Beyond the Flames

Summarize the details that explain a workplace disaster and its aftermath.

11-12.RH.2.b "Summarize the key supporting details and ideas."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details in each paragraph that an accurate summary needs, and circle a detail that keeps the story from sounding simpler than it was.

The Triangle Fire and the Fight for Safety

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. The factory occupied the top three floors of a ten-story building, where workers stitched blouses called shirtwaists. Many were young immigrant women. Cloth scraps and paper patterns supplied fuel, while crowded work areas made movement difficult. Earlier, garment workers had organized strikes to demand better pay and conditions, but serious hazards remained across the industry. Triangle's crowded rooms were not simply a matter of untidy housekeeping. They reflected a system that placed fast production ahead of workers' safety.

2. The fire started on the eighth floor and spread upward. Some workers escaped down stairs or by elevator, but others found exits blocked. A fire escape collapsed, and firefighters' ladders could not reach the upper floors. With no sprinklers to slow the flames, workers on the ninth floor had especially little time to get out. Some jumped from windows to escape the heat and smoke. In all, 146 people died. These details explain why the death toll was so high: the danger came not only from the flames but also from the limited ways to leave the building.

3. After the fire, mourners and labor organizers held a large public procession through the city. Their demands reached lawmakers as well as factory owners. New York created the Factory Investigating Commission, which inspected workplaces and documented unsafe conditions. In the following years, the state passed laws that strengthened fire safety rules, including requirements for safer exits and fire drills. Those changes did not erase every workplace danger or guarantee that rules would always be enforced. Still, the fire and the organizing that followed helped turn private warnings about factory safety into a public demand for government action.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Summarize how details in the first paragraph support the idea that workers faced serious hazards before the fire.

2. Summarize the key details that explain why so many workers died, rather than simply stating the death toll.

3. Summarize how public action after the fire led to changes in New York's safety rules.

4. Summarize two details from different paragraphs that show why the history of workplace safety cannot be told as a simple story of one fire fixing every problem.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 95 word museum label summarizing why the Triangle fire became a turning point in workplace safety debates. Use at least one key supporting detail from each paragraph, and include a detail that prevents a too-simple claim that the reforms solved everything.

Beyond the Flames

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details in each paragraph that an accurate summary needs, and circle a detail that keeps the story from sounding simpler than it was. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Summarize how details in the first paragraph support the idea that workers faced serious hazards before the fire.	**Cloth scraps and paper patterns could fuel a fire, and crowded work areas made movement difficult. Earlier strikes had called for better conditions, yet hazards remained.**
2	Summarize the key details that explain why so many workers died, rather than simply stating the death toll.	**The fire spread upward, some exits were blocked, the fire escape collapsed, and ladders could not reach the upper floors. Without sprinklers, workers had little time to escape.**
3	Summarize how public action after the fire led to changes in New York's safety rules.	**Mourners and labor organizers pressed for action. New York investigated unsafe workplaces and then passed stronger fire safety rules, including requirements for safer exits and fire drills.**
4	Summarize two details from different paragraphs that show why the history of workplace safety cannot be told as a simple story of one fire fixing every problem.	**Workers had organized strikes before the fire, but hazards remained. Laws passed afterward did not eliminate every danger or guarantee enforcement.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 1911, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire exposed how dangerous garment work could be. Crowded rooms and flammable scraps made a fast-moving fire especially threatening. When flames spread from the eighth floor, blocked exits, a collapsed fire escape, and ladders that could not reach high floors limited escape; 146 people died. Public mourning and labor organizing then pressed New York to investigate factories and adopt stronger fire safety rules. The changes mattered, although laws alone could not eliminate every danger or ensure enforcement.

Accept accurate paraphrases that select details supporting the larger ideas, rather than listing isolated facts. For the museum label, check the word count, coverage of all three paragraphs, and a qualification about the limits of reform.