After the Fire

Trace how a writer's time and viewpoint shape a call to action.

USG.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 references to the fire, circle two clues about the writer's viewpoint as a shop owner, and number two safety actions the writer proposes. Use your marks to judge what shapes the letter's purpose.

An Imagined Shop Owner's Letter, April 1911

1 I own a small garment shop in New York City, and I am writing to other shop owners about safety. Last month, fire swept through the Triangle Waist Company factory, killing 146 workers. Many were young immigrant women. I cannot read that number without thinking of the people who sew beside my cutting tables. Yet I also know what a slow week means: wages must be paid even when orders are scarce. Some owners hear calls for new rules and imagine an inspector closing their doors. I ask them to listen before they turn away.

2 We should keep exits clear, hold fire drills, and welcome inspections that find hazards before a fire does. A locked exit might seem useful to an owner worried about theft, but it can trap people who need to escape. No bolt or bundle of cloth is worth a worker's life. I do not pretend that every change will cost nothing. In a small shop, time spent on a drill is time away from sewing. Even so, the Triangle fire shows what happens when saving time becomes more important than letting people leave a dangerous building.

3 I want the city to set clear safety rules and give shops a reasonable period to meet them. Owners should not use the cost of change as an excuse to delay every repair, but officials should not assume that every shop can buy new equipment overnight. If we act only to defend our profits, we will lose the trust of the people whose work keeps our businesses open. If we act only after another disaster, we will have waited too long. I hope fellow owners will support rules that protect workers while allowing small shops time to adjust.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the Triangle fire shape the writer's reason for addressing other owners? Cite one detail from the letter.

2. How does the writer's viewpoint as a small-shop owner shape the safety rules proposed? Cite one detail.

3. Which concern shared by some owners does the writer challenge, and how does that challenge serve the letter's purpose?

4. To what extent does the writer's business viewpoint limit the call for safety? Use evidence from both the second and third paragraphs.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine that a garment worker writes a reply to this letter in April 1911. In 5 to 6 sentences, state the worker's purpose, explain how that viewpoint could change the proposed timeline for safety rules, and compare how the worker's and owner's viewpoints shape their purposes. Cite one detail from the letter.

ANSWER KEY

After the Fire

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.P.3.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two references to the fire, circle two clues about the writer's viewpoint as a shop owner, and number two safety actions the writer proposes. Use your marks to judge what shapes the letter's purpose. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the Triangle fire shape the writer's reason for addressing other owners? Cite one detail from the letter.	**The fire makes the writer urge owners to act before another disaster. The writer cites the 146 deaths and warns against waiting too long.**
2	How does the writer's viewpoint as a small-shop owner shape the safety rules proposed? Cite one detail.	**The writer supports safety rules but asks for a reasonable period to meet them because small shops may not be able to buy equipment overnight.**
3	Which concern shared by some owners does the writer challenge, and how does that challenge serve the letter's purpose?	**The writer challenges the concern that safety changes cost time or money. By arguing that these costs do not justify unsafe exits or delay, the writer tries to win owners' support for safety rules.**
4	To what extent does the writer's business viewpoint limit the call for safety? Use evidence from both the second and third paragraphs.	**It affects the timing of some changes but not the writer's support for safety. The writer says shops should keep exits clear and hold drills, yet asks that shops have a reasonable period to meet city rules.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

As a garment worker, I would write to ask the city to make safety rules take effect immediately. The owner's letter says a locked exit can trap people, so I would not want shops to wait before clearing every exit. I would also ask for immediate fire drills, even if they take time away from sewing. The owner supports safety but asks for time because small shops may struggle to buy equipment overnight. Our viewpoints strongly shape our purposes: I would press for immediate protection, while the owner asks for time to adjust.

Accept supported judgments that distinguish the fire's influence from the owner's concern about the costs and timing of changes. For the open task, the worker's reply may agree with some of the owner's proposals, but it should explain how the worker's viewpoint affects its purpose or timeline.