

Three Views, One Fire

Compare firsthand testimony, news reporting, and historical analysis.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9 "Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail from each paragraph and label it P for personal experience, N for news reporting, or H for historical analysis. Circle a phrase in each paragraph that shows what that source focuses on.

The Triangle Fire Through Three Sources

- ① On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Waist Company in New York City. In a later oral-history interview, survivor Rose Freedman described workers rushing toward exits as flames spread. She recalled the fear of women crowding at windows and the shock of seeing people jump. Freedman had worked at the factory, so her account offers a firsthand view from inside the disaster. Yet she spoke more than fifty years later, and her memories focus on what she saw and felt rather than on a complete count of victims or an explanation of the building's safety rules.
- ② Newspapers reported the fire within days. A March 26 New York Times article emphasized numbers and public facts: 146 people died, most of them young immigrant women. It described firefighters' ladders as too short to reach upper floors and reported that bodies lay on the street. The article used observations from officials and reporters, presenting the event as urgent public news. Unlike Freedman's later testimony, the newspaper did not linger on one worker's personal memories. Because it was written immediately, it preserves early information, but some details were gathered quickly during a chaotic event and could later require correction.
- ③ Modern historians use testimony, newspapers, court records, and factory investigations to explain why the fire became so deadly. One history of the disaster notes that the factory occupied the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors of the Asch Building and that locked or difficult-to-open exit doors trapped workers. This secondary account connects the fire to broader conditions, including weak workplace protections and the growth of labor reform. It does not provide the immediate terror in Freedman's words or the Times's breaking-news tone. Instead, it weighs several sources and traces consequences, such as stronger New York workplace safety laws and increased support for garment workers' organizing.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Compare Freedman's oral history with the New York Times article. What kind of evidence does each source emphasize?

2 How does the time when Freedman spoke differ from the time when the Times reported, and how could that difference affect each source?

3 How does the modern historian's treatment of the fire differ from both primary sources? Use one detail from the passage.

4 Which source would best help a reader understand the workers' personal experience, and which would best help a reader understand long-term causes and results? Explain.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a historical event you have studied and locate one primary source and one secondary source about it. Write exactly four sentences: name the event and both sources, explain what each source emphasizes, compare their perspectives or purposes, and explain what using both sources reveals.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one detail from each paragraph and label it P for personal experience, N for news reporting, or H for historical analysis. Circle a phrase in each paragraph that shows what that source focuses on. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare Freedman's oral history with the New York Times article. What kind of evidence does each source emphasize?	Freedman emphasizes personal memories, fear, and what she witnessed. The Times emphasizes public facts, including death totals, firefighters' ladders, and reports from officials and reporters.
2	How does the time when Freedman spoke differ from the time when the Times reported, and how could that difference affect each source?	Freedman spoke more than fifty years after the fire, so her account may center on memory and feeling. The Times reported immediately, so it preserved early information but may have included details gathered too quickly to be fully checked.
3	How does the modern historian's treatment of the fire differ from both primary sources? Use one detail from the passage.	The historian combines several kinds of evidence to explain causes and consequences, such as unsafe exit doors, weak protections, safety laws, and labor reform. The primary sources focus more on personal experience or immediate news.
4	Which source would best help a reader understand the workers' personal experience, and which would best help a reader understand long-term causes and results? Explain.	Freedman's oral history best shows workers' personal experience because she was inside the factory. The modern historian best explains long-term causes and results because the account connects the fire to workplace protections, reforms, and organizing.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would compare the 1963 March on Washington in Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and a National Park Service history of the march. King's speech emphasizes demands for racial justice and the hopes of people listening at the Lincoln Memorial. The history places the march in the larger civil rights movement and describes its organizers and political impact. Together, the sources show both participants' goals that day and the march's longer historical significance.

Accept equivalent comparisons that accurately distinguish firsthand experience, immediate reporting, and later historical analysis. For Part 3, accept any accurate historical event and source pair if all four required ideas appear in exactly four sentences.