Fire, Reform, Memory

Paraphrase key ideas from a historical informational text.

ELA.11.R.3.2 "Paraphrase content from grade-level texts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one sentence in each paragraph that carries a main idea, then write a 10- to 15-word paraphrase beside it without copying a full phrase.

The Triangle Fire and Its Legacy

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City's Asch Building. The factory occupied the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors, where many young immigrant workers made blouses. Flames spread quickly through fabric scraps and wooden worktables. Some workers could not escape because one exit door was locked, while another stairway soon filled with smoke and fire. Firefighters' ladders did not reach the highest floors. In less than half an hour, 146 people died, many after jumping from windows.

2. Public anger turned the disaster into a political issue. Frances Perkins, who later became the first woman to serve in a U.S. presidential cabinet, watched the fire from the street and described it as a formative event. Labor advocates used the tragedy to argue that workplace safety could not depend solely on an employer's choices. New York created the Factory Investigating Commission, which inspected workplaces and proposed reforms. Over the next several years, the state passed laws addressing fire exits, building safety, hours, and working conditions. These measures influenced labor protections beyond New York.

3. The trial of factory owners Max Blanck and Isaac Harris showed another difficulty. A jury acquitted them of manslaughter in 1911 after prosecutors failed to prove that the owners knew the exit door was locked. The verdict frustrated many observers, but the fire's importance did not rest on the trial alone. It became a symbol used by reformers, unions, and journalists to connect individual deaths with broader workplace conditions. Remembering the disaster requires more than recounting its horror, it also means tracing how public pressure helped change laws and expectations.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In one sentence, paraphrase why so many workers could not escape the fire.

2. Paraphrase how the public responded to the disaster.

3. In one sentence, paraphrase the work of the Factory Investigating Commission.

4. Paraphrase the passage's point about why the owners' trial did not determine the fire's full importance.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 45- to 55-word paraphrase of paragraph 3. Include the trial outcome and the larger effect of the fire, but do not copy more than three words in a row from the paragraph.

Fire, Reform, Memory

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one sentence in each paragraph that carries a main idea, then write a 10- to 15-word paraphrase beside it without copying a full phrase. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In one sentence, paraphrase why so many workers could not escape the fire.	**Workers faced blocked or unusable escape routes, and rescue ladders could not reach the upper floors.**
2	Paraphrase how the public responded to the disaster.	**The fire caused widespread outrage and led people to demand government action on workplace safety.**
3	In one sentence, paraphrase the work of the Factory Investigating Commission.	**The commission examined workplace conditions and recommended safety reforms that shaped new state laws.**
4	Paraphrase the passage's point about why the owners' trial did not determine the fire's full importance.	**Although the owners were acquitted, the disaster still became a powerful reason for people to seek workplace reforms.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The criminal case against the Triangle owners ended without convictions because their knowledge of the locked door was not established. Yet the disaster had consequences beyond court. Activists and news writers treated it as evidence that dangerous working conditions demanded public action, leading people to expect stronger protections.

Accept accurate paraphrases that restate the passage's ideas in the student's own wording while preserving the relationships among events, causes, and effects. For the open response, check for both the acquittal and the disaster's broader influence on reform.