Before the Fire

Trace how a historical account develops its central idea.

11-12.RH.2 "Determine the central ideas or information of primary or secondary sources. Evaluate how ideas develop over the course of a text. Summarize the key supporting details and ideas."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that best states the passage's central idea. Number one detail in each paragraph that helps develop it.

The Work Behind Factory Reform

1. In 1909, thousands of New York garment workers walked off the job in a strike often called the Uprising of the 20,000. Many were young immigrant women who made shirtwaists, popular women's blouses. They demanded shorter hours, better pay, and safer shops. Some Triangle Shirtwaist Factory employees joined the strike, but the factory's owners did not agree to a union contract. The struggle showed that workers had identified dangerous conditions well before the disaster that would make their demands famous.

2. On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out on the upper floors of the Triangle factory in Manhattan. Flames spread quickly through crowded workrooms. Some workers could not reach an exit because a door was locked; the building's fire escape collapsed under the weight of people trying to flee. The fire killed 146 workers. Newspapers covered the deaths, and thousands attended a public funeral procession. The tragedy made factory safety impossible for many New Yorkers to ignore.

3. Public grief alone did not change the law. Labor organizers kept pressing for protections, and New York lawmakers created a Factory Investigating Commission in 1911. Its members inspected workplaces and documented hazards, including blocked exits and poor fire protection. Their findings helped produce state laws on workplace safety. The Triangle fire was a turning point, but the reforms depended on workers' earlier demands, continued organizing, and evidence gathered after the deaths.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What central idea does the passage develop? How does paragraph 1 introduce it?

2. How does paragraph 2 strengthen the workers' earlier safety demands? Use one detail.

3. According to paragraph 3, what two actions helped turn public concern into reform?

4. How does the final sentence challenge the claim that the fire alone caused reform?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 65 to 85 word summary for a museum display. State the central idea, trace it from before the fire to its aftermath, and include one supporting detail from each paragraph without quoting the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Before the Fire

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.RH.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that best states the passage's central idea. Number one detail in each paragraph that helps develop it. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What central idea does the passage develop? How does paragraph 1 introduce it?	**Factory reform resulted from workers' efforts as well as the fire. Paragraph 1 shows that workers demanded safer shops before the disaster.**
2	How does paragraph 2 strengthen the workers' earlier safety demands? Use one detail.	**The fire exposed the danger workers had warned about. A locked door prevented some workers from reaching an exit.**
3	According to paragraph 3, what two actions helped turn public concern into reform?	**Labor organizers continued pressing for protections, and the Factory Investigating Commission documented workplace hazards.**
4	How does the final sentence challenge the claim that the fire alone caused reform?	**It identifies earlier worker demands, continued organizing, and later evidence gathering as necessary parts of the reform effort.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

New York's factory safety reforms grew from workers' efforts before and after the Triangle fire, not from the disaster alone. In 1909, garment workers struck for changes that included safer workplaces. Two years later, a fire at the Triangle factory killed 146 people and drew widespread public attention. Organizers continued to demand protections, while a state commission inspected factories and recorded hazards. Its findings helped lawmakers create safety rules. The fire intensified a campaign workers had already begun.

Accept summaries that explain the combined roles of worker action, the fire, and the investigation. Supporting details may differ from those in the sample.