Voices After the Fire

How an author's perspective shapes a call for change

AWH.P.3.2.A "Evaluate the extent to which historical or cultural perspectives affect an author's stated or implied purpose."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline what each writer wants readers to do, circle clues about each writer's position or audience, and draw arrows connecting those clues to the writer's purpose.

Three Responses to the Triangle Fire

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City, killing 146 workers. Many were young immigrant women. Imagine a letter printed soon afterward by Rosa Bellini, a fictional garment worker and union organizer. "When we asked for safer shops, some employers called our demands foolish. Now families wait outside a building that should have had enough safe ways out. City leaders must inspect factories and require clear escape routes." Rosa knows the long hours and dangers of garment work firsthand. Her letter names a policy goal, but its urgent tone also asks readers to feel the workers' loss.

2. Imagine another fictional letter, this one from Henry Alden, who manages a different garment factory in 1911. "No owner wants such a tragedy. Yet if every new rule arrives at once, small shops may close, and workers may lose wages. Let us meet with inspectors and set changes we can afford." Henry does not deny that factories need safer exits. He also worries that costly rules could threaten the business he runs. He writes in a period when factory owners faced public pressure for reform and feared higher operating costs. He never mentions locked doors or the workers who died.

3. A century later, imagine a museum curator, Leah Chen, writing a label beside a display about the fire. "The 146 lives lost in this fire changed how many Americans thought about workplace safety. Examine the old sewing machine, then ask whose labor makes the clothes you wear today." Leah writes for visitors who may have never entered a garment factory. Her museum also serves a community where people debate conditions in modern workplaces. She does not ask visitors to support a single bill. Instead, she connects an event from 1911 to choices and questions in their own time.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does Rosa's experience help explain both her stated demand and her urgent tone?

2. How does Henry's position as a factory manager shape his proposal and what he leaves out?

3. To what extent do Rosa's and Henry's different positions explain their different proposals? Use one detail from each letter.

4. How does Leah's audience a century later shape her purpose differently from Rosa's purpose in 1911?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 60 to 80 word public statement as a workplace safety inspector in 2026 responding to the fire. Add one sentence explaining how your modern perspective shapes your purpose.

ANSWER KEY

Voices After the Fire

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.P.3.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline what each writer wants readers to do, circle clues about each writer's position or audience, and draw arrows connecting those clues to the writer's purpose. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Rosa's experience help explain both her stated demand and her urgent tone?	**As a garment worker and union organizer, Rosa knows factory dangers firsthand. She demands inspections and clear escape routes, and her urgent tone calls attention to workers' losses.**
2	How does Henry's position as a factory manager shape his proposal and what he leaves out?	**Henry proposes affordable changes made with inspectors because he worries about the cost to businesses. He leaves out locked doors and the workers who died.**
3	To what extent do Rosa's and Henry's different positions explain their different proposals? Use one detail from each letter.	**Their positions strongly shape their proposals. Rosa, a worker and organizer, demands inspections and clear escape routes. Henry, a manager, asks for changes businesses can afford.**
4	How does Leah's audience a century later shape her purpose differently from Rosa's purpose in 1911?	**Leah asks museum visitors to connect past labor to the clothes they wear today, rather than support a specific bill. Rosa calls for immediate factory inspections and clear escape routes.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

When I inspect a workplace, I look for exits that open, clear paths, and drills people understand. The Triangle fire reminds us that a safety rule matters only if workers can use it during an emergency. I would ask employers to check doors with employees, not just complete a form. I would also ask workers to report blocked exits without fear. These steps cannot undo 1911, but they can protect people now.
As a present-day inspector, I focus on practical checks because my purpose is to prevent another workplace disaster.

Accept supported judgments about the extent of each perspective's influence, including answers that note Rosa and Henry both favor some safety changes. The letters and museum label are fictional texts created for this worksheet.