After the Fire

How a speaker's position shapes a call for change

USH.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 each speaker's requested action, circle a phrase that reveals each speaker's perspective, and put a star beside a phrase that hints at an unstated goal.

Two Voices After Triangle

1 On March 25, 1911, a fire at New York City's Triangle Waist Company killed 146 workers. Many were young immigrant women who sewed shirtwaists, a popular kind of blouse. Crowded workrooms, a collapsed fire escape, and a locked exit door made escape harder. The tragedy intensified calls for workplace safety laws. The next two statements are invented voices, not historical documents, but they reflect competing arguments of the time. One speaker organizes garment workers; the other owns a small clothing factory. Both speak to New Yorkers after the fire, yet each brings different daily concerns to the debate.

2 Workers should not have to choose between a paycheck and a safe way out. I have listened to seamstresses describe doors they could not use during a workday and supervisors who valued speed over complaints. The Triangle deaths are not only a terrible accident; they expose what can happen when employees have little power to challenge unsafe conditions. City leaders must require unlocked exits and regular inspections, even if some employers object to the cost. When readers call such rules too expensive, I want them to picture the families who will never see their daughters come home.

3 I own a small workshop, and I cannot forget the workers who died. My employees deserve open exits and inspections, too. But a new rule that demands expensive building changes overnight could force a small shop to shut its doors, leaving workers without wages. Give owners clear deadlines and loans to pay for safer stairs and alarms. Some owners will complain about any rule, but that does not make every concern about cost an excuse. I hope readers see that protecting jobs and protecting lives need not be opposing goals.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. To what extent does the organizer's work with garment workers shape the demand for safety rules? Use two details from the statement.

2. How does the owner's position shape the request for deadlines and loans? Identify an implied goal as well as the stated request.

3. The owner says some owners will complain about any rule. How does this admission affect your judgment about whether business interests alone explain the statement's purpose?

4. How much of the speakers' disagreement comes from their different positions? Explain one difference and one point of agreement using evidence from both statements.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a city fire inspector writing a public notice after the Triangle fire. In 5 to 6 sentences, write a brief notice with a specific safety request, then explain how the inspector's work shapes its stated purpose, its possible unstated purpose, and how much that perspective explains the notice.

ANSWER KEY

After the Fire

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.P.3.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each speaker's requested action, circle a phrase that reveals each speaker's perspective, and put a star beside a phrase that hints at an unstated goal. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	To what extent does the organizer's work with garment workers shape the demand for safety rules? Use two details from the statement.	**It strongly shapes the demand. The organizer has heard seamstresses describe unusable doors and emphasizes workers' limited power to challenge unsafe conditions.**
2	How does the owner's position shape the request for deadlines and loans? Identify an implied goal as well as the stated request.	**The owner asks for time and financial help to make shops safer. The warning that a small shop could close suggests an implied goal of keeping the business open.**
3	The owner says some owners will complain about any rule. How does this admission affect your judgment about whether business interests alone explain the statement's purpose?	**It suggests business interests do not explain the whole statement. The owner distinguishes concerns about the pace and cost of changes from opposition to all safety rules.**
4	How much of the speakers' disagreement comes from their different positions? Explain one difference and one point of agreement using evidence from both statements.	**Their positions explain much of the disagreement about cost and timing: the organizer wants required inspections even if employers object, while the owner wants deadlines and loans. Both support open exits and inspections.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Factory owners should keep exits clear and make sure workers can open them during every shift. City inspectors need access to workrooms to check those conditions. As a fire inspector, I would state my purpose as preventing deaths in a fire. My job would also give me a reason to seek more authority to enter factories, an unstated purpose readers might notice. That perspective explains much of my request, but the danger shown by the Triangle fire gives people outside my profession reason to support it, too.

Accept supported judgments about degree, including answers that weigh concern for workers against either speaker's professional interests. Students should distinguish what each speaker asks for from a reasonable inference about why.