When Fire Spread

Trace the causes and effects of a factory disaster

6-9.WH.6.2 "Determine and explain the cause and effect of historical events or developments."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three causes in the passage and circle the effect each one produced. Write matching numbers beside each cause-and-effect pair.

The Triangle Factory Fire

1 On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out on the eighth floor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. Workers made blouses there, cutting and sewing fabric at crowded tables. The fire began in a bin of cloth scraps, although no one knows exactly what started it. Nearby piles of fabric helped the flames spread quickly. Many workers were young immigrant women. When smoke filled the room, they had only minutes to find a way out. Crowded work areas gave people little room to move as they searched for exits.

2 Some exit doors were locked during the workday, and workers who reached them could not get through. The building's narrow fire escape collapsed under the weight of people trying to flee. Firefighters arrived, but their ladders could not reach the upper floors. Elevators carried some workers to safety, then could not take any more people down. With escape routes blocked or out of reach, 146 workers died. The number of deaths shocked New Yorkers, who read newspaper accounts and gathered to mourn the victims.

3 The fire led many people to ask why a factory could operate with such dangerous exits. In response to public pressure, New York State created the Factory Investigating Commission in 1911. Investigators visited workplaces and reported unsafe conditions, not just at the Triangle factory. Their findings helped lawmakers pass new rules for factory safety, including rules about fire escapes and exits. The fire did not create safer workplaces by itself. Public anger led to an investigation, and the investigation supplied evidence for new laws. Changes came from choices people made after the disaster.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the fabric near the fire affect what happened next?

2. Explain how two problems with escape routes put workers in danger.

3. What led New York State to create the Factory Investigating Commission?

4. How did the commission's visits help bring about new safety rules?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine the factory had unlocked exits and working sprinklers before the fire. In four sentences, predict two ways the fire's effects might have changed and one effect that could still have happened. Use details from the passage to explain your reasoning.

ANSWER KEY

When Fire Spread

GRADES 6-9 · 6-9.WH.6.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three causes in the passage and circle the effect each one produced. Write matching numbers beside each cause-and-effect pair. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the fabric near the fire affect what happened next?	**Nearby piles of fabric helped the flames spread quickly.**
2	Explain how two problems with escape routes put workers in danger.	**Locked exit doors trapped workers who reached them, and the fire escape collapsed as people tried to flee. Accept ladders that could not reach the upper floors as one problem.**
3	What led New York State to create the Factory Investigating Commission?	**Public pressure after the deadly fire and concern about dangerous factory exits led the state to create the commission.**
4	How did the commission's visits help bring about new safety rules?	**Investigators reported unsafe conditions at workplaces, and their findings helped lawmakers pass new factory safety rules.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

If the exits had been unlocked, more workers might have escaped instead of being trapped at the doors. Working sprinklers might have slowed the flames as they spread through the fabric. Firefighters still might not have reached the upper floors because their ladders were too short. Unlocked exits and sprinklers would not have made the ladders taller.

Accept other cause-and-effect pairs supported by the passage. For Part 3, look for two plausible changes, one plausible effect that could remain, and reasoning tied to passage details.