# Warnings and Reform

Trace how a historical account develops its central idea.

**9-10.RH.2** "Determine the central ideas of primary or secondary sources. Analyze how ideas develop over the course of the text. Provide an accurate summary."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline one sentence in each paragraph that helps build the passage's central idea. Number your choices 1, 2, and 3 to track how the idea develops.

### Before and After the Triangle Fire

1. In 1909, thousands of New York City garment workers walked off the job in a strike known as the Uprising of the 20,000. Many were young immigrant women who sewed clothes for low wages in crowded factories. They demanded better pay and hours, but they also wanted a stronger voice at work. At the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, some workers joined the strike. Factory owners resisted union demands, and the strike ended without solving every complaint. The walkout made the workers' concerns public, yet public attention alone did not remove the risks inside the city's workshops.

2. On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in Manhattan. Flames spread through the upper floors of the building while workers tried to escape. One fire escape collapsed, some exit doors were locked, and firefighters' ladders could not reach the highest floors. The fire killed 146 workers, most of them women. Newspaper reports and witness accounts brought the disaster before a wide audience. What had sounded like a dispute over factory rules became a visible question of life and death: what protections did employers and government owe workers?

3. After the fire, labor organizers and grieving families pressed officials to act. New York State created a Factory Investigating Commission, which inspected workplaces and heard testimony about dangerous conditions. Over the next few years, the state passed laws that strengthened fire exits, required safety measures, and addressed other factory conditions. These changes did not arise from one terrible day alone. Workers had raised concerns before the fire; investigators gathered evidence afterward; and supporters kept demanding change. The Triangle story shows how a disaster can bring attention to a problem, while sustained public pressure can turn that attention into reform.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the central idea of the whole passage? State it in your own words.

2. How does the first paragraph establish an idea that the rest of the passage develops?

3. How does the second paragraph change the significance of the workers' earlier complaints?

4. How does the final paragraph complicate the claim that the fire alone caused new safety laws?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 100 word objective summary of the whole account. Include its central idea and explain how events before, during, and after the fire develop that idea, without adding your opinion.

ANSWER KEY

# Warnings and Reform

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-10.RH.2

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one sentence in each paragraph that helps build the passage's central idea. Number your choices 1, 2, and 3 to track how the idea develops. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What is the central idea of the whole passage? State it in your own words. | **The fire drew attention to dangerous factory conditions, but earlier worker concerns and continued pressure also helped bring about reform.** |
| 2 | How does the first paragraph establish an idea that the rest of the passage develops? | **It shows that workers had raised concerns before the fire, but public attention to those concerns had not removed workplace risks.** |
| 3 | How does the second paragraph change the significance of the workers' earlier complaints? | **The deaths and reports of blocked or inadequate escape routes made the dangers behind those complaints clear to a wider public.** |
| 4 | How does the final paragraph complicate the claim that the fire alone caused new safety laws? | **It connects the laws to concerns raised before the fire, investigations afterward, and continued pressure from organizers and families.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Triangle Shirtwaist fire was not the beginning of workers' concerns about factory conditions. During a 1909 garment strike, workers sought better conditions and a voice at work, but their complaints were not fully addressed. In 1911, a fire at Triangle killed 146 workers, exposing dangerous escape conditions to a wider public. Afterward, organizers and families pressed for action, and a state commission investigated factories. New York passed stronger safety laws. The account shows that earlier warnings, a widely reported disaster, and continued pressure all contributed to reform.

Accept summaries that accurately connect the earlier strike, the fire, and the later investigations and laws. Responses should distinguish the fire's role in drawing attention from the sustained efforts that helped produce reform.