Voices for Safety

How workers and reformers helped change factory laws

SS24.5.3b "Summarize the role of labor unions and reformers in changing laws governing working conditions."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two actions unions took, circle two actions reformers took, and put a star beside one safety rule lawmakers passed.

After the Triangle Fire

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. Workers made shirts on high floors of the building. Some exit doors were locked, and a fire escape collapsed. The fire killed 146 workers, most of them young women. The disaster drew attention to dangers that many factory workers faced every day, not only during fires.

2. Before the fire, clothing workers had formed labor unions to speak with one voice. In 1909, thousands went on strike for better pay, shorter hours, and safer shops. Union members held meetings and shared their demands with the public. After the fire, unions joined calls for stronger safety rules. Their group action helped keep workers' needs in the news and before lawmakers.

3. Reformers, people who worked to fix problems, also pushed for change. Frances Perkins saw the fire and urged leaders to protect workers. Other reformers investigated dangerous workplaces and shared what they found with lawmakers. New York lawmakers passed laws requiring fire drills and better exits. Unions brought workers' demands to the public, while reformers gave leaders evidence of danger. Both groups helped turn concern into laws that made factories safer.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did clothing workers use unions to push for better working conditions?

2. How did reformers help lawmakers understand the need for safer factories?

3. How did unions and reformers each help turn concern after the fire into new laws?

4. What did the new laws require, and how did those rules address workers' concerns?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine bakery workers breathe flour dust all day and often cough. Write three sentences explaining one action a union could take, one action a reformer could take, and a safety law their efforts might help pass.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two actions unions took, circle two actions reformers took, and put a star beside one safety rule lawmakers passed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did clothing workers use unions to push for better working conditions?	**They went on strike, held meetings, shared their demands with the public, and called for stronger safety rules.**
2	How did reformers help lawmakers understand the need for safer factories?	**They investigated dangerous workplaces, shared their findings with lawmakers, and urged leaders to protect workers.**
3	How did unions and reformers each help turn concern after the fire into new laws?	**Unions kept workers' demands before the public and lawmakers. Reformers provided evidence of danger and urged leaders to act.**
4	What did the new laws require, and how did those rules address workers' concerns?	**The laws required fire drills and better exits, which addressed dangers workers faced in factory fires.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Bakery workers could form a union and ask for cleaner air at work. A reformer could measure the flour dust and tell lawmakers how it affects workers. Together, they could push for a law requiring bakery owners to use equipment that removes dust from the air.

Accept other passage-supported descriptions of how unions and reformers influenced lawmakers. For Your Turn, accept a plausible union action, reformer action, and law that addresses flour dust, stated in three sentences.