Same Fire, Different Views

Compare two arguments about factory safety after the Triangle fire.

USH.P.3.2.B "Evaluate the author's point of view, potential bias, and how authors can reach different conclusions regarding the same issue."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each letter writer's conclusion, circle one detail each writer uses to support it, and put a star beside a phrase in each letter that suggests how the writer's interests may shape the argument.

Who Should Check the Exits?

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. One hundred forty-six workers died. Some exit doors were locked, and crowded escape routes made it difficult for workers to get out. After the disaster, New York State investigated factory conditions and passed new safety laws. The following two letters are invented to represent arguments people could have made during that debate. Both writers want another fire prevented, but they disagree about regular state inspections of factory exits. As you read, consider what each writer sees every day and which costs each one fears most.

2. Letter from a neighborhood nurse: "I have treated workers who could not afford to miss even one day's wages. The 146 people who died at Triangle did not get to choose whether an exit was safe. A posted rule is little comfort if a locked door stays locked until a fire starts. State inspectors should visit factories regularly and check exits without warning. Owners who know an inspector might arrive will have a reason to keep doors clear every day. Inspections cost money, but families pay a far higher price when safety depends only on an owner's promise."

3. Letter from a small garment-factory owner: "The Triangle deaths were terrible, and every exit in my shop should open during working hours. But regular state visits could pull workers away from orders and add costs that a small factory struggles to pay. Those costs could mean fewer jobs for the same families the state hopes to protect. Rather than require repeated inspections, the state should give owners clear exit rules and impose steep fines when a blocked door is reported. A factory that ignores a rule should face consequences, but a careful owner should not pay for another owner's failures."

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How might the nurse's work shape her view of inspections? Support your answer with a detail from her letter.

2. Which concern in the owner's letter suggests a financial interest? How might it affect his conclusion?

3. Both writers want to prevent another fire. Why do they reach different conclusions about regular inspections?

4. Which writer gives stronger support for the proposed policy, based on the letters? Use one detail from each letter to explain your judgment.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a town deciding whether to turn an empty lot into a public garden or parking spaces. In 4 to 5 sentences, describe two possible writers, each writer's conclusion and a reason for it, then explain how their different interests could shape their conclusions.

ANSWER KEY

Same Fire, Different Views

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.P.3.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each letter writer's conclusion, circle one detail each writer uses to support it, and put a star beside a phrase in each letter that suggests how the writer's interests may shape the argument. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How might the nurse's work shape her view of inspections? Support your answer with a detail from her letter.	**She treats workers who cannot afford to miss wages, so she focuses on protecting workers and their families before a fire occurs. She calls for regular, unannounced exit inspections.**
2	Which concern in the owner's letter suggests a financial interest? How might it affect his conclusion?	**He says inspections could interrupt orders and add costs to a small factory. As an owner, he favors clear rules and fines for reported violations instead of repeated inspections.**
3	Both writers want to prevent another fire. Why do they reach different conclusions about regular inspections?	**The nurse believes inspections could catch unsafe exits before a fire. The owner worries that inspections would burden careful factories and threaten jobs, so he prefers rules and fines.**
4	Which writer gives stronger support for the proposed policy, based on the letters? Use one detail from each letter to explain your judgment.	**For example, the nurse gives stronger support because unannounced visits could reveal locked exits before a fire, while the owner's plan calls for fines only when a blocked door is reported.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A resident who wants to grow food might support a public garden because it would give neighbors space to plant vegetables. A shop owner might prefer parking spaces because customers need places to leave their cars. The resident sees the lot as a source of food and shared space. The shop owner sees it as a way to help nearby businesses. Their different interests lead them to favor different uses for the same lot.

For question 4, accept either writer if the student uses a relevant detail from each letter and explains the judgment. In Part 3, look for two distinct conclusions, a reason for each, and an explanation of how the writers' interests affect their views.