

CLAIM TESTING – EVIDENCE

1. What kinds of evidence did Wegener have to support his theory of continental drift?

Sample answer: The shapes of the continents, which fit together like puzzle pieces; the similarities of geographic features on the “edges” of where those puzzle pieces meet; and fossil evidence.

2. What kinds of evidence did Hess have to support the theory of continental drift?

Sample answer: He used sonar to study the ocean floor, eventually leading to the discovery that the sea floor is made up of all kinds of landforms, including mountains, valleys, and even volcanoes.

3. As you know, people believed Hess and not Wegener. Was Hess’s evidence really that much better?

Sample answer: Answers will vary. Some students might assert that Wegener’s puzzle-piece assertion is really based on logic rather than evidence, but overall, they both had really good evidence.

4. Imagine that Hess and Wegener had equally good evidence – did people see Hess as an authority, but not Wegener?

Sample answer: Wegener was a meteorologist, not a geologist, so no matter what it’s unlikely that his theory would have been accepted. Although an authority in meteorology, he was not considered an authority in the field of geology at the time, which may have made it more difficult for others to trust his evidence. In other words, Hess was a more credible source of information about geology than Wegener.

5. Now that you’ve considered a variety of factors that influence what people decide to believe, revisit the claim you’re testing as part of this activity: “Evidence is the best of the four claim testers.” Explain why your group believes this claim is either true, false, or if you need more information or context to respond to the claim.

Sample answer: Answers will vary. Ultimately, students should draw the conclusion that no single claim tester is the best – it depends on the context, the situation, and the actual claim being made.



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