Evidence After the Fire

Compare sources to investigate a historical claim

WG.P.2.2.A "Gather and evaluate the usefulness of various formats of evidence for specific inquiry, analyzing the broader historical context, and assessing potential bias and credibility of sources."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline at least three evidence formats in the passage and circle a limitation or possible bias for each one. Number two details about work or labor disputes in 1911 that could help you interpret the sources.

Investigating the Triangle Fire

1. In March 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. The factory occupied the upper floors of a building where many garment workers, mostly young immigrant women, sewed clothing. The fire killed 146 workers. An investigator asks, "How did workplace conditions shape the death toll?" This question calls for more than a dramatic story. A court transcript might record testimony about exits, while a building plan could show where stairways and doors were located. Neither format alone establishes what happened at every exit as the fire spread.

2. A witness's testimony can describe smoke, blocked routes, or a door that would not open. It offers a firsthand account, but panic can limit what the witness saw or remembered. A building plan may locate exits but cannot prove whether a door was unlocked that day. A newspaper article can reveal how the public understood the fire, yet its writer may favor owners or workers. A list of those who died documents the scale of the loss, but names and ages alone cannot explain why escape failed. Comparing these formats helps an investigator test claims instead of treating one source as the whole story.

3. Source credibility also depends on when, why, and for whom a record was made. Testimony recorded soon after the fire may preserve details, although a witness questioned in court could feel pressure to defend a position. In 1911, garment workers faced long hours and struggled to win safer conditions; labor organizers and factory owners often disagreed about regulation. Those conflicts could shape what each side emphasized. To investigate a claim about an exit, compare testimony from people in different locations with a building plan and any available inspection records. Agreement strengthens a claim, but a contradiction deserves further investigation.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which format could help locate exits, and why could it not settle whether people could use those exits during the fire?

2. How could a witness's testimony help investigate an escape route, and what might make the account incomplete?

3. How could the disagreement between labor organizers and factory owners affect a newspaper account of the fire?

4. A witness says an exit could not be used. Which two other formats named in the passage could you consult, and what could one of them tell you?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are investigating whether the fire changed calls for factory safety rules. In four sentences, choose two evidence formats from the passage, explain what each could show and one limitation of each, and describe how you would compare them.

ANSWER KEY

Evidence After the Fire

HIGH SCHOOL · WG.P.2.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline at least three evidence formats in the passage and circle a limitation or possible bias for each one. Number two details about work or labor disputes in 1911 that could help you interpret the sources. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which format could help locate exits, and why could it not settle whether people could use those exits during the fire?	**A building plan could locate exits, but it could not show whether a door was unlocked during the fire.**
2	How could a witness's testimony help investigate an escape route, and what might make the account incomplete?	**A witness could describe a blocked route or a door that would not open. Panic or a limited view could leave out what happened elsewhere.**
3	How could the disagreement between labor organizers and factory owners affect a newspaper account of the fire?	**A writer might favor one side and emphasize details that support its position on workplace regulation.**
4	A witness says an exit could not be used. Which two other formats named in the passage could you consult, and what could one of them tell you?	**Consult a building plan and any available inspection records. The plan could show where the exit was located, though not whether its door opened during the fire.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would compare newspaper articles published before and after the fire to see whether calls for safety rules became more common. Articles reflect editors' choices, not necessarily the views of all readers. Court transcripts could show what witnesses said about unsafe exits, but courtroom pressure might shape their accounts. I would check whether newspapers' calls for change match the hazards described in testimony, without claiming that either source proves what the entire public believed.

For the marking task, accept any three named formats paired with limitations stated in the passage. For Your Turn, accept other relevant pairs if the student explains each format's usefulness, its limitation, and a meaningful comparison.