History on Display

Judge how an exhibit presents and supports a historical conclusion.

SS24.HS.9 "Present and defend the results of their interpretations and conclusions. 9a Describe ways in which public historians present history to audiences..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one conclusion about the fire, number the three presentation methods, and circle one limitation of each method. Use your marks to judge how well each method communicates the conclusion.

Telling the Triangle Factory Story

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. The factory occupied upper floors of the Asch Building, and 146 workers died. Many were young immigrant women. Investigators heard testimony that a ninth-floor exit door was locked during the fire. Public historians use investigation testimony and contemporary news reports to interpret the disaster, but these sources do not record every worker's experience. An exhibit should therefore explain how unsafe escape routes increased the danger while making clear whose accounts survive and where the evidence has limits.

2. For a proposed museum exhibit, a curator considers a wall display with short excerpts from investigation testimony beside brief source labels. Visitors could compare accounts and see which statements support the curator's conclusion about dangerous exits. Reading the labels also helps them distinguish a witness's words from the curator's interpretation. However, visitors moving quickly through a crowded gallery may skip even well-chosen excerpts. The curator could print a brief summary in several languages, then offer longer excerpts for visitors who want to examine the evidence more closely.

3. A recorded audio tour offers another approach. Actors could read documented testimony, with narration identifying the original speaker and explaining that the voice is a modern performance. This can make an account easier to follow, but an actor's tone may suggest feelings the source does not establish. An online exhibit could let distant visitors examine scans of records and check citations themselves. Yet large files can be difficult to open with a slow connection. Text transcripts and smaller files would improve access. In either format, the historian must explain why the evidence supports a conclusion rather than simply deliver a dramatic story.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could a historian use the investigation testimony to defend the exhibit's conclusion about escape routes? What should the historian avoid claiming?

2. For visitors who have only a few minutes in a gallery, evaluate the wall display. Give one strength and one weakness from the passage.

3. How might the audio tour help visitors understand an account, and what must the historian make clear about its recording?

4. Which method best serves someone who cannot visit the museum but has internet access? Evaluate one access problem and a solution from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Design a two-stop traveling exhibit for students at a school. In 80 to 100 words, state a conclusion about the fire, give each stop a different presentation method, cite one piece of evidence from the passage, and defend how your stops serve students while addressing one limitation.

ANSWER KEY

History on Display

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.HS.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one conclusion about the fire, number the three presentation methods, and circle one limitation of each method. Use your marks to judge how well each method communicates the conclusion. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could a historian use the investigation testimony to defend the exhibit's conclusion about escape routes? What should the historian avoid claiming?	**Testimony that a ninth-floor exit door was locked supports the conclusion that unsafe escape routes increased the danger. The historian should not claim that the surviving testimony records every worker's experience.**
2	For visitors who have only a few minutes in a gallery, evaluate the wall display. Give one strength and one weakness from the passage.	**Source labels help visitors connect testimony to the curator's conclusion, but visitors in a hurry may skip the excerpts.**
3	How might the audio tour help visitors understand an account, and what must the historian make clear about its recording?	**Hearing documented testimony read aloud can make it easier to follow. The historian must identify the voice as a modern actor's performance, not the original speaker's voice.**
4	Which method best serves someone who cannot visit the museum but has internet access? Evaluate one access problem and a solution from the passage.	**The online exhibit lets a distant visitor examine records and citations. Large files may not open easily on a slow connection, so the historian could provide smaller files.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My exhibit argues that unsafe exits increased the danger at the Triangle factory. At Stop 1, students compare an excerpt of investigation testimony about a locked ninth-floor exit with a curator's summary. A source label helps them separate evidence from interpretation. At Stop 2, students hear an actor read documented testimony and then read a transcript. The recording identifies the actor as a modern performer, since it is not a worker's voice. Short excerpts make both stops manageable during a class visit, while the transcript lets students check what the testimony actually says.

Accept different supported conclusions and presentation methods in the exhibit pitch. Look for a specific connection between evidence and conclusion, a reason each method suits students, and a workable response to one limitation.