

Student Workbook

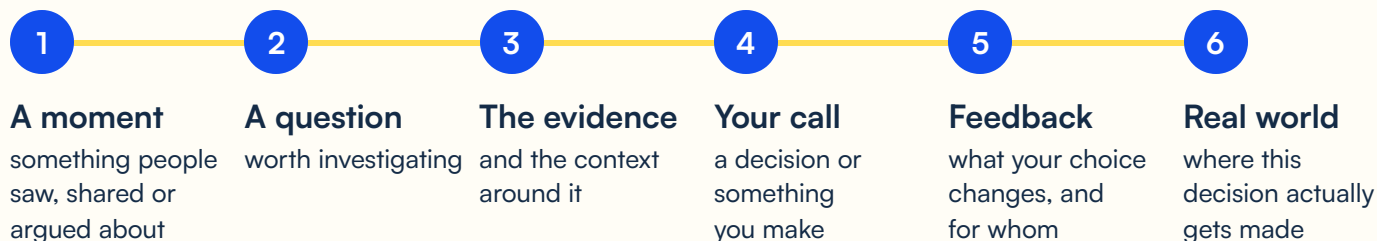
AP Seminar

For AP Seminar

20 cases about media, law, policy and the decisions that shape your life. For every case: the story, the case file, a thinking page and a work page shaped like your task.

How this edition works

Every case starts with something that happened, a question worth asking and the evidence to check. Then you make a call or make something. Write on the pages, fill them in on a computer, or scan the code on a work page to do it online.



The companions in the margins



Lupa
Evidence



Duda
Questions



Pauta
Rules



Onda
Impact



Nexo
Connections



Voz
Next steps

What's different in this edition

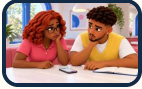
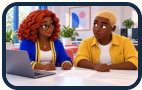
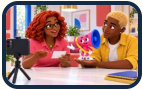
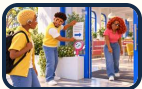
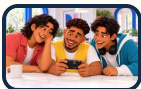
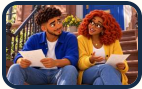
- Every case can support an AP Seminar inquiry because the course is topic-flexible; each route states why its question is genuinely multi-perspective
- Tasks mirror performance-task components without replacing them
- Students bring outside sources, including at least one that complicates their position
- Team presentations include an individual oral defense

Real, or made for this lesson?

Real source links to reporting, research or an official page you can check yourself.

Fictional case material was written for the story, so you can practise on it safely.

What's inside

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Case 1

Before you repost

What can a screenshot actually prove?

Most news about school closures, rule changes and events reaches students as a cropped clip in a group chat. Checking the original and posting a useful update keeps a whole community from acting on half a sentence.

In the real world

CrashCourse (YouTube), 2019 Check Yourself with Lateral Reading: Crash Course Navigating Digital Information #3

PolitiFact, 2022 Viral image shows fake story from The Atlantic about Biden

Mateo

Dale, I wanted that clip to be fake so badly I almost told everyone to ignore it. Let me find the full transcript first.

You'll make

Individual research report (800—1,000 words) plus 8-minute team multimedia presentation

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

Forwarded screenshot in the crew's group chat, Friday 4:52 p.m.

"They're removing access tonight.
Screening cancelled?"

Attached clip, 7 seconds.

Coordinator: "...we are removing access—" The clip ends there.



What was said right after this clip ends? Which word in the caption goes further than the clip itself?

Fictional case material

2

Room coordinator, full meeting transcript, Friday 3:30 p.m. meeting

"The side-door reader is broken. We are removing access through that reader tonight. Existing room bookings remain in place. Use the staffed front entrance while we repair it."



Which four words narrow what "access" means? Underline them.

Fictional case material

3

Booking confirmation emailed to Mateo, sent Tuesday 10:14 a.m.

Friday, 6—9 p.m. Screening confirmed. Front entrance: step-free. Staff member at the desk from 5:30 p.m.
Contact the coordinator for arrival support.



What does this confirm? What does it not say about the side door or about visitors who need other support?

Fictional case material

4

Jordy, holding message in the same chat

"We're checking the original. Hold your plans for a moment."



What does this message promise, and which word from the rumor does it avoid repeating?

Fictional case material

5

"My friend is already on the train. "We are figuring it out" does not tell her whether to keep coming."

Gia, 21, leaving for a café shift

What does this reader need first: a verdict, a time, a door or a contact?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Whether every visitor can use the staffed front entrance (the email says step-free, not that every arrival need is covered), who first cropped the clip and why, and how many people already changed their plans.

Real-world evidence



Real source

Society of Professional Journalists, SPJ Code of Ethics

Summary, not a quotation: the code asks journalists to take responsibility for the accuracy of their work, verify information before releasing it and avoid distorting facts or context, including visual information.



video

Check Yourself with Lateral Reading: Crash Course Navigating Digital Information #3

[CrashCourse \(YouTube\)](#), 2019-01-22

Shows the move the crew makes: leave the screenshot, open new tabs and check who made it and what other sources say.



article

Viral image shows fake story from The Atlantic about Biden

[PolitiFact](#), 2022-08-01

A real fact-check of a fabricated news screenshot: the image looked official, but the outlet never published it.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

What the evidence can hold up

Draw an arrow from each piece of evidence to the claim it supports or challenges. Which claim is left standing, and which gap still needs a check before you post?

Evidence	Claim 1 The screening is cancelled.	Claim 2 The screening is on; use the staffed front entrance.
1 The clip: “we are removing access...” ends mid-sentence.		
2 The transcript: access is removed “through that reader,” and existing bookings remain in place.		
3 The booking email: Friday 6—9 p.m., screening confirmed, step-free front entrance.		

Still open

- Can every visitor use the temporary entrance?

Words that do the work

Claim
Afirmación
Something a person says is true. It still needs checking before you repeat it.

Context
Contexto
The information around a quote or clip that changes what it means.

Primary source
Fuente primaria
The original record of what was said or done, not someone’s retelling of it.

Holding statement
Declaración provisional
A short message saying what you know, what you are checking and when you will update.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write a holding statement and a follow-up correction for the same chat, twenty minutes apart.
Add a two-sentence rationale.

Message 1 (5:05 p.m.): Hey everyone, we saw the clip about the Common Room. We're checking the full meeting update right now, so please don't cancel your plans yet. We'll post again by 5:25 with a real answer. ¹ Message 2 (5:25 p.m.): Update: the screening is NOT cancelled ³. It's still Friday 6—9 p.m. The clip cut off the part where the coordinator said they're removing access "through that reader," meaning the broken side door ². Use the front entrance instead. It's staffed from 5:30 and it's step-free. I think whoever posted it was trying to start drama. ⁴

Rationale: I didn't repeat the word "cancelled" in my first message because people might only read that one word. I gave a time for the next update so people know when to check back.

- ¹ Strong holding move: a specific time tells people already traveling when to look again.
- ² Precise evidence. Quoting the exact words the clip removed shows readers why the clip misled them.
- ³ A clear verdict, but naming the booking email or the transcript here would let readers check it for themselves.
- ⁴ Revise: nothing in the sources tells us why the clip was shared. A guess about motive weakens the correction and can start a new argument.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

I think whoever posted it was trying to start drama.

After

I checked the coordinator's full transcript and Mateo's booking email. Need help getting in? Message the coordinator before you leave.

The revision swaps an unsupported guess for a named source and a contact, which gives readers something to verify and something to do.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team inquiry: “How do communities decide what’s true when updates move through group chats?” Each member writes a short research report through one lens: journalism ethics, psychology of sharing, platform design or local institutions. Then the team presents one update protocol for a school or club.

Use

Case documents plus two or three credible outside sources per student (teacher-approved).

You’ll make

Individual research report (800–1,000 words) plus 8-minute team multimedia presentation

Slide 1: The moment

What you’ll say

Slide 2: The question

What you’ll say

Slide 3: The evidence

What you’ll say

Slide 4: Your ask

What you’ll say

Done when

- ☐ Research question is focused and answerable
- ☐ Each report represents its lens accurately
- ☐ Presentation synthesizes lenses into one protocol
- ☐ Team names limitations and next steps

Need a boost?

- Lens assignment sheet
- Source-credibility tracker
- Slide storyboard for an 8-minute presentation



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 2

Same test. More questions

Does this task show what someone knows?

A single score can follow a student into placement, support and how teachers see them. Knowing what the law requires before a school decides a student needs special education helps students ask for support without diagnosing each other.

In the real world

Education Week, 2025 Does Extended Time on Tests Actually Help Students With ADHD?

K-12 Dive, 2025 IDEA at 50: How the landmark law changed education

Dec

I can trace the circuit. The six paragraphs are what lose me. Ask me before you tell the teacher what I need.

You'll make

Individual written argument, 1,200—1,500 words

Time

About 250 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

§ Circuit practice brief, handed out Monday, period 4

Goal: Explain how a simple circuit works. Read the six paragraphs below before you answer. Use the diagram to trace the path of the current from the battery through the switch and the LED and back. Answer questions 1–4 in complete sentences. (One small diagram sits below six dense paragraphs. No time limit or speed target is listed.)



Which skill does the goal line name, and which skills does the page demand that the goal line leaves out?

Fictional case material

2

Out loud, with the larger sketch: traced the whole path, battery to switch to LED and back. Correct. Written sheet: skipped a line in the instructions and answered a different question from the one asked. Dec: the layout is hard to follow.

Dec's study-table notes, Wednesday 3:40 p.m.



What did Dec get right out loud that the sheet didn't record? What do these notes not tell you?

Fictional case material

3

"I can show you where the current goes. Then I get halfway through the written question and lose my place."

Dec, 17, theatre crew



Is Dec describing the content, the format or both?

Fictional case material

4

"I kept saying "it is right there." That was not helping. I was looking at the answer, not how the question was written."

Anika, 16, studying with Dec



What did Anika change her mind about, and what evidence changed it?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Whether Dec wants formal support at all, how the sheet is scored, whether other students lose their place in the same layout, and what the teacher meant the six paragraphs to test.

Real-world evidence



Real source

IDEA regulations, 34 CFR § 300.304 (evaluation procedures)

Summary, not a quotation: when a public agency conducts an IDEA evaluation, it must use a variety of assessment tools and strategies and may not use any single measure or assessment as the sole basis for deciding whether a child has a disability or what educational program is appropriate.



Real source

CAST, Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

Summary, not a quotation: the UDL Guidelines are design guidance that encourages offering learners more than one way to engage with learning, to take in information and to express what they know.



article

Does Extended Time on Tests Actually Help Students With ADHD?

[Education Week, 2025-10-13](#)

Asks the case’s question in real life: does a test accommodation help students show what they actually know?

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

Who actually gets to decide?

Sort who can decide each question. Which decision belongs to the teacher, which to a formal school process, and which only to Dec?

Try a clearer practice format for the circuit goal

Who decides

The teacher, who sets the practice format and the learning goal

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Dec, who decides what to share and whether to ask

Your way in

Start a formal IDEA evaluation or a Section 504 conversation

Who decides

The school's evaluation process, with a parent or guardian for a student under 18

Under which rule

IDEA evaluation rule: varied tools, no single measure as the sole basis

Who lives with it

Your way in

Words that do the work

Learning goal

Meta de aprendizaje

The knowledge or skill a task is meant to show.

IDEA

Ley IDEA

A federal law requiring public schools to provide eligible students with disabilities a free appropriate public education.

Evaluation

Evaluación

A formal process that gathers varied information to decide if a student has a disability and needs services.

IEP

Programa de educación individualizado (IEP)

A written plan for an eligible student listing current performance, measurable goals and the services the school will provide.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Draft a message to the teacher in Dec's voice, written with his permission, that describes the observations and asks about support options. Add a two-sentence note on what you left out and why.

Hi Ms. R, I'm working on the circuit practice sheet. The goal says we should explain how a simple circuit works. ¹ At the study table I traced the whole circuit out loud with a bigger diagram, but on the written sheet I skipped a line and answered a different question. ² I think I might have ADHD or something. ³ Could we talk about how the sheet checks the goal and whether there are other ways I could show it? I can bring both tries. Thanks, Dec Note: I left out my old grades and anything about my friends' support plans because that's private. I also didn't say the test was unfair, because we don't actually know that ⁴.

- 1** Strong opening. Leading with the learning goal frames the request around what the sheet is meant to measure, not the score.
- 2** Two precise, neutral observations taken from the study-table notes. This is the evidence a teacher can act on.
- 3** Revise: the notes cannot establish a diagnosis, and naming one in an email shares health information Dec may not want shared. Describe what happened instead.
- 4** Good reasoning in the note: the writer separates what the evidence shows from a conclusion it cannot support.

Works well

Uses evidence

Gap to fix

Think about the reader

One revision

Before

I think I might have ADHD or something.

After

The layout with six long paragraphs is where I lose my place.

The revision keeps the message about the task's format, which the evidence supports, and leaves any formal evaluation to the school's process and to Dec's own choice.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Write an individual argument responding to a stimulus packet on the question “Do standardized formats measure what students know?”

Use

Teacher-built stimulus packet: the case, the CAST UDL Guidelines excerpt, one article on assessment validity and one teacher perspective on workload.

You'll make

Individual written argument, 1,200–1,500 words

Thesis A claim someone could reasonably disagree with

Reason 1: claim, evidence, commentary

Reason 2: claim, evidence, commentary

Done when

- ☐ Research question emerges from the stimulus
- ☐ Evaluates at least three perspectives
- ☐ Synthesizes sources into an original argument
- ☐ Proposes a feasible resolution with limitations

Need a boost?

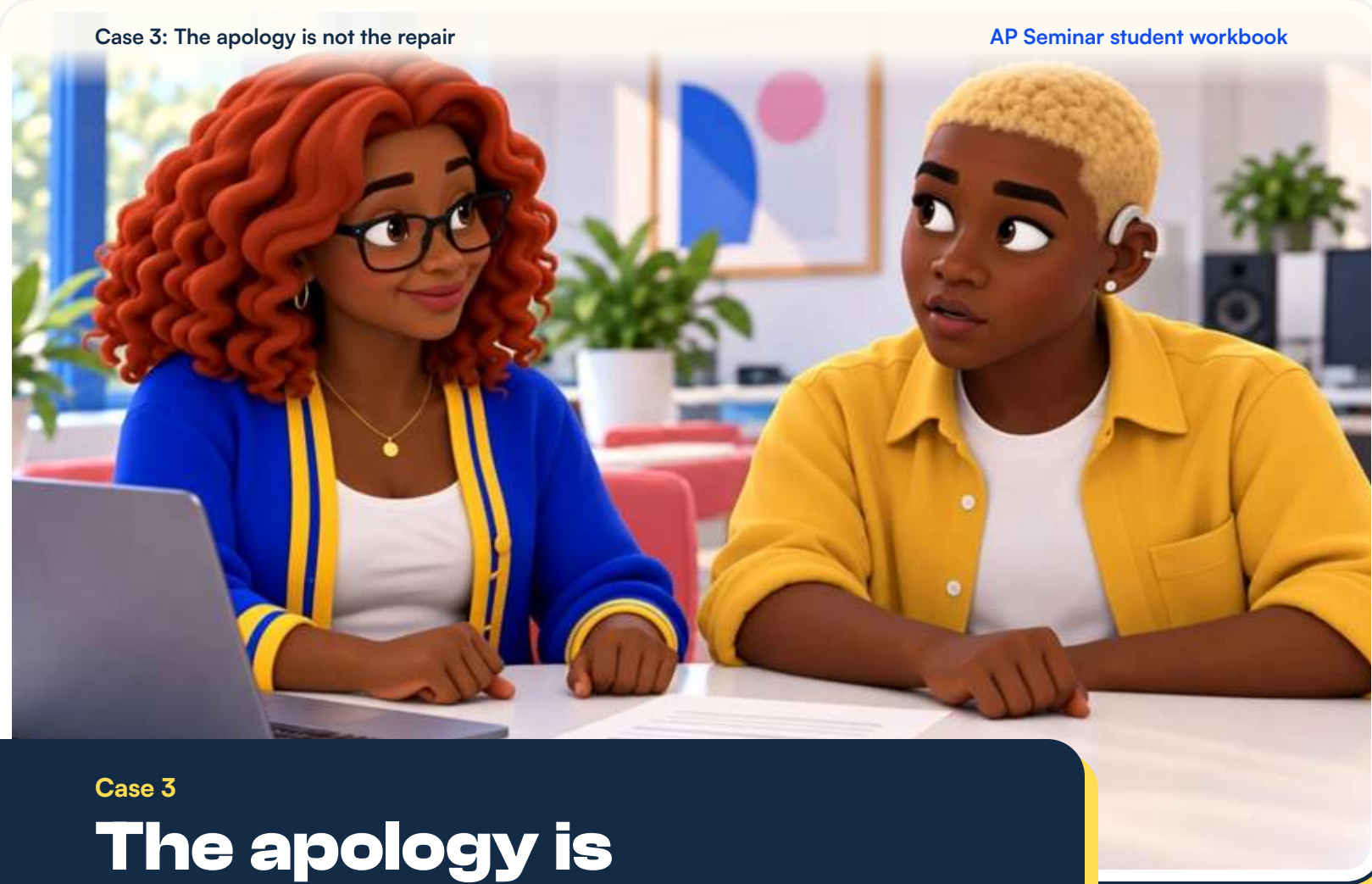
- Stimulus annotation guide
- Perspective map: student, teacher, policymaker, researcher
- Line-of-reasoning outline

The strongest counterargument, and your answer

Why it matters beyond this case



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 3

The apology is not the repair

What makes a correction more useful than “sorry”?

Clubs, schools and companies all post things that turn out to be wrong, and how they fix it decides who keeps trusting them. Students who can tell a real correction from a nice-sounding apology can hold groups, including their own, to a higher standard.

In the real world

NPR Public Editor, 2022 That was wrong

NPR, 2017 Dove Expresses 'Regret' For Racially Insensitive Ad

Anika

We were carrying chairs at 5:30. Don't tell me how sorry you feel. Tell people what actually happened.

You'll make

10-minute team presentation plus individual oral defense

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

The crew's published recap caption, Saturday 11:08 a.m.

"Great night, once the younger crowd finally got organized."



Which group does this caption ask readers to blame, and on what evidence?

Fictional case material

2

Jordy's setup log, Friday evening

5:40 p.m. Projector failure reported. 6:00 p.m. Attendees seated.
6:20 p.m. Replacement projector connected. Note: Anika and Dec helped carry chairs before doors opened.



What happened at 5:40 that the caption never mentions? Which entry challenges the caption most directly?

Fictional case material

3

Anika, 16, message to the crew

"We were helping you set up. Why are we the problem in this post?"



What fact does Anika add, and what is she asking the crew to change?

Fictional case material

4

Gia's first correction, drafted Saturday 2:15 p.m., not posted

"Sorry if this came across wrong. We love our younger neighbors and would never want anyone to feel excluded."



What fact does this correct? Who does the word "if" put the problem on?

Fictional case material

5

"My log says Anika and Dec were carrying chairs before doors opened. The caption turned them into the reason we started late."

Jordy, 20, kept Friday's setup log

What does Jordy's log add about Anika and Dec, and what should the crew not ask of Anika?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

What each attendee actually experienced, whether any latecomers affected the start at all, how far the recap was reshared, and whether Anika wants any public response.

Real-world evidence



Real source

Public Relations Society of America, PRSA Code of Ethics

Summary, not a quotation: the code names honesty among its core values and, in its provisions of conduct, expects members to correct promptly any erroneous communication they are responsible for.



article

That was wrong

[NPR Public Editor, 2022-10-21](#)

How a real newsroom corrects mistakes: name the error, fix it on the story and keep a public list.



article

Dove Expresses 'Regret' For Racially Insensitive Ad

[NPR, 2017-10-08](#)

A real brand apology after an ad played into a racial stereotype; compare the words with what changed afterward.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

Same moment, different accounts

Place the four accounts side by side. Where do they agree, where do they split, and which one was written down at the time?

Account 1

Caption: the night went well once the younger crowd got organized.

Account 2

Event log: projector failed at 5:40; replacement connected at 6:20; Anika and Dec carried chairs.

Account 3

Anika: "We were helping you set up."

Where they agree

Where they differ

Check: Which account was recorded at the time rather than remembered afterward?

Words that do the work

Communications plan

Plan de comunicación

A plan naming your goal, audiences, key message, channels and how you will check it worked.

Key message

Mensaje clave

The one idea every audience should walk away with.

Correction

Corrección

A clear replacement of inaccurate information, published where the error was seen.

Stereotype

Estereotipo

A broad assumption about people because of a group label.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write a correction and a short repair plan with a named owner and a date to check it.

Correction: Our recap said the screening started late because the younger crowd wasn't organized. That was wrong, and we're sorry. ¹ Jordy's event log shows the projector failed at 5:40 p.m. ² and the new one wasn't connected until 6:20. Anika and Dec actually helped carry chairs before doors opened. Repair plan: Gia will edit the original caption today so the correction is where people saw the mistake. We will also ask Anika to post that she's okay with the correction so people know it's resolved. ³ Before we post any recap, Jordy will check claims about what caused a problem against the event log. We'll check on Friday whether the next recap went through that step. ⁴

- ¹ Good order: the correction names the error before it apologizes, so it does its main job first.
- ² Precise evidence with a time lets readers see why the caption's explanation doesn't hold.
- ³ Revise: this puts repair work on the person who was blamed. The crew can offer a private way to respond, but Anika shouldn't have to vouch in public.
- ⁴ Strong measure: it checks whether the promised process happened, not just whether the comments stopped.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~We will also ask Anika to post that she's okay with the correction so people know it's resolved.~~

After

We'll message the people the caption blamed to say it's corrected, and they can reply privately if we missed something.

The crew still reaches the people who were harmed, but the work of fixing the record stays with the crew.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team multimedia presentation: “What does an organization owe people it misrepresents?” The team examines PR ethics, journalism standards, sociology of stereotypes and the view of the people affected, then presents a repair standard to a student club.

Use

Case plus PRSA and SPJ codes and one sociology source on stereotypes.

You'll make

10-minute team presentation plus individual oral defense

Slide 1: The moment

What you'll say

Slide 2: The question

What you'll say

Slide 3: The evidence

What you'll say

Slide 4: Your ask

What you'll say

Done when

- ☐ Question is clear and significant
- ☐ Multiple perspectives are fairly represented
- ☐ Presentation reaches a supported standard
- ☐ Oral defense shows command of sources

Need a boost?

- Perspective jigsaw
- Presentation rubric preview
- Oral-defense practice questions



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 4

Whose room is it, anyway?

Who gets a say when a shared space changes?

Libraries, rec centers and after-school rooms change hours and fees all the time, and those changes land hardest on people with the least flexible schedules. Learning to read a budget and ask the right decision-maker lets students defend a shared space without pretending money doesn't matter.

In the real world

Education Week, 2023 Letting Students Decide Where Money Should Go: How One District Did It

First Alert 4 (KMOV), 2026 St. Louis shuts down streets to cars, hands them over to neighbors

Mari

Mira, “keep it free” doesn’t pay the person closing up, and I’m that person. So what’s our plan for the gap?

You'll make

Individual research report (800–1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

§ Nonprofit board agenda, board meeting Wednesday 6:30 p.m.

Evening rentals, for discussion. Option A: keep the current free evenings; the funding gap remains. Option B: replace Tuesday and Thursday evenings with paid rentals. Option C: pilot one rental evening for six weeks while seeking additional funding. No vote has been taken.



Is this a vote or a discussion? Which words tell you?

Fictional case material

2

Illustrative weekly budget note prepared for the board (invented figures for practice)

Evening staffing and utilities: \$600. Current grants and donations: \$400. Each paid rental is projected to add \$120 after its extra costs. Two bookings would add \$240; one would add \$120. Demand is uncertain.



Which number here is a guess, and what could change it? Work out the gap with zero, one and two rentals.

Fictional case material

3

Sami works afternoons. Dec rehearses on Thursdays. Mari closes the shop. A nearby resident worries about late noise. The proposed meeting time overlaps with several shifts.

Listening notes from evening users, collected over the weekend



Whose voice is missing from these four notes, and how could they contribute without attending?

Fictional case material

4

"If they take both late evenings, the room might still be "open" when I am working. That is not the same as being able to use it."

Mari, 19, bookseller who closes the shop



What is the difference between a room being open and a room being usable?

Fictional case material

5

"I want us to stop solving this for everybody before we ask everybody."

Sami, 23, uses the room after her print-shop shift

What would the crew have to do before its request could claim to speak for evening users?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Who uses the room on other evenings, whether the \$120 projection rests on any past bookings, what the board will do if the pilot underperforms, and the views of evening users who were not in the listening notes.

Real-world evidence



Real source

Carol Bacchi, “What’s the problem represented to be?” approach

Summary, not a quotation: Bacchi’s policy-analysis approach asks how a proposed solution represents the problem it claims to solve and what that representation leaves unexamined.



article

Letting Students Decide Where Money Should Go: How One District Did It

[Education Week, 2023-02-06](#)

A real district let students propose and vote on how shared school spaces and money would change.



article

St. Louis shuts down streets to cars, hands them over to neighbors

[First Alert 4 \(KMOV\), 2026-06-04](#)

A city pilot that changes a shared space for a trial run, so neighbors can test trade-offs before anything is permanent.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

Follow each option to its consequences. Which consequences depend on a projection, and who carries the cost if it misses?

The power or responsibility to make a particular decision.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

[illegible]

One student's draft

Prepare a 90-second public comment recommending an option, using at least one figure accurately.

Good evening. I use the Common Room on weeknights, and I'm here about the evening rental options. I think the board should choose Option C, the six-week pilot.¹

Option B would replace both Tuesday and Thursday free evenings, and Dec rehearses on Thursdays, so he would lose his spot². The budget note says each rental will add \$120, so the pilot will bring the gap down to \$80³. That still leaves a gap, but the board could ask local businesses to sponsor the room. Also, a lot of people who use the room are working during this meeting. Could the board accept written comments for two weeks so they can be heard too?⁴ Thank you.

- 1 A clear position on a specific option, stated early enough for a listener to follow.
- 2 Good use of the listening notes: an affected person tied to a specific evening.
- 3 Revise: the budget note calls \$120 a projection and says demand is uncertain. Say "is projected to" and "if bookings hold."
- 4 Strong request: the board can act on it, and it reaches people the meeting time leaves out.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~The budget note says each rental will add \$120, so the pilot will bring the gap down to \$80.~~

After

The budget note projects \$120 per rental, so if bookings hold, the pilot would bring the weekly gap down to about \$80.

The revision matches the source's own uncertainty, which makes the speaker more credible to a board that knows demand could fall short.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team inquiry: “Who should pay for shared community space?” Members research one lens each (nonprofit finance, disability access, urban planning, neighbor relations), write individual reports, then present a recommendation to the Common Room board.

Use

Case plus teacher-approved outside sources on community spaces and funding.

You'll make

Individual research report (800—1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Slide 1: The moment

What you'll say

Slide 2: The question

What you'll say

Slide 3: The evidence

What you'll say

Slide 4: Your ask

What you'll say

Done when

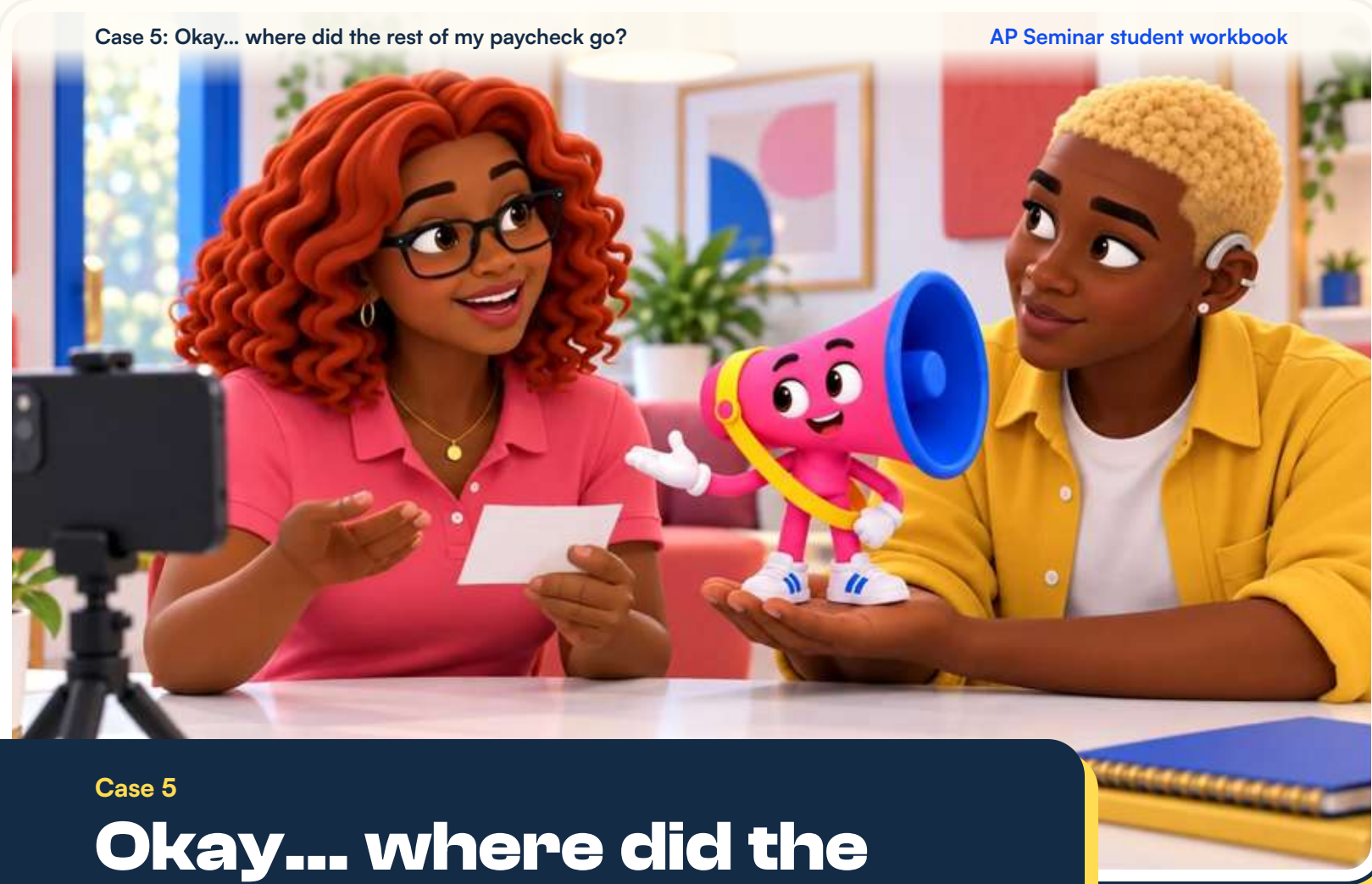
- ☐ Each lens is researched accurately
- ☐ Recommendation synthesizes lenses
- ☐ Addresses budget and access
- ☐ Acknowledges uncertainty

Need a boost?

- Lens assignments
- Annotated bibliography template
- Presentation storyboard



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 5

Okay... where did the rest of my paycheck go?

Why is my deposit smaller than what I earned?

Many students start working in high school, and a pay statement is often the first place they meet labor law and the social safety net. Reading each line lets a worker spot a real error and understand what their Social Security and Medicare contributions are for.

In the real world

Two Cents / PBS (YouTube), 2019 How Do Your Tax Dollars Get Spent?

NPR, The Indicator from Planet Money, 2018 Social Insecurity

Gia

I counted my hours twice. Okay, the Saturday shift was after the cutoff. One more question: what's this withholding line?

You'll make

Individual research report (800–1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

Illustrative pay statement, pay period ending Friday the 12th, paid the following Thursday

Hours: 15.00 at \$17.00. Gross pay: \$255.00. Social Security tax: \$15.81. Medicare tax: \$3.70. Federal income tax withheld: \$8.40. State and local income tax withheld: \$6.10. Net pay: \$220.99. (Invented withholding amounts for practice; they do not predict anyone's taxes.)



Which line shows what Gia earned before deductions? Which two lines together make up FICA?

Fictional case material

2

Gia's shift log in her notes app, last two weeks

Mon the 8th: 4 hrs. Wed the 10th: 4 hrs. Thu the 11th: 3 hrs. Fri the 12th: 4 hrs. Sat the 13th: 3 hrs. My total: 18 hrs.



Which shift falls outside the pay period? Add up the hours that fall inside it.

Fictional case material

3

Gia and Jordy comparing deposits, Thursday 7:20 p.m.

Gia: my deposit is way less than what I worked out??

Jordy: Mine looks different too. But comparing just our deposits is going to send us in circles.

Jordy: Please don't post the whole statement. Just tell me which line.



Why doesn't comparing deposits answer Gia's question? What would they need to compare instead?

Fictional case material

4

"Just did. The period ended Friday the 12th. My Saturday shift was the 13th. So it's probably on the next statement. Probably. I still want payroll to confirm."

Gia, 21, café worker



What does Gia decide to check before making a claim about an error?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Whether the Saturday shift will appear on the next statement, what Gia entered on her W-4, whether any other deductions such as benefits apply to her job, and the minimum wage where she works.

Real-world evidence



Real source

Internal Revenue Service, Understanding employment taxes

Summary, not a quotation: the IRS explains that employers generally withhold federal income tax and the employee's share of Social Security and Medicare taxes from wages, and that federal income-tax withholding is figured partly from the employee's Form W-4.



Real source

Internal Revenue Service, Understanding Taxes tutorial on gross and net pay

Summary, not a quotation: the tutorial defines gross pay as earnings before deductions and net pay as what remains after deductions, the amount often called take-home pay.



video

How Do Your Tax Dollars Get Spent?

[Two Cents / PBS \(YouTube\), 2019-04-10](#)

Starts with a first paycheck that's smaller than expected and explains FICA and income tax withholding.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

What the evidence can hold up

Before calling it an error, sort the evidence. Which facts explain the smaller deposit, and which question is still worth asking payroll?

Evidence	Claim 1 Payroll shorted Gia's pay.	Claim 2 The missing 3 hours belong on the next statement.
1 Shift log shows 18 hours; the statement shows 15		
2 The period ended Friday the 12th; the 3-hour shift was Saturday the 13th		
3 Gross pay of \$255.00 matches 15 × \$17.00		
4 FICA and withholding lines account for the gap between gross and net		

Still open

- Will the Saturday shift actually appear next time? Ask payroll.

Words that do the work

Gross pay

Salario bruto

What you earned before anything is taken out: hours times rate, plus other earnings.

Net pay

Salario neto

What actually reaches you after deductions.

FICA

FICA (Seguro Social y Medicare)

Payroll taxes for Social Security and Medicare, federal programs for retirement, disability, survivors and health care.

Withholding

Retención

Money your employer takes from pay and sends toward taxes you may owe, based partly on your W-4.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write Gia's payroll question and a short explainer for a friend starting their first job.

Payroll message: Hi, I'm checking my statement for the pay period that ended Friday the 12th. My shift log shows 18 hours, but the statement shows 15. ¹ Was my Saturday shift on the 13th after the cutoff? ² If so, will it be on my next check? Thanks, Gia

Explainer for Jordy: Your deposit is net pay, which is what's left after deductions. Gross pay is your hours times your rate. FICA is the tax for Social Security and Medicare, and income-tax withholding is basically the same thing, just another name for it ³. So before you think payroll messed up, match the dates first and then read each line ⁴.

- 1 Precise evidence from both records: the exact comparison payroll can check.
- 2 Good reasoning: the writer tests the pay-period explanation before assuming an error.
- 3 Revise: federal income-tax withholding is a separate line from FICA, and its amount depends partly on the W-4.
- 4 Useful, sequenced advice a new worker can actually follow.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

FICA is the tax for Social Security and Medicare, and ~~income-tax withholding is basically the same thing, just another name for it.~~

After

FICA is the tax for Social Security and Medicare. Federal income-tax withholding is a separate line, and the amount depends partly on the W-4 you filled out.

The revision fixes a factual error that would confuse a first-time worker looking at two different lines on the same statement.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team inquiry: “How should societies share the risks of old age, disability and illness?” Members research economics, history of Social Security, ethics and one other country’s social insurance, then present to classmates starting first jobs.

Use

The case plus teacher-approved sources, including an SSA overview.

You’ll make

Individual research report (800—1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Slide 1: The moment

What you’ll say

Slide 2: The question

What you’ll say

Slide 3: The evidence

What you’ll say

Slide 4: Your ask

What you’ll say

Done when

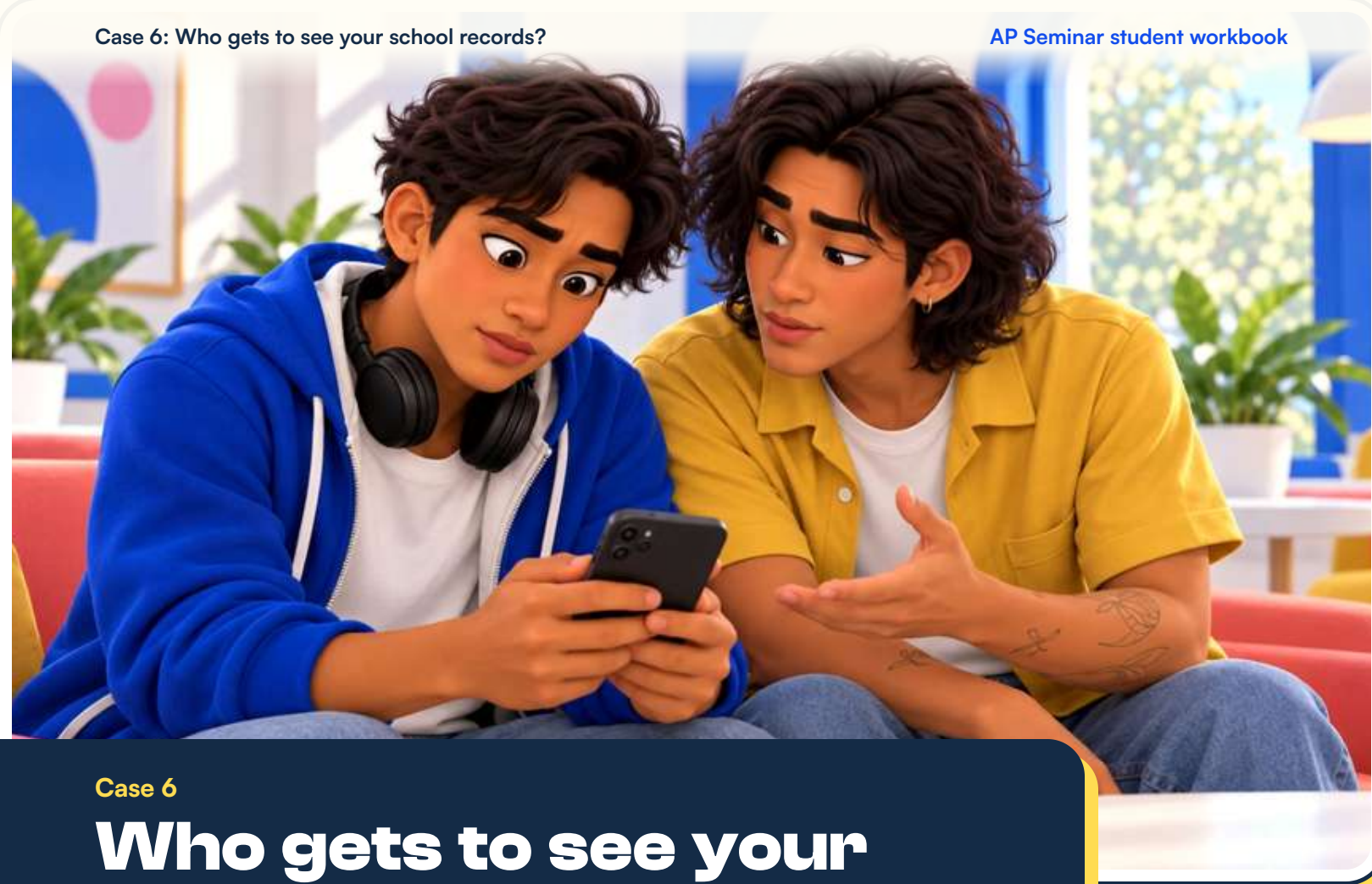
- ☐ Accurate research in each lens
- ☐ Multiple perspectives on social insurance
- ☐ Synthesized conclusion
- ☐ Practical, accurate takeaway

Need a boost?

- Lens assignments
- Annotated bibliography
- Audience analysis: first-time workers



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 6

Who gets to see your school records?

If your family helps pay for school, what are they allowed to see?

Grades, schedules and discipline records follow students for years, and the rules about who can see them change at 18 or when a student starts college. Knowing which record, which permission and which office to ask keeps family support from turning into giving away every login.

In the real world

U.S. Department of Education (YouTube), 2013 Student Privacy 101: FERPA for Parents and Students

U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office Must postsecondary institutions provide a parent with access to an eligible student's education records?

Rafa

Sige, they can help with the bill. I just want to read what I'm signing before I hand over my grades too.

You'll make

Individual written argument, 1,200—1,500 words

Time

About 250 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

§ Parent and family access authorization form mailed to Rafa, August 28 (illustrative)

Section 1, Billing and payments: allow the person named below to view account statements and make payments. Yes / No. Section 2, Academic records: allow the person named below to receive information about grades, enrollment and academic standing. Yes / No. Section 3: this authorization stays in effect until the student changes or withdraws it in writing.



Which section covers billing and which covers grades? What happens if Rafa signs only Section 1?

Fictional case material

2

College annual FERPA notice posted on the registrar's page, fall term (illustrative)

Students have the right to inspect their education records, to request corrections and to consent to disclosures, except where the law allows disclosure without consent. Questions go to the Office of the Registrar.



Who does this notice say holds the rights now? Which phrase tells you exceptions exist?

Fictional case material

3

Rafa's family group chat, Sunday 8:47 p.m.

Mom: Did the tuition form come? We want to help with the bill.

Dad: Send us the login and we'll take care of everything.

Rafa: Sige, the bill part I can share. Let me read the rest first.



What is his family actually asking for help with, and how is "everything" different from the bill?

Fictional case material

4

"Then we need the actual exception and the actual facts. "Privacy law" is not a magic sentence that answers every request."

Caio, 24, helping Rafa read the request



Why is "privacy law" not enough of an answer on its own?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Which form and exceptions Rafa's own college uses, whether his family claims him as a tax dependent, exactly what help his family wants, and how the college lets a student change an authorization.

Real-world evidence



Real source

U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office, FAQ "What is FERPA?"

Summary, not a quotation: FERPA gives parents certain rights over their children's education records, and those rights transfer to the student at age 18 or when the student attends a school beyond the high school level. A student who holds the rights is called an eligible student.



Real source

American University, parent-access guide (AU Central)

Summary, not a quotation: the guide separates parent online access for student-account activity and bill payment from authorization to discuss academic records, and says parent billing access does not include viewing grades.



video

Student Privacy 101: FERPA for Parents and Students

[U.S. Department of Education \(YouTube\), 2013-11-07](#)

The Education Department's own short explainer of FERPA rights and when they move from parents to students.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

Who actually gets to decide?

Who actually decides each question: Rafa, the rule or the college? Mark where paying the bill and seeing grades split into two separate decisions.

Who may see Rafa's grades?

Who decides

Rafa, the eligible student, through written consent

Under which rule

FERPA: rights transfer to the student at 18 or on entering college

Who lives with it

Rafa's family, who help pay tuition

Your way in

Who may see and pay the tuition bill?

Who decides

Rafa, the eligible student, through written consent

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Rafa's family, who help pay tuition

Your way in

Words that do the work

FERPA

Ley FERPA

A federal law giving parents, and later students, rights over education records at schools that receive U.S. Department of Education funds.

Education record

Expediente educativo

A record directly about a student that the school, or someone acting for it, keeps.

Transfer of rights

Transferencia de derechos

FERPA rights move from parents to the student at 18 or when the student enters college, whichever comes first.

Consent

Consentimiento

Written permission with a defined scope: which record, to whom, for what purpose.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write Rafa a one-page guide separating paying the bill from seeing grades.

Paying vs. Seeing: A Guide for Rafa Since you're 18 and in college, the FERPA rights to your education records belong to you now, not your parents. The Department of Education FAQ says rights transfer at 18 or when you start college¹. Paying tuition is a different thing from seeing your grades. In the university guide, parent access for the bill does not include viewing grades², so that needs a separate authorization. So your parents can never see your grades unless you say yes.³ Before you sign anything, ask the records office three questions: which record would be shared, who would get it, and how you can change your mind later⁴. Talk with your family first about what help you actually want.

- 1 Accurate statement of the transfer rule, attributed to the right source.
- 2 Precise use of the university guide, and the writer correctly presents it as one school's process.
- 3 Revise: this overstates the rule. FERPA has exceptions, including one for parents who claim a student as a tax dependent. Say that exceptions exist and send Rafa to the records office.
- 4 Strong next step: specific, answerable questions for the office that actually holds the records.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~So your parents can never see your grades unless you say yes.~~

After

Usually your family would need your permission to see grades, but the law has exceptions, so ask the records office which ones your college uses.

The revision keeps the main rule clear while being honest that exceptions exist, which is what the success criteria ask for.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Individual written argument on “How much should families know about a young adult’s life?”, using a stimulus packet.**Use**

Stimulus: the FERPA FAQ, the university guide, one article on family involvement in college and one cultural perspective on family and independence.

You'll make

Individual written argument, 1,200–1,500 words

Thesis A claim someone could reasonably disagree with

Reason 1: claim, evidence, commentary

Reason 2: claim, evidence, commentary

Done when

- ☐ Clear research question
- ☐ Evaluates legal, cultural and personal perspectives
- ☐ Original, synthesized argument
- ☐ Acknowledges limitations

Need a boost?

- Perspective map
- Stimulus annotation guide
- Argument outline

The strongest counterargument, and your answer

Why it matters beyond this case



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 7

Who decides what stays on the shelf?

A group chat says one complaint got a novel “banned.” What actually happened, and who decides?

School and public libraries across the country are deciding how to handle challenges to books, and the rules vary by district and state. Students who can tell a complaint from a final decision, and who know where to speak, can take part without spreading rumors or silencing other readers.

In the real world

Chalkbeat Colorado, 2025 Colorado bill to curb school library book challenges clears first legislative hurdle

You'll make

Individual research report (800–1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar

Mari

Mira, I found a character in a book like this who made me feel less alone. That's why I care. Now what does the policy actually say?



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

Group chat, Thursday 10:12 p.m.

"One parent complained, so that novel is banned. It's gone from the library."



What stage of the process does this message skip? How could you check the second sentence?

Fictional case material

2

§ District reconsideration notice, posted Friday by the school library

"A request for reconsideration has been received for one title in the library collection. Under district policy, the title remains available during the review. A review committee will read the full work and evaluate it against the district's selection criteria. Written input may be submitted by the 15th. The committee's decision may be appealed."



Is the book on the shelf right now? List the stages this notice describes.

Fictional case material

3

§ Review committee input form, due the 15th

Name and role (student, parent, staff or community member). Have you read the entire work? Yes / No. Which selection criteria does your input address? Comments, 300 words maximum.



Who can submit input, and what does the form ask about? Why might it ask whether you read the whole work?

Fictional case material

4

"Mira, I found a character in a book like this who made me feel less alone. That's why I care. Now what does the policy actually say?"

Mari, 19, bookseller and zine maker



What two things does Mari hold together: a personal reason and what else?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Which novel is under review and what the request says, who sits on the review committee, what the district's selection criteria say in full, and what state law, if any, adds to the district policy.

Real-world evidence



Real source

American Library Association, Selection and Reconsideration Policy Toolkit: formal reconsideration

Summary, not a quotation: ALA's example procedure has a review committee whose members read or view the entire work, evaluate it against the collection policy's criteria and vote, with the material remaining available until a formal decision and with an appeal route. ALA presents this as guidance for libraries to adapt, not as law.



Real source

Roald Dahl, Matilda, authorized extract published by Penguin

Summary, not a quotation: in the extract, four-year-old Matilda finds the village public library on her own; the librarian, Mrs Phelps, helps her choose books, and over the following months she reads widely, including classic adult novels.



article

Colorado bill to curb school library book challenges clears first legislative hurdle

[Chalkbeat Colorado, 2025-02-10](#)

A state debated requiring clear reconsideration policies, showing a challenge is a process, not an instant ban.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

Who actually gets to decide?

Replace “banned” with the real chain of decisions. Who decides at each stage, which rules bind them, and where can a student’s input land?

Keep, restrict or remove the novel after review

Who decides

The school review committee, which reads the whole work and votes
District-level appeal and, finally, the school board

Under which rule

District reconsideration policy and selection criteria
State law and unsettled First Amendment case law (Pico had no majority opinion)

Who lives with it

Your way in

Words that do the work

Challenge

Solicitud de reconsideración

A formal request to reconsider whether a library resource should be available.

Reconsideration policy

Política de reconsideración

A written process for handling challenges: review, criteria, decision and appeal.

Selection criteria

Criterios de selección

The standards a library uses to choose and evaluate materials.

Professional guidance vs. law

Recomendación profesional y ley

Recommendations from groups like the ALA aren’t binding law; adopted policies and statutes are.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write input to the review committee using the published selection criteria.

To the Review Committee, I'm a student at this school, and I'm writing about the novel under review. The district's selection criteria ask the committee to judge each book as a whole¹, not by one passage. Read as a whole, this book follows a character dealing with isolation² and slowly finding people she can trust, and that is why readers my age connect with it. I understand the parent who filed the request is worried about one scene with mature content, and that concern deserves a real answer³. But honestly, anyone who wants a book removed is just trying to control what other people read⁴. I'm asking the committee to keep the novel available and, if the concern is about age level, to consider an age note in the catalog rather than removal. Thank you.

- 1** Strong: the argument is anchored in the committee's own published criterion.
- 2** Good use of the whole-work standard, though one specific scene or detail would make the evidence stronger.
- 3** Good: the writer acknowledges another reader's concern with respect.
- 4** Revise: this assigns a motive to everyone who files a request and contradicts the respect shown one sentence earlier. The committee needs reasons tied to criteria, not judgments of people.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

But honestly, anyone who wants a book removed is just trying to control what other people read.

After

But the criteria ask about the whole work, and that scene is part of how the story shows the character's isolation.

The revision keeps the disagreement about the book, where the criteria apply, instead of about the parent, which the committee cannot weigh.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team inquiry: “Who should decide what’s in a school library?” Members research librarians’ professional standards, parental rights views, state law trends and student perspectives, then present a model process.

Use

Case, ALA toolkit and teacher-approved sources representing different views.

You’ll make

Individual research report (800—1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Slide 1: The moment

What you’ll say

Slide 2: The question

What you’ll say

Slide 3: The evidence

What you’ll say

Slide 4: Your ask

What you’ll say

Done when

- ☐ Accurate research in each lens
- ☐ Fair to competing views
- ☐ Synthesized process
- ☐ Considers legitimacy

Need a boost?

- Lens assignments
- Source tracker with viewpoint labels
- Presentation storyboard



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 8

Is it a recommendation or an ad?

If a creator got the product free, do viewers need to know?

Much of what students see online is shaped by relationships between creators and brands, and many students are creators too. Knowing what a clear disclosure looks like helps them judge recommendations and post honestly, whether they have fifty followers or fifty thousand.

In the real world

NBC News, 2023 Influencers warned by FTC over 'inadequate' disclosures of artificial sweetener promotions

ABC News, 2019 Popular YouTuber chimes in on federal product disclosure guide for influencers

Caio

Calma, the cut is good.
Watch it once like a stranger
with the sound off. Can
they tell the book was free?

You'll make

Individual research report (800–1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

Publisher email offering a review copy, sent two weeks before posting

"Hi Gia, we love your book reviews! We'd be glad to send you a free copy of our spring novel for review. There's no obligation to post, but if you do, we'd appreciate a tag. Best, the publicity team"



What did the publisher give, and what did they ask for? Does "no obligation" change whether there is a relationship to disclose?

Fictional case material

2

Gia's review video, first cut, Friday evening (script and caption)

Spoken: "Okay, you guys, I have to tell you about this book because I literally could not put it down!" On-screen text: none. Caption, below the video: "@publisher #booktok"



Where in this video would a viewer learn about the free copy? What does the tag tell them, and what does it leave out?

Fictional case material

3

Watch once as a stranger, phone on mute. 0:00—0:03: does anything say free copy? Caption sits below the video; most people won't open it. Tag = brand name, not relationship.

Caio's edit notes, Saturday 1:30 p.m.



What does Caio want to test before uploading, and why start with the first three seconds?

Fictional case material

4

Viewer comment on a similar review by another creator (illustrative)

"wait was this sponsored?? kind of feels like an ad now"



What changes for this viewer when they learn about the relationship after watching instead of before?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Whether Gia has any other relationship with the publisher, what label the platform itself would show, how many of her viewers watch without sound, and whether the review's strongest claims are supported beyond her own reading.

Real-world evidence



Real source

Federal Trade Commission, Disclosures 101 for Social Media Influencers

Summary, not a quotation: FTC staff guidance says to disclose any financial, employment, personal or family relationship with a brand, including free or discounted products; to place the disclosure where it is hard to miss, with the endorsement; and, in a video, to put the disclosure in the video itself, ideally in both audio and on-screen text, not only in the description.



Real source

Federal Trade Commission, FTC's Endorsement Guides: What People Are Asking

Summary, not a quotation: the FTC's question-and-answer guide explains how the agency applies its Endorsement Guides, which interpret the FTC Act's prohibition on deceptive practices, to reviews, social media posts and other endorsements.



article

Influencers warned by FTC over 'inadequate' disclosures of artificial sweetener promotions [NBC News, 2023-11-15](#)

Real creators were warned for not clearly saying they were paid, the exact question this case asks.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

If this, then what?

Follow both choices forward. Which consequences can Gia control, which depend on viewers, and what test tells her the disclosure worked?

Post the first cut with only a brand tag in the caption

Sound-off viewers never learn the book was free

Disclose aloud and on screen in the first seconds

Viewers weigh the recommendation knowing the relationship

Some viewers may discount the review as an ad

Words that do the work

Material connection

Conexión material

A relationship with a brand, like payment or a free product, that could affect how viewers weigh a recommendation.

Disclosure

Divulgación

A clear statement of that relationship, placed where viewers will notice it.

Channel

Canal

The place and format a message travels through, which shapes who sees it.

Consistency

Coherencia

Making sure a message says the same thing across every place it appears.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write a revised script and caption and a short note on why a tag alone isn't enough.

Revised script: At 0:00, spoken and on screen: "Heads up, the publisher sent me this book for free ¹." Then: "Okay, you guys, I could not put this down. The sisters felt so real, and the ending wrecked me. I finished it in two nights."

Caption: Publisher sent me a free copy for review.

@publisher #booktok Note: A tag alone isn't enough because a lot of people watch with the sound off and never open the caption ³, and a tag just names the brand without saying the book was free ². Now the disclosure is spoken and on screen in the first seconds. Honestly the disclosure is just a formality, because my opinion is real either way. ⁴

- 1 Plain words that name the relationship, placed at 0:00 where every viewer meets it.
- 2 Precise reasoning that matches the case: a tag identifies a brand, not the relationship.
- 3 Good audience thinking: the writer considers how viewers actually watch.
- 4 Revise: an honest opinion and a disclosed relationship answer different questions. Viewers need the relationship to decide how much weight to give the opinion, so it is not a formality.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~Honestly the disclosure is just a formality, because my opinion is real either way.~~

After

My opinion is honest, but viewers still deserve to know the book was free so they can decide how much to trust it.

The revision separates the two ideas the task asks about: whether the opinion is sincere, and whether viewers know the relationship that could shape it.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team inquiry: “Should influencer disclosure rules change?” Members research consumer psychology, FTC policy, creator economics and teen media use, then present recommendations.

Use

Case plus teacher-approved sources.

You'll make

Individual research report (800–1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Slide 1: The moment

What you'll say

Slide 2: The question

What you'll say

Slide 3: The evidence

What you'll say

Slide 4: Your ask

What you'll say

Done when

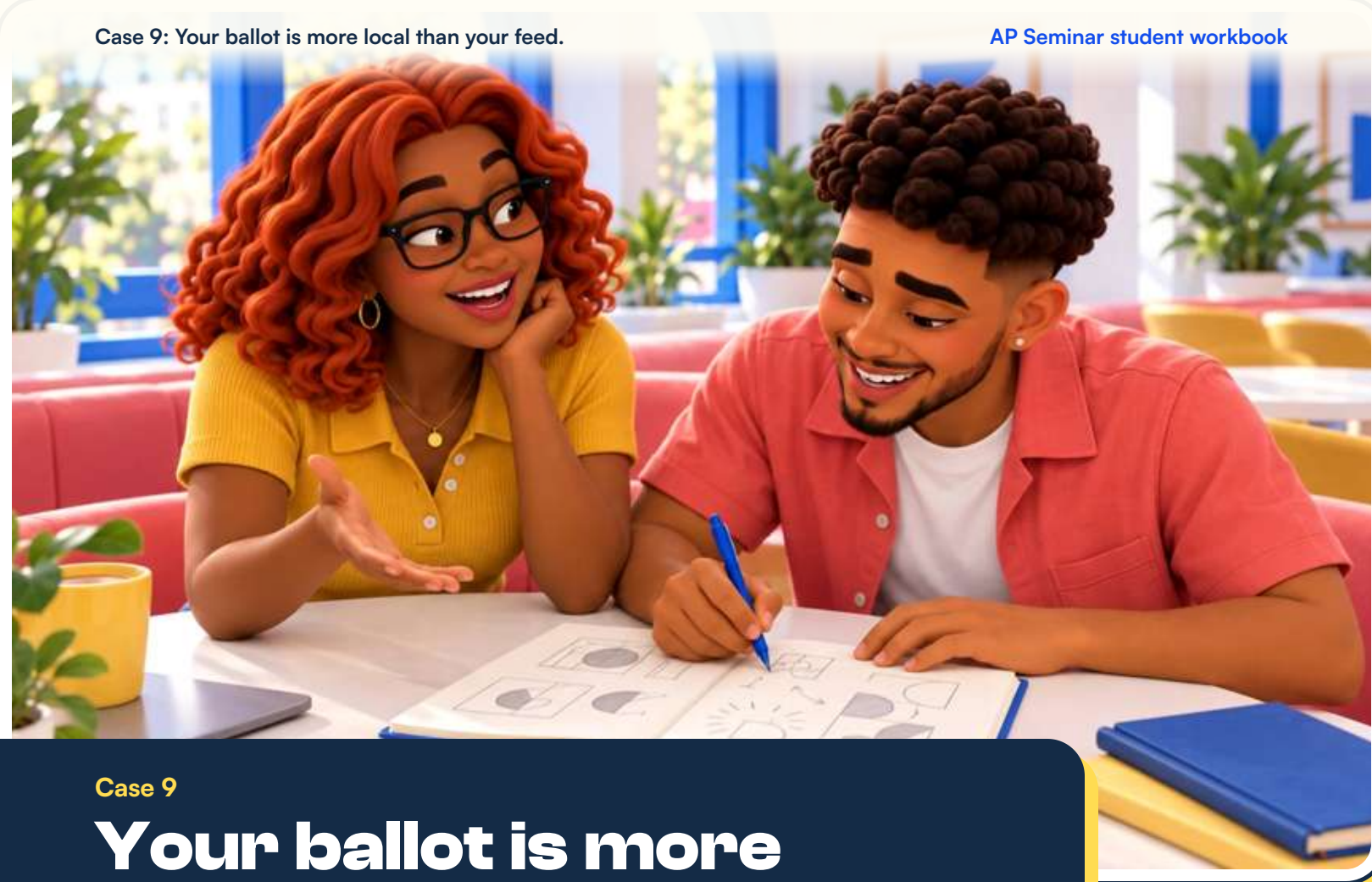
- ☐ Accurate research per lens
- ☐ Several perspectives
- ☐ Synthesized recommendations
- ☐ Feasibility addressed

Need a boost?

- Lens assignments
- Annotated bibliography
- Presentation storyboard



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 9

Your ballot is more local than your feed.

What's actually on your ballot, and where do you find out?

National races dominate feeds, but many decisions that shape students' lives, like school boards, judges and local measures, appear lower on the ballot. Knowing how to find your own official ballot and deadlines matters whether you're voting soon or learning how the system works before you can.

In the real world

NPR, 2023 Some states are trying to boost youth voter registration. Here's what they're doing

Ballotpedia News, 2025 Most states allow teenagers to pre-register to vote before turning 18, and some let them vote in primaries

Mateo

Dec doesn't need us picking for him. He needs his own ballot and a registration check before November. Honestly, so do I.

You'll make

Individual research report (800–1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

§ Illustrative sample ballot, November general election

Federal: U.S. Representative. State: State Senator; Superior Court judge (retention). Local: Board of Education, District 3 (vote for two); City Council, Ward 5. Measures: Measure T, transit improvements bond.



Which contests are below the headline race? Which one touches Dec's school, and which touches his bus?

Fictional case material

2

Creator's voter guide, posted three weeks before the election

"Everything you need for November!! Registration closes the 14th. School board: vote Candidate B, the only one who actually cares about students. Measure T: yes, obviously."



Which lines are facts you can check, and which are picks? Whose deadline is "the 14th"?

Fictional case material

3

Gia's group-chat reminder draft, Sunday 6:30 p.m.

"Check your registration and your own sample ballot at vote.gov. Deadlines depend on your state. Please don't post your address here."



What information should stay out of a group chat, and what does Gia share instead?

Fictional case material

4

"I turn 18 in October. I don't need someone picking for me. I need to know what's on my ballot and whether I'm registered in time for November."

Dec, 17, theatre crew



What two things does Dec need to find out, and which official source answers each?

Fictional case material

5

"Dec's feed is all the big race. Then you flip the sample ballot: school board, city council, a transit bond. Nobody's posting about Measure T."

Mateo, 22, moved from New Bedford for college



Which contests does Mateo find below the headline race, and how would he separate the guide's facts from its picks?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Dec's own state, registration status and deadline, the actual sample ballot for his address, what each local office is responsible for where he lives, and who wrote and funds the creator's guide.

Real-world evidence



Real source

Vote.gov, Preparing to vote: age 18 and under

Summary, not a quotation: Vote.gov explains that in most states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories people can preregister before turning 18, that you must be 18 to vote, that several states let 17-year-olds vote in primaries if they will be 18 by the general election, and that each person should check their own state's rules.



Real source

U.S. Constitution, Twenty-Sixth Amendment, Section 1 (text as published by the National Constitution Center)

"The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age."



article

Some states are trying to boost youth voter registration. Here's what they're doing NPR, 2023-08-06

Explains preregistration and other state steps that let teens sign up before they turn 18.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

[illegible]

One student's draft

Write a nonpartisan explainer on one local contest: what the office does, what's on the ballot and where to verify it. Compare how two guides describe the race.

School Board, District 3 What the office does: The school board sets the district budget, hires the superintendent and approves policies like the school calendar. It doesn't run individual classrooms.¹ What's on the ballot: Two seats are open, with four candidates. There's also a transit measure, but that's a city question, not a school board one². Where to verify: Look up your own sample ballot through vote.gov, which sends you to your state's election office. The creator guide says Candidate B is the only one who cares about students, so you should probably vote for her³. Comparing guides: The county guide prints each candidate's statement in their own words.⁴ The creator guide adds opinions about who is best.

- 1 Good: saying what the office does not control keeps readers from asking it for the wrong things.
- 2 Strong jurisdiction thinking: the writer separates two contests on the same ballot.
- 3 Revise: an explainer must stay nonpartisan. Report what the guide claims as the guide's opinion and leave the choice to the reader.
- 4 Good comparison: the writer identifies how the two guides differ in purpose.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~The creator guide says Candidate B is the only one who cares about students, so you should probably vote for her.~~

After

One creator guide recommends a candidate; that is the guide's opinion, so check each candidate's own statement in the county guide.

The revision keeps the explainer nonpartisan while still teaching readers to tell a recommendation from a fact.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team inquiry: “Why do young people vote less in local elections, and what would change that?” Members research turnout data, registration rules, civic education and youth-led efforts, then present to student council.

Use

Case plus teacher-approved sources on youth turnout.

You'll make

Individual research report (800—1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Slide 1: The moment
What you'll say
Slide 2: The question
What you'll say
Slide 3: The evidence
What you'll say
Slide 4: Your ask
What you'll say
Done when

- ☐ Accurate data
- ☐ Several perspectives
- ☐ Synthesized, nonpartisan recommendations
- ☐ Feasible for students

Need a boost?

- Lens assignments
- Data tracker
- Presentation storyboard



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 10

A city you can actually reach

If the usual route is blocked, whose job is it to make the trip work?

Getting to school, a library or a city program depends on sidewalks, ramps, buses and information, and when one piece fails, someone's day falls apart. Knowing which law applies and which office to ask turns frustration into a request that can get a route fixed.

In the real world

HISTORY, 2020 When the 'Capitol Crawl' Dramatized the Need for Americans with Disabilities Act

THE CITY, 2025 North Bronx Subway Station to Get Elevators, Nearly a Decade After ADA Lawsuit

Sami

I don't need a viral video, Mateo. I need to know if there's a route that gets me to the bus in twelve minutes.

You'll make

Individual written argument, 1,200—1,500 words

Time

About 250 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

Construction detour sign at the corner, posted Monday, photographed Tuesday 4:05 p.m.

**“SIDEWALK CLOSED AHEAD.
PEDESTRIAN DETOUR →”** The arrow points
to a path that begins with a flight of stairs.



Where does this detour send people, and who can use that route?

Fictional case material

2

Route map, home to the city workshop, drawn by Sami and Mateo

1. Home to the corner of Elm Street and 4th Avenue: sidewalk clear. 2. Northeast curb ramp: blocked by construction fencing. 3. Bus stop: next bus in 12 minutes. 4. Bus to the parks department building. 5. Workshop entrance and room: not yet checked.



Which stages of the trip does Mateo's photo leave out?

Fictional case material

3

City workshop flyer posted by the parks department

“Free Community Workshop Series. Tuesdays, 5–7 p.m., Parks Department Annex. All welcome! Questions? Call the front desk.” The flyer gives no information about accessible entrances or how to request access.



Does the flyer say how to request access or whom to contact? What would you add?

Fictional case material

4

“The sign says detour. The detour starts with stairs. So, no. Twelve minutes.”

Sami, 23



Why isn't this detour a detour for Sami, and what does she need to know in the next twelve minutes?

Fictional case material

5

“I had the sign on video before I even thought about it. Sami asked if that gets her on the bus. Fair. Camera down.”

Mateo, 22, already filmed the sign

What is the difference between documenting a barrier and making Sami the content?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Whether an accessible detour exists and how it is marked, how long the ramp will be blocked, whether the workshop entrance and room are accessible, and who the city's ADA coordinator is and how complaints are handled.

Real-world evidence



Real source

U.S. Department of Justice, ADA Update: The ADA and City Governments

Summary, not a quotation: under Title II, city programs, services and activities must be accessible, but program access generally does not require making every facility accessible; a city can, for example, move a service to an accessible place. The guide also covers curb ramps during street and sidewalk work and the city's duty to communicate effectively.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

What the evidence can hold up

Sort what the evidence supports. Which claim can you make today, which one needs more facts, and who can supply them?

Evidence	Claim 1 The city is breaking the ADA.	Claim 2 On Tuesday, the posted detour did not work for a wheelchair user.
1 Photo: the northeast curb ramp blocked by fencing on Tuesday at 4:05 p.m.		
2 Detour sign points to a path that starts with stairs		
3 DOJ: Title II requires program access, not every facility to be accessible		

Still open

- Is there another accessible route to the bus and the workshop? Ask the ADA coordinator.

Words that do the work

Jurisdiction

Jurisdicción

Which laws and which government bodies apply to a place or program.

Claim vs. evidence

Afirmación y prueba

A claim says something is true; evidence is the record that supports or challenges it.

Program access

Acceso al programa

Under ADA Title II, a government program as a whole must be accessible, even if not every older facility is.

Burden of proof

Carga de la prueba

In a legal dispute, the side making a claim usually has to show evidence for it.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write an access report to the city's ADA coordinator about the blocked route, with one sentence explaining why you ask rather than claim a violation.

To the City ADA Coordinator, I'm writing about the construction at Elm Street and 4th Avenue, next to the bus stop. On Tuesday at about 4:05 p.m., the curb ramp on the northeast corner was blocked by construction fencing¹, and the detour sign pointed to a route with stairs. My friend Sami, who uses a wheelchair and said I could mention her², couldn't reach the bus stop that way. The city is clearly violating the ADA by blocking the ramp.³ Could you tell us whether there is an accessible detour, how it is marked and how long the ramp will be blocked? We would also like to know how to report this if it happens again. Why I asked instead of claimed: I only saw one corner at one time⁴.

- 1 Precise location, time and observation: the details an office needs to find the problem.
- 2 Good: the writer checked with Sami before including her.
- 3 Revise: one observation cannot establish a violation, and the sentence contradicts the writer's own rationale. Program access concerns the whole program, so ask about the detour instead.
- 4 An honest statement of the evidence's limit, which is exactly why a question fits better than a claim.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~The city is clearly violating the ADA by blocking the ramp.~~

After

Because the city runs the workshop and maintains the sidewalk, we understand ADA Title II may apply, so we wanted to ask you directly.

The revision names the relevant law as the reason for contacting this office without declaring a violation the evidence cannot support.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Individual written argument on “Who is responsible for an accessible city?”, using a stimulus packet.

Use

Stimulus: the case, DOJ Title II page, one universal-design source and one article on transit access.

You'll make

Individual written argument, 1,200—1,500 words

Thesis A claim someone could reasonably disagree with

Done when

- ☐ Clear research question
- ☐ Multiple perspectives
- ☐ Original synthesis
- ☐ Addresses limitations

Reason 1: claim, evidence, commentary

Reason 2: claim, evidence, commentary

Need a boost?

- Stimulus annotation
- Perspective map: city, residents, contractors, taxpayers
- Argument outline

The strongest counterargument, and your answer

Why it matters beyond this case



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 11

Same work. Different pay. Why?

Jordy and Gia worked the same event. Why are their rates different, and how do you ask?

Pay gaps can come from fair criteria, mistakes or discrimination, and workers usually can't tell which from a paycheck alone. Knowing what the law protects, including the right most private-sector workers have to talk about pay, helps young workers ask without guessing or getting silenced.

In the real world

NPR, 2022 The U.S. national women's soccer team wins \$24 million in equal pay settlement

NPR, 2020 Federal Judge Dismisses U.S. Women's Soccer Team's Equal Pay Claim

Jordy

We were both there till close. I want to know why the numbers differ. Not my statement in a post before we've even asked.

You'll make

Individual written argument, 1,200—1,500 words

Time

About 250 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

Jordy's pay statement (illustrative), Saturday event, paid the following Friday

Event crew, Saturday. Hours: 8.0 at \$16.50. Gross pay for the event: \$132.00.



What rate and hours does this show? What does it not show about how the rate was set?

Fictional case material

2

Event crew schedule with job titles, posted the Wednesday before

Saturday event, 3:00—11:00 p.m. Crew: Gia (shift lead), Jordy and two other crew members. Setup, 3:00—5:00: all crew. Caption and audio check: Jordy. Closing, 10:00—11:00: all crew.



What does "shift lead" mean on this schedule? What would you need to know to decide whether it explains the rate?

Fictional case material

3

Jordy and Gia comparing notes, Sunday 1:15 p.m.

Gia: I'm fine with you knowing my rate. I just don't want my statement posted anywhere.

Jordy: Got it. Did you do anything different as shift lead?

Gia: I opened up and handled one guest issue. Honestly, I don't know if that's why. We have a question, not a finding.



What does each of them actually know? What has Gia agreed to share, and with whom?

Fictional case material

4

"We were both there till close. I want to know why the numbers differ. Not my statement in a post before we've even asked."

Jordy, 20, event crew and caption editor



What order does Jordy want to do things in, and why?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

What the shift-lead role officially involves and how rates are set, whether Gia's higher rate reflects experience or other criteria, how other crew members are paid, and whether the company has any written pay policy.

Real-world evidence



Real source

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Youth@Work: Pay Discrimination

Summary, not a quotation: the EEOC explains that the Equal Pay Act requires men and women to be paid equally for the same work at the same workplace, that other laws it enforces bar pay discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age (40 or older) or genetic information, that compensation includes wages, overtime, bonuses and benefits, and that retaliation for complaining is prohibited.



Real source

National Labor Relations Board, Your Right to Discuss Wages

Summary, not a quotation: the NLRB says that for employees covered by the National Labor Relations Act, employers may not have rules banning wage discussions or requiring permission for them, and may not punish, question, threaten or monitor employees for such discussions, whether or not they have a union.



article

The U.S. national women's soccer team wins \$24 million in equal pay settlement [NPR, 2022-02-22](#)

A real 'same work, different pay' dispute that ended in a settlement and a promise of equal rates.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

Same moment, different accounts

Line up the accounts. Where do they agree, where do they differ, and which difference could be a legitimate factor? What would you need to find out before calling it unfair?

Account 1

Jordy's record: 8 hours, setup, caption and audio check, closing, \$16.50

Account 2

Gia's account: same hours, setup and closing, opened up and handled one guest issue, \$18.00

Account 3

The schedule: Gia listed as shift lead, with no description of the role

Where they agree

Where they differ

Check: Ask the supervisor how rates are set and what the shift-lead role requires

Words that do the work

Equal Pay Act

Ley de Igualdad Salarial

A 1963 federal law requiring equal pay for substantially equal work regardless of sex, with some allowed exceptions.

Title VII

Título VII

Part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 barring employment discrimination, including pay, based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

Compensation

Compensación

All pay and benefits, including rates, bonuses and overtime.

Legitimate factor

Factor legítimo

A reason other than a protected trait that can lawfully explain a pay difference, like seniority or job duties.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Build a private comparison sheet and draft Jordy's message to the supervisor.

Comparison sheet: Jordy worked the Saturday event, 3 to 11 p.m.: setup, the caption and audio check, and closing, at \$16.50 an hour. Gia worked the same event and hours, setup and closing, at \$18.00. The schedule lists Gia as "shift lead." Message: Hi Dana, I have a question about my rate for Saturday's event. I worked 3 to 11 p.m., did setup and closing, and ran the caption and audio check¹. My statement shows \$16.50 an hour², and I know Gia was paid \$18.00 for the same shift³. Could you explain how rates are set for event crew, and what the shift-lead role involves⁴? Thanks, Jordy

- 1 Precise hours and duties: the facts the supervisor needs to compare roles.
- 2 Good: Jordy states their own record, which is theirs to share.
- 3 Revise: this names a coworker and her pay without her permission. Jordy can raise the question without exposing Gia's information.
- 4 Strong: the question targets the one legitimate factor that might explain the difference.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~My statement shows \$16.50 an hour, and I know Gia was paid \$18.00 for the same shift.~~

After

My statement shows \$16.50 an hour, and I understand another worker on the same shift was paid a higher rate.

The revision keeps the question specific while respecting that Gia's pay is hers to share, which also keeps the conversation about criteria rather than about a coworker.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Individual written argument on “Would pay transparency make workplaces fairer?”, using a stimulus packet.**Use**

Stimulus: EEOC page, one article on pay-range laws, one employer perspective and NPR’s reporting on the U.S. women’s soccer equal-pay case.

You’ll make

Individual written argument, 1,200–1,500 words

Thesis A claim someone could reasonably disagree with

Done when

- ☐ Clear question
- ☐ Multiple perspectives
- ☐ Original synthesis
- ☐ Accurate history

Reason 1: claim, evidence, commentary

Reason 2: claim, evidence, commentary

Need a boost?

- Stimulus annotation
- Perspective map
- Argument outline

The strongest counterargument, and your answer

Why it matters beyond this case



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 12

A protest is not one legal question

When does a school get to limit what students say?

Students speak up at school through shirts, posters, walkouts and posts, and they often hear either “you have free speech” or “you have no rights here.” Both are too simple, and knowing how precedent really works helps students speak effectively without walking into avoidable trouble.

In the real world

PBS NewsHour, 2021 Student free speech makes it to the Supreme Court in former high school cheerleader's case

PBS NewsHour (Associated Press), 2021 Supreme Court rules in favor of cheerleader who published critical social media post in First Amendment case

You'll make

Individual research report (800–1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar

Anika

The feeling is real. But “free speech, end of story” isn’t a fact pattern. What did the poster say, where did it go up, and under whose rule?



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

Anika's poster, first version, printed Tuesday 3:15 p.m.

**"KEEP OUR LIBRARY OPEN AT LUNCH.
Wear blue Thursday."** A photo of the school's
sign and logo runs across the top. No student
name or group appears anywhere on the poster.



Who does this poster look like it comes from? Which single element does most of that work?

Fictional case material

2

§ Student handbook, posting policy, p. 14 (illustrative excerpt)

Students may post materials on the student bulletin boards outside the cafeteria and the library. Materials must be approved by the main office and must show the name of the student or group responsible.



Where are student posters allowed, and who approves them? What would the first version need to change to follow this rule?

Fictional case material

3

Group chat suggesting a walkout, Wednesday 9:02 p.m.

"If they take the poster down we walk out Thursday.
Tinker says they can't touch us."

Reply: "Wait, wear blue AND walk out??"



Which part is expression, and which is leaving class? What does the first message assume about Tinker?

Fictional case material

4

"I put the school sign across the top because it looked good. Now it reads like the school is announcing it. It isn't."

Mateo, 22, did the photo and layout



Why might it matter, legally and practically, whether a poster looks school-sponsored?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

What the attendance policy says about leaving class, whether the school has objected to the poster or only might, whether the people shown in the photo agreed to its use, and what process the school follows before any discipline.

Real-world evidence



Real source

U.S. Courts, Facts and Case Summary: *Tinker v. Des Moines*

Summary, not a quotation: public-school students were suspended for wearing black armbands to protest the Vietnam War. The Supreme Court ruled for the students, reasoning that a school could not restrict their expression because of a mere fear of disruption.



Real source

Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District, 393 U.S. 503 (1969), majority opinion

"It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." ... "But, in our system, undifferentiated fear or apprehension of disturbance is not enough to overcome the right to freedom of expression."



video

Student free speech makes it to the Supreme Court in former high school cheerleader's case

[PBS NewsHour, 2021-04-28](#)

Explains the Snapchat case the Court used to ask when a school can punish off-campus student speech.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

What the evidence can hold up

Test the slogan against the facts. Which evidence supports each claim, which challenges it, and which fact would you still need?

Evidence	Claim 1 Tinker means nobody can face consequences for walking out.	Claim 2 The wear-blue plan closely matches Tinker's facts.	Claim 3 The poster should carry a student byline instead of the school logo.
1 Tinker's facts: silent armbands, no substantial disruption, a public school			
2 A walkout means leaving class, which falls under the attendance rule			
3 The logo photo makes the poster look like school-sponsored speech			

Still open

- What does the attendance policy say, and what process follows?

Words that do the work

Precedent
Precedente
An earlier court decision that guides later cases with similar facts.

Constitutional right
Derecho constitucional
A protection from the Constitution that limits what government, including public schools, can do.

Substantial disruption
Perturbación sustancial
Tinker's test: a public school may limit student speech if it would substantially disrupt school or invade others' rights.

School-sponsored speech
Expresión patrocinada por la escuela
Speech that looks like it comes from the school, which schools can regulate more (Hazelwood, 1988).

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write a fact-pattern brief comparing Tinker with the wear-blue plan and the walkout.

Facts: In Tinker (1969), public-school students wore black armbands to protest the Vietnam War and were suspended. Rule: The Supreme Court said students keep free-speech rights at school unless their expression would substantially disrupt school or invade others' rights¹.

Application: Anika's wear-blue Thursday plan is a lot like the armbands. It is silent and doesn't stop class, so Tinker probably protects it.² The walkout is also protected because it is a protest just like Tinker.³ Open questions: We don't know what the attendance policy says⁴ or whether the school would count a walkout as a disruption. We also need to know whether the school has any rule about clothing.

- 1 Accurate rule, including the limit most first drafts leave out.
- 2 Good application: the writer matches specific facts and says "probably" instead of promising a legal outcome.
- 3 Revise: leaving class is conduct under an attendance rule, which Tinker does not settle. Calling both "protest" hides the fact that changes the question.
- 4 Strong open question: it names the exact missing fact that would decide the walkout issue.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~The walkout is also protected because it is a protest just like Tinker.~~

After

The walkout is different: the message may be similar, but leaving class is conduct covered by the attendance policy, so Tinker alone doesn't answer it.

The revision separates the message from the action, which is the distinction the case turns on.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team inquiry: “Where should schools draw the line on student expression?” Members research one lens each (U.S. law, education research on school climate, adolescent development, one other country’s approach) and present a model expression policy.

Use

Tinker and Mahanoy summaries plus teacher-approved outside sources.

You’ll make

Individual research report (800—1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Slide 1: The moment

What you’ll say

Slide 2: The question

What you’ll say

Slide 3: The evidence

What you’ll say

Slide 4: Your ask

What you’ll say

Done when

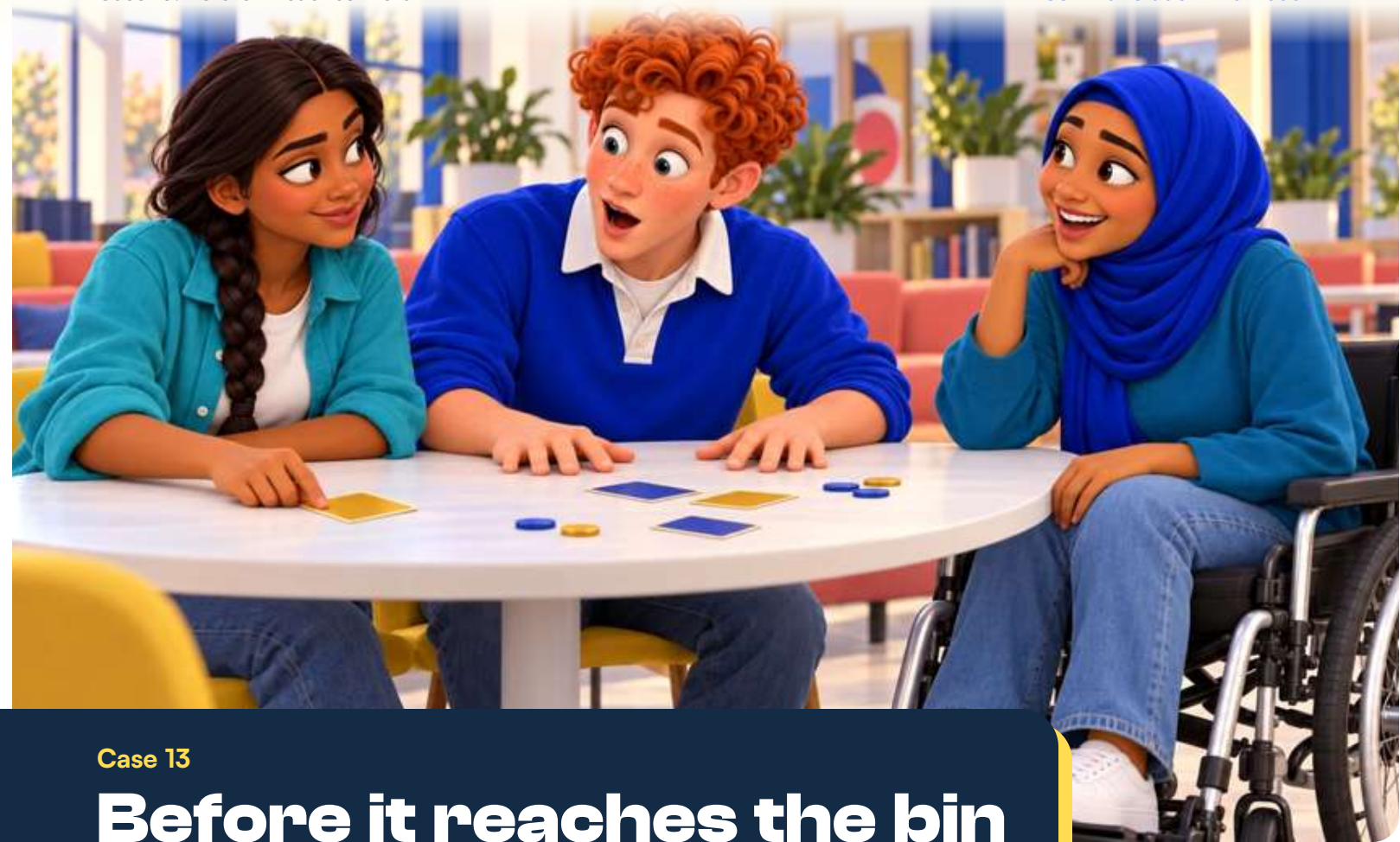
- ☐ Focused question
- ☐ Each lens researched accurately
- ☐ Policy synthesizes lenses
- ☐ Distinguishes speech from conduct

Need a boost?

- Lens assignment sheet
- Source tracker
- Policy-drafting template



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 13

Before it reaches the bin

Could the crew make less waste before anyone reaches the recycling bin?

Cities spend public money collecting and managing waste, and the costs of landfills and pollution don't land evenly on every neighborhood. Students who look upstream at what gets bought and reused can make real changes at school events and ask better questions of their local government.

In the real world

NPR, 2018 Starbucks To Eliminate Plastic Straws In Its Stores By 2020

NPR, 2018 Why People With Disabilities Want Bans On Plastic Straws To Be More Flexible

Dec

Half this box is packaging around tiny parts. Before we redo the recycling sign, can we just order smarter?

You'll make

Individual written argument, 1,200—1,500 words

Time

About 250 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

Screening supply list, last Friday's event

Single-use cups (plastic-lined paper, labeled "recyclable"): about 120.
Paper plates: 80. Printed flyers: 150. Paper straws, on request: 40.
Folding chairs: borrowed from the bookshop.



Which item was used the most, and could it be reduced or reused?

Fictional case material

2

Parts order with packaging, delivered Tuesday to the theatre shop

Three separate orders of small LED connectors and switches, placed over one week and delivered together: one full box, about half of it plastic air pillows and foam around tiny parts.



What could the next order change before any packaging reaches the shop?

Fictional case material

3

§ City accepted-materials list, current sanitation guide (illustrative)

Accepted in recycling: metal cans, glass bottles and jars, rigid plastic bottles and containers, flattened cardboard. Not accepted: plastic-lined paper cups, plastic bags and film, foam, items labeled compostable.



Does this list accept the cups the crew bought? What does the word "recyclable" on the cup actually tell you?

Fictional case material

4

"Half this box is packaging around tiny parts. Before we redo the recycling sign, can we just order smarter?"

Dec, 17, theatre crew



Where on the waste hierarchy is Dec trying to act?

Fictional case material

5

"Before anyone says this saves money or energy, what are we counting? Washing takes water and time too."

Anika, 16, theatre tech crew

What would a fair comparison need to include, and what would it leave out?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

How many cups washable reuse would actually replace, what washing costs in water and volunteer time, whether the bookshop can lend cups every time, and where the city's trash and recycling actually go.

Real-world evidence



Real source

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Sustainable Materials Management: Non-Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Hierarchy

Summary, not a quotation: EPA ranks approaches from most to least environmentally preferred as source reduction and reuse, then recycling and composting, then energy recovery, then treatment and disposal, while noting that no single approach suits all materials and circumstances.

article

**Starbucks
To Eliminate
Plastic
Straws In Its
Stores By
2020**
[NPR, 2018-
07-09](#)

A throwback
to a company
cutting waste
at the
counter,
before
anything
reached
a bin.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

If this, then what?

Follow each choice to its consequences, including new costs. Which consequence would you measure first, and what would count as success?

**Keep buying
“recyclable”
single-use cups**

About 120 cups go to the trash because the city does not accept them

Borrow washable cups and run a wash station

Fewer cups in the trash, if people use the washable ones

Check: Count cups and bags after the next event and compare with last time

Combine parts orders into one shipment

Less packaging
arrives before
anything reaches
a bin

New costs: water,
washing time and
volunteers

Check: Count cups and bags after the next event and compare with last time

Words that do the work

Waste hierarchy

Jerarquía de residuos

EPA's ranking that generally prefers reducing and reusing before recycling, and recycling before disposal.

Source reduction

Reducción en la fuente

Preventing waste before it's created, like buying less or choosing less packaging.

Local acceptance

Materiales aceptados

What your local collection program actually takes, which varies by city.

Public service

Servicio público

A service government provides for everyone, like trash and recycling pickup, paid for with public money.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write a proposal to the event organizers for one purchasing change, with a measurement plan.

Proposal: Replace most single-use cups at the next screening. Last Friday we used about 120 single-use cups², and the city's accepted-materials list doesn't take that kind of cup¹, so they all went to the trash even though they say "recyclable." We propose borrowing 60 washable cups from the bookshop and running a wash station. We'll keep compostable cups available for anyone who needs a disposable one³, like people who can't use a heavy cup. This change will definitely save money and cut our waste in half.⁴ To measure it, we'll count the cups used and thrown away after the event and compare with last time.

- 1** Strong: the writer checks the local rule instead of trusting the label.
- 2** Good use of a count as the baseline for the proposal.
- 3** Good: the access concern is built into the plan rather than added as an afterthought.
- 4** Revise: nothing has been measured yet, and washing has costs of its own. Say what you expect and let the count after the event decide.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~This change will definitely save money and cut our waste in half.~~

After

We expect fewer cups in the trash, but we won't claim savings until we compare the counts and the cost of running the wash station.

The revision matches the claim to the evidence and names a cost the original sentence ignored, which makes the proposal more credible to organizers.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Individual written argument on “Should cities charge by how much trash households produce?”, using a stimulus packet.**Use**

Stimulus: EPA hierarchy, one pay-as-you-throw study, one equity critique and one city’s program description.

You’ll make

Individual written argument, 1,200–1,500 words

Thesis A claim someone could reasonably disagree with

Done when

- ☐ Clear question
- ☐ Multiple perspectives
- ☐ Original synthesis
- ☐ Equity addressed

Reason 1: claim, evidence, commentary

Reason 2: claim, evidence, commentary

Need a boost?

- Stimulus annotation
- Perspective map
- Argument outline

The strongest counterargument, and your answer

Why it matters beyond this case



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 14

Credit is not the whole copyright answer

If you credit the artist, can you use their track in your film?

Students remix music, clips and images every day, and many believe credit or “only ten seconds” makes any use okay. Understanding how U.S. copyright and fair use actually work lets creators share their projects without getting taken down, and respect other creators too.

In the real world

CrashCourse (YouTube), 2015 Copyright, Exceptions, and Fair Use: Crash Course Intellectual Property #3

NPR, 2023 Supreme Court sides against Andy Warhol Foundation in copyright infringement case

You'll make

Individual research report (800–1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar

Caio

Calma, Mateo. The sample makes the scene, I know. But “we credited them” isn’t a reason I can explain. Let’s check the license first.



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

Caio's rough cut, Friday 9:40 p.m. (edit timeline)

0:00—0:18 crew footage, no music. 0:18—0:38 sampled track, pitched up slightly, under the setup montage. 0:38—1:52 crew footage and interviews. 1:40—1:46 a 6-second clip downloaded from a stitched TikTok post.



Which parts of this cut did the crew not make? What is each borrowed element doing in the film?

Fictional case material

2

Mateo in the crew chat, Friday 10:02 p.m.

"We'll credit them in the caption. Post tonight?"



Which question does credit answer, and which doesn't it?

Fictional case material

3

"Calma, Mateo. The sample makes the scene, I know. But "we credited them" isn't a reason I can explain. Let's check the license first."

Caio, 24, editor and film-night organizer



What is Caio asking the crew to find before posting?

Fictional case material

4

Rights log template, started Saturday morning

Columns: element, who made it, where it came from, permission or license and date. Row 1: setup-montage music, the recording artist, a streaming download, permission unknown. Row 2: 6-second clip, a TikTok creator, downloaded from TikTok, permission unknown.



What goes in the permission column for each row, and where would you find it?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Whether the track has any license that covers this use, which part of the song the 20 seconds come from, where the film will be shown, and what the TikTok creator agreed to when the clip was posted.

Real-world evidence



Real source

U.S. Copyright Office, Fair Use Index overview page

Summary, not a quotation: the Copyright Office explains that fair use is decided case by case with four factors (purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted work, amount and substantiality of the portion used, and effect on the potential market), that no formula guarantees a set amount may be used without permission, and that even a small portion can weigh against fair use if it is the heart of the work.



Real source

U.S. Copyright Office, Fair Use Index summary of *Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. v. Goldsmith* (2023)

Summary, not a quotation: the Supreme Court held that the first factor did not favor fair use for the specific licensing use at issue, because that use shared substantially the same purpose as the original photograph and was commercial; a new look or meaning alone did not settle the question.



video

Copyright, Exceptions, and Fair Use: Crash Course Intellectual Property #3

[CrashCourse \(YouTube\), 2015-05-07](#)

Explains why giving credit is not the same as permission, and how fair use is weighed.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

What the evidence can hold up

Test the crew’s two assumptions against the sources. Which evidence knocks each one down, and what single check could still make the plan work?

Evidence	Claim 1 Crediting the artist makes the use okay.	Claim 2 Twenty seconds is short enough to be fair use.
1 Credit names the creator but grants no permission		
2 Copyright Office: no formula makes a set amount safe; the heart of a work matters		
3 The sample is background mood, not commentary on the song		
4 Stitch permission applies inside TikTok, not to a downloaded clip in another film		

Still open

- Does any license cover this use? Check before posting.

Words that do the work

Copyright
Derechos de autor
U.S. legal protection that automatically covers original creative work once it’s fixed, like recorded or written down.

Attribution
Atribución
Naming or crediting the source.

License
Licencia
Permission to use a work under specific terms.

Fair use
Uso justo
A U.S. doctrine allowing some unlicensed uses, judged case by case on four factors.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write a four-factor analysis of the crew's planned use and recommend a path.

Factor 1, purpose: We're using about 20 seconds of the song as background mood for our recap, not to comment on the song, so this factor probably weighs against fair use¹. Factor 2, nature of the work: The song is a creative recording, which also weighs against us. Factor 3, amount: 20 seconds is a small part, so this factor is fine because anything under 30 seconds is allowed². Factor 4, market effect: Using it for free as background music could replace a license the artist might sell³. Recommendation: Credit doesn't equal permission, and Stitch only works inside TikTok⁴, so we should swap in a licensed track or record our own before posting.

- 1 Accurate reading of purpose, with an honest "probably" instead of a verdict.
- 2 Revise: there is no safe number of seconds. The Copyright Office says no formula guarantees that a set amount may be used, and even a small portion can count against fair use if it is the heart of the work.
- 3 Strong: the writer connects market effect to how artists actually earn from music.
- 4 Good: platform permission is correctly limited to the platform.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~Factor 3, amount: 20 seconds is a small part, so this factor is fine because anything under 30 seconds is allowed.~~

After

Factor 3, amount: 20 seconds is a small part of the song, but the factor also weighs which part is used, and if it is the song's most recognizable hook, that could count against us.

The revision replaces a myth with the actual factor, which weighs both how much and which part is used.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team inquiry: “Does copyright help or hurt young creators?” Members research artists’ income, remix culture, platform licensing and legal doctrine, then present guidance for student filmmakers.

Use

Case plus teacher-approved sources.

You’ll make

Individual research report (800—1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Slide 1: The moment

What you’ll say

Slide 2: The question

What you’ll say

Slide 3: The evidence

What you’ll say

Slide 4: Your ask

What you’ll say

Done when

- ☐ Accurate research
- ☐ Artists’ and remixers’ perspectives both represented
- ☐ Synthesized guidance
- ☐ Stated limits

Need a boost?

- Lens assignments
- Annotated bibliography
- Presentation storyboard



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 15

Internship, or someone's unpaid job?

When is an unpaid internship really a job that should be paid?

Internships open doors, but unpaid ones favor people who can afford to work for free, and some “internships” are just unpaid jobs. Knowing the questions the law asks helps students ages 16–24 evaluate an offer before they give it a summer.

In the real world

PBS NewsHour (YouTube), 2023 Why unpaid internships still exist despite hardships for young workers

NPR, 2013 Internships: Low-Paid, Unpaid Or Just Plain Illegal?

Rafa

Sige, I want the experience. I also work at the shop. So what would I actually learn, and who's teaching me?

You'll make

Individual written argument, 1,200–1,500 words

Time

About 250 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

Studio internship listing, posted on the campus job board in April

"Summer Editing Intern (unpaid). Join our fast-paced studio! You'll run the customer inbox all summer, help with client files and get great exposure to the industry. College credit available."



Which words describe learning, and which describe work? What does the listing leave out?

Fictional case material

2

Studio reply to Rafa, Tuesday 11:20 a.m.

"Thanks for your interest, Rafa! Since interns get college credit, it's totally legal for us not to pay. We'd love for you to start right after finals."



Is credit one factor or the whole test? What did the reply not answer?

Fictional case material

3

Gia and Rafa talking it through, Tuesday lunch

Gia: Didn't they pay someone to do the inbox last year?

Rafa: Yeah, their assistant.

Gia: And it's your summer, not theirs. What about your shifts at the shop?



Whose time and money does this offer spend? Which DOL factor does the first question connect to?

Fictional case material

4

"Sige, I want the experience. I also work at the shop. So what would I actually learn, and who's teaching me?"

Rafa, 18, first-year commuter who works at his family's shop



Turn Rafa's two questions into questions he could send the studio in writing.

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

What training and supervision the studio actually provides, how many hours a week the role takes, whether Rafa's school will grant credit, and how many paid shifts at the family shop Rafa would give up.

Real-world evidence



Real source

U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, Fact Sheet #71: Internship Programs Under the Fair Labor Standards Act

Summary, not a quotation: for-profit employers use the "primary beneficiary test" to decide whether an intern is an employee who must be paid under the FLSA. The fact sheet lists seven factors, including whether the internship is tied to formal education or academic credit and whether the intern's work complements rather than displaces paid employees, and says the test is flexible with no single factor determinative.



video

Why unpaid internships still exist despite hardships for young workers

[PBS NewsHour \(YouTube\), 2023-08-26](#)

Reports that nearly half of U.S. interns were unpaid in 2022 and who can afford to take those jobs.



article

Internships: Low-Paid, Unpaid Or Just Plain Illegal?

[NPR, 2013-05-18](#)

Explains when an unpaid internship can break wage law, using the 'Black Swan' intern lawsuit.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

What the evidence can hold up

Test the studio’s claim against the factor list. Which evidence points toward training, which toward a job, and what is still unknown?

Evidence	Claim 1 College credit makes the unpaid internship legal.	Claim 2 The role looks more like a job than training.
1 DOL: credit is one of seven factors, and no single factor decides		
2 The listing: Rafa runs the customer inbox all summer		
3 A paid assistant ran the inbox last year		
4 The role is openly unpaid and offers credit (factors 1 and 3)		

Still open

- Is there a learning plan, and who supervises?

Words that do the work

Primary beneficiary test
Prueba del beneficiario principal
The Department of Labor’s test asking whether the intern or the company mainly benefits from an unpaid internship at a for-profit employer.

Fair Labor Standards Act
Ley de Normas Justas de Trabajo
The federal law setting minimum wage and overtime for covered employees.

Displacement
Desplazamiento
When an intern does work that a paid employee would otherwise do.

Academic credit
Crédito académico
School credit tied to a placement; one factor in the test, not an automatic exemption.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Turn the seven DOL factors into an internship questions sheet, fill it in with the studio's answers and write a 150-word summary.

Summary: Using the seven factors, Rafa's internship looks more like a job than training. The studio says it's unpaid and gives college credit, so factors 1 and 3 point toward an internship¹. But the listing says Rafa would run the customer inbox all summer, and a paid assistant did that job last year, so factor 6 points toward a job² because he would be replacing a worker. We don't know about training or supervision because the studio didn't answer that question.³ Since the studio says credit makes it legal, and credit is one of the factors, the internship is probably legal.⁴ Rafa should ask for a written learning plan and the weekly hours before he decides.

- 1 Accurate and fair: the writer credits the evidence that cuts the other way instead of ignoring it.
- 2 Strong: specific evidence tied to the displacement factor.
- 3 Good: unknowns are marked as unknown rather than guessed.
- 4 Revise: this repeats the studio's claim and contradicts the summary's own reasoning. No single factor decides the test, and the displacement evidence points the other way.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~Since the studio says credit makes it legal, and credit is one of the factors, the internship is probably legal.~~

After

Credit is only one factor, and no single factor decides the test, so the studio's answer doesn't settle it.

The revision matches the conclusion to the flexible test and to the writer's own evidence instead of adopting the employer's claim.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Individual written argument on “Do unpaid internships widen inequality?”, using a stimulus packet.**Use**

Stimulus: DOL Fact Sheet 71, one labor-economics article, one career-services perspective and one first-person account.

You'll make

Individual written argument, 1,200–1,500 words

Thesis A claim someone could reasonably disagree with

Reason 1: claim, evidence, commentary

Reason 2: claim, evidence, commentary

Done when

- ☐ Clear question
- ☐ Multiple perspectives
- ☐ Original synthesis
- ☐ Limits acknowledged

Need a boost?

- Stimulus annotation
- Perspective map
- Argument outline

The strongest counterargument, and your answer

Why it matters beyond this case



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 16

“It’s our policy” is not the end

When a new building rule appears, who wrote it and who does it affect?

Housing rules decide whether people can work, gather and get in and out of their own homes, and renters often have less power than whoever posts the notice. Asking who issued a rule and how it lands on different residents is how neighbors protect each other without spreading rumors.

In the real world

Gothamist, 2019 Brooklyn Landlord Does An About Face On Facial Recognition Plan

HUD (YouTube), 2014 The Federal Fair Housing Act and Reasonable Accommodations

Sami

I’m not canceling my workshop over an unsigned notice. I’m also not ignoring it. Who wrote it, and how do I get in after eight?

You’ll make

Individual written argument, 1,200—1,500 words

Time

About 250 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

§ Unsigned notice beside the common-room door, found Monday morning

"NOTICE TO ALL RESIDENTS. Effective immediately, the rear door will be locked at 8:00 p.m. nightly. The common room is for resident social use only. NO BUSINESS USE." No issuer, date or contact appears on the page.



Who wrote this, and how would you find out? Which features make it sound official?

Fictional case material

2

§ Building house rules, last year's version, distributed at lease signing (illustrative excerpt)

"Residents may reserve the common room for gatherings, classes and resident-run workshops. Reservations are made through the building office."



What did the old rule say about resident workshops? Does the new notice say it replaces this?

Fictional case material

3

Building entrance plan from the lobby directory

Front entrance: four steps, no ramp. Rear door: step-free, opens to the elevator hallway. Side door: service use only.



Which entrance is step-free, and what happens to it after 8 p.m. under the notice?

Fictional case material

4

"Rear door locked at 8. That's the only door I can get through. My workshop runs later. So, questions. Plural."

Sami, 23, lives in 3B and runs a workshop in the common room



Which two questions does Sami need answered, and who can answer each?

Fictional case material

5

"All caps, bold, no name, no date. That's a design choice. It isn't authority."

Caio, 24, reading last year's house rules beside the notice

What would count as proof of authority for a building rule?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Who issued the notice and why, whether it replaces or adds to the house rules, what Sami's lease says, whether there has been a security problem at the rear door, and how the building handles accommodation requests.

Real-world evidence



Real source

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Fair Housing Act overview

Summary, not a quotation: HUD's overview lists the characteristics the Fair Housing Act protects (race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status and disability) and says housing discrimination is illegal in nearly all housing, including private, public and federally funded housing.

article

Brooklyn Landlord Does An About Face On Facial Recognition Plan

[Gothamist,](#)
2019-11-21

A throwback about a door rule: the landlord needed state permission to change how tenants got in, and tenants used that process to object.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

Who actually gets to decide?

Map who made this rule, which rules it has to fit, who it affects and where residents can take a question. Which box is still empty?

Lock the rear door at 8 p.m. and ban business use of the common room

Who decides

Unknown issuer: the owner, the manager or someone else?

Under which rule

Last year's house rules allowed resident-run workshops
Fair Housing Act: disability is a protected characteristic

Who lives with it

Sami and other residents who need the only step-free entrance

Your way in

Words that do the work

Housing as a need

La vivienda como necesidad

Stable, safe housing affects health, school and work, which is why governments make rules about it.

Authority

Autoridad

The power to make or enforce a particular rule, and where that power comes from.

Jurisdiction

Jurisdicción

Which laws and bodies apply to a particular place or situation.

Fair Housing Act

Ley de Vivienda Justa

A federal law barring housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status or disability.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write Sami's message to the building manager asking about the rule and requesting access after 8 p.m.

Hi, I'm Sami in 3B. On Monday I saw a new notice by the common-room door. It says the rear door will be locked after 8 p.m. and that business use of the room is banned. ¹ I use a wheelchair, and the rear door is the building's only step-free entrance ². If it's locked, I can't get into my own building at night. This notice is illegal under the Fair Housing Act, so please take it down. ³ Also, who issued the notice, and does it replace last year's house rules, which allowed resident workshops? ⁴ Thank you, Sami

- 1 Accurate summary of the notice, so the manager can see exactly which parts Sami means.
- 2 Strong: a concrete, checkable fact about access, taken from the entrance plan.
- 3 Revise: the facts don't establish a violation yet, and removing the notice wouldn't guarantee Sami's access. Ask for an accommodation instead.
- 4 Good question about authority: it points to a specific document the manager can check.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~This notice is illegal under the Fair Housing Act, so please take it down.~~

After

I'd like to request an accommodation so I can get in after 8, such as a key fob for the rear door.

A specific accommodation request is something the manager can say yes to, and it keeps the legal question open instead of declaring an answer.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Individual written argument on “Is housing a right, a market good, or both?”, using a stimulus packet.**Use**

Stimulus: the case, HUD overview, one economics article on housing markets and one article on housing and health.

You’ll make

Individual written argument, 1,200–1,500 words

Thesis A claim someone could reasonably disagree with

Reason 1: claim, evidence, commentary

Reason 2: claim, evidence, commentary

Done when

- ☐ Clear research question
- ☐ Evaluates economic, legal and health perspectives
- ☐ Original synthesis
- ☐ Addresses limitations

Need a boost?

- Stimulus annotation guide
- Perspective map
- Argument outline

The strongest counterargument, and your answer

Why it matters beyond this case



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

Take it off the page

Ask who wrote the rule before you argue about it.



Case 17

A good choice for whom?

Ten free seats, thirty people who want one. How should the crew decide?

Clubs, schools and governments constantly decide who gets limited seats, money or time, and every method helps some people and costs others. Students who can name the trade-off out loud make fairer decisions and can challenge unfair ones without pretending there's a perfect answer.

In the real world

NPR, 2020 The Ethics Of Who Gets The COVID-19 Vaccine And When

Scientific American, 2020 How to Decide Who Should Get a COVID-19 Vaccine First

Anika

I'm not asking the plan to revolve around me. I'm asking you to count the cost instead of saying nobody loses.

You'll make

Individual research report (800–1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

§ Workshop sign-up sheet, opened Monday 9 a.m.

"Free workshop: 10 seats. Add your name to show interest. How seats will be chosen: to be announced." Thirty names by Wednesday; the first 22 were added before 10 a.m. on Monday.



Who saw this first, and who might have seen it late? What would first-come, first-served mean for these thirty names?

Fictional case material

2

Crew dinner debate thread, Sunday 8:30 p.m.

Gia: first come is easiest to run, we just take the top ten.

Anika: I'm at rehearsal most days, I'd see it after it's full.

Mateo: lottery?

Gia: then we need a sign-up window and someone to run the drawing.



Which cost does each person mention, and which costs does nobody mention?

Fictional case material

3

Three selection options on the whiteboard, Sunday night

A. First come, first served: fast to run; favors whoever sees it first. B. Lottery after a three-day sign-up: equal chance for everyone; needs a sign-up window and a drawing. C. Needs-based rubric: prioritizes people who can't afford the paid version; needs personal information and someone to judge it.



Which option does each ethical lens favor? Which option asks applicants to give up the most privacy?

Fictional case material

4

"No. I want the group to count the effect instead of saying nobody loses. Then we can look for an adjustment."

Anika, 16, balancing rehearsal and getting home



What is Anika asking for, and what is she explicitly not asking for?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

How many of the thirty applicants have the greatest need, whether a second session is possible, who would see personal information under a needs-based rubric, and how the twenty people without seats would like to be told.

Real-world evidence



Real source

Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University, A Framework for Ethical Decision Making

Summary, not a quotation: the framework suggests examining a decision through several ethical lenses, such as its consequences, the rights it respects, whether it treats people justly, the common good, virtue and care, and notes that the lenses can point in different directions.



article

The Ethics Of Who Gets The COVID-19 Vaccine And When

[NPR, 2020-12-20](#)

A bioethicist explains how leaders chose who went first when there wasn't enough for everyone.



article

How to Decide Who Should Get a COVID-19 Vaccine First

[Scientific American, 2020-09-03](#)

Lays out competing criteria such as risk, fairness and benefit, the same lenses the crew uses.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

One student's draft

Write a 150-word decision note defending one option, its strongest objection and one revision, using two ethical lenses.

We should use a lottery after a three-day sign-up. Looking at fairness, a lottery gives all thirty people the same chance¹, while first-come, first-served rewards whoever sees the message first, which is unfair to people like Anika who can't check their phones during rehearsal². Looking at consequences, a lottery also makes the most people happy, because everyone will feel they had a fair shot³. The strongest objection is that a lottery ignores need: someone who can't afford the paid version of the workshop has the same chance as someone who can⁴. To reduce that cost, we will run a second free session for the twenty people who don't get in. We would rethink this if we can't actually run a second session.

- 1 Accurate use of the fairness lens: it names exactly what the method treats equally.
- 2 Strong: a concrete cost of the alternative, tied to a person in the case.
- 3 Revise: this guesses at feelings. Under the consequences lens, a lottery still leaves twenty people without seats, so name the outcomes it actually produces.
- 4 Good: the writer states the strongest objection at full strength instead of a weak version.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~Looking at consequences, a lottery also makes the most people happy, because everyone will feel they had a fair shot.~~

After

Looking at consequences, every method seats exactly ten people, so the real difference is which ten; a lottery spreads the chance evenly but does nothing extra for those with the greatest need.

The revision applies the consequences lens to actual outcomes rather than predicted feelings, and it sets up the objection that follows.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team presentation: “How should limited public opportunities be allocated?” Members research lotteries, needs-based selection, merit and first-come systems in real programs, then present a recommendation to the crew.

Use

Case plus teacher-approved sources on allocation methods.

You'll make

Individual research report (800—1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Slide 1: The moment

What you'll say

Slide 2: The question

What you'll say

Slide 3: The evidence

What you'll say

Slide 4: Your ask

What you'll say

Done when

- ☐ Accurate research
- ☐ Multiple methods compared
- ☐ Synthesized recommendation
- ☐ Addresses the people left out

Need a boost?

- Lens assignments
- Comparison matrix
- Presentation storyboard



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

Take it off the page

Ask how your school decides who gets limited spots.



Case 18

Follow the school money

The district budget is huge. Why is the theatre curtain still falling apart?

School budgets decide which rooms get repaired, which programs survive and how many adults are in the building, and students are rarely told where to ask. Learning to read a budget's year, stage and units turns "where did the money go?" into a question a school board can actually answer.

In the real world

NPR, 2016 Why America's Schools Have A Money Problem

Chalkbeat, 2026 A financial reckoning is hitting America's public schools

Mari

Ay, bendito, that curtain. Okay, before we get mad at the big number, which line is supposed to fix it?

You'll make

Individual research report (800—1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

District proposed budget, facilities excerpt, posted in spring for next school year

PROPOSED BUDGET, NEXT SCHOOL YEAR. Total proposed budget: \$48,000,000. Projected enrollment: 3,200 students. Facilities, building repairs (all schools): \$310,000. Note: figures are proposed and may change before the board adopts the budget.



Is this a plan or what was actually spent? Which line might cover a stage curtain?

Fictional case material

2

Social post comparing two districts, shared Tuesday 6:10 p.m.

"Our district: \$48 MILLION. Westbrook: \$21,000 per student. And they can't fix ONE curtain?? Where is the money going?"



Which figure is a total and which is per student? What would you need to compare them fairly?

Fictional case material

3

Facilities repair quote issued to the theatre advisor

Stage curtain replacement, main auditorium: remove the torn curtain, supply and install a flame-retardant replacement. Total: \$6,800.



Which budget line would pay this, and who would decide whether it is ranked ahead of other repairs?

Fictional case material

4

"Forty-eight million dollars, and the curtain still won't close. Ay, bendito. I want to ask about that without pretending the total answers it."

Mari, 19, helping younger neighbors prepare a budget question



What connection does Mari want to ask about, and why doesn't the total answer it?

Fictional case material

5

"I pull that curtain every show. It doesn't close all the way anymore. That part I can show you."

Dec, 17, theatre crew, pulls the curtain every show

What can a photo prove here, and what caption would claim too much?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Whether stage equipment falls under the building-repairs line or another one, how the district ranks repair requests, Westbrook’s budget year and stage, and what the board finally adopts after public comment.

Real-world evidence



Real source

National Center for Education Statistics, Condition of Education: Public School Revenue Sources
Summary, not a quotation: NCES reports public school revenue by federal, state and local source, and its data show that the mix of sources differs from state to state.



article

Why America's Schools Have A Money Problem
[NPR, 2016-04-18](#)
Explains how local property taxes make school budgets very different from one district to the next.



article

A financial reckoning is hitting America’s public schools
[Chalkbeat, 2026-05-28](#)
Big districts are making cuts, showing how a huge budget can still leave little for extras like a stage curtain.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

Who actually gets to decide?

Trace the curtain request from the photo to the vote. Who ranks it, who adopts the budget, which rules limit them, and where can students speak?

Fund the \$6,800 curtain replacement next year

Who decides

The elected local school board, which adopts the budget
The facilities office, which ranks repair requests (how is still unknown)

Under which rule

State and federal rules and funding streams set limits on district budgets
Proposed building-repairs line: \$310,000 for all schools

Who lives with it

Your way in

Words that do the work

Revenue sources

Fuentes de ingresos

Where school money comes from: federal, state and local sources, in a mix that varies by place.

Budget stages

Etapas del presupuesto

A proposed budget is a plan, an adopted budget is approved, and actual spending is what happened.

Per-pupil amount

Cantidad por estudiante

Money divided by the number of students, so places of different sizes can be compared.

Equity vs. adequacy

Equidad y suficiencia

Equity asks if resources are fairly shared given different needs; adequacy asks if there's enough to meet the goals.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Correct a misleading social post that compares mismatched budget figures, then write a better comparison with a worked calculation.

Correction: A post going around says our district has \$48 million and Westbrook spends \$21,000 per student, so we're being shortchanged. Those numbers can't be compared. ¹ The \$48 million is our district's total proposed budget for next year, and the Westbrook number is per student. To compare fairly, divide our total by our projected enrollment: $\$48,000,000 \div 3,200 \text{ students} = \$15,000 \text{ per student}$ ². So our district spends less per student, which proves we are underfunded ³. We also need to check that both numbers are for the same year and the same stage ⁴, proposed or adopted. Source: district proposed budget, next school year.

- 1 Clear diagnosis stated up front, before any math.
- 2 Correct calculation that turns the total into a comparable unit, with the work shown.
- 3 Revise: per-pupil figures cannot settle adequacy on their own. Costs, student needs and budget categories differ between districts, and a proposed budget is not spending.
- 4 Strong: the writer names the remaining conditions for a fair comparison.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~So our district spends less per student, which proves we are underfunded.~~

After

So our district's proposed budget works out to less per student than Westbrook's figure, but that alone can't tell us whether either district has enough for its students' needs.

The revision keeps the useful comparison while separating what the numbers show from a conclusion about adequacy they cannot support.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team inquiry: “How should school facility needs be prioritized fairly?” Members research equity vs. adequacy, capital planning, student voice and one district’s process, then present to a mock school board.

Use

Case plus teacher-approved outside sources.

You’ll make

Individual research report (800—1,000 words) plus 8-minute team presentation

Slide 1: The moment

What you’ll say

Slide 2: The question

What you’ll say

Slide 3: The evidence

What you’ll say

Slide 4: Your ask

What you’ll say

Done when

- ☐ Accurate research in each lens
- ☐ Criteria synthesize the lenses
- ☐ Tested on the case
- ☐ Acknowledges trade-offs

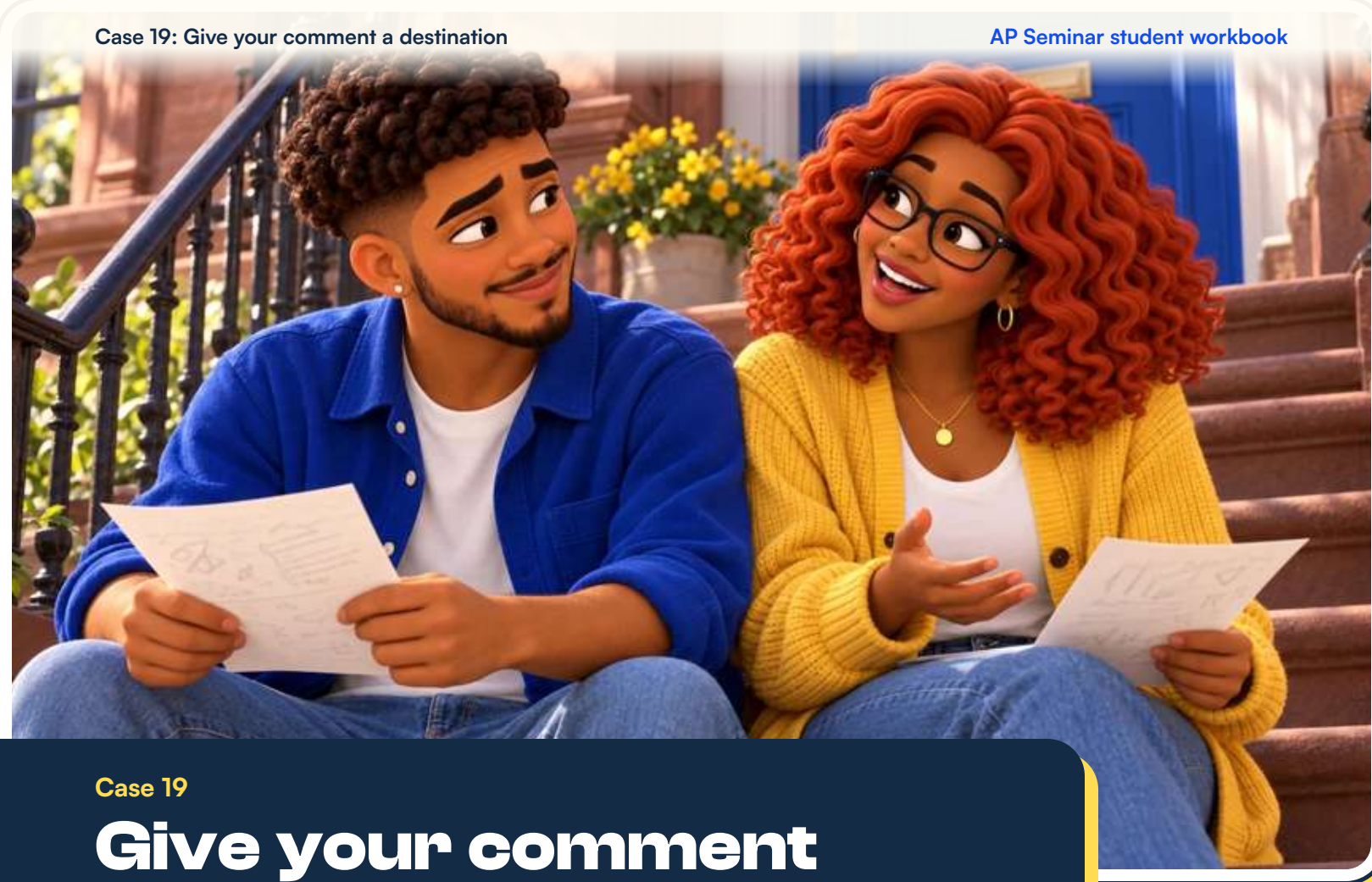
Need a boost?

- Lens assignments
- Source tracker
- Board presentation template



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

Take it off the page Find one line in your school’s budget.



Case 19

Give your comment a destination

How do you make a public comment that actually lands?

City councils, school boards and agencies make decisions about parks, buses and schools in meetings anyone can attend, but most people never find the agenda. A short, specific comment in the right place can be one of the most direct ways a young person, including one too young to vote, takes part in local government.

In the real world

Chalkbeat Philadelphia, 2026 'Not what democracy is all about': Philly students slam school leaders' approach to school closures

Chalkbeat Newark, 2025 How a Newark student coalition is using its own research to press for change in schools

You'll make

8-minute team presentation plus individual oral defense

Time

About 300 minutes

Level

AP Seminar

Gia

I wrote three pages. The limit is two minutes. Okay: item four, what I saw, why it matters, what I'm asking. Time me.



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

§ Parks committee agenda, Tuesday 6 p.m., item 4

Item 4. Evening court hours. Proposal to turn off the court lights and close the lighted courts at 8:00 p.m. Background: complaints about evening noise from nearby residents. Action: committee recommendation to the full council.



Is this item for discussion or a vote? What can this committee do, and what can it not do?

Fictional case material

2

§ Public comment instructions posted with the agenda

Sign up to speak by 5:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Each speaker has 2 minutes. Written comments may be submitted before the meeting. Comments and speakers' names become part of the public record.



What is the time limit, can you comment in writing, and what does "public record" mean for what you include?

Fictional case material

3

Gia's three-page draft, Monday night (excerpt)

"The park is really important to everyone and closing it is a terrible idea. I go there all the time with my friends... You guys never listen to young people. Please don't close the park."



Which sentence is her actual request, and is it accurate about what item 4 proposes?

Fictional case material

4

"The courts are good for the neighborhood, but the noise late in the evening carries into our apartment. We have kids with school in the morning."

Written comment from a nearby resident, submitted before the meeting (illustrative)



What does this resident need, and could Gia's request respond to it?

Fictional case material

5

"What is the one thing you want them to answer?"

Mateo, 22, helping Gia prepare

Answer Mateo's question for Gia in one sentence.

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

How many residents have complained and when the noise occurs, whether any compromise hours were considered, how the full council usually treats committee recommendations, and the views of court users who cannot attend a 6 p.m. meeting.

Real-world evidence



Real source

Seattle City Council, Public Comment

Summary, not a quotation: the page describes hybrid comment in person or by phone, registration before the meeting, up to 2 minutes per speaker, written comments by email, and comment on items on the agenda and within the committee's purview.



article

'Not what democracy is all about': Philly students slam school leaders' approach to school closures [Chalkbeat Philadelphia, 2026-04-03](#)

Students testified at board meetings and used district data, real public comment with a clear destination.



article

How a Newark student coalition is using its own research to press for change in schools [Chalkbeat Newark, 2025-11-26](#)

Teens brought evidence and specific requests to their school board, the formula this case teaches.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

Who actually gets to decide?

Follow a comment from the speaker to the final decision. Which body hears it, which body decides, and whose concerns reach the room?

Turn off the court lights at 8 p.m.?

Who decides

Full council: takes the final action

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Your way in

Words that do the work

Agenda item

Punto del orden del día

A specific matter scheduled for a meeting, often with a number, a description and an action type.

Remit

Ámbito de competencia

The matters a body is responsible for and can act on.

Key message

Mensaje clave

The one point you want listeners to remember.

Public record

Registro público

Comments and names may be published and stay searchable.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Cut Gia's long draft into a 90-second comment, then write a note explaining what you cut and why.

Comment: Good evening. I'm Gia, and I live two blocks from the park. I'm here about item 4, the proposal to turn off the court lights at 8 p.m. ¹ On weekday evenings I've counted twenty to thirty people on the courts between 8 and 9 ². My friend works late and is going through a lot at home ³, so this is her only time to play. Please keep the lights on until 9 on weekdays this summer. Thank you.

Cutting note: I cut the part about the committee never listening to young people, because it didn't ask them for anything ⁴. I cut the long history of the park so the comment fits in two minutes.

- 1 A precise destination: the item number and the exact proposal tell the committee what the comment is about.
- 2 Strong evidence: a specific, first-hand observation tied to the hours in question.
- 3 Revise: this is someone else's private story, and it would stay in the public record. Keep the point that people work late without the personal detail.
- 4 Good reasoning in the note: the cut is justified by purpose, not only by length.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

~~My friend works late and is going through a lot at home, so this is her only time to play.~~

After

Many of us work until evening, so after 8 is the only time we can play.

The revision keeps the reason that matters to the committee while protecting a friend's privacy in a permanent record.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Team multimedia presentation to a mock parks committee on the court-lights proposal, built from interviews with park users (with consent) and research on park use and noise.

Use

The agenda item, teacher-approved sources on park use, and consented interview notes.

You'll make

8-minute team presentation plus individual oral defense

Slide 1: The moment

What you'll say

Slide 2: The question

What you'll say

Slide 3: The evidence

What you'll say

Slide 4: Your ask

What you'll say

Done when

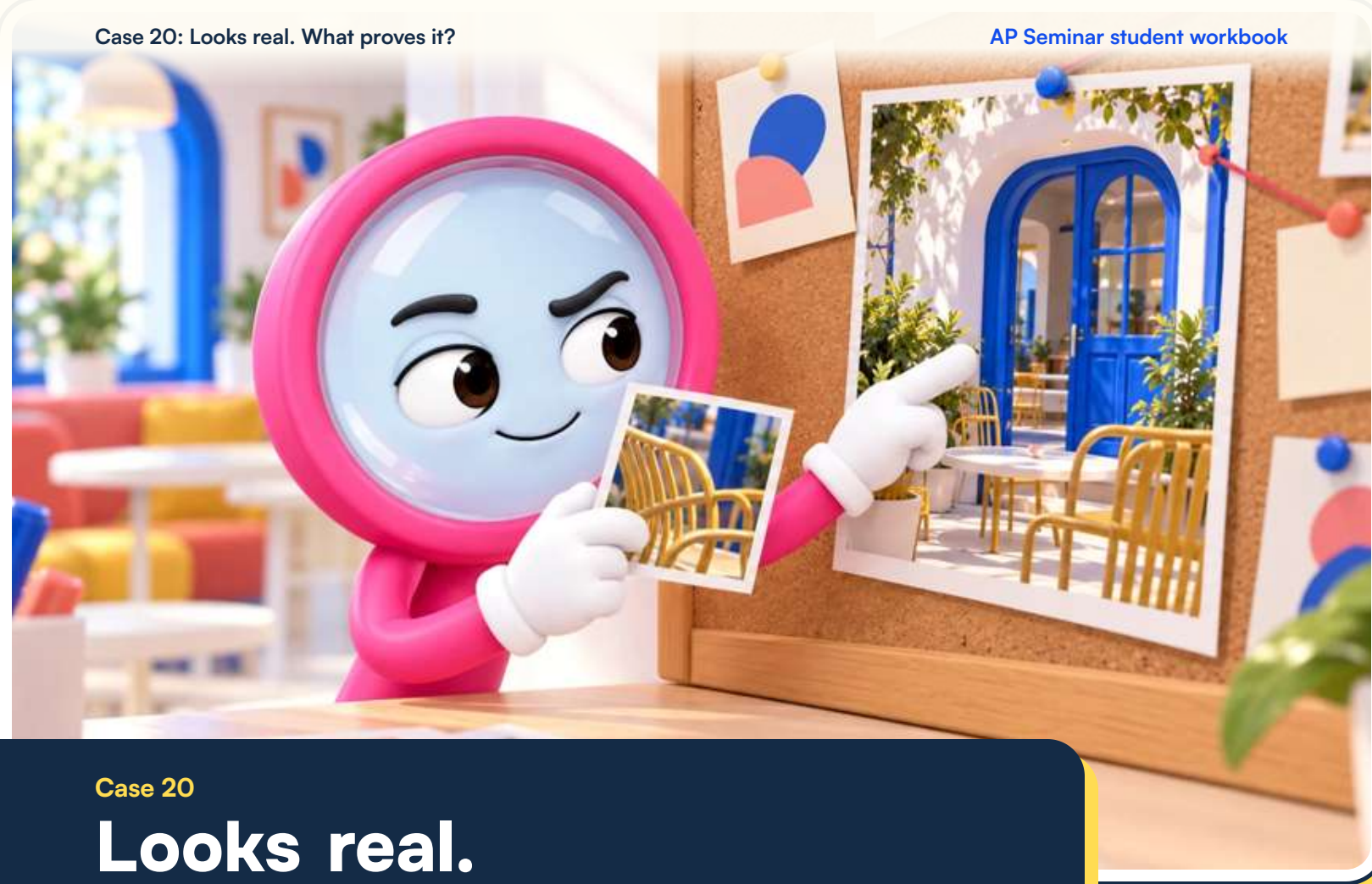
- ☐ Research question is clear
- ☐ Evidence includes several perspectives
- ☐ Proposal is within the committee's remit
- ☐ Defends sources under questioning

Need a boost?

- Interview guide and consent script
- Presentation storyboard
- Oral-defense questions



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.



Case 20

Looks real. What proves it?

A realistic image says the courtyard flooded today. What would it take to post that as true?

Generated and recycled images now move through group chats as fast as real ones, and organizations that repost them lose trust quickly. Students who can write an honest verification note, including “we can’t confirm this yet,” protect their audience and their own credibility.

In the real world

NPR, 2023 Fake viral images of an explosion at the Pentagon were probably created by AI

CNN, 2023 ‘Verified’ Twitter accounts share fake image of ‘explosion’ near Pentagon, causing confusion

Jordy

I wanted a clean yes or no for the recap. “We can’t verify it yet” is less fun. It’s also what’s true.

You’ll make

Individual written argument, 1,200—1,500 words

Time

About 250 minutes

Level

AP Seminar



The case file

Look at what's actually here before deciding what it means.

Fictional case material

1

Courtyard flood image with caption, shared Wednesday 2:48 p.m.

Image, described: a photo-like view of the campus courtyard with water over the paving and benches; a person in the foreground holds up a phone.

Caption: "Courtyard flooded today, stay away." No link, no date on the image and no original poster named.



Where did this image first appear, and when? What does the caption claim that the image alone cannot show?

Fictional case material

2

Sami's zoom-in of the hand, crew chat, Wednesday 3:02 p.m.

Zoomed screenshot of the foreground hand: the fingers seem to merge at the knuckles.

Sami: "The hand is weird. But who posted this first? That's what I want to know."



What can a strange detail tell you, and what can't it?

Fictional case material

3

Reply in the crew chat, Wednesday 3:05 p.m.

"My roommate's friend said she saw water near the library earlier."



Is this corroboration? Who actually saw what, where and when?

Fictional case material

4

Result from a free online image detector (illustrative)

"12% likely AI-generated."



What can a score tell you, and what can't it? Does it say anything about whether the courtyard flooded today?

Outside the story

The case is fictional. The questions in it are not. Here is where they show up in the real world.

Still missing

Who first posted the image and when, whether it shows this courtyard on this day, whether anyone with a dated photo saw water, and how quickly the facilities page would report a same-day flood.

Real-world evidence



Real source

National Institute of Standards and Technology, Reducing Risks Posed by Synthetic Content: An Overview of Technical Approaches to Digital Content Transparency

Summary, not a quotation: NIST describes approaches such as provenance data, labeling, watermarking and detection for synthetic content, and explains that each has technical limitations, so no single approach settles on its own whether content is synthetic.



article

Fake viral images of an explosion at the Pentagon were probably created by AI [NPR, 2023-05-22](#)

A realistic fake image spread fast and briefly moved markets before officials confirmed nothing happened.



article

'Verified' Twitter accounts share fake image of 'explosion' near Pentagon, causing confusion [CNN, 2023-05-22](#)

A blue check was not proof: accounts that looked trustworthy still shared an image with no real source.

What I notice across the case file Which item changes your first reaction most?

What the evidence can hold up

Two claims are in play: the flood and the image. Sort each piece of evidence under the claim it actually bears on. What would settle either one?

Evidence	Claim 1 The courtyard flooded today.	Claim 2 The image was generated by AI.
1 The image shows water in a courtyard, with no date or source		
2 Facilities alerts page at 3:10 p.m.: no active alerts		
3 Secondhand report of water near the library		
4 An odd hand and a 12% detector score		

Still open

- The image’s earliest source and date

Words that do the work

Provenance
Procedencia
Information about where a file came from and how it was handled.

Corroboration
Corroboración
Independent evidence that supports a claim from another direction.

Verification note
Nota de verificación
A short public note saying what was checked, what was found and what remains unknown.

Burden of proof
Carga de la prueba
The idea that whoever makes a claim should supply the evidence for it.

Your thinking Answer the question above in two or three sentences.

One student's draft

Write the verification note Jordy posts instead of the image, plus a short explanation of your choices.

Verification note: We've seen the courtyard flood picture going around. We checked the campus facilities alerts page at 3:10 and it shows no flooding today¹, and we couldn't find who posted the image first². The picture is fake, so please ignore it.³ Check the official alerts page before you change plans. Why I wrote it this way: I didn't repost the image because people would share it without reading the note. I listed what we checked so followers can check it too. The hand in the picture also looks weird, which shows it was made with AI⁴.

- 1** Strong: a named source and a time, so followers can check it themselves.
- 2** Honest about a gap in provenance, which is part of what was checked.
- 3** Revise: the evidence shows the flood is unconfirmed, not that the image is fake. It could be a real photo from another day or place.
- 4** Revise: an odd detail is a reason to look closer, not proof. Visual clues and detectors both have error rates.

Works well Uses evidence Gap to fix Think about the reader

One revision

Before

The picture is fake, so please ignore it.

After

We can't confirm the flood, so we're not sharing the image as news, and we'll update here by 6 p.m.

The revision reports exactly what the evidence supports and gives followers a time to check back, instead of a verdict the crew can't defend.

Your turn: revise one line Pick one highlighted line and rewrite it so it does its job better.

AP Seminar

Individual written argument on “Can we still trust what we see?”, using a stimulus packet.**Use**

Stimulus: NIST overview, Adobe’s labeled examples, one journalism verification guide and one psychology article on belief.

You’ll make

Individual written argument, 1,200–1,500 words

Thesis A claim someone could reasonably disagree with

Done when

- ☐ Clear research question
- ☐ Evaluates technical, journalistic and psychological perspectives
- ☐ Original synthesis
- ☐ Feasible norm proposed

Reason 1: claim, evidence, commentary

Reason 2: claim, evidence, commentary

Need a boost?

- Stimulus annotation
- Perspective map
- Argument outline

The strongest counterargument, and your answer

Why it matters beyond this case



Prefer typing? Scan to do this in the online workspace.

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The paper has rounded corners and a dark blue border. There are ten evenly spaced horizontal lines across the page, creating nine rows for writing. The paper is completely blank, with no handwriting or other markings.