Evidence After Tragedy

Trace how two sources build a historical argument

TOT.P.4.1.A "Compose informative essays and written products, developing a thesis, citing and incorporating evidence from multiple sources and maintaining an organized, formal structure."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the thesis and circle the names of the two sources. Write 1 beside a sentence explaining how Cornell's evidence supports the thesis and 2 beside a sentence explaining how the Department of Labor's evidence supports it.

Why the Triangle Fire Still Matters

1 On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. Many workers were young immigrant women who made blouses on crowded upper floors. The disaster raises a question larger than how the fire began: What makes a workplace safe when leaving it quickly can mean survival? The Triangle fire shows that safety depends not only on a worker's choices but also on rules that employers and governments enforce. Evidence about the workers' deaths reveals the human cost of unsafe conditions, while records of later reforms show why the disaster changed public policy.

2 First, the number of deaths makes the failure of workplace protection impossible to treat as a minor problem. Cornell University's Triangle Fire collection reports that 146 people died in the fire. Its accounts also describe how a locked exit prevented some workers from escaping. These details work together as evidence: the death toll shows the scale of the disaster, and the exit shows how conditions inside the building increased the danger. A number alone might shock readers, but an account of the blocked route helps explain why safety rules matter. The fire was not simply an accident that individuals could avoid.

3 Next, the fire's aftermath shows that the public response reached beyond one factory. The U.S. Department of Labor's history of the Triangle fire explains that the tragedy helped spur investigations and new workplace safety laws in New York. That evidence supports the thesis in a different way from Cornell's records: it shows what institutions did after the deaths, not only what happened during the fire. Together, the sources connect immediate harm to lasting changes in policy. Although new laws could not restore the lives lost, the reforms recognized that workers needed protections built into workplaces before another emergency occurred.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. State the passage's thesis. Where does the writer place it?

2. How does the writer use Cornell's evidence to support the thesis, rather than simply report a death toll?

3. What does the Department of Labor's account add to the argument that Cornell's evidence does not?

4. How do the words “First” and “Next” help organize the writer's argument?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one formal paragraph of 75 to 105 words for a school museum exhibit. Argue whether the death toll or the later policy changes best explain why the Triangle fire remains important, then cite both sources named in the passage and explain how each supports your thesis.

ANSWER KEY

Evidence After Tragedy

HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.P.4.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the thesis and circle the names of the two sources. Write 1 beside a sentence explaining how Cornell's evidence supports the thesis and 2 beside a sentence explaining how the Department of Labor's evidence supports it. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	State the passage's thesis. Where does the writer place it?	**The Triangle fire shows that safety depends on enforced rules as well as workers' choices. The thesis appears in the first paragraph.**
2	How does the writer use Cornell's evidence to support the thesis, rather than simply report a death toll?	**The writer pairs the 146 deaths with the locked exit to explain how unsafe conditions increased the danger and why workplace rules matter.**
3	What does the Department of Labor's account add to the argument that Cornell's evidence does not?	**It describes the investigations and new safety laws that followed the fire, showing a policy response beyond the factory.**
4	How do the words “First” and “Next” help organize the writer's argument?	**They guide readers from evidence about the danger during the fire to evidence about the reforms that followed.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Triangle fire remains important chiefly because its aftermath shows that protecting workers requires public action, not just personal caution. Cornell University's Triangle Fire collection reports that 146 people died and describes a locked exit. That evidence shows the danger workers faced under unsafe conditions. The U.S. Department of Labor explains that the tragedy helped spur investigations and new workplace safety laws in New York. This second source shows that officials responded to the danger through policy. Together, the sources explain why a disaster at one factory became an argument for broader protections.

Accept either position in Part 3 if the paragraph states a clear thesis, cites both named sources accurately, explains each source's relevance, and maintains a formal, organized structure.