

Evidence Behind the Strike

Compare perspectives to build a historical argument.

S.WG.d "investigating and analyzing evidence from multiple sources to construct arguments;"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline evidence from each source, circle words that show a source's limit or point of view, and number the sources 1 through 4 so you can combine evidence into an argument.

Why Did Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike?

- ① In February 1968, sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, began a strike after years of low pay, unsafe equipment, and unfair treatment. The deaths of Echol Cole and Robert Walker, crushed inside a malfunctioning garbage truck while sheltering from rain, made the dangers impossible to ignore. Workers also wanted the city to recognize their union, AFSCME Local 1733. To investigate why the strike began, historians compare records created by city leaders, workers, and reporters rather than trusting one voice alone.
- ② Workers' oral histories describe being sent home without pay when rain stopped collection, even though white employees could wait indoors and still be paid. These accounts offer firsthand evidence about daily treatment, but memories recorded years later may leave out details. Payroll records can test part of the accounts. They list workers' wages and work days, although numbers alone do not show how supervisors treated people. When both kinds of sources point to unequal conditions, the claim becomes stronger.
- ③ Newspaper photographs from March show marchers carrying "I AM A MAN" signs, which supports the idea that dignity was central to the protest. Yet a photograph captures one moment and may not show every participant's reason for striking. City statements emphasized the cost of a wage increase and the need to keep garbage collection running. An argument that explains both workers' safety concerns and city officials' priorities is more convincing than one built from only a single source.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What evidence from the oral histories supports a claim that workers faced unequal treatment?

2 How can payroll records strengthen the oral-history evidence, and what can payroll records not show?

3 What claim can the March photographs support, and what limitation does the passage give for photographs?

4 Which city priorities might complicate a worker-centered argument about the strike? Explain.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Using at least three source types from the passage, write an 80 to 100 word argument explaining why Memphis sanitation workers struck. State a claim, use evidence from each source, and explain one limitation or competing point of view.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline evidence from each source, circle words that show a source's limit or point of view, and number the sources 1 through 4 so you can combine evidence into an argument. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What evidence from the oral histories supports a claim that workers faced unequal treatment?	The oral histories say workers were sent home without pay when rain stopped collection, while white employees could wait indoors and still be paid.
2	How can payroll records strengthen the oral-history evidence, and what can payroll records not show?	Payroll records can provide evidence about wages and work days. They cannot show how supervisors treated workers.
3	What claim can the March photographs support, and what limitation does the passage give for photographs?	They support the claim that dignity was important to the protest. A photograph shows one moment and may not show every participant's reason for striking.
4	Which city priorities might complicate a worker-centered argument about the strike? Explain.	City officials were concerned about the cost of a wage increase and keeping garbage collection running. These priorities show the city's point of view, even though workers had safety concerns.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Memphis sanitation workers had strong reasons to strike because the city failed to address unequal treatment and dangerous work. Oral histories report that workers lost pay when rain stopped collection while white employees could remain paid indoors. Payroll records can help confirm differences in wages or work days, making the testimony stronger. Photographs of "I AM A MAN" signs show that dignity mattered too. City statements about costs and garbage service explain officials' concerns, but they do not erase the workers' evidence.

Accept equivalent evidence-based responses that accurately identify a source's support and limitation. For the open response, accept arguments that use at least three passage source types, include a clear claim, and address a limitation or city perspective.