

Three Views, One Fire

Compare firsthand memory, contemporary news, and later interpretation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9 "Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read the three source selections about the 1911 Triangle factory fire. Underline one detail showing each source's focus. Beside it, write M for personal memory, N for contemporary news, or H for historical interpretation.

Three Source Selections: Quotations and Adapted Summaries

- ① A. Pauline Pepe, survivor interview, March 19, 1986 (primary source). Pepe recalled leaving her coat and pocketbook behind, escaping down crowded stairs, and searching for a friend. She said "we were all crying" and "I was looking for my friend." She found the friend outside. This memory, recorded nearly seventy-five years after the fire, describes one worker's experience; in the interview, Pepe also struggles to recall some names.
- ② B. The New York Times, March 26, 1911, page 1 (primary source). The next-day headline reported "141 Men and Girls Die in Waist Factory Fire." The article described flames spreading through the factory's upper floors and a fire ladder stopping below people waiting at a window. Its urgent account presented the disaster to the public with an early death count, observations of rescue efforts, and concern about workplace protection.
- ③ C. Cornell University, Triangle Fire exhibit, Introduction (secondary source). This later overview gives the death toll as 146 and places the disaster in the history of industrial working conditions. It explains why the fire remains important to public memory and the labor movement. Its focus is the event's broader significance, rather than one survivor's escape or a next-day rescue report.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Compare the focus of sources A and B. Use one specific detail from each.

2 Compare when A and B were created. What limitation should a reader consider for each?

3 How does C treat the same fire differently from A and B? Identify one similarity and one difference.

4 Compare the death counts in B and C. What can the difference tell you, and what can it NOT establish by itself?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Use the sources on this worksheet to write exactly four sentences: state what the three sources share, compare two sources' different focuses with one detail from each, identify one limitation, and explain what combining the sources helps a reader understand.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Read the three source selections about the 1911 Triangle factory fire. Underline one detail showing each source's focus. Beside it, write M for personal memory, N for contemporary news, or H for historical interpretation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare the focus of sources A and B. Use one specific detail from each.	A emphasizes a survivor's personal experience, such as crying and looking for her friend. B reports the public disaster, such as an early death count and a ladder that could not reach waiting people.
2	Compare when A and B were created. What limitation should a reader consider for each?	A was recorded nearly 75 years later, so memory can leave details uncertain; Pepe struggles with names. B was reported the next day, so some information, including the early death count, could be incomplete.
3	How does C treat the same fire differently from A and B? Identify one similarity and one difference.	All address the same disaster and its human impact. C places it in industrial and labor history, whereas A focuses on personal experience and B on immediate news and rescue efforts.
4	Compare the death counts in B and C. What can the difference tell you, and what can it NOT establish by itself?	B reported 141 the next day; C gives 146 in a later overview. The difference shows that the accounts use different counts and invites checking later records. It does not by itself establish why the figures changed or prove that a source deliberately misled readers.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

All three sources describe the Triangle factory fire and its human impact. Pepe remembers crying and searching for her friend, while the newspaper reports an early death count and a ladder that could not reach waiting people. Pepe's much later memory leaves some names uncertain, so it cannot answer every historical question. Combining those accounts with Cornell's overview connects individual experience and immediate reporting to the event's broader importance.

Accept accurate comparisons grounded in the printed selections; students should distinguish source focus, timing, and limits. Four-sentence responses should synthesize rather than simply rank sources as good or bad. Selections use short quotations and adapted summaries, not full transcripts. Originals are in Cornell's Triangle Fire exhibit: trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu. A: Primary Sources > Survivor Interviews > Pauline Pepe (1986). B: Newspapers > New York Times, March 26, 1911, p. 1. C: Story of the Fire > Introduction. The 141 count belongs to the contemporary report; 146 is the later accepted total.