

Historical Thinking Skills

Lunchroom Fight Activity

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

You are a principal who is trying to figure out the truth about a lunchroom fight. The fight was between Justin and Max. Justin is a new student. He is shy, quiet, and does not have many friends. He moved to town last month because his father was hired to take over the town's main business. Justin's father fired many people, including Max's parents, when he reorganized the business. Max is a popular student, who is known for his friendliness and good humor. In the past few weeks, however, he has been withdrawn and somewhat depressed.

After the fight you must now collect all the sources (pieces of evidence) you can in order to come to the conclusion of who is guilty. The following are the sources you have collected from your investigations:

1 **Justin:** "That kid started it. Max. I was just standing in line waiting to pay for my food, and he shoved me super hard. And, like, for no reason. He just freaked out on me. I don't even know the kid, and he's been weird to me ever since I started going to this school. He and his friends glare at me in English class for no reason."

2 **Max:** "That kid is psycho. He turned around and punched me out of nowhere. Me and my friends were standing in line just joking around, and he turned around and punched me for no reason. He's messed up and creepy. Ask anyone."

3 **Eric** (Max's good friend who saw the fight): "The new kid definitely started it. He really just attacked out of nowhere. He's a freak, and he seriously thinks he's better than everyone because of his dad."

4 **Anthony** (bystander who saw the fight): "I was pretty far back in the line, but Max and his friends were being kind of loud and joking around. I couldn't really hear what they were saying. And then all of a sudden I saw people pulling Justin and Max apart."

5 **Megan** (Max's girlfriend): "I wasn't there. All I can say is that Max has been really different lately and kind of mean. I don't know what's going on, but he's not himself."

6 **Cafeteria worker** (saw the fight): "The group of boys were pushing each other around. I think it was an accident, and one of them pushed into the new boy, and he took it the wrong way."

7 **Max's mother:** "Max would never start a fight. He's the sweetest boy. I know he's had a hard time lately with me and his dad losing our jobs, but he still would never start a fight with anyone. He's a mentor to the younger boys and helps out at church. You can ask anyone in this town."

8 **Justin's father:** "I can guarantee 100% that Justin would never lay a finger on anyone unless he was really provoked. Trust me. And I know because we've had to move around quite a bit in the last few years because of my job, so unfortunately, Justin knows what it's like to be the new kid. And I've watched him go through these adjustment periods at each new school. He just lies low, and pretty soon the other kids see what a great kid he is. So I know as a fact that Justin wouldn't stir up trouble. It's really not in his nature."

9 **Jamie** (student in English class with Max and Justin in the period right before lunch): "I wasn't in the cafeteria today, and I'm not friends with any of those guys, but I've seen Max and his friends be mean to Justin in the hallways and in class when the teacher isn't looking. Not physical or anything, but they'll like say jokes under their breath and then laugh and stuff like that. They make him uncomfortable."

10 **English teacher:** "To be completely honest with you, I'm not surprised that this happened. There has been a lot of tension in the school and in the town, in general, with the reorganization plan. A lot of people are very upset with the decisions of the new management to fire people, and I must say that I myself am very surprised that they've done this. It's a tremendous strain on the community, and I feel for all the boys."

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35pts

Name: _____

Period: _____

Evaluation of Sources

You have now come to the part where you must evaluate the evidence in order to get to “the bottom” of who actually is guilty. In doing this begin by answering these few questions:

3

(1) How could there be different stories of the event if you assume no one is lying?

3

(2) What might make one person’s story more authentic/reliable than another person’s?

3

(3) Why does the collection of all the other sources help you build a stronger case than if you just had Max's and Justin’s accounts?

3

(4) What does each account say about who started the fight? (if not applicable put “NA”)

Account 1: _____

Account 2: _____

Account 3: _____

Account 4: _____

Account 5: _____

Account 6: _____

Account 7: _____

Account 8: _____

Account 9: _____

Account 10: _____

3 (5) What does each account say about how Max and his friends treat Justin? (if not applicable put NA)

Account 1: _____

Account 2: _____

Account 3: _____

Account 4: _____

Account 5: _____

Account 6: _____

Account 7: _____

Account 8: _____

Account 9: _____

Account 10: _____

Contextualizing Sources

3	Town Context: What is happening in the town that might explain the lunchroom fight?	Who said this?	Explain if this source is reliable or not and why.

3	School Context: What has been happening in the rest of the school (for example, in English class)?	Who said this?	Explain if this source is reliable or not and why.

3	Cafeteria Context: What happened in the cafeteria?	Who said this?	Explain if this source is reliable or not and why.

Suspension Report

(1) The incident in the school cafeteria was as follows:

(2) In my judgment the following student: _____ should be suspended. My reasoning is as follows:

_____ Principals Signature

_____ Date