After the Flames

Weigh two explanations for workplace reform

OKH.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 the claim both experts accept. Circle each expert's claim about which force mattered most.

What Drove Reform After the Triangle Fire?

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire at New York City's Triangle Shirtwaist factory killed 146 workers. A supporting question is: Why did this disaster lead to new workplace protections? Cornell University's Kheel Center preserves accounts from the period, while New York State's Factory Investigating Commission recorded testimony and inspected factories after the fire. These sources are useful because their origins are known and readers can compare accounts with official findings. Neither source, on its own, proves which force mattered most in passing reforms.

2. Consider two expert interpretations of that evidence. A labor historian might argue that organized workers and public marches were the strongest force behind reform: the fire gave labor activists a wider audience. A fire-safety scholar might instead argue that the commission's investigations mattered most because inspectors documented hazards and lawmakers could target them in new rules. Both interpretations accept that the fire exposed dangerous conditions and that New York changed its laws. They disagree about whether public pressure or detailed investigations did more to produce those changes.

3. How could you judge the disagreement? Reports of marches show that people demanded action, but a large crowd cannot prove what persuaded legislators. Commission testimony and inspection findings identify hazards, but they cannot, by themselves, show why lawmakers voted as they did. The commission's work and organized workers' actions can both have mattered. To weigh the experts' claims, seek lawmakers' statements explaining their votes, then check when those statements were made and whether other records support them. A strong answer states the shared facts and keeps the disputed cause open.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What do both experts agree happened after the fire, even though they explain it differently?

2. What does each expert consider the strongest force behind reform?

3. How do the commission's records support one expert's view, and what can they not prove?

4. What additional source could help you weigh the experts' disagreement, and how would you check it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences judging which expert's interpretation is better supported by the evidence in the passage. Include one supporting detail, one limit of that evidence, and a point both experts accept.

ANSWER KEY

After the Flames

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.P.1.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the claim both experts accept. Circle each expert's claim about which force mattered most. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What do both experts agree happened after the fire, even though they explain it differently?	**Both agree that the fire exposed dangerous conditions and that New York changed its laws.**
2	What does each expert consider the strongest force behind reform?	**The labor historian emphasizes organized workers and public marches; the fire-safety scholar emphasizes the commission's investigations.**
3	How do the commission's records support one expert's view, and what can they not prove?	**They document hazards that lawmakers could address, supporting the fire-safety scholar's view. They cannot prove why lawmakers voted as they did.**
4	What additional source could help you weigh the experts' disagreement, and how would you check it?	**Lawmakers' statements explaining their votes could help. Check when the statements were made and whether other records support them.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The fire-safety scholar's interpretation is somewhat better supported by the evidence described here. The commission inspected factories and recorded testimony, giving lawmakers specific hazards to address. Still, those records do not prove that investigations mattered more than organized workers' pressure when legislators voted. Both experts agree that the fire exposed dangerous conditions and that New York changed its laws.

Accept either expert as the stronger interpretation if the response uses passage evidence and acknowledges what that evidence cannot establish. The shared point must be one both interpretations accept.