From Claim to Question

Investigate the Triangle fire through focused research questions

8.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 the two claims about the Triangle fire. Circle the records a historian could use to test them, then number the details that could make a research question more specific.

Investigating the Triangle Fire

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. Many employees were young immigrant women. The fire killed 146 workers. Newspapers reported the disaster, and survivors later described their escape attempts. A historian might begin with the broad topic of factory safety, but that topic alone cannot guide a manageable investigation. A useful research question needs a clear place, period, and focus, along with records that could help answer it.

2. One possible claim is that difficult-to-use exits increased the danger to workers during the Triangle fire. Witnesses reported that a door on the ninth floor was locked during the fire; other workers escaped onto the roof. These accounts show different ways people tried to leave the building. A researcher could compare witness testimony with newspaper coverage to learn whose experiences each source included. That comparison matters because a report about the crowd outside might leave out what workers saw inside the factory.

3. Another possible claim is that public pressure after the fire helped push New York to strengthen workplace rules. Newspapers printed calls for safer factories. The state created a Factory Investigating Commission in 1911 to examine working conditions. Its reports described hazards and recommended changes. New York then passed laws that improved fire safety and other workplace protections. Yet the timing of two events alone does not prove that one caused the other. To test the claim, a historian would look for connections among newspaper coverage, commission recommendations, and the wording of later laws.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Use the ninth-floor door and roof details to write a more specific claim about workers' attempts to escape the Triangle fire.

2. Refine “What happened in factories?” into a research question that could test the passage's claim about exits. Include the place, date, and a kind of record named in the passage.

3. Refine “Did the fire cause every new factory law?” into a question about a possible link between commission recommendations and later laws. Name both kinds of records in your question.

4. A student wants to test the claim about public pressure but asks, “How did the whole world react to the fire?” Explain why this question is too broad, then write a question the records in the passage could help answer.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a different social studies event or issue. Write a specific claim with a reason, then write a research question that could test it; include a place, a time, and two kinds of records you could examine.

ANSWER KEY

From Claim to Question

GRADE 8 · 8.P.4.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the two claims about the Triangle fire. Circle the records a historian could use to test them, then number the details that could make a research question more specific. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Use the ninth-floor door and roof details to write a more specific claim about workers' attempts to escape the Triangle fire.	**Workers faced different escape conditions during the 1911 Triangle fire: witnesses reported a locked ninth-floor door, while some workers escaped onto the roof.**
2	Refine “What happened in factories?” into a research question that could test the passage's claim about exits. Include the place, date, and a kind of record named in the passage.	**How do survivors' accounts of the locked ninth-floor door and roof escapes show the difficulties workers faced leaving the Triangle factory in New York City on March 25, 1911?**
3	Refine “Did the fire cause every new factory law?” into a question about a possible link between commission recommendations and later laws. Name both kinds of records in your question.	**Which fire-safety recommendations in the New York Factory Investigating Commission's reports appear in New York workplace laws passed after the 1911 Triangle fire?**
4	A student wants to test the claim about public pressure but asks, “How did the whole world react to the fire?” Explain why this question is too broad, then write a question the records in the passage could help answer.	**The passage names records about New York, not the whole world. A focused question is: How did calls for safer factories in New York newspapers after the Triangle fire compare with the commission's later safety recommendations?**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Claim: Sustained participation in the 1955–1956 Montgomery bus boycott helped challenge bus segregation by keeping public attention on the protest. Question: How do boycott notices and newspaper reports from Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955–1956 show the ways organizers encouraged people to keep participating?

Accept other focused claims and questions supported by details in the passage. For Part 3, check that the question could test the student's claim using the two named kinds of records.