Tracing the Evidence

Research questions and competing accounts of the Triangle fire

8.P.4.2 "Engage in authentic research to acquire, refine, and share knowledge through written presentations and products. Refine and formulate viable research questions related to social studies investigations..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the broad question and its sharper version, circle the model claim, and number the newspaper report, worker testimony, owners' account, and state investigation as they appear. Use your marks to track how the research moves from a question to a supported claim.

Investigating the Triangle Fire

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. The fire killed 146 workers, many of them young immigrant women. A student researching the disaster first asks, "Why was the fire bad?" That question invites opinion but gives little direction. A sharper question is, "How did the Triangle fire influence New York workplace safety laws from 1911 to 1913?" It names an event, a place, a time span, and a change to investigate. A focused question helps the student decide which sources matter.

2. To investigate, the student compares several kinds of records. A newspaper report printed just after the fire describes crowds watching workers trapped above the street. Testimony from workers describes conditions inside the factory, including an exit door that was locked. Factory owners disputed that the door was locked during working hours. A state investigation gives another perspective: officials examined factory hazards and called for stronger safety rules. These sources do not all make the same claims. The student records who made each claim and when, rather than treating every account as identical.

3. The student writes this claim: "The Triangle fire helped push New York to strengthen factory safety rules, but workers and owners disagreed about what had made the workplace dangerous." To support it, the student paraphrases worker testimony and identifies it as testimony, not as personal observation. The student then summarizes the state investigation's recommendations and notes the owners' competing account. New York formed a Factory Investigating Commission in 1911 and passed several workplace safety laws afterward. Quoted words would need quotation marks and a source. These choices make the claim testable and the writing honest.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Refine “Why was the fire bad?” into a different research question about factory exits. Include New York and a time span from the passage.

2. Which accounts disagree about the exit door? How should you present that disagreement without treating either account as your own finding?

3. Paraphrase what the state investigation found and recommended. Name the source in your sentence.

4. Why would the newspaper report alone be insufficient to support the model claim about safety rules? Name a source from the passage that would help.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four or five sentences for a research plan about what people outside and inside the factory could learn about the fire. Include a focused research question, a tentative claim, and how you would use and credit both the newspaper report and worker testimony in your own words.

ANSWER KEY

Tracing the Evidence

GRADE 8 · 8.P.4.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the broad question and its sharper version, circle the model claim, and number the newspaper report, worker testimony, owners' account, and state investigation as they appear. Use your marks to track how the research moves from a question to a supported claim. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Refine "Why was the fire bad?" into a different research question about factory exits. Include New York and a time span from the passage.	**Example: How did accounts of the Triangle factory's exits shape New York's safety investigations from 1911 to 1913?**
2	Which accounts disagree about the exit door? How should you present that disagreement without treating either account as your own finding?	**Workers testified that an exit door was locked; owners disputed that it was locked during working hours. Attribute each account to its source and explain that they conflict.**
3	Paraphrase what the state investigation found and recommended. Name the source in your sentence.	**Example: According to the state investigation, officials examined factory dangers and urged stronger rules to protect workers.**
4	Why would the newspaper report alone be insufficient to support the model claim about safety rules? Name a source from the passage that would help.	**The newspaper report describes the crowd, not recommendations for safety rules. The state investigation would help support that part of the claim.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

How do the newspaper's description of the crowd and workers' accounts of factory conditions offer different views of the Triangle fire? I expect the newspaper to show what people witnessed outside, while workers' testimony describes hazards inside. I would credit the newspaper when paraphrasing its report of crowds watching workers trapped above the street. I would also credit worker testimony when describing the locked exit, while noting that the owners disputed when the door was locked.

Accept other focused questions and claims grounded in the passage. Student paraphrases should use original wording, identify the source, and preserve the disagreement between workers and owners.