

Testimony Under Pressure

Trace how a public argument builds from claim to action.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5 “Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one sentence in each paragraph that most moves the testimony forward. In the margin, label each underlined sentence C for claim, E for evidence, or S for solution, then notice how the labels show the argument’s structure.

Testimony to the Factory Investigating Commission, 1911

- ① Honorable commissioners, I have sewn shirtwaists in New York factories for four years. After the Triangle fire on March 25, 1911, I cannot treat safety as a private matter between an owner and a worker. The doors in our shop are often locked during the day, supposedly to prevent theft or early departures. When hundreds of people work above the street, a locked door can turn a small fire into a disaster. I ask this commission to require unlocked exits and regular inspections in every garment factory.
- ② Owners may say that workers can notice danger before it spreads, but the workroom gives us little chance to do so. Machines stand close together, scraps of cloth collect beneath tables, and the noise of belts and needles can cover an alarm. A foreman may know the stairway is blocked, while the people at the far windows do not. These details matter because a safety rule that exists only on paper protects no one. Inspectors must be able to enter without warning, see the conditions themselves, and order hazards corrected before another emergency.
- ③ I do not offer these examples to blame one foreman or one company alone. The problem is a system that leaves safety to the choice of people who may save money by delaying repairs. For that reason, the commission should make its findings public and recommend laws with clear penalties. Workers will then know what protection to expect, owners will know what duties cannot be ignored, and officials will have a standard to enforce. If the state acts now, the deaths at Triangle can lead to safer workplaces rather than becoming only a sad memory.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 Which sentence in paragraph 1 states the writer’s main request? Explain how its place at the end of the paragraph prepares the reader for the rest of the testimony.

- 2 How does the first sentence of paragraph 2 shape the organization of that paragraph?

- 3 What job does the sentence “These details matter because a safety rule that exists only on paper protects no one” do within paragraph 2?

- 4 How does paragraph 3 change the scale of the argument, and how does that change support the testimony’s conclusion?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write a 120 to 150 word structural analysis of the testimony. Explain the distinct job of each paragraph, quote one sentence from each paragraph, and show how the order of those jobs builds the writer’s argument.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one sentence in each paragraph that most moves the testimony forward. In the margin, label each underlined sentence C for claim, E for evidence, or S for solution, then notice how the labels show the argument's structure. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which sentence in paragraph 1 states the writer's main request? Explain how its place at the end of the paragraph prepares the reader for the rest of the testimony.	"I ask this commission to require unlocked exits and regular inspections in every garment factory." It ends the opening with the central demand that the later paragraphs support.
2	How does the first sentence of paragraph 2 shape the organization of that paragraph?	It introduces an opposing claim, that workers can notice danger, before the paragraph gives details that challenge that claim.
3	What job does the sentence "These details matter because a safety rule that exists only on paper protects no one" do within paragraph 2?	It connects the specific workplace conditions to the writer's point that inspections and enforced rules are necessary.
4	How does paragraph 3 change the scale of the argument, and how does that change support the testimony's conclusion?	It shifts from dangers in one shop to a wider system that allows unsafe choices. This shift supports the call for public findings, laws, penalties, and state action.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Paragraph 1 establishes the speaker's position and audience. Its final sentence, "I ask this commission to require unlocked exits and regular inspections in every garment factory," gives the testimony a clear demand before the evidence begins. Paragraph 2 tests the excuse that workers can simply escape and replaces it with workplace details. The sentence "These details matter because a safety rule that exists only on paper protects no one" turns those details into a reason for inspections. Paragraph 3 widens the argument from one shop to a system. "The problem is a system that leaves safety to the choice of people who may save money by delaying repairs" supports laws and penalties. This order moves from claim, to evidence, to a public solution.

Accept reasonable choices of key sentences when students accurately explain each sentence's structural role. In Part 3, look for analysis of all three paragraphs, accurate quotations, and an explanation of how the sequence develops the argument.