Questions After the Fire

Use historical evidence to sharpen a research question and claim.

7.P.4.2.A "Refine and formulate viable research questions related to social studies investigations, using well-developed theses or claims."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that could support a claim about factory safety, circle two kinds of records a researcher could check, and number the sentence that warns against making a claim that is too broad.

Investigating the Triangle Fire

1 On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. The factory occupied the upper floors of a building where workers made women's blouses. Many workers were young immigrant women. Flames spread quickly, and some people could not reach a safe exit. One stairway door was locked during the fire. Others escaped onto the roof, while some jumped from windows. In all, 146 workers died. The disaster raised urgent questions about who was responsible for safe working conditions and what protections workers needed.

2 After the fire, survivors and witnesses described the crowded rooms, exits, and rush to escape. Newspapers reported their accounts, but a reporter's description might not match every witness's experience. Labor groups had already called for safer workplaces, and workers continued to demand change. New York lawmakers created a commission to investigate factory conditions. Investigators visited workplaces and recorded testimony in commission reports. In the following years, the state passed laws that strengthened fire safety rules and factory inspections. These records offer different kinds of evidence about danger, public pressure, and government action.

3 A useful investigation begins with a question narrow enough to study using available records. For example, instead of asking whether a bus route changed an entire city, a researcher might ask how it changed trips to one neighborhood park during its first year. A claim should offer a possible answer and reasons, not pretend that one event explains every change. Researchers can compare accounts from people who lived through an event with records made afterward. When sources disagree or leave gaps, a careful claim shows what the evidence supports without guessing beyond it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Refine the broad question "What happened after the fire?" into a research question about New York lawmakers that you could investigate using records named in the passage.

2. Which question is more viable to investigate with records named in the passage? Explain why. A: "Did the fire end unsafe work everywhere?" B: "What did witnesses report about escape routes during the Triangle fire?"

3. Write a claim about why one newspaper account might not tell the whole story of workers' escapes. Support your claim with two details from the passage.

4. Revise this claim so it fits the evidence in the passage: "The fire alone led to New York's new factory safety laws." Include two other developments the passage names.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine your town added a marked crosswalk near a school last fall. Write a broad question, then refine it into a research question that names a group, place, and time. Add a tentative claim with one reason and name two sources you could check.

ANSWER KEY

Questions After the Fire

GRADE 7 · 7.P.4.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that could support a claim about factory safety, circle two kinds of records a researcher could check, and number the sentence that warns against making a claim that is too broad. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Refine the broad question "What happened after the fire?" into a research question about New York lawmakers that you could investigate using records named in the passage.	**How did New York lawmakers investigate factory safety in the years after the Triangle fire?**
2	Which question is more viable to investigate with records named in the passage? Explain why. A: "Did the fire end unsafe work everywhere?" B: "What did witnesses report about escape routes during the Triangle fire?"	**B. Newspaper accounts and commission testimony could provide witness reports about escape routes. The passage names no records that could show whether unsafe work ended everywhere.**
3	Write a claim about why one newspaper account might not tell the whole story of workers' escapes. Support your claim with two details from the passage.	**One newspaper account might miss important differences in workers' escapes: some workers reached the roof, while others jumped from windows.**
4	Revise this claim so it fits the evidence in the passage: "The fire alone led to New York's new factory safety laws." Include two other developments the passage names.	**The new laws followed the fire, but labor groups had already demanded safer workplaces, and a state commission investigated factory conditions afterward.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Broad question: Did the crosswalk change anything? Refined question: How did the new crosswalk near Pine Street School affect students' routes to school during the first month after it was added? Tentative claim: The crosswalk may have led more students to use Pine Street because it gave them a marked place to cross. I would check town street records and surveys of students' routes.

Accept different focused questions and claims when they match the passage's evidence without claiming more than it supports. For Your Turn, the claim is tentative, so students do not need to prove it.