Pressure at the Mills

Read a historical account and trace how details build an argument.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.10 "By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence in each paragraph that you think best advances the author's central idea, then number two details that show how workers built pressure on mill owners.

The Lawrence Textile Strike

1. In January 1912, textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, learned that their weekly pay would drop after a new state law shortened the workweek for women and children. Mill owners reduced wages to match the fewer hours, even though many families already depended on every dollar. Workers from dozens of immigrant communities walked out of the mills. They demanded higher pay, but the strike also exposed a larger conflict: industrial employers treated labor as a cost to control, while workers argued that wages had to cover food, rent, and fuel.

2. The Industrial Workers of the World helped coordinate the walkout, but local workers shaped it through meetings translated into several languages. Strikers formed relief committees, held marches, and sent some children to supporters in other cities when money and food ran short. Authorities responded with arrests and violence. When police stopped a group of children at the Lawrence railroad station, newspapers across the country reported the scene. That publicity made the dispute harder for mill owners to describe as a small, local disturbance and drew national attention to the workers' demands.

3. The strike ended in March after many mill companies agreed to raise wages, although the gains varied and did not solve the insecurity faced by industrial workers. Its importance lies partly in what it revealed about power. Workers with different languages and backgrounds built a common campaign, while their public actions pressured business leaders beyond the negotiating table. Later accounts often call the event the Bread and Roses strike, a phrase that connects basic needs with dignity. The name is memorable, yet the evidence in the strike shows that organization, publicity, and economic pressure helped produce results.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What larger conflict did the Lawrence strike expose, according to the first paragraph?

2. How did translated meetings and relief committees help the strikers continue their campaign? Use details from paragraph 2.

3. Explain how the railroad-station event changed the scale of the dispute.

4. Why does the author contrast the memorable name “Bread and Roses” with the evidence in the final sentence?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence historical annotation. State the passage's central idea, explain how one event from paragraph 2 supports it, and interpret why the final sentence matters. Use at least two precise details from the passage, but do not quote more than five consecutive words.

ANSWER KEY

Pressure at the Mills

HIGH SCHOOL · RH.9-10.10

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence in each paragraph that you think best advances the author's central idea, then number two details that show how workers built pressure on mill owners. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What larger conflict did the Lawrence strike expose, according to the first paragraph?	**It exposed a conflict between employers who treated labor as a cost to control and workers who needed wages high enough to pay for basic living expenses.**
2	How did translated meetings and relief committees help the strikers continue their campaign? Use details from paragraph 2.	**Translated meetings helped workers from different language groups organize together, and relief committees helped support families when money and food were scarce.**
3	Explain how the railroad-station event changed the scale of the dispute.	**Police stopping children at the station became national news, so the strike could no longer be easily described as a small local problem.**
4	Why does the author contrast the memorable name “Bread and Roses” with the evidence in the final sentence?	**The contrast shows that the slogan expresses the workers' goals, but organization, publicity, and economic pressure were the practical forces that helped win results.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Lawrence strike shows that organized workers could challenge mill owners by turning a wage dispute into a public campaign. Translated meetings and the national reporting on children at the railroad station helped workers gain support beyond Lawrence. The final sentence matters because it explains that the strike's results came from deliberate pressure, not from the memorable name alone.

Accept accurate paraphrases supported by specific passage details. For the open response, look for a defensible central idea, an explained paragraph 2 event, and an interpretation of how organization, publicity, or economic pressure contributed to the outcome.