Titanic Evidence Test

Evaluate what different sources can and cannot show.

11.R.1.C "Objectively evaluate primary and secondary sources for their credibility, reliability, accuracy, usefulness, and limitations. That includes identifying their main and supporting ideas, points of view, conflicting information..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the passage's main idea and one supporting idea in each paragraph. Circle wording that signals a source's strength or limitation, and number two places where accounts or interpretations may conflict.

Investigating the Titanic

1. On April 15, 1912, the RMS Titanic sank after striking an iceberg, killing about 1,500 people. To investigate, the United States Senate held hearings only days later. Survivor Margaret Brown testified that the ship had too few lifeboats and that some boats left with empty seats. Her testimony is a primary source because she experienced the evacuation. It is useful for details she saw and heard, but it cannot describe every deck or every launch. Her memories were also shaped by darkness, cold, noise, and the fear of survival.

2. The Senate committee's 1912 report is also a primary source, an official record created during the investigation. It argued that lifeboat regulations had not kept pace with larger ships and recommended stronger safety rules. Because the committee questioned many witnesses and collected documents, its findings can be checked against a broad record. Still, the report reflects an American investigation conducted quickly and does not settle every disputed detail. For example, witnesses gave differing estimates of how many lifeboat seats were empty, so the exact number remains uncertain.

3. A modern history book can compare the Senate transcript with British inquiry records, ship plans, and later research. This secondary source may be more useful for explaining patterns, such as why lifeboat rules mattered, than for preserving one person's immediate observations. Its reliability depends on whether the author cites evidence and represents disagreements fairly. A book that selects only dramatic testimony may create a biased picture of cowardly crew members. A careful reader should distinguish documented failures in equipment and procedures from claims about motives, which are harder to prove.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1 State the passage's main idea. Then name two supporting ideas that develop it.

2 Which source is most useful for learning about one survivor's immediate experience of the evacuation? Give one reason it is useful and one limitation.

3 What information conflicts in the sources described in paragraph 2? Why does the passage say the exact answer is uncertain?

4 What biased or misleading picture might a secondary history book create if it selects only dramatic testimony? Which kind of claim does the passage say is harder to prove?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a historical event you know. In 3 or 4 sentences, name one primary source and one secondary source you would use, explain one strength and one limitation of each, and identify one claim you would need to verify before accepting it.

ANSWER KEY

Titanic Evidence Test

GRADE 11 · 11.R.1.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the passage's main idea and one supporting idea in each paragraph. Circle wording that signals a source's strength or limitation, and number two places where accounts or interpretations may conflict. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	State the passage's main idea. Then name two supporting ideas that develop it.	**The main idea is that readers should evaluate Titanic sources for their evidence, usefulness, and limitations before drawing conclusions. Supporting ideas include that Brown's eyewitness testimony gives firsthand details but has limited scope, and that the Senate report uses many records but cannot settle every disputed detail.**
2	Which source is most useful for learning about one survivor's immediate experience of the evacuation? Give one reason it is useful and one limitation.	**Margaret Brown's testimony is most useful. It provides details she saw and heard, but it cannot describe every deck or every lifeboat launch, and her memory was affected by the conditions of the disaster.**
3	What information conflicts in the sources described in paragraph 2? Why does the passage say the exact answer is uncertain?	**Witnesses gave different estimates of how many lifeboat seats were empty. The exact number is uncertain because the witnesses' accounts did not agree.**
4	What biased or misleading picture might a secondary history book create if it selects only dramatic testimony? Which kind of claim does the passage say is harder to prove?	**It might create a biased picture of cowardly crew members. Claims about people's motives are harder to prove than documented failures in equipment and procedures.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

For the Montgomery Bus Boycott, I would use Rosa Parks's later autobiography as a primary source and a scholarly history that cites city records as a secondary source. Parks's account could explain her own experience, but it reflects one participant's memory and point of view. The history could connect her experience to the boycott's broader organization, but I would check its citations and its choice of voices. I would verify any claim that presents one person as the only cause of the boycott, because major events have many documented contributors.

Accept equivalent evaluations when students accurately distinguish firsthand evidence from later interpretation and identify relevant limitations. In the open response, accept other historical events if the source types, strengths, limitations, and verification claim are logical and specific.