Short Research Projects

Name: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

A short Grade 6 research project (1) starts with a FOCUSED, OPEN question (not too broad, not too narrow), (2) uses MULTIPLE CREDIBLE SOURCES (not just one), (3) refocuses the question as the researcher learns more, and (4) draws conclusions from the sources rather than from personal opinion. A topic word ('volcanoes') is not a question; a yes/no factual question is too narrow.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Three research situations

SITUATION A - Yusuf is starting a one-week research project. His teacher assigned the broad topic 'energy.' Yusuf must NARROW the topic into a focused, researchable question.

SITUATION B - Mira is researching how community gardens affect neighborhoods. She has found five possible sources and must decide which are credible enough to use.

SITUATION C - Owen has a research question (What factors help honeybee colonies survive cold winters?) and is comparing notes from three sources. He has to keep his notes on the question and refocus when needed.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Read each research situation and choose the BEST option.

1. Which research question is BEST for Yusuf's one-week project?

A. Is energy real?

B. Everything about energy.

C. How does solar power compare to wind power for heating a single-family home in the northeastern United States?

D. What is the largest power plant on Earth?

2. Yusuf also considered the question *Is energy important?* Why is this NOT a strong research question?

A. The question is missing the word *important*.

B. The question is too BROAD and the answer is obvious - there is no real research to do.

C. The question is too long for a one-week project.

D. The question is informal and uses slang.

3. Mira is comparing five sources for her community-garden topic. Which is the MOST CREDIBLE?

A. A 2024 peer-reviewed article in the Journal of Urban Health on community gardens and physical activity.

B. A short comment on a video that says, 'Gardens are awesome - trust me.'

C. An anonymous blog post titled 'My 10 Favorite Gardens!!!' with no author listed.

D. An advertisement for a seed company that claims their tomatoes will revitalize any neighborhood.

4. Mira found two CREDIBLE sources that agree community gardens improve neighborhood food security. Why is using BOTH still a good idea?

A. Two sources are required by law for school projects.

B. Two sources will make the paper exactly twice as long.

C. Independent credible sources that agree STRENGTHEN the evidence and let her CROSS-CHECK facts she will include in her own writing.

D. Two sources mean she only needs to read one of them.

5. Owen's research question is: *What factors help honeybee colonies survive cold winters?* Which note from a source is OFF TOPIC?

A. Worker bees seal cracks in the hive with a sticky substance called propolis to keep cold drafts out.

B. Honey on a piece of warm toast tastes especially good in winter.

C. Bees cluster tightly around the queen and shiver their flight muscles to warm the center of the hive.

D. Beekeepers in cold regions sometimes wrap hives in insulating fabric to help colonies survive.

6. Halfway through the project, Owen realizes most of his strongest evidence is about how bees PREPARE for winter (gathering honey, sealing cracks) rather than what they do once winter has begun. What is the BEST move?

A. Ignore the new pattern and keep the original question exactly as written.

B. Throw out all of his notes and start a completely new project.

C. REFOCUS the question to better match what the sources actually show - for example, *How do honeybee colonies PREPARE for cold winters?*

D. Add fake notes that fit the original question.

7. Mira is choosing between two sources on community gardens. Source 1 is a peer-reviewed 2023 article in an urban-health journal. Source 2 is a magazine column from 1996. Which is BEST?

A. Source 2, because older sources are always more reliable than new ones.

B. Whichever source uses more pictures.

C. Source 1, because it is RECENT and PEER-REVIEWED in a TOPIC-SPECIFIC journal.

D. Neither - only print books may be used for school research.

8. Yusuf narrows his topic to *How does solar power compare to wind power for heating a single-family home?* Which is the BEST FIRST STEP after writing the question?

A. Write the whole report from memory before reading anything.

B. Skim two or three credible sources to see what they cover and to start a notes page.

C. Switch to a brand-new topic in case this one doesn't work out.

D. Wait until the night before the project is due to begin.

9. Yusuf wants help narrowing the broad topic 'food.' Write ONE FOCUSED, OPEN research question he could use for a one-week project. The question must be specific enough to investigate AND open-ended enough to require research.

_____

_____

10. Name TWO different KINDS of credible sources Yusuf could use to research his question, and explain in ONE sentence why EACH is credible.

_____

_____

Answer Keys

1	A	B	**C**	D	6	A	B	**C**	D
2	A	**B**	C	D	7	A	B	**C**	D
3	**A**	B	C	D	8	A	**B**	C	D
4	A	B	**C**	D	9	See below			
5	A	**B**	C	D	10	See below			

Explanations

1. C	C is FOCUSED (one comparison, one use, one region), OPEN (it requires real research, not a yes/no), and reasonably scoped for one week. A is too narrow and yes/no answerable. B is a topic, not a question. D has a single-fact answer.
2. B	*Is energy important?* has an obvious yes answer; no real research is needed. B names that problem. A is false (the word IS there). C is wrong (it's short). D is wrong (no slang).
3. A	A is recent, peer-reviewed, in a topic-specific journal, and from a named publication - the strongest credibility markers. B is unsourced opinion. C is anonymous and informal. D is an ad with a sales motive.
4. C	C names the real reason: cross-checking facts and corroborating evidence is a core research practice. A is false. B confuses sources with length. D contradicts the purpose of using multiple sources.
5. B	B is a tasty fact about HONEY ON TOAST, not about COLONY SURVIVAL. A, C, and D each describe a real winter-survival mechanism that helps answer Owen's question.
6. C	C names a real research move: when sources point to a slightly different focus, careful researchers REFOCUS the question rather than forcing the evidence. A wastes the work he has done. B discards everything for no reason. D is dishonest.
7. C	C names two real credibility markers (recent and peer-reviewed) plus a third (topic-specific journal). A is the opposite of true - newness can matter. B is irrelevant. D is false.
8. B	B is the real next step: gather a small set of credible sources, skim for relevance, and start organizing notes. A skips research. C abandons the work. D is a planning failure.
9.	**Answer:** Examples: (1) How do school breakfast programs affect attendance for sixth-grade students in urban districts? (2) Why have so many U.S. school cafeterias added plant-based meal options since 2015? (3) How does food packaging affect how much food is wasted in middle-school cafeterias? Accept any QUESTION that (a) ends with a question mark, (b) is OPEN (not answered by a single fact or yes/no), (c) is FOCUSED on a specific group, place, or angle, and (d) requires real research to answer. NOT acceptable: 'What is food?', 'Is food important?', a single-word topic, or a question with an obvious one-fact answer.

10.	**Answer:** Examples: (1) A peer-reviewed research article (e.g., in a nutrition journal) - credible because experts in the field check it before it is published. (2) A government agency website (e.g., USDA) - credible because it is written and updated by federal nutrition experts. (3) A nonprofit health organization (e.g., American Heart Association) - credible because its publications are reviewed by doctors and researchers. (4) A reputable news outlet's reporting (e.g., NPR, The New York Times) - credible because reporters follow editorial standards and cite sources. Accept any TWO DIFFERENT KINDS of credible sources (not two of the same type) with a one-sentence credibility reason for EACH that names a real reason (expert review, government oversight, professional editing, named author with credentials). NOT acceptable: two random websites with no credibility reason, two of the same kind, or 'because it sounds true.'

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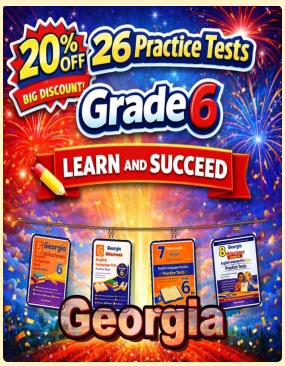

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