What Remains

How preservation shapes memory of the Triangle fire

SS24.HS.3 "Explain how historic preservation has been or can be used to impact historical memory of the subject. 3a Describe different methods of historical preservation, and identify examples of these methods."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one example of each of the three preservation methods in the passage. Circle two sentences that explain how a method affects what people remember.

Remembering the Triangle Fire

1 On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. The factory occupied the top floors of the Asch Building, where workers made women's blouses. One hundred forty-six workers died, many of them young immigrant women. Today the building still stands and is used by New York University. Keeping the structure, rather than replacing it, lets people visit the place where the disaster occurred. Yet the building alone cannot explain whose lives were lost or what unsafe working conditions meant for those workers. A passerby might see only another university building.

2 Preserving records offers another way to remember the fire. Newspapers from 1911, photographs, and testimony from survivors and witnesses remain available in archives. These sources can show how workers and onlookers described the event, rather than leaving only the owners' version of the story. Records also require careful reading: a newspaper may emphasize dramatic scenes while overlooking ordinary working conditions. Researchers have used such evidence to identify victims and investigate the fire's causes. When archives make these materials available, students and visitors can ask whose experiences earlier accounts neglected.

3 In 2023, a memorial was dedicated at the former factory building. It displays the names and ages of the 146 people who died. Naming individuals can change public memory: instead of treating the fire as a number, visitors encounter people with distinct lives. The memorial also draws attention to the site, which someone could otherwise pass without noticing. Unlike an old document, a new memorial is a choice made by people today about what deserves public attention. Preserving the building, protecting records, and creating a memorial together offer more than one way to remember a tragedy.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How can keeping the former factory building affect what visitors remember, and what can the building alone not explain?

2. How can archived accounts change a history of the fire that tells only the owners' side?

3. Why might the memorial's names and ages shape public memory differently from a death toll alone?

4. Why might a historian use both archived records and the memorial instead of relying on either one alone?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a historical event or place other than the Triangle fire. Propose two different preservation methods and explain how each could shape what future people remember, including one gap or bias they might leave.

ANSWER KEY

What Remains

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.HS.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one example of each of the three preservation methods in the passage. Circle two sentences that explain how a method affects what people remember. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How can keeping the former factory building affect what visitors remember, and what can the building alone not explain?	**Visitors can stand where the fire occurred, but the building alone cannot explain whose lives were lost or what unsafe conditions meant for workers.**
2	How can archived accounts change a history of the fire that tells only the owners' side?	**Survivor and witness accounts add workers' and onlookers' descriptions of the event.**
3	Why might the memorial's names and ages shape public memory differently from a death toll alone?	**They present the victims as individuals with distinct lives, not just as a number.**
4	Why might a historian use both archived records and the memorial instead of relying on either one alone?	**Records provide accounts and evidence for investigating the fire. The memorial makes the victims' names visible to people at the site.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

For the 1960 Greensboro sit-ins, I would preserve part of the lunch counter so visitors could picture where students challenged segregation. I would also collect interviews with participants to preserve their reasons for protesting and their memories of the experience. The counter might draw attention to the four students who began the sit-ins while obscuring the many others who helped sustain them.

Accept supported explanations that connect a preservation method to its effect on historical memory. For the open task, look for two distinct methods and a plausible gap or bias.