Details That Matter

How specific evidence develops a historical explanation

11-12.WHST.2.b "Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the definition that helps an unfamiliar reader, circle one number that shows the scale of the fire, and number three concrete details that explain either the danger or the response.

The Triangle Fire and Its Aftermath

1 At 4:40 p.m. on March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Waist Company in New York City. The factory occupied the top three floors of a ten-story building, where workers made shirtwaists, popular women's blouses. Many workers were young immigrant women. A reader who knows little about factory labor might imagine an ordinary office fire, but the workroom held scraps of cloth and paper patterns that could burn quickly. The blaze began on the eighth floor and spread upward. These details show how a routine workplace became dangerous within minutes.

2 Getting out was harder than simply finding a hallway. One stairway door on the ninth floor was locked, and fire blocked another route. The building's fire escape buckled and fell, while the elevators could carry only some workers before the cars stopped running. Some people escaped across the roof to a neighboring building; others could not reach it. In all, 146 workers died. The number states the scale of the loss, while the blocked routes explain why the death toll was so high. Together, they give a reader evidence, not just an assertion that the building was unsafe.

3 The fire also changed how New Yorkers argued about workplace safety. Afterward, the state created the Factory Investigating Commission, which inspected workplaces and recommended changes. New York then strengthened rules for fire exits, drills, and sprinklers. A rule about an exit door may sound minor until a reader connects it to the locked door on the ninth floor. The commission's work shows that reform involved investigation and legislation, not just public grief. Explaining both the immediate hazard and the later response helps readers see why this fire remains a case study in how evidence can drive safety policy.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which fact in paragraph 1 identifies where the blaze began, and which concrete detail explains why it could spread quickly?

2. Why does paragraph 2 give both the death toll and details about escape routes instead of only saying the building was unsafe?

3. A writer claims that concern about the fire led to government action. Which two details in paragraph 3 would support that claim, and what does each show?

4. How does the phrase “popular women's blouses” help a reader who has never heard of shirtwaists?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph of 80 to 110 words explaining to someone unfamiliar with public libraries how a library can help investigate a local historical question. Include a clear claim, define one research tool or service, give two concrete examples of how a researcher could use library materials, and explain why those examples support your claim.

ANSWER KEY

Details That Matter

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.WHST.2.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the definition that helps an unfamiliar reader, circle one number that shows the scale of the fire, and number three concrete details that explain either the danger or the response. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which fact in paragraph 1 identifies where the blaze began, and which concrete detail explains why it could spread quickly?	**The fire began on the eighth floor. Scraps of cloth and paper patterns in the workroom could burn quickly.**
2	Why does paragraph 2 give both the death toll and details about escape routes instead of only saying the building was unsafe?	**The death toll shows the scale of the loss, while the locked door, blocked route, collapsed fire escape, and limited elevator trips help explain it.**
3	A writer claims that concern about the fire led to government action. Which two details in paragraph 3 would support that claim, and what does each show?	**The state created a commission to inspect workplaces and recommend changes. New York also strengthened rules for exits, drills, and sprinklers, showing that recommendations were followed by changes in policy.**
4	How does the phrase “popular women's blouses” help a reader who has never heard of shirtwaists?	**It defines an unfamiliar product in familiar terms, helping the reader picture what the workers made.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Public libraries can help researchers test a claim about when a neighborhood changed. A library catalog is a searchable list of materials a library owns or provides access to. A researcher could search the catalog for a local history book to learn when a factory opened. If the library provides old newspapers, the researcher could compare reports from before and after the opening to see how residents described new jobs or traffic. The book offers background, while dated news reports show what people said at the time. Using both makes a historical explanation more specific and easier to check.

For Part 1, accept other relevant numbered details about escape barriers or safety reforms. For Part 3, accept accurate library tools and examples that clearly develop the claim for an unfamiliar reader.