Evidence After the Fire

Compare sources about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire

OKH.P.2.2.A "Gather and evaluate the usefulness of various formats of evidence for specific inquiry, analyzing the broader historical context, and assessing potential bias and credibility of sources."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline what each source could help you learn, circle clues about who made it or when, and number the three source formats. Use your marks to judge which sources fit different questions about the fire.

Three Views of a Factory Fire

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City killed 146 workers. Many employees were young immigrant women who made clothing for low wages. The factory occupied the upper floors of a ten-story building, where escape was difficult. A newspaper story published the next day described people trapped above the street and crowds watching below. Its reporter could gather eyewitness accounts and describe what people saw soon after the fire. The story appeared before investigators had finished their work, however. A reader studying the first public reaction would find details that a later report might leave out.

2. Garment workers also spoke publicly after the fire. In union appeals, they called for safer factories and stronger protection for workers. Union members had firsthand knowledge of the clothing industry, including long hours and crowded workplaces. They also wanted readers to support changes that would help workers. Their appeals can show which problems workers thought needed attention and how they tried to persuade the public. They cannot, by themselves, establish conditions in every New York factory. At the time, clothing production was growing, and many workers had little power to challenge an employer's rules without risking their jobs.

3. New York State created a Factory Investigating Commission after the fire. Its 1912 report drew on investigations of working conditions in multiple factories, not just Triangle. The report discussed hazards such as unsafe exits and inadequate fire protection and recommended changes to state law. Because the commission worked for the government, its findings could influence lawmakers. Its statewide focus also meant it could not describe every moment of the Triangle fire or every worker's experience. Taken together, the newspaper story, union appeals, and commission report offer different kinds of evidence. Their dates, purposes, and scopes matter when deciding which to use.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. For an inquiry into the first public reaction to the fire, why would the newspaper story be useful? Name one limit of its timing.

2. What could union appeals reveal about workers' concerns, and what purpose might shape how they presented those concerns?

3. How does the clothing industry's broader context help explain why workers called for stronger protections?

4. Which source is better suited to an inquiry about hazards across New York factories, the newspaper story or the commission report? Explain using the scope of each.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

You want to investigate what a Triangle worker's ordinary workday was like before the fire. Propose a source format not named in the passage, then explain what it might reveal, one reason to check its credibility, and how it would complement one source in the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Evidence After the Fire

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.P.2.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline what each source could help you learn, circle clues about who made it or when, and number the three source formats. Use your marks to judge which sources fit different questions about the fire. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	For an inquiry into the first public reaction to the fire, why would the newspaper story be useful? Name one limit of its timing.	**It described eyewitness accounts and crowds soon after the fire, but it appeared before investigators had finished their work.**
2	What could union appeals reveal about workers' concerns, and what purpose might shape how they presented those concerns?	**They could reveal problems workers wanted addressed, such as factory safety. Union members wanted public support for changes that would help workers.**
3	How does the clothing industry's broader context help explain why workers called for stronger protections?	**Clothing production was growing, while many workers risked their jobs if they challenged an employer's rules.**
4	Which source is better suited to an inquiry about hazards across New York factories, the newspaper story or the commission report? Explain using the scope of each.	**The commission report is better suited because it drew on investigations of multiple factories. The newspaper story focused on the Triangle fire.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would look for a worker's diary written before the fire. Entries might describe daily hours, tasks, and rules that mattered to the writer. I would check when the entries were written and whether the writer described personal experience or repeated a rumor. The diary could add one worker's daily perspective to the commission report's findings from multiple factories. It would not show whether that worker's experience was typical.

Accept other plausible source formats if students explain their usefulness for the new inquiry, a specific credibility concern, and how the source complements a passage source. Distinguish evidence about one worker from evidence about factory conditions more broadly.