After the Fire

Check historical claims across two media

6-12.HT2.9 "Evaluate the central arguments in secondary works of history on related topics in multiple media in terms of their historical accuracy."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each account's central claim, then underline facts that help you check it and write S for support or C for challenge beside each underlined fact.

Two Accounts of the Triangle Fire

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. The factory occupied the upper floors of a building, and 146 workers died. Some exit doors were locked, and a fire escape collapsed. New York already had factory safety rules and inspectors before the fire. Shirtwaist workers had also organized for better conditions, including a major strike in 1909. These dated facts can help you check later accounts of the disaster. Two sample accounts below retell this history in different media: a podcast script and a museum website article.

2. The sample podcast script argues, "The Triangle fire created the first factory safety laws in America and fixed dangerous workplaces overnight." Its narrator describes the deaths and says public outrage forced leaders to act. The script adds that officials began investigating factories after the fire. In 1911, New York formed the Factory Investigating Commission to study working conditions. The state passed many worker-safety laws over the following years. The podcast leaves out the earlier rules and the 1909 strike. Its strong language makes a dramatic story, but the dates and the reach of each change still need checking.

3. The sample museum website article argues, "The fire helped drive new safety rules in New York, but reform took time and unsafe conditions did not vanish." It points to the commission and later state laws. The article also mentions the 1909 strike as a sign that workers pushed for change before the fire. Neither account is an eyewitness report: both are later explanations of the same past events. The podcast is meant to be heard, while the article is meant to be read. The medium can shape how each tells the story, but its claims still need to match the evidence.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Is the podcast's claim about the "first factory safety laws in America" accurate? Use a fact from the passage to explain.

2. What part of the podcast's argument about action after the fire does the evidence support?

3. How does the 1909 strike affect the museum article's argument that the fire helped drive reform?

4. Which account describes the timing of reform more accurately? Compare its claim with what happened after 1911.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 50 to 70 word script for a new museum audio guide about what led to safety reforms after the Triangle fire. Include the 1909 strike, the 1911 fire, and the later New York laws, and make an accurate claim about how much the fire changed.

ANSWER KEY

After the Fire

GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.HT2.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle each account's central claim, then underline facts that help you check it and write S for support or C for challenge beside each underlined fact. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Is the podcast's claim about the "first factory safety laws in America" accurate? Use a fact from the passage to explain.	**No. New York had factory safety rules and inspectors before the 1911 fire, so the fire could not have created the first such laws in America.**
2	What part of the podcast's argument about action after the fire does the evidence support?	**Officials did act after the fire: New York formed the Factory Investigating Commission in 1911 and passed worker-safety laws in later years.**
3	How does the 1909 strike affect the museum article's argument that the fire helped drive reform?	**The strike shows that workers were seeking change before the fire. It supports the article's limited claim that the fire helped drive reform, rather than acting alone.**
4	Which account describes the timing of reform more accurately? Compare its claim with what happened after 1911.	**The museum article is more accurate. New York passed safety laws over the following years, which challenges the podcast's claim that workplaces were fixed overnight.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Workers were pushing for safer factories before the Triangle fire, including during a major shirtwaist strike in 1909. The 1911 fire killed 146 workers and helped spur action. New York formed a factory investigating commission that year and passed safety laws in later years. The fire mattered, but change took time and did not make every workplace safe.

Accept answers that distinguish New York's later reforms from a claim that the fire immediately changed every workplace. Students should use the earlier rules or strike, the commission, and the later laws as evidence where relevant.