History Through Story

Compare a historical account with a scene set during the same event.

RL.7.9 "Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal and a historical account of the same period as a means to understand how authors use history."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two facts in the historical account that the fictional scene uses, circle one invented action or line of dialogue, and number the two places that mention a locked door.

The Triangle Factory Fire

1. Historical account, March 25, 1911: A fire began on the eighth floor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. Workers on the eighth floor warned people above them, but the flames spread fast. The factory occupied the top three floors of a ten-story building. Some workers escaped by elevator or reached the roof. On the ninth floor, at least one stairway door was locked. The outside fire escape collapsed, and firefighters' ladders could not reach the upper floors. Many workers had few ways out.

2. Historical account, continued: The fire killed 146 workers, most of them young immigrant women. Newspapers reported the disaster, and labor groups demanded safer workplaces. New York investigators studied factory conditions after the fire. The state then passed laws that improved fire safety and required changes in factories. These reforms could not bring back the people who died. The historical record tells what happened to groups of workers and shows how unsafe exits turned a fire into a disaster. It does not describe every worker's thoughts or conversations.

3. Fictional scene, inside the Triangle factory: Alma heard pounding at the stairway door. Smoke stung her eyes. She pulled a spare key from her apron, turned it in the lock, and waved three coworkers through. “Stay together,” she said as they rushed down the stairs. Outside, Alma looked up at the burning windows and held the key so tightly it marked her palm. She promised herself she would tell everyone about the locked door. Alma and her rescue are invented, but the scene places them inside a real disaster.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the fictional scene use the historical fact about the stairway door, and what does it invent?

2. Compare how the two accounts show workers trying to escape. What does each account help you understand?

3. The historical account reports 146 deaths, while the fictional scene follows Alma and three coworkers. How does this choice change the reader's view of the fire?

4. Why might a writer invent Alma's promise to tell others about the door when the historical account describes later safety reforms?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence note to a writer planning a different fictional scene about the Triangle fire. Name one historical detail to keep, invent a new character's action that is not a key rescue, and explain how the scene would affect readers differently from the historical account.

ANSWER KEY

History Through Story

GRADE 7 · RL.7.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two facts in the historical account that the fictional scene uses, circle one invented action or line of dialogue, and number the two places that mention a locked door. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the fictional scene use the historical fact about the stairway door, and what does it invent?	**Both accounts include a locked stairway door. The scene invents Alma unlocking it with a spare key and helping three coworkers escape.**
2	Compare how the two accounts show workers trying to escape. What does each account help you understand?	**The historical account describes several escape routes and why they were dangerous or unavailable. The fictional scene follows one small group, helping readers imagine what an escape might have felt like.**
3	The historical account reports 146 deaths, while the fictional scene follows Alma and three coworkers. How does this choice change the reader's view of the fire?	**The historical account shows the disaster's scale. The fictional scene focuses on the actions and feelings of a few imagined people.**
4	Why might a writer invent Alma's promise to tell others about the door when the historical account describes later safety reforms?	**The promise connects one imagined worker's response to the real concern about unsafe exits. It does not claim that Alma caused the reforms.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Keep the fact that firefighters' ladders could not reach the upper floors. Invent a worker named Rosa who signals to people on the street from an upper window. Her action would help readers imagine one person's fear and determination, while the historical account describes the danger faced by many workers. The scene should not suggest that her signal solved the shortage of safe exits.

Accept other comparisons supported by both accounts. For the open task, the invented action should fit the historical conditions without being presented as a documented event.