After the Fire

Compare evidence and expert interpretations of factory safety.

E.P.1.2.B "Evaluate points of agreement and disagreement from reliable information and expert interpretations used to answer supporting questions related to content knowledge."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two facts both specialists use, then circle each specialist's top priority. Number the priorities 1 and 2 so you can compare them.

What Would Make Factories Safer?

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. It killed 146 workers, many of them young immigrant women. To investigate why so many died, researchers can compare survivor testimony preserved by Cornell University's Kheel Center with reports from the New York State Factory Investigating Commission. These records describe dangerous escape routes: a door was locked, and the building's fire escape collapsed. The records provide evidence, but deciding which reform mattered most requires interpretation.

2. Consider two specialists using those records to answer this question: What change would best protect factory workers after the fire? A fire-safety engineer emphasizes building design and enforcement. In this interpretation, unlocked exits, usable fire escapes, and regular inspections would have offered workers clearer ways out. The engineer does not claim that one fix could erase every risk. Instead, the physical failures documented in the records make enforceable safety rules the most urgent response.

3. A labor historian reads the same evidence but puts more weight on workers' power. Workers needed ways to report hazards and organize without fearing dismissal, the historian argues. Both specialists agree that unsafe exits helped turn a fire into a catastrophe and that rules must be enforced. They disagree about priority: the engineer centers safer buildings, while the historian centers workers' ability to demand and maintain safety. Neither account proves its preferred reform alone would have prevented all 146 deaths.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What do both specialists agree made the fire more deadly? Cite one detail from the records.

2. How do the specialists differ about the most urgent change?

3. What can the two named record collections help readers check, and what can they not settle?

4. Do the records prove that either specialist's preferred reform alone would have saved all 146 workers? Explain.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

How should officials find and fix factory hazards before a fire? In three or four sentences, propose an action, connect it to one fact from the records, and explain what the other specialist's view adds.

ANSWER KEY

After the Fire

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two facts both specialists use, then circle each specialist's top priority. Number the priorities 1 and 2 so you can compare them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What do both specialists agree made the fire more deadly? Cite one detail from the records.	**Both agree that unsafe exits increased the danger. The records describe a locked door or a collapsed fire escape.**
2	How do the specialists differ about the most urgent change?	**The engineer prioritizes enforceable building safety rules. The historian prioritizes workers' ability to report hazards and demand safety.**
3	What can the two named record collections help readers check, and what can they not settle?	**They help readers check claims about escape routes, including the locked door and collapsed fire escape. They cannot settle which proposed reform should come first.**
4	Do the records prove that either specialist's preferred reform alone would have saved all 146 workers? Explain.	**No. The records document hazards, but they do not show what would have happened if only one reform had been in place.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Officials should prioritize regular inspections that check whether exit doors open. A locked door at Triangle shows why checking an exit before a fire matters. The labor historian adds that workers need a safe way to report problems between inspections. Combining reports with inspections could help officials find and fix hazards sooner.

Accept either specialist's approach in Part 3 if the response uses a passage fact and considers what the other perspective adds. Distinguish documented hazards from claims about which reform would have worked best.