From Fire to Reform

Trace how a model essay builds a thesis with evidence from two sources.

WG.P.4.1.A "Compose informative essays and written products, developing a thesis, citing and incorporating evidence from multiple sources and maintaining an organized, formal structure."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the essay's thesis, circle the names of its two sources, and number one piece of evidence from each source. Use your marks to trace how the evidence supports the thesis.

How the Triangle Fire Changed Workplace Safety

(1) On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Waist Company factory in New York City. Many workers were young immigrant women who earned their wages sewing shirts called shirtwaists. The disaster killed 146 people, but its significance extends beyond that terrible number. The Triangle fire shows how documented conditions at one workplace can push a government to strengthen protections for workers. To understand that change, an account of what happened inside the building must be read alongside an account of the public response. Together, these sources connect the danger workers faced with the reforms that followed.

(2) Cornell University's Kheel Center records that some exit doors were locked and that the building's fire escape collapsed during the blaze. Those details help explain why workers could not simply leave when flames spread. A locked door turns a normal exit into a barrier, while a failed fire escape removes another route to safety. The center also documents that 146 workers died. Its account supplies concrete evidence of the danger, rather than just a general statement that the factory was unsafe. Yet evidence of a disaster alone does not show whether officials changed the rules afterward.

(3) The National Park Service explains that the fire helped bring about the New York State Factory Investigating Commission, which examined factory conditions and recommended reforms. New York then adopted laws addressing workplace safety. This account shows a response beyond sympathy: officials investigated hazards and changed legal requirements. Read with the Kheel Center's account, it suggests a clear sequence from deadly barriers to public scrutiny and new protections. The two sources do different jobs in the argument. One identifies the conditions that made escape difficult; the other describes a government response. Together, they support the thesis that documented harm can spur policy change.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Copy the essay's thesis. How does it connect the fire to a larger change?

2. Choose one detail attributed to Cornell University's Kheel Center. Explain how the essay uses it as evidence, rather than leaving it as an isolated fact.

3. Which evidence from the National Park Service shows a government response? Explain how that evidence supports the thesis.

4. Why does the essay present the Kheel Center's account before the National Park Service's account? Explain how that order helps develop the thesis.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one formal paragraph arguing which reform should have been the first priority after the Triangle fire: keeping exits usable or establishing government inspections. State your claim, cite evidence from both named sources in the passage, and explain why the other reform also matters.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the essay's thesis, circle the names of its two sources, and number one piece of evidence from each source. Use your marks to trace how the evidence supports the thesis. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Copy the essay's thesis. How does it connect the fire to a larger change?	**"The Triangle fire shows how documented conditions at one workplace can push a government to strengthen protections for workers." It connects evidence of unsafe conditions to stronger worker protections.**
2	Choose one detail attributed to Cornell University's Kheel Center. Explain how the essay uses it as evidence, rather than leaving it as an isolated fact.	**The Kheel Center records that some exit doors were locked. The essay explains that a locked door prevented workers from using a route to safety.**
3	Which evidence from the National Park Service shows a government response? Explain how that evidence supports the thesis.	**The fire helped bring about a state commission that examined factory conditions and recommended reforms. This supports the thesis by showing that documented danger led to government action.**
4	Why does the essay present the Kheel Center's account before the National Park Service's account? Explain how that order helps develop the thesis.	**The Kheel Center's account establishes the dangerous conditions workers faced. The National Park Service's account then shows the government response, connecting the problem to policy change.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Keeping exits usable should have been the first priority after the Triangle fire because workers need a way out during an emergency. Cornell University's Kheel Center records that some exit doors were locked and the fire escape collapsed during the blaze. Both conditions made escape more difficult. Government inspections also matter: the National Park Service explains that the fire helped bring about a state commission that examined factory conditions and recommended reforms. Such oversight could identify hazards before another emergency, but workers must be able to leave safely when one occurs.

For the marking task, accept the thesis in paragraph one and any accurate evidence detail attributed to each named source. For the paragraph, accept either priority if the claim is supported with attributed evidence from both sources and explains the value of the other reform.