Evidence in the Fire

Compare what three records can and cannot reveal

SS24.HS.4b "Compare and contrast the types of evidence provided by various primary sources."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail each record provides, then circle one limit of each record. Number the records 1, 2, and 3 so you can compare them in your answers.

Three Views of a Factory Fire

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City killed 146 workers. Imagine studying three records created near the time of the fire. The first is a survivor's sworn account given days later. She describes smoke filling a workroom and says she turned toward a stairway but could not move through the crowd. Her account puts a person's fear and choices into the record. Yet she could report only what she saw from her part of the building, and several days had passed before she spoke.

2. The second record is a newspaper article printed the next morning. Its reporter describes smoke pouring from upper windows and people gathering in the street. The article also includes statements from two witnesses who watched the upper floors. The reporter could see what happened outside, but not every room upstairs. Readers receive the witnesses' statements through the reporter, who selected and shortened them. The survivor and the reporter both noticed smoke, but they observed it from different places. Their records may support the same broad claim while offering different details about what happened.

3. The third record is a payroll ledger kept by the factory before the fire. Its dated entries list workers' names, weekly wages, and days paid. Those entries can help a researcher study employment and pay, topics neither the survivor nor the street reporter could fully document. The ledger does not describe the fire itself. A name in it would not prove that person was at work when the fire began. Each record captures something close to the event, but each also leaves questions that require another kind of source.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the survivor's account and the newspaper article provide different evidence about the smoke?

2. Which would better support a claim about weekly wages, the survivor's account or the ledger? Compare what each records.

3. Compare one limit of the survivor's account with one limit of the newspaper article as evidence about events inside the factory.

4. Could the ledger or the survivor's account prove that a worker named in the ledger was present when the fire began? Compare what each could show.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Ask a new question about the factory that these records do not fully answer. In 4 to 5 sentences, compare what two records could contribute, explain what both leave unknown, and name another kind of primary source you would seek.

ANSWER KEY

Evidence in the Fire

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.HS.4b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail each record provides, then circle one limit of each record. Number the records 1, 2, and 3 so you can compare them in your answers. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the survivor's account and the newspaper article provide different evidence about the smoke?	**The survivor describes smoke inside a workroom. The newspaper reporter describes smoke coming from upper windows, as seen from outside.**
2	Which would better support a claim about weekly wages, the survivor's account or the ledger? Compare what each records.	**The ledger is better because it lists weekly wages. The survivor's account records her experience during the fire, not workers' pay.**
3	Compare one limit of the survivor's account with one limit of the newspaper article as evidence about events inside the factory.	**The survivor could describe only her part of the building. The reporter could not see every room upstairs and selected and shortened the witnesses' statements.**
4	Could the ledger or the survivor's account prove that a worker named in the ledger was present when the fire began? Compare what each could show.	**No. The ledger shows the worker's name and pay records, not whether the worker was present then. The survivor describes a crowd in her part of the building but does not identify that worker.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would ask how workers reached safety through the roof. The survivor's account describes a crowded stairway, which suggests one route was difficult but does not show who reached the roof. The newspaper article reports observations from the street, but its reporter could not see every route upstairs. Neither record shows what happened on the roof, so I would seek testimony from a worker who escaped that way.

Accept comparisons that distinguish what a source records from what a researcher might infer. For Part 3, the new source should be a record made by someone involved at the time, not a later summary.