Questions After the Fire

Investigate evidence and plan a museum exhibit.

AWH.P.1.2.D "Demonstrate understanding of content through the development of self-driven inquiries and the completion of multi-staged, authentic tasks and assessments."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that could lead to a historical question, circle two kinds of sources you could investigate, and put a question mark beside one claim you would check before using it in a museum exhibit.

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, and 146 workers died, most of them young immigrant women. Some workers could not escape because a door was locked, and an exterior fire escape collapsed. Newspaper reports described people jumping from windows, while witnesses recalled crowded routes to the exits. These accounts reveal the scale of the disaster, but they do not by themselves explain every decision made inside the factory. They leave open how particular escape routes affected workers on different floors.

2. Evidence comes from different places. A surviving worker's testimony can describe what that person saw, but not what happened in every stairwell. An official fire investigation can compare several accounts and examine building conditions, though investigators may still miss details. A newspaper report from the next day shows what readers learned quickly, before every claim could be checked. Comparing these sources helps distinguish a supported conclusion from a dramatic but uncertain detail. If two reports disagree about an exit, a researcher could find out who observed it and when each account was recorded.

3. The disaster led to public pressure for safer workplaces. In the following years, New York passed laws that strengthened factory safety rules and gave inspectors greater power to enforce them. Yet a new rule on paper does not prove that every workplace became safe. Inspection records from later years could show whether a particular factory changed its practices; the text of a law could show what officials required. A city history museum planning a small exhibit would need a short, accurate label. Visitors should be able to tell which claims rest on records and which questions remain open.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Use two details from paragraph 1 to write a focused question about escape routes that the passage cannot fully answer.

2. Which two sources named in the passage would you use to investigate your question? Explain what each could add.

3. A next-day newspaper report and a survivor disagree about an exit. What two checks suggested by the passage could help you decide what to report?

4. A museum label claims, “The new safety laws made every New York factory safe.” Which two sources named in the passage could help test this claim, and what would each show?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a new question about the fire’s aftermath, not about escape routes. In 70 to 100 words, state your question, name two sources from the passage, outline two research steps and one way to check a claim, then describe a museum product for a specific audience.

ANSWER KEY

Questions After the Fire

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.P.1.2.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that could lead to a historical question, circle two kinds of sources you could investigate, and put a question mark beside one claim you would check before using it in a museum exhibit. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Use two details from paragraph 1 to write a focused question about escape routes that the passage cannot fully answer.	**How did the locked door and the collapsed fire escape each affect workers' chances of escaping?**
2	Which two sources named in the passage would you use to investigate your question? Explain what each could add.	**A surviving worker's testimony could describe a route that worker tried. The official fire investigation could provide accounts from others and information about building conditions.**
3	A next-day newspaper report and a survivor disagree about an exit. What two checks suggested by the passage could help you decide what to report?	**Find out who observed the exit and when each account was recorded. Compare both accounts with the official fire investigation.**
4	A museum label claims, "The new safety laws made every New York factory safe." Which two sources named in the passage could help test this claim, and what would each show?	**The text of a law would show what officials required. Later inspection records could show conditions at particular factories, but would not prove that every factory was safe.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My question is whether New York's new factory safety rules changed conditions for garment workers in the years after the fire. First, I would read the text of a later law to identify what employers had to do. Next, I would examine inspection records from several factories to look for evidence of those changes. I would check any claim about improvement against records from more than one factory rather than assuming every workplace complied. I would write a brief exhibit label for museum visitors that explains what the records show and what they cannot establish.

Accept other focused questions and source choices when students explain how the evidence fits the inquiry. In Part 3, look for a workable sequence of steps and a check that recognizes the limits of the chosen records.