When Dangers Combine

Trace the causes and effects of a factory fire

6-12.HT2.7 "Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline causes and circle effects in the passage. Write the same number beside causes that worked together to produce one effect.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

1 On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. Hundreds of workers, mostly young immigrant women, made blouses on the upper floors of a tall building. Cloth scraps and paper patterns filled the workrooms, so flames spread quickly after the fire began. The exact spark was never proved. The building had no sprinkler system to stop the flames. People on the floor where the fire started tried to escape while smoke filled the rooms. Some reached a stairway or an elevator, but there were not enough safe routes for everyone.

2 Several dangers turned a fast-moving fire into a disaster. One exit door was locked during work hours, and another stairway soon filled with smoke. The outside fire escape broke under the weight of people trying to use it. Elevators made trips, but they could not carry everyone in time. Firefighters arrived, yet their ladders could not reach the highest floors. Some workers jumped rather than face the flames. In all, 146 people died. The number of deaths was not caused by a single failure: flames spread quickly, escape routes failed, and rescue equipment could not reach everyone.

3 The deaths shocked New Yorkers, but anger alone did not create new rules. Labor organizers had already protested unsafe factory conditions and pushed for stronger protections. After the fire, workers and families joined marches, and newspaper stories brought attention to the danger. New York State investigators examined workplaces and recommended changes. Lawmakers then passed new safety rules, including requirements for fire drills and better exits. These changes aimed to reduce the chance of another disaster, though a law could protect people only if it was enforced. The fire became a turning point because earlier organizing, public pressure, investigation, and lawmaking came together.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the contents of the workrooms and the lack of sprinklers work together to make the fire more dangerous?

2. How did problems with exits and firefighting equipment combine to raise the death toll?

3. How did the fire lead to both an immediate public response and a longer-term change?

4. Why does the passage say anger alone did not create new safety rules? Explain how two other forces helped bring about change.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine the factory had working sprinklers, but its exits and the firefighters' ladders stayed the same. In three or four sentences, explain two likely changes to what happened and one danger that might remain. Use details from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

When Dangers Combine

GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.HT2.7

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline causes and circle effects in the passage. Write the same number beside causes that worked together to produce one effect. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the contents of the workrooms and the lack of sprinklers work together to make the fire more dangerous?	**Cloth scraps and paper patterns helped the flames spread quickly, while the lack of sprinklers meant there was no sprinkler system to stop them.**
2	How did problems with exits and firefighting equipment combine to raise the death toll?	**A locked exit, a smoke-filled stairway, and a broken fire escape left workers with fewer ways out. Firefighters' ladders could not reach the highest floors.**
3	How did the fire lead to both an immediate public response and a longer-term change?	**After the fire, workers and families marched, and newspapers drew attention to the danger. New York lawmakers later passed new safety rules.**
4	Why does the passage say anger alone did not create new safety rules? Explain how two other forces helped bring about change.	**Labor organizers had already pushed for protections. State investigators examined workplaces and recommended changes that helped lead to new laws.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Working sprinklers might have slowed the flames. More workers might then have had time to reach a stairway or elevator, so fewer people might have died. Still, a locked exit and ladders that could not reach the highest floors would have left some workers in danger.

Accept other supported cause-and-effect links. For the open task, look for two plausible changes and one remaining danger, with cautious language because the outcome cannot be known for certain.