Claims Under Investigation

Build a historical thesis that your sources can test

MWH.P.4.2.A "Develop self-generated theses or claims related to independent research and investigations using credible and relevant sources."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two possible research questions in the passage, circle the sources that could help answer them, and number one limit of each source. Use your marks to see how a thesis must fit its evidence.

Researching the Triangle Fire

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. The fire killed 146 workers, many of them young immigrant women. Some workers could not reach a safe exit. A researcher might ask how people learned about the factory's conditions or how safety concerns reached lawmakers. These are different questions, so they require different evidence. A claim about conditions inside the building needs records from people who were there. A claim about changes across the state needs records that cover more than one factory. A strong thesis takes a position that its sources can test.

2. A survivor's sworn testimony in a court case described a door that would not open during the fire. It offers direct evidence about one person's experience, but not a complete account of every exit. Newspapers published soon after the fire reported crowds, grief, and calls for action. Those reports show what readers could learn at the time, although reporters chose which voices to quote. To investigate workers' experiences, a researcher could compare several firsthand accounts instead of relying on one. To investigate what the public heard, a researcher could compare reports from different newspapers and check their publication dates.

3. The New York State Factory Investigating Commission was created after the fire. Its reports documented unsafe conditions in many workplaces and recommended safety changes. These official records can help test claims about statewide problems and proposed reforms, but they cannot show what every worker thought. A university archive that identifies a document's author, date, and original setting can help a researcher verify where a testimony transcript or report came from. The fire drew attention to dangerous conditions, yet demands for safer workplaces also existed before it. A defensible thesis should connect a specific claim to evidence without treating one event as the only cause of change.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. You want to claim that a door would not open during the fire. Which source best supports this claim, and what limit should you acknowledge?

2. A student claims, "Every New Yorker demanded new laws immediately." Which source could test what people heard after the fire, and why can it not prove this claim?

3. Write a testable thesis about the scale of unsafe factory conditions after the fire. Name the source in the passage that supports it.

4. Revise "The fire alone caused every New York factory safety reform" into a narrower thesis supported by two different types of sources in the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose your own research question about how the Triangle fire was recorded, using an angle you did not address above. Write a tentative thesis, name two different sources from the passage that could test it, and explain one limit of your evidence.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.P.4.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two possible research questions in the passage, circle the sources that could help answer them, and number one limit of each source. Use your marks to see how a thesis must fit its evidence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	You want to claim that a door would not open during the fire. Which source best supports this claim, and what limit should you acknowledge?	**The survivor's sworn court testimony supports the claim. It describes one person's experience, not every exit.**
2	A student claims, "Every New Yorker demanded new laws immediately." Which source could test what people heard after the fire, and why can it not prove this claim?	**Newspaper reports could show what readers were told about calls for action. They cannot establish what every New Yorker thought or demanded.**
3	Write a testable thesis about the scale of unsafe factory conditions after the fire. Name the source in the passage that supports it.	**Unsafe conditions extended beyond the Triangle factory. The state Factory Investigating Commission's reports documented unsafe conditions in many workplaces.**
4	Revise "The fire alone caused every New York factory safety reform" into a narrower thesis supported by two different types of sources in the passage.	**After the fire, public calls for action and evidence of unsafe conditions across workplaces both contributed to the push for reform. Newspaper reports document the calls, while commission reports document the wider hazards.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Question: How could a researcher's choice of sources affect whose voices appear in a history of the fire? Tentative thesis: A history based on newspaper reports may feature voices selected by reporters, while one based on court testimony may focus closely on a survivor's experience. Comparing newspaper reports with sworn testimony could test which voices each source includes. Neither source can show what every worker thought.

Accept distinct, arguable theses that stay within what the named sources could test. For Part 3, the question and thesis should take an angle different from the student's Part 2 answers, and the response must identify two relevant sources and a genuine evidence limit.