When Counts Change

Compare an early report with a later historical account.

TOT.P.3.1 "Comprehend, evaluate, and synthesize textual sources to acquire and refine knowledge in the social studies. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, evaluating features such as author, date..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each source's name and timing. Circle the reported death totals, then number the passage details that help you judge what each source can establish.

Counting the Triangle Fire

1 On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Waist Company factory in New York City. Workers made shirtwaists, a popular kind of blouse, on the upper floors of a building. Many could not escape. To investigate the disaster, historians compare accounts made at the time with later summaries based on additional records.

2 The New York Times printed a report on March 26, the morning after the fire. Its headline began, "141 Men and Girls Die in Waist Factory Fire." The headline shows what readers were told while news of the disaster was still developing. It does not, by itself, establish the final number of people who died.

3 The National Park Service, a federal agency, now reports 146 deaths in its online history of the fire. Unlike the next-day newspaper, this later account can draw on records assembled after the disaster. The chart compares the two reported totals. Their difference alone does not prove that the newspaper acted dishonestly; people were still identifying victims.

REPORTED TRIANGLE FIRE DEATHS



2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which account is a primary source for the fire? Cite its origin and date to support your choice.

2. What claim does the newspaper headline support, and what claim can it not establish on its own?

3. How many more deaths does the later account report? Use a passage detail to explain a possible reason for the difference.

4. Which source better supports a claim about the final death toll? Cite the chart and a detail about the source.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you find a third account, published years later, that claims 150 people died but does not name its records. Write a four- or five-sentence curator's note explaining how you would check its claim against the two sources here. Include two specific details from the passage or chart and explain why the third account's later date alone does not make it reliable.

When Counts Change

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each source's name and timing. Circle the reported death totals, then number the passage details that help you judge what each source can establish. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which account is a primary source for the fire? Cite its origin and date to support your choice.	**The New York Times report is a primary source. It was published on March 26, 1911, the morning after the fire.**
2	What claim does the newspaper headline support, and what claim can it not establish on its own?	**It supports that readers were told 141 people had died soon after the fire. It cannot establish the final death toll.**
3	How many more deaths does the later account report? Use a passage detail to explain a possible reason for the difference.	**It reports five more deaths, 146 rather than 141. The later account could use records assembled after the disaster, when victims had been identified.**
4	Which source better supports a claim about the final death toll? Cite the chart and a detail about the source.	**The National Park Service account better supports the final toll of 146 because it was produced later and could draw on records assembled after the fire.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would compare the new account's claim of 150 deaths with the New York Times headline reporting 141 and the National Park Service's total of 146. The newspaper appeared the day after the fire, so its count may have been incomplete. I would ask which records the new account used and whether they identify four additional victims beyond the Park Service's count. Publishing later does not, by itself, make an account without named records more reliable than one that can draw on records assembled after the disaster.

Accept answers that distinguish what an immediate report documents from what a later account can establish. For the curator's note, look for a specific comparison, a proposed check of the unnamed records, and reasoning beyond publication date.