

Evidence After Fire

Trace how firsthand accounts and later research build a historical interpretation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 "Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail from Freedman's account, circle one detail from the 1911 report, and number two details from the historian or commission that explain the fire as more than a single event.

The Triangle Fire and Reform

- ① On March 25, 1911, fire broke out at Triangle Waist Company in New York City's Asch Building. The factory occupied the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors, where many employees made women's blouses. Flames spread quickly through cloth scraps and wooden work areas. In a later interview, survivor Rose Freedman recalled workers racing toward elevators as the fire spread. Her account records fear and confusion inside the factory, but it shows only what one witness experienced during the emergency. It does not, by itself, explain whether the danger reflected a larger workplace problem.
- ② Other evidence broadens that view. A 1911 New York Times report stated that some victims could not reach safety because the available routes were overwhelmed or unusable. Decades later, historian David Von Drehle used court records, testimony, and newspaper accounts to argue that the fire exposed dangerous factory conditions that had been tolerated in the growing garment industry. His secondary account does not replace Freedman's interview. Instead, it places her frightening observation within a larger pattern of weak safety practices and public neglect in the city at that time.
- ③ The disaster led to legal and political consequences. The owners, Isaac Harris and Max Blanck, were tried for manslaughter but acquitted. Public anger, however, helped spur investigations by New York's Factory Investigating Commission. The commission documented workplace hazards and recommended changes, and New York later adopted laws addressing fire safety and working conditions. Read together, the witness interview, contemporary report, and historian's interpretation show more than a single tragedy. They reveal how firsthand terror, reported facts, and later research can explain why one fire became a force for reform.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What detail from Freedman's account supports the idea that workers faced immediate danger? Explain what that detail reveals.

2 Why is Freedman's interview useful as a primary source, but limited for explaining the whole disaster? Use details from paragraph 1.

3 What detail from the 1911 New York Times report does Von Drehle's secondary account help explain? Explain the connection.

4 Use two details from paragraph 3 to explain how the passage supports its claim that the fire became a force for reform.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly four sentences explaining how the primary and secondary sources build the passage's whole message. Include one specific detail from Freedman's interview, one from Von Drehle's account, and one detail about the aftermath in paragraph 3.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one detail from Freedman's account, circle one detail from the 1911 report, and number two details from the historian or commission that explain the fire as more than a single event. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What detail from Freedman's account supports the idea that workers faced immediate danger? Explain what that detail reveals.	Freedman recalled workers racing toward elevators as the fire spread. This reveals panic and an urgent search for escape.
2	Why is Freedman's interview useful as a primary source, but limited for explaining the whole disaster? Use details from paragraph 1.	It is useful because it records one survivor's firsthand fear and confusion. It is limited because it shows only one witness's experience and does not explain whether the danger reflected a larger workplace problem.
3	What detail from the 1911 New York Times report does Von Drehle's secondary account help explain? Explain the connection.	The report says available routes were overwhelmed or unusable. Von Drehle connects that problem to tolerated dangerous factory conditions and weak safety practices across the garment industry.
4	Use two details from paragraph 3 to explain how the passage supports its claim that the fire became a force for reform.	Public anger helped spur the Factory Investigating Commission, which documented hazards and recommended changes. New York later adopted laws addressing fire safety and working conditions.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Freedman recalled workers racing toward elevators, revealing the panic of the fire itself. Von Drehle draws on court records, testimony, and newspapers to argue that unsafe conditions had been tolerated across the garment industry. The Factory Investigating Commission documented hazards and recommended changes, while New York later adopted safety and workplace laws. Together, these details show that the fire exposed broad failures and helped create reform.

Accept paraphrased evidence when students accurately identify the source and explain how its detail supports an interpretation. For the open response, look for a clear connection between specific evidence from multiple sources and the passage's larger claim about reform.