Questions After the Fire

Use historical evidence to plan an inquiry for a public audience.

8.P.1.2.D "Demonstrate understanding of social studies content through the development of self-driven inquiries and the completion of authentic tasks and assessments."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that could support an inquiry, circle one kind of source that could test a claim, and number one claim you would need to check further. Use your marks to plan an evidence-based public history task.

Investigating the Triangle Fire

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. The factory made clothing on the upper floors of a building near Washington Square. One hundred forty-six workers died, many of them young immigrant women. Some workers could not reach a safe exit, and a fire escape collapsed. The disaster was not only a story about flames. It raised questions about building safety, workers' choices, and who had the power to change dangerous conditions. Different questions require different evidence.

2. After the fire, survivors described what they had seen, and investigators examined the building and questioned witnesses. Newspaper reports recorded the scene and public reactions, but reporters did not all witness the same events. A survivor's account can reveal what one person experienced, while inspection records can help check claims about exits. Neither source can tell the whole story alone. Even when two accounts disagree, that difference can lead to a sharper inquiry: Which detail is disputed, and what other record could help test it?

3. Thousands of people joined a funeral procession for victims. Public pressure helped spur investigations, and New York State passed new workplace safety laws in the years after the fire. Laws are one kind of evidence about official action, but they do not prove that every factory immediately became safe. A public history product, such as a museum label or a letter to a local exhibit planner, should connect each claim to evidence and identify what remains uncertain. Its purpose is to help an audience understand the past without overstating the case.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Write a focused question you could investigate about who had the power to change dangerous conditions after the fire. Which detail in the passage makes your question worth asking?

2. If two survivors gave different accounts of an exit, which other kind of record named in the passage could help you test their accounts? Explain why.

3. Which kind of source named in the passage could help you study public reactions to the fire? What limit should you keep in mind when using it?

4. You are preparing a museum label about official action after the fire. What claim can the passage support, and what claim would go beyond its evidence?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose your own focused question about the Triangle fire that differs from your answers in Part 2. In four sentences, propose a museum label for visitors: state your question, make one claim supported by a passage detail, name a source you would examine next, and explain what it could test or leave uncertain.

ANSWER KEY

Questions After the Fire

GRADE 8 · 8.P.1.2.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that could support an inquiry, circle one kind of source that could test a claim, and number one claim you would need to check further. Use your marks to plan an evidence-based public history task. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Write a focused question you could investigate about who had the power to change dangerous conditions after the fire. Which detail in the passage makes your question worth asking?	**How did New York State act to improve workplace safety after the fire? The passage says the state passed new workplace safety laws.**
2	If two survivors gave different accounts of an exit, which other kind of record named in the passage could help you test their accounts? Explain why.	**Building inspection records could help check claims about exits, although they might not settle what each survivor experienced.**
3	Which kind of source named in the passage could help you study public reactions to the fire? What limit should you keep in mind when using it?	**Newspaper reports recorded public reactions, but reporters did not all witness the same events.**
4	You are preparing a museum label about official action after the fire. What claim can the passage support, and what claim would go beyond its evidence?	**The passage supports saying that New York State passed new workplace safety laws. It does not support saying that every factory immediately became safe.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

How did the collapse of the fire escape affect workers trying to flee? The passage establishes that the fire escape collapsed. I would examine survivors' accounts to learn whether they saw people trying to use it. Those accounts might reveal individual experiences, but they could not show what happened to every worker.

Accept other focused questions and evidence choices grounded in the passage. For Part 3, look for an original inquiry, a supported claim, a relevant next source, and a specific limit on what that source could establish.