Archive Detective

Student worksheet | Read each set of fictional records. Choose one answer and cite the clue that decides it.

The new sign

The edge of an undated shop photograph includes a freshly painted sign.

Negative sleeve

A single exposure shows the shop with the new green sign already in place.

Painter’s daybook

The old sign came down on April 5. The green sign was installed on April 6.

Receipt

On April 12 the shopkeeper received a print from this very negative.

What is the narrowest supported window for the exposure?

- ☐ April 5–6
- ☐ April 6–12
- ☐ April 12 only

Evidence for this answer _____

An envelope used twice

A collector kept a note and two envelopes, but only one travelled with the original.

Note

“I wrote this the morning after the choir concert.”

Choir programme

The concert took place on December 8.

Later envelope

A collector mailed a photocopy of the note to a friend on January 12.

Which date belongs to the writing of the original note?

- ☐ December 8
- ☐ January 12
- ☐ December 9

Evidence for this answer _____

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The unpunched ferry ticket

A ferry ticket has no date. Its serial number and printed fare survive.

Ticket
Serial 1274. Fare 8 cents. The boarding punch is empty.

Stock ledger
The printer produced serials 1200–1299 on March 4.

Fare notice
The 8-cent fare was in force March 5–18. Unused tickets stayed in stock after that.

What can the archive establish about this particular ticket?

- ☐ It was printed on March 4.
- ☐ It was used on March 5.
- ☐ It was used by March 18.

Evidence for this answer _____

The printer’s corrected map

Three sheets survive from a printer’s map of a fictional harbour.

Proof A
The inlet is labelled “Heron Bya.”

Correction slip
“Correct Bya to Bay after Proof A.”

Sheet B
The label reads “Heron Bay.” The printer identified it as a pull made from the corrected plate.

Which order is actually established?

- ☐ Sheet B came before Proof A.
- ☐ Proof A came before Sheet B.
- ☐ Both were pulled on the same day.

Evidence for this answer _____

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The album print

A print has a laboratory date on the back. The original negative survives separately.

Family album
A copy print bears a September 14 processing stamp.

Negative register
The same portrait is visible in a contact sheet developed August 7.

Studio card
The sitter first entered this studio on July 28, and this portrait was made during one of their visits.

When could the camera exposure have happened?

- ☐ September 14 only
- ☐ August 8–September 14
- ☐ July 28–August 7

Evidence for this answer _____

Two clocks in one photograph

A station clock and a platform clock disagree in a single exposure.

Platform dial
The platform clock reads 4:10.

Booking hall dial
Through the window, the booking-hall clock reads 4:24.

Repair notebook
One clock was running 14 minutes fast. The notebook does not identify it or say whether the other showed the correct time.

Which statement can a caption make with confidence?

- ☐ The two displayed times differ by 14 minutes.
- ☐ The photograph was taken at exactly 4:10.
- ☐ The photograph was taken at exactly 4:24.

Evidence for this answer _____

Archive Detective

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The second performance

A visitor's note describes a performance without giving the date.

Theatre card

This production ran on November 12, 14 and 16 only.

Stage log

The painted moon cracked after the November 12 performance. It was replaced before the November 16 performance.

Visitor's note

"At tonight's performance, the moon still had that crack."

Which performance fits all three records?

- ☐ November 12
- ☐ November 14
- ☐ November 16

Evidence for this answer _____

Three witnesses or one?

Three accounts give exactly the same launch date. An editor asks how many independent observations survive.

Harbour diary

A witness wrote "the boat launched on June 3" beside a sketch made that morning.

Gazette clipping

The article states that it took its date from the harbour diary.

Museum label

The label cites the Gazette as its only source for the date.

How many independent observations of the launch date are represented?

- ☐ Three
- ☐ Two
- ☐ One

Evidence for this answer _____

Archive Detective

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The undated field letter

A letter says the previous day was market day. Two market days fall inside the possible interval.

Field letter

“Yesterday was market day.”

Market ledger

Markets actually took place on May 3 and May 10, with no other markets in May.

Folder note

Independent evidence establishes that the letter was written between May 1 and May 15, inclusive.

What set of dates should the cataloguer retain?

- ☐ May 4 or May 11
- ☐ Every date from May 4 to May 11
- ☐ May 3 or May 10

Evidence for this answer _____

Compare two cases

Choose a case where the evidence supports one date and another where several dates are possible. Name the record that limits each answer. What extra evidence would let you narrow the second one?