Dam Debate

Compare evidence, reasoning, and historical connections.

12.RI.3.A "Evaluate texts with differing points of view on the same or similar events or issues by assessing claims, reasoning, evidence, and connections to other works or historical events."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each claim, circle its supporting evidence, and number the two connections to larger historical issues or events.

Building Norris Dam

(1) During the 1930s, the Tennessee Valley Authority, or TVA, built dams across the Tennessee River system. In a 1936 public statement, a TVA engineer claimed that Norris Dam would reduce flood damage, produce inexpensive electricity, and attract industry. He reasoned that a publicly managed river could serve farms and towns better than scattered private companies. He cited construction plans, projected power rates, and maps of flood-prone land. His statement presents the dam as a practical New Deal investment.

(2) An oral-history interview recorded decades later offers a different view. A woman whose family left land for the Norris reservoir said officials valued acreage and buildings but could not replace neighbors, churches, or burial sites. Her claim is that compensation did not measure what the move cost communities. She supports it with memories of packing, photographs of the former town, and the names of relocated families. Unlike the engineer, she judges the project by losses that planning documents did not count.

(3) A historian comparing these accounts connects the dispute to a larger New Deal question: should national projects be judged mainly by economic totals or by their effects on particular people? The comparison also resembles later debates over urban renewal, when highways and redevelopment often displaced residents in the name of public benefit. The engineer's projections can be checked against later power and flood records. The resident's testimony cannot prove every outcome, but it supplies evidence about experiences those records omit. Together, the sources make a fuller evaluation possible.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the engineer's claim, and what is the resident's competing claim?

2. Which evidence could later records verify, and what evidence does the resident provide that those records may miss?

3. How does the connection to urban renewal strengthen the historian's comparison?

4. Why should a reader treat the engineer's projections with caution?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a historical or current public project. Write 3 sentences that state two differing claims, assess one piece of evidence for each claim, and connect the disagreement to another event or work.

ANSWER KEY

Dam Debate

GRADE 12 · 12.RI.3.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each claim, circle its supporting evidence, and number the two connections to larger historical issues or events. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the engineer's claim, and what is the resident's competing claim?	**The engineer claims Norris Dam would benefit the region through flood control, cheap power, and industry. The resident claims that payment could not measure community losses caused by relocation.**
2	Which evidence could later records verify, and what evidence does the resident provide that those records may miss?	**Later power and flood records could check the engineer's projections. The resident provides testimony, photographs, and family names that show personal and community experiences.**
3	How does the connection to urban renewal strengthen the historian's comparison?	**It shows that the conflict between public benefits and displacement continued in later projects, making Norris Dam part of a broader historical pattern.**
4	Why should a reader treat the engineer's projections with caution?	**They predict future benefits, so they are not proof that those benefits occurred. Later power and flood records are needed to check them.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Supporters of the Apollo program claimed that lunar missions advanced science and national prestige, while critics claimed that the money should address poverty at home. NASA's successful missions support the first claim, while the era's unmet social needs support the critics' concern. The disagreement connects to the Cold War, when competition with the Soviet Union shaped federal priorities.

Accept equivalent descriptions of the claims and evidence if they accurately distinguish measurable outcomes from community experiences. For Part 3, accept any accurate project, balanced claims, evidence assessment, and relevant historical or textual connection.