The Locked Door

How a worker's perspective shapes an appeal for safety

OKH.P.3.2.A "Evaluate the extent to which historical or cultural perspectives affect an author's stated or implied purpose."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two facts about the Triangle fire, circle two phrases that reveal the writer's perspective as a worker, and number the actions she asks lawmakers to take. Use your marks to trace how her perspective shapes her purpose.

An Imagined Worker's Appeal, 1912

1 Last spring, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory burned in New York City. One hundred forty-six workers died, most of them young women and girls. Some exit doors were locked, and a fire escape collapsed. I sew shirtwaists in another crowded shop, so this is not a distant story to me. When a supervisor shuts a door to keep workers at their machines, I notice how far the windows are from the street. I write to state lawmakers as a worker, not as someone who calculates profits from a desk. What happened at Triangle could happen where I work.

2 Many of us are immigrants. We know that a lost day's wages can mean an unpaid bill, so speaking against a boss carries a risk. Yet silence carries another risk. I want state lawmakers to pay for more inspectors who can check exits without waiting for workers to complain. I also want inspection results reported publicly, so families can judge whether a shop is safe. A factory owner might see a locked door as a way to prevent theft or keep production moving. From my sewing machine, the same door looks like a trap.

3 Some owners say new rules cost money and might force small shops to cut jobs. I understand why that warning frightens workers who need a paycheck. But a wage cannot protect a family if its earner never comes home. Lawmakers should require doors that open easily during working hours and enough inspections to make that rule real. The Triangle fire has already shown what can happen when profit and safety are weighed on different scales. I cannot speak for every worker, but my place at the machine makes me unwilling to treat a locked exit as a minor expense.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the writer's position as a garment worker shape what she wants lawmakers to do? Use one detail from the appeal.

2. Why does the writer contrast an owner's view of a locked door with her own? Explain how the contrast supports her purpose.

3. To what extent does the Triangle fire shape the urgency of the writer's appeal? Support your judgment with a detail from the passage.

4. What does the writer acknowledge about workers who fear losing jobs? How does that acknowledgment affect her appeal?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 90 word fictional 1912 letter from a small garment-factory owner to state lawmakers. Support safer exits but request time to pay for changes; include two accurate details from the passage and let the owner's financial perspective shape the request.

ANSWER KEY

The Locked Door

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.P.3.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two facts about the Triangle fire, circle two phrases that reveal the writer's perspective as a worker, and number the actions she asks lawmakers to take. Use your marks to trace how her perspective shapes her purpose. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the writer's position as a garment worker shape what she wants lawmakers to do? Use one detail from the appeal.	**Working in a crowded shop makes her fear being trapped, so she asks lawmakers to require doors that open easily and fund more inspectors.**
2	Why does the writer contrast an owner's view of a locked door with her own? Explain how the contrast supports her purpose.	**An owner might lock a door to prevent theft or keep production moving, but the worker sees a trap. The contrast supports her call to put workers' safety ahead of those concerns.**
3	To what extent does the Triangle fire shape the urgency of the writer's appeal? Support your judgment with a detail from the passage.	**It strongly shapes the urgency: 146 people died, and some exits were locked. She argues that the same danger could exist in her shop.**
4	What does the writer acknowledge about workers who fear losing jobs? How does that acknowledgment affect her appeal?	**She recognizes that workers need wages and may fear that costly rules will cut jobs. This shows she understands a concern about safety rules while still arguing that open exits are necessary.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

To the state lawmakers: I run a small shirtwaist shop, and I agree that every exit should open quickly during work. The Triangle fire killed 146 people, and locked doors made escape harder. I want my workers to return home safely, but paying for repairs all at once could leave me unable to pay their wages. Please require clear exits while giving small shops several months to make changes. Inspectors can then check that we have done the work.

Accept supported judgments about how strongly the fire and the writer's worker perspective shape her purpose. For Part 3, look for an original owner's viewpoint, two accurate passage details, support for safer exits, and a request for time to pay.