Fire and Change

Read a historical account for facts, interpretations, and outcomes.

6.H.14 "Differentiate between fact and interpretation in historical accounts and explain the meaning of historical passages by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, and relating them to outcomes that followed."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two statements you can check as facts, circle one interpretation, and write 1 beside where the fire started and 2 beside one outcome that followed.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

1 On Saturday, March 25, 1911, workers were finishing their day at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. The factory made women's blouses called shirtwaists. It occupied the top three floors of a ten-story building near Washington Square. Many employees were young immigrant women who cut and sewed fabric. Late that afternoon, a fire began on the eighth floor. Flames spread quickly through scraps of cloth and paper. Workers rushed toward stairs and elevators, but the exits could not carry everyone to safety.

2 Some workers escaped down stairways or in elevators. Others reached the roof, where people from the next building helped them cross to safety. A fire escape collapsed, and firefighters' ladders could not reach the highest floors. Many workers were trapped by smoke and flames. In all, 146 people died in the fire. Newspaper reports described the crowd watching from the street below. These details tell us what happened, but a claim about why this disaster mattered is an interpretation, a conclusion drawn from facts.

3 After the fire, New York State created a commission to investigate factory conditions. Investigators visited workplaces and recommended changes. The state passed new safety laws, including rules for exits and fire drills. Some historians call the Triangle fire a turning point in workplace safety because the deaths brought attention to hazards and helped build support for reform. This is an interpretation, not a detail someone could have counted at the scene. The new laws are evidence for that interpretation, though safety problems did not disappear overnight.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Name one fact about escape routes. Why is it a fact rather than an interpretation?

2. Who were many of the factory workers, and where in the building did the fire start?

3. What did New York State do after the fire? Explain how it followed from the disaster.

4. What does calling the fire a "turning point" mean? Give one fact from the passage that supports this interpretation.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence museum caption about the fire for someone who has not read the passage. In the first sentence, tell who was involved, what happened, and where; in the second, name an outcome; in the third, give your own interpretation and support it with a different detail.

ANSWER KEY

Fire and Change

GRADE 6 · 6.H.14

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two statements you can check as facts, circle one interpretation, and write 1 beside where the fire started and 2 beside one outcome that followed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Name one fact about escape routes. Why is it a fact rather than an interpretation?	**The fire escape collapsed. That is a reported event that can be checked, not a conclusion about what the event meant.**
2	Who were many of the factory workers, and where in the building did the fire start?	**Many workers were young immigrant women. The fire started on the eighth floor.**
3	What did New York State do after the fire? Explain how it followed from the disaster.	**The state created a commission to investigate factory conditions and passed new safety laws in response to the fire.**
4	What does calling the fire a “turning point” mean? Give one fact from the passage that supports this interpretation.	**It means the fire helped bring changes in workplace safety. New York State passed laws with rules for exits and fire drills.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City, young immigrant women were among the workers caught in a fire in 1911. Afterward, New York State created a commission to investigate factory conditions. I think the fire showed an urgent need for safer escape routes because firefighters' ladders could not reach the highest floors.

Accept other accurate facts and interpretations supported by passage details. In Part 3, the supporting detail must be different from the outcome named in the second sentence.