Evidence After the Fire

Build a historical inquiry from sources and their limits.

USH.P.1.2.D "Demonstrate understanding of content through the development of self-driven inquiries and the completion of multi-staged, authentic tasks and assessments."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the research question, circle three source types, and number two steps the researcher would take before writing the exhibit label. Use your marks to track how a question becomes a supported public explanation.

Investigating the Triangle Fire

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory on the upper floors of a New York City building. One hundred forty-six workers died, many of them young immigrant women. The fire spread quickly among fabric scraps and paper patterns. Some workers could not use an exit because a door on the ninth floor was locked. Others found a fire escape that collapsed under the weight of people trying to flee. These details do more than explain a tragedy. They raise a question worth investigating: which workplace conditions made the fire so deadly, and what evidence can distinguish one condition from another?

2. A museum researcher looking into this question might consult testimony from survivors, photographs of the building, and reports written after the fire. A survivor's account could describe what happened at a particular exit, but one person could not see every floor. A photograph might show the building's exterior, but it could not show whether a door was locked during the fire. An official report might record a violation, yet the researcher would need to check when inspectors visited. Each source offers a piece of the story. Comparing sources helps separate a strong claim from a plausible guess.

3. The researcher could next create a short exhibit label explaining a specific hazard and proposing a safety measure that would address it. Before writing, the researcher would identify a claim, find two different sources that support it, and note what remains uncertain. The finished label could explain why an unlocked exit matters, for example, without claiming that one change alone would have saved everyone. After the fire, New York State investigated factory conditions and enacted workplace safety reforms. An exhibit should make clear which details describe the 1911 event and which details concern the later response.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. A visitor says a photograph of the building proves the ninth-floor door was locked during the fire. How could you test that claim, and why is the photograph not enough?

2. You find an official report that records a safety violation. What must you check before using it as evidence of conditions on the day of the fire? Explain why.

3. Which two source types could you compare to investigate trouble at an exit? What might each add to your inquiry?

4. If an exhibit label discusses both the fire and safety reforms, how should the researcher keep those parts of the account distinct?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose your own focused question about the fire or the reforms, different from the question in paragraph 1. In five sentences, name an audience and a public product, explain two research steps in order using two source types from the passage, and identify one uncertainty your product would acknowledge.

ANSWER KEY

Evidence After the Fire

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.P.1.2.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the research question, circle three source types, and number two steps the researcher would take before writing the exhibit label. Use your marks to track how a question becomes a supported public explanation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	A visitor says a photograph of the building proves the ninth-floor door was locked during the fire. How could you test that claim, and why is the photograph not enough?	**Compare the photograph with survivor testimony about the exit. A photograph of the exterior cannot show whether the door was locked during the fire.**
2	You find an official report that records a safety violation. What must you check before using it as evidence of conditions on the day of the fire? Explain why.	**Check when inspectors visited. The visit date determines whether the report documents conditions at the time of the fire.**
3	Which two source types could you compare to investigate trouble at an exit? What might each add to your inquiry?	**Survivor testimony could describe what happened at an exit. An official report might record a related violation, if one was documented.**
4	If an exhibit label discusses both the fire and safety reforms, how should the researcher keep those parts of the account distinct?	**Identify hazards such as the locked door or collapsed fire escape as details of the 1911 fire, and identify the state investigation and reforms as later responses.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My question is, could workers have noticed a risk with the fire escape before March 25, 1911? For museum visitors, I would create an exhibit label that separates possible warnings from facts learned afterward. First, I would check the dates of building photographs and look for visible damage. Next, I would compare those clues with survivor testimony about any earlier concerns. I would acknowledge that a photograph might miss hidden damage and a survivor might not know what other workers noticed.

Accept other source comparisons when students explain what each source can and cannot establish. For the open task, look for a distinct, focused question and a feasible sequence that connects evidence to a public product without overstating what the sources prove.