

RECURSO GRATIS • NIVEL PRINCIPIANTE

La fotografía del puente

A B1 mystery about an old photograph, an incomplete public record, and a contribution nearly forgotten.

EVIDENCE

MEMORY

RECOGNITION

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ANTES DE LEER

Prepare to read

Elena finds a photograph of her grandfather beside an unknown woman at a bridge dedication. The official history names him—but says nothing about her.

Think before you read

Why might a photograph preserve information that an official document leaves out?

Reading goal

Notice vocabulary for investigation and historical evidence. Separate confirmed facts, reasonable interpretations, and unsupported assumptions.

THE STORY · PART 1

The woman beside the engineer

Elena discovered the photograph inside a library book donated by her grandfather. It showed the Stone Creek Bridge on the day it opened in 1978.

Her grandfather, Rafael Torres, stood near the center wearing a dark suit. He had been a county engineer, and a metal **plaque** on the bridge still listed his name.

Beside him stood a woman in work boots holding a rolled set of plans. Someone had drawn a small star above her head.

On the back, Rafael had written: 'The person who kept the bridge standing before it was built.' No name appeared.

Elena asked her mother, who recognized several officials but not the woman. One relative suggested she was Rafael's secretary. Another confidently called her a reporter.

Elena disliked how quickly everyone created an answer without **evidence**. She scanned the photograph and visited the county archive.

The bridge file contained engineering reports, newspaper articles, and photographs from the dedication. Most documents credited Rafael with revising the design after a dangerous winter flood.

One technical drawing, however, carried two sets of **initials**: RT and IM.

In the corner, a handwritten note mentioned a 'revised foundation angle based on field observations.'

Elena searched employee records for anyone with the initials IM, but the archive's digital database began in 1982.

THE STORY · PART 2

Following the missing name

A retired archivist suggested checking payroll books stored in the courthouse basement. There Elena found Isabel Morales, listed as a temporary field **technician**.

Isabel had worked for the county for only nine months. Her job title did not explain why her initials appeared on structural drawings.

Elena located an old newspaper photograph of workers measuring erosion after the flood. The same woman stood in the river wearing tall boots.

A caption identified every man but described her only as ‘an assistant.’

Through a community group, Elena contacted Isabel's son, Tomás. He owned several boxes of his mother's papers but had never organized them.

Inside one box was a notebook filled with water measurements, sketches, and calculations. Isabel had observed that the proposed foundation faced the strongest current at a dangerous **angle**.

She recommended rotating it and extending one support deeper into the riverbank. Rafael's later report included the same recommendation almost word for word.

Tomás immediately accused Rafael of stealing the idea. Elena felt defensive, but the documents did not yet prove what had happened.

Then they found a letter Rafael had written to the county board. He requested that Isabel receive an engineering position and formal **credit** for the revision.

The board had rejected the request because she lacked a state engineering license. Rafael's final report named her, but a later summary removed the reference.

Repairing the record

The discovery did not create a simple hero and villain. Rafael had supported Isabel, but his name still benefited from work the public attributed entirely to him.

Isabel later earned her license in another state and designed irrigation systems. She rarely discussed the Stone Creek Bridge with her family.

Elena and Tomás presented the documents to the county history committee. Some members worried that changing the plaque would suggest the original bridge record was dishonest.

Elena argued that historical **accuracy** was not an accusation. New evidence gave the county a chance to make the record more complete.

After several meetings, the county installed a second plaque recognizing Isabel's field research and design recommendation. The library also updated its digital **archive** with both families' documents.

At the ceremony, Elena displayed the original photograph. The star above Isabel's head remained unexplained.

Tomás believed Rafael had drawn it. Elena thought Isabel might have marked the photograph herself. They had no evidence for either theory, so the label simply read: 'Photographer and annotation unknown.'

Elena appreciated that sentence. Their investigation had answered the important question without pretending to solve every detail.

The bridge itself had always depended on Isabel's observation, whether the plaque admitted it or not. Recognition could not return the opportunities she had lost, but it could change what future visitors learned.

As Elena crossed the river, she understood that history was not fixed behind glass. Like a bridge, it required inspection—and sometimes repair.

The past does not change when we discover new evidence. Our responsibility to tell it honestly does.

Words for evidence and the past

plaque	placa
evidence	evidencia / pruebas
initials	iniciales
technician	técnico/a
angle	ángulo
credit	reconocimiento / crédito
accuracy	exactitud
archive	archivo
annotation	anotación
recognition	reconocimiento

COMPREHENSION

Follow the evidence

A. Choose the best answer

1. Where does Elena find the photograph? a) In a library book b) Under the bridge c) In the archive
2. What do the initials IM lead Elena to? a) A reporter b) Isabel Morales c) Her mother
3. What did Isabel recommend? a) Closing the bridge b) Moving the road c) Changing the foundation angle
4. Why was Isabel denied an engineering position? a) She lacked a license b) She moved away c) Rafael objected

B. Evidence or assumption?

1. Rafael drew the star above Isabel. EVIDENCE / ASSUMPTION
2. Isabel's recommendation appears in Rafael's report. EVIDENCE / ASSUMPTION
3. The board rejected Rafael's request. EVIDENCE / ASSUMPTION

C. Write

Write a short archive label for the photograph. Include two confirmed facts and clearly identify one unanswered question.

ANSWER KEY

Review and reflect

A. 1. a 2. b 3. c 4. a

B. 1. Assumption 2. Evidence 3. Evidence

Sample archive label

County engineer Rafael Torres and field technician Isabel Morales stand at the Stone Creek Bridge dedication in 1978. Morales's measurements and design recommendation contributed to the revised foundation. The person who drew the star above Morales remains unknown.

Think further

A corrected record does not require replacing one simple hero with another. It can show how collaboration, unequal opportunities, and later editing shaped the history people inherited.

KEEP GOING

Discuss: Is correcting an incomplete history the same as judging the past?