Safety Before Speed

Analyze how a reform speech builds a case for workplace safety.

ELA.10.R.2.3 "Analyze an author's choices in establishing and achieving purpose(s) in historical American speeches and essays."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words or phrases that create urgency, circle evidence or comparisons that support the speaker's claim, and number 1, 2, and 3 beside the speaker's main moves toward urging legislation. These marks will help you trace how the speaker pursues a purpose.

A Reform Speech, New York, 1911

(1) Honored members of the legislature, on March 25, smoke rose above the Asch Building in New York City while workers pressed against windows above the street. By nightfall, 146 people, most of them young garment workers, were dead. I ask you not to picture this number as ink on a report. Picture the empty chair at a family table, the unfinished coat on a workbench, and the mother who waited at a door that never opened. A city that accepts such losses has mistaken cheap labor for human worth.

(2) Some will say that factory owners can choose safety when profits allow. Yet a fire does not wait for a generous owner, and a locked exit does not become safe because a business calls it efficient. The state already inspects weights, bridges, and food because one person's bargain can endanger another person's life. Why should the hands that sew our shirts receive less protection than the bridge we cross? Require unlocked exits, fire drills, and inspections. These rules may cost money today, but funerals, lost wages, and broken families cost far more.

(3) Members, you cannot return the 146 workers to their homes, but you can decide what their deaths will mean. If you delay, another alarm will ring, another crowd will gather below high windows, and another set of families will search for names. If you act, every inspected factory will tell its workers that their lives matter to the public. Let New York become known not for the height of its buildings, but for the strength of its conscience. Pass a law that places safety before speed, and let this session be remembered for protection rather than regret.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the first paragraph turn the death toll into an emotional appeal? Explain how this choice serves the speaker's purpose.

2. Why does the speaker compare protection for garment workers with the state's inspection of bridges and food in paragraph 2?

3. How does the speaker respond to the idea that factory owners can choose safety when profits allow? Explain how the response advances the purpose.

4. How do the two conditional statements, "If you delay" and "If you act," help the speaker pressure legislators to pass a law?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write 4 sentences explaining how one emotional appeal and one logical appeal work together to persuade legislators to pass safety laws. Include one quoted phrase from the passage and identify the speaker's purpose.

ANSWER KEY # Safety Before Speed

GRADE 10 · ELA.10.R.2.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline words or phrases that create urgency, circle evidence or comparisons that support the speaker's claim, and number 1, 2, and 3 beside the speaker's main moves toward urging legislation. These marks will help you trace how the speaker pursues a purpose. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the first paragraph turn the death toll into an emotional appeal? Explain how this choice serves the speaker's purpose.	**The speaker pairs the number 146 with images of an empty chair, an unfinished coat, and a waiting mother. These details make the deaths feel personal and build support for safety laws.**
2	Why does the speaker compare protection for garment workers with the state's inspection of bridges and food in paragraph 2?	**The comparison shows that the government already protects people from dangers in other areas. It supports the claim that factory workers also deserve legal protection.**
3	How does the speaker respond to the idea that factory owners can choose safety when profits allow? Explain how the response advances the purpose.	**The speaker argues that voluntary safety is unreliable because fires and locked exits remain dangerous regardless of profit. This supports the call for required exits, drills, and inspections.**
4	How do the two conditional statements, "If you delay" and "If you act," help the speaker pressure legislators to pass a law?	**They contrast the harmful results of delay with the protective results of action. This makes passing a safety law seem urgent and morally necessary.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The speaker uses emotional images, including "the empty chair at a family table," to make the deaths feel personal rather than distant. This choice encourages legislators to see workers as people whose families suffer. The speaker also compares factory safety to the state's inspection of bridges and food, showing that government already acts when public safety is at risk. Together, these appeals support the speaker's purpose of persuading legislators to pass factory-safety laws.

Accept responses that accurately link a named author choice to the purpose of persuading legislators to enact workplace-safety laws. Students may describe the effects in different words if they support their analysis with evidence from the passage.