Evidence After Fire

Use historical details to support and qualify a claim.

11-12.WHST.9 "Draw relevant evidence from informational and/or literary fiction or non-fiction texts to support written analysis, reflection, and research."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show a workplace danger, circle one detail about an official response, and number a detail that complicates a simple cause-and-effect story. Use your marks as evidence in your answers.

What Changed After the Triangle Fire?

1 Near closing time 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, a popular kind of blouse. Flames spread through cloth scraps and other materials. Some workers escaped by elevator or stairs, but the building's single exterior fire escape collapsed under the weight of people trying to flee. Firefighters' ladders could not reach the highest floors. In all, 146 workers died. These details show why a fire that started inside a workshop became a catastrophe for people far above the street.

2 The disaster exposed more than a problem with one staircase. Witnesses described a locked door on the ninth floor, although the factory owners disputed that account. A locked exit could prevent a quick escape even when a stairway existed. Public outrage helped drive calls for investigations into factory conditions across New York State. In 1911, the state created the Factory Investigating Commission, which inspected workplaces and recommended new protections. Over the next few years, New York passed laws addressing fire safety and other working conditions. The sequence suggests political action followed public scrutiny, but it does not prove that one event alone caused every reform.

3 The legal outcome was not the same as the legislative one. In a 1911 criminal trial, the factory's owners were acquitted of manslaughter. The verdict did not erase the dangers workers had faced, and it did not mean that safety rules were unnecessary. Workers had also challenged factory conditions before the fire: during a 1909 shirtwaist strike, thousands demanded changes to pay, hours, and union recognition. Remembering that earlier organizing complicates a story in which lawmakers acted only because a disaster suddenly revealed an invisible problem. Workers had been speaking publicly about conditions, even if the fire brought much wider attention.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which two details from paragraph 1 support the claim that escape was difficult for workers on the upper floors? Explain how each detail supports the claim.

2. What evidence in paragraph 2 supports the claim that public concern led to government action? Explain the link without claiming the fire was the only cause.

3. Use evidence from paragraph 3 to challenge the claim that workers first began calling for change after the fire. Explain your reasoning.

4. A writer claims the owners' acquittal showed that no safety problem existed. Which detail from another paragraph challenges that claim, and why?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Which had the greater impact after the fire, the legal verdict or political action? Write one paragraph of 75 to 100 words that makes a judgment, explains two supporting details from different paragraphs, and discusses one detail that could support another view.

ANSWER KEY

Evidence After Fire

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.WHST.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show a workplace danger, circle one detail about an official response, and number a detail that complicates a simple cause-and-effect story. Use your marks as evidence in your answers. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which two details from paragraph 1 support the claim that escape was difficult for workers on the upper floors? Explain how each detail supports the claim.	**The exterior fire escape collapsed, removing one way down. Firefighters' ladders could not reach the highest floors, limiting rescue from outside.**
2	What evidence in paragraph 2 supports the claim that public concern led to government action? Explain the link without claiming the fire was the only cause.	**Public outrage helped drive calls for investigations, and New York created the Factory Investigating Commission in 1911. This sequence supports a link between concern and action, but it does not establish that the fire was the only cause.**
3	Use evidence from paragraph 3 to challenge the claim that workers first began calling for change after the fire. Explain your reasoning.	**Thousands of workers demanded changes during a 1909 shirtwaist strike. Because the strike preceded the 1911 fire, workers were calling for change before the disaster.**
4	A writer claims the owners' acquittal showed that no safety problem existed. Which detail from another paragraph challenges that claim, and why?	**The exterior fire escape collapsed as people tried to flee. That physical danger existed regardless of the criminal verdict.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Political action had the greater long-term impact after the Triangle fire. The collapse of the fire escape and the ladders' failure to reach upper floors show how urgently workplaces needed safer ways out. After public calls for investigations, New York created the Factory Investigating Commission and later passed laws addressing fire safety and working conditions. Those changes could affect workers beyond a single factory. The owners' acquittal also mattered, because it left the deaths without a criminal conviction. Yet a verdict concerned the owners, while new laws could change conditions across the state.

Accept other relevant passage details when students explain how each supports or qualifies their claim. For the paragraph, look for evidence from two different paragraphs and a meaningful discussion of a competing view.