Two Counts, One Fire

Compare an early report with a later account of a historic fire.

5.P.2.2 "Develop skills which demonstrate an understanding of historical events and the people who shaped our history. Compare and analyze primary and secondary sources from the past and present..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one cause that made the fire deadly and one effect it had. Circle both death counts, then write 1 beside the source made at the time and 2 beside the later source to help you compare them.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in New York City. Many workers were young immigrant women who sewed clothing on the upper floors. Some escape routes were blocked or hard to reach, and the fire spread quickly. The disaster drew crowds into the streets. For workers and their families, the fire was a terrible personal loss, not just a news story.

2. The next morning, The New York Times printed a headline that reported 141 deaths. This newspaper report is a primary source because it was made at the time of the fire. Its writers wanted to tell readers about breaking news. Their count was preliminary, or not yet final, because reporters were working quickly before officials had finished identifying the dead. The headline shows what readers learned at that moment.

3. Today, a history article from the National Park Service gives the death toll as 146. This secondary source looks back after records were checked. Its writers aim to teach readers about the fire and its effects. Public anger helped lead to new workplace safety rules in New York. The two counts differ because the newspaper reported early, while the later article could use more complete records.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How are the two sources different in when they were made and what they report?

2. Why do the two sources give different death counts?

3. Who was each source written for, and what did its writers want to do?

4. Name one cause that made the fire so deadly and one effect it had beyond the factory.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label from the viewpoint of a worker's family member or a safety reformer. Include a detail from the passage, explain why the fire mattered to your chosen person, and tell how the newspaper and later article would help that person understand the fire differently.

ANSWER KEY

Two Counts, One Fire

GRADE 5 · 5.P.2.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one cause that made the fire deadly and one effect it had. Circle both death counts, then write 1 beside the source made at the time and 2 beside the later source to help you compare them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How are the two sources different in when they were made and what they report?	**The newspaper reported 141 deaths the morning after the fire. The later history article reports 146 deaths.**
2	Why do the two sources give different death counts?	**The newspaper reported quickly, before officials had finished identifying the dead, so its count was preliminary. The later article could use more complete records.**
3	Who was each source written for, and what did its writers want to do?	**The newspaper writers wanted to tell readers breaking news. The history article's writers wanted to teach readers about the fire and its effects.**
4	Name one cause that made the fire so deadly and one effect it had beyond the factory.	**Some escape routes were blocked or hard to reach. Public anger helped lead to new workplace safety rules in New York.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

As a worker's sister, I feared for my family when fire swept through the factory. Blocked escape routes made the danger worse. The newspaper's early count of 141 shows what people knew the next morning, but that count was not final. The later article's count of 146 shows the fuller loss our city had to face.

Accept either blocked or hard-to-reach escape routes or the fire's quick spread as a cause. For the museum label, accept either viewpoint if the four sentences use a passage detail and distinguish the early report from the later account.