READING COMPREHENSION

C1 | Adults / Teens | Reading + Vocabulary | 45-60 minutes
Topic: Education | Skills: Reading, Vocabulary, Speaking

Read the text carefully. Then answer the questions on Page 2.

The Case for an Unfinished Map

When the town archive invited residents to **annotate** a digital map, the organisers anticipated corrections: a street renamed, a demolished cinema located more precisely, a photograph assigned its proper date. They were less prepared for disagreements that could not be resolved by checking a document. One former resident remembered a square as a welcoming meeting place. Another recalled being warned not to enter it.

The first design required a single approved description for each location. This made the map easy to navigate but pushed conflicting memories into a queue labelled "awaiting **verification**". Some could indeed be verified. A shop had either occupied a particular building or it had not. Others concerned experiences whose **divergence** was itself historically revealing. Treating them as faulty versions of one account risked losing what the project had been established to collect.

An alternative design allowed several accounts to appear together, each with a date and a brief explanation of its source. Critics worried that this would surrender the archive's responsibility to distinguish reliable claims from invention. Their objection could not simply be dismissed as hostility to participation. A familiar story, repeatedly posted, might acquire authority through repetition rather than evidence.

The archivists therefore separated factual corrections, **attributed** recollections and unresolved claims. They explained why an item had been placed in a category and allowed those decisions to be challenged. This created more work, not less. It also meant that some locations remained visibly incomplete, which disappointed funders hoping for a finished product at the launch.

The map became useful in a way the original plan had not anticipated. Students could compare not only accounts of a place but the kinds of evidence on which those accounts rested. Its gaps were not all virtues: some reflected communities the archive had still failed to reach. Yet erasing every sign of uncertainty would have produced a smoother interface, but a less honest history.

An unfinished map need not be an uncritical one. The task is to make uncertainty intelligible, while continuing the work that might reduce it.

Key vocabulary

annotate - add explanatory notes or comments

verification - the process of checking whether a claim is accurate

divergence - a difference or movement apart between accounts or views

attributed - identified as coming from a particular source

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

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Answer in complete sentences. Support interpretations with evidence from the text.

1. Why could some conflicting memories not be settled by documentary checks?

2. How did the first interface shape the treatment of disagreement?

3. What valid concern did critics raise about multiple accounts?

4. How did the revised map retain an evaluative role?

5. Why does the writer warn that not every gap was a virtue?

6. What distinction underlies the final paragraph?

Discuss with a partner

- How should an archive display two sincere but conflicting memories?
- When does a simple interface make information misleading?

ANSWER KEY

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Suggested full-sentence answers. Accept other supported interpretations where appropriate.

1. Why could some conflicting memories not be settled by documentary checks?
Some described different lived experiences of the same place rather than mutually exclusive factual claims.

2. How did the first interface shape the treatment of disagreement?
Its requirement for one approved account classified conflicting memories as problems awaiting verification.

3. What valid concern did critics raise about multiple accounts?
They warned that unsupported stories could gain authority through repetition if the archive abandoned critical evaluation.

4. How did the revised map retain an evaluative role?
It categorised claims by type, explained decisions and allowed challenges instead of presenting all accounts as equivalent.

5. Why does the writer warn that not every gap was a virtue?
Some gaps reflected failures to reach particular communities rather than productive or unavoidable uncertainty.

6. What distinction underlies the final paragraph?
The paragraph distinguishes acknowledging uncertainty from abandoning standards for assessing evidence.

Teaching notes

Read once for the main idea, then reread for evidence. Compare answers before discussing the two open questions. Interpretive answers may vary; ask learners to justify their reading.

Language and reading focus: Distinguishing categories of claims; concession and epistemic uncertainty.

Text: Original commentary using a fictional scenario. Discussion questions have no fixed answers.