Evidence After the Fire

Research the Triangle fire through questions, sources, and limits

IS.1.34 "Conduct historical research that incorporates information literacy skills such as forming appropriate research questions, evaluating information by determining its accuracy, relevance and comprehensiveness..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a research question the records could help answer, circle details that show what each source can or cannot tell us, and number the records you would check first and second. Use your marks to judge how strong a claim about the fire could be.

What Can the Records Tell Us?

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 near Washington Square. One hundred forty-six workers died, many of them young immigrant women. Investigators trying to understand the deaths faced more than one question: Where could workers leave the building? Which exits were usable during the fire? A narrow question about exit access can guide a search through records. It also keeps a researcher from treating every dramatic detail, such as the size of the crowd outside, as proof about conditions inside.

2. Imagine a folder containing descriptions of three records. A newspaper published on March 26, 1911, described people escaping through windows and a fire escape that failed. Testimony from a factory worker described a door on her floor that would not open during the fire. A historian writing decades later examined testimony and reports to explain why the fire led to demands for safer workplaces. The newspaper appeared soon after the event, but a reporter could not watch every exit. The worker described a direct experience, but from only one floor.

3. These descriptions are leads, not complete citations or a complete account. The folder includes no building plan, inspection record, or statement from a manager. A careful researcher would locate the original newspaper issue and testimony before quoting either one, checking names, dates, and what each person could actually know. The historian's account can help connect the fire to later laws, but its claims still need traceable evidence. In the final report, each claim should point to a record with its author or creator, title, date, and page or archive location when available. Missing records should remain visible as limits, not become guesses.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which question could this folder help investigate more directly: "Why do all factory fires happen?" or "What do accounts of the Triangle fire reveal about escape routes?" Explain your choice.

2. Before reporting that the fire escape failed, how could you check the accuracy of the newspaper's account?

3. Which record is most relevant to a claim that an exit door would not open? What is one limit of that record?

4. Why is this folder insufficient to conclude that every factory exit was unusable? Name one additional record you would seek.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Investigate a different issue: How did the Triangle fire affect New York workplace safety rules? In five sentences, write a focused research question, name two records you would seek, explain how you would check their accuracy and relevance, identify one limit, and state what citation details you would save.

Evidence After the Fire

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a research question the records could help answer, circle details that show what each source can or cannot tell us, and number the records you would check first and second. Use your marks to judge how strong a claim about the fire could be. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which question could this folder help investigate more directly: "Why do all factory fires happen?" or "What do accounts of the Triangle fire reveal about escape routes?" Explain your choice.	**The question about Triangle escape routes is more workable because the newspaper and worker testimony describe escape attempts and an exit door. The folder cannot explain all factory fires.**
2	Before reporting that the fire escape failed, how could you check the accuracy of the newspaper's account?	**Find the original newspaper report and compare its claim with an inspection record or another firsthand account.**
3	Which record is most relevant to a claim that an exit door would not open? What is one limit of that record?	**The worker's testimony is most relevant because it describes a door she encountered. It concerns only her floor, not every exit.**
4	Why is this folder insufficient to conclude that every factory exit was unusable? Name one additional record you would seek.	**The accounts do not cover every exit. A building plan, inspection record, or additional testimony could help fill that gap.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

How did the Triangle fire shape New York's workplace safety rules from 1911 to 1914? I would compare laws passed during those years with legislative hearing records that mention the fire. The laws could show what changed, while the hearings could show which reasons lawmakers gave. I would check dates and wording in official state publications, then compare claims about the fire with firsthand accounts. I would save each record's creator, title, date, and page number, but without enforcement records I could not tell whether factories followed the new rules.

Accept other focused questions and reasonable source checks grounded in the passage. For Part 3, look for two relevant records, a way to verify them, an acknowledged evidence gap, and specific citation details.