From Fire to Reform

Read a model essay that connects evidence from two historical sources.

MWH.P.4.1.A "Compose informative essays and written products, developing a thesis, citing and incorporating evidence from multiple sources and maintaining an organized, formal structure."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the essay's thesis, circle the names of its two sources, and number one piece of evidence from each source. Use your marks to trace how the writer supports the thesis.

The Triangle Fire and Public Safety

(1) On March 25, 1911, a fire raced through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. Many workers were young immigrant women who sewed clothing on upper floors of a building near Washington Square. The fire killed 146 people. A tragedy on this scale invites more than a list of facts; it calls for an explanation of what changed afterward. The Triangle fire exposed dangerous working conditions and helped push workplace safety from a private factory concern into a public responsibility. To understand that shift, evidence about the workers' escape must be considered alongside evidence about the laws that followed.

(2) The National Park Service's account of the fire describes workers trapped above the reach of fire ladders and notes that some exit doors were locked. These details show why ordinary choices by individual workers could not guarantee their safety. The U.S. Department of Labor's history of the fire describes how public outrage helped spur New York to strengthen factory safety laws. Unlike the account of the exits, this source provides evidence of a government response. Together, the sources connect a preventable hazard to a change in public policy rather than treating the fire as an isolated accident.

(3) That connection matters because rules do not erase a disaster, but they can reduce the chance of another one. Locked exits explain the immediate danger, while later safety laws show that lawmakers treated similar dangers as a problem for the public to address. Neither kind of evidence alone tells the whole story: details about the exits do not show what officials did later, and details about new laws do not show why change felt urgent. Read together, the two accounts support a larger conclusion: the Triangle fire helped redefine who was responsible for protecting workers.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which sentence states the essay's thesis? What change does the thesis say the fire helped bring about?

2. How do the details attributed to the National Park Service support the thesis?

3. What different kind of evidence does the U.S. Department of Labor provide, and which part of the thesis does it support?

4. Which sentence in the final paragraph brings the two kinds of evidence together? Explain how it prepares the reader for the conclusion.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one formal paragraph for a museum exhibit plan arguing whether the exhibit should begin with the fire's escape conditions or the laws that followed. State your choice as a thesis, cite and explain one detail from each named source in the passage, and end with a conclusion about why your order would help visitors understand the fire's importance.

From Fire to Reform

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the essay's thesis, circle the names of its two sources, and number one piece of evidence from each source. Use your marks to trace how the writer supports the thesis. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which sentence states the essay's thesis? What change does the thesis say the fire helped bring about?	**The thesis is, "The Triangle fire exposed dangerous working conditions and helped push workplace safety from a private factory concern into a public responsibility." It identifies a shift toward public responsibility for worker safety.**
2	How do the details attributed to the National Park Service support the thesis?	**Workers were trapped above the reach of fire ladders, and some exit doors were locked. These details show dangerous conditions that workers could not overcome through individual choices.**
3	What different kind of evidence does the U.S. Department of Labor provide, and which part of the thesis does it support?	**It describes public outrage that helped spur stronger New York factory safety laws. This supports the thesis's claim that worker safety became a public responsibility.**
4	Which sentence in the final paragraph brings the two kinds of evidence together? Explain how it prepares the reader for the conclusion.	**"Locked exits explain the immediate danger, while later safety laws show that lawmakers treated similar dangers as a problem for the public to address." It links the hazard to the government response before the essay concludes that responsibility for worker safety changed.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A museum exhibit should begin with the factory's escape conditions because visitors need to see the danger before they study the reforms. The National Park Service reports that some exit doors were locked and that fire ladders could not reach trapped workers. Those facts make the workers' lack of safe options concrete. The U.S. Department of Labor describes how public outrage helped New York strengthen factory safety laws, showing that people demanded a response beyond the factory itself. Beginning with the escape conditions would make the later laws easier to understand as a response to specific failures.

Accept either exhibit order if the paragraph states a clear choice, accurately attributes a distinct detail to each source, explains both details, and closes with a reason for that order. Students may paraphrase rather than quote.