Evidence After the Fire

Use historical details to support a claim without overstating the evidence.

9-10.WHST.9 "Draw relevant evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, narrative and creative texts, and research..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read the passage, then underline two details about failed escape routes and circle two details showing how the fire led to an investigation or new rules. These details can serve as evidence for different claims.

The Triangle Fire and Its Aftermath

1 On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. Workers made women's blouses on the upper floors of a ten-story building. Many were young immigrant women. Flames spread through fabric scraps and paper patterns. Some workers escaped by elevator or stairs, but others could not reach a safe exit. The fire escape collapsed under the weight of people trying to flee. Firefighters' ladders could not reach the highest floors. By the time the fire was out, 146 workers had died. These details reveal that the danger came not only from flames but also from limited ways out.

2 After the fire, survivors described their attempts to leave. Several testified that a ninth-floor exit door was locked. Other accounts described crowded stairways and elevators that made repeated trips before heat stopped them. Testimony about one door cannot establish that every door in the building was locked. Still, paired with the collapsed fire escape, it helps explain why some workers had so few escape routes. The owners were tried for manslaughter and acquitted. That verdict did not erase the witnesses' accounts or settle every question about what the owners knew on the day of the fire.

3 Thousands of people joined a funeral procession for the victims. The disaster also prompted demands for stronger workplace protections. New York created a Factory Investigating Commission, which examined conditions in factories across the state. In the following years, lawmakers passed new rules on fire safety and other working conditions. The fire was not the only cause of these reforms: labor organizers had already been pressing for change. Yet the sequence matters. A deadly factory fire drew public attention, an investigation gathered wider evidence, and new rules followed. To argue that the fire influenced reform, a writer should cite that sequence without claiming it acted alone.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which two details from the first paragraph best support the claim that emergency equipment could not save everyone on the upper floors? Explain how they support it.

2. What claim about exit doors does the survivors' testimony support, and what broader claim does it not prove?

3. Use two details from the final paragraph to support the claim that the fire influenced workplace reform.

4. What detail challenges the claim that the fire alone caused the new rules? Explain why it matters.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Propose one specific safety measure a factory inspector in 1911 could have recommended. In four or five sentences, support your proposal with two details from different paragraphs, explain how each detail supports it, and make clear that your measure is a proposal rather than a documented rule.

ANSWER KEY

Evidence After the Fire

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-10.WHST.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Read the passage, then underline two details about failed escape routes and circle two details showing how the fire led to an investigation or new rules. These details can serve as evidence for different claims. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which two details from the first paragraph best support the claim that emergency equipment could not save everyone on the upper floors? Explain how they support it.	**The fire escape collapsed, and firefighters' ladders could not reach the highest floors. Both details show that equipment people might have used to escape or be rescued was unavailable to them.**
2	What claim about exit doors does the survivors' testimony support, and what broader claim does it not prove?	**The testimony supports the claim that a ninth-floor exit door was locked. It does not prove that every door in the building was locked.**
3	Use two details from the final paragraph to support the claim that the fire influenced workplace reform.	**New York created a Factory Investigating Commission after the fire, and lawmakers passed new workplace rules in the following years. Together, these actions support the claim that the fire influenced reform.**
4	What detail challenges the claim that the fire alone caused the new rules? Explain why it matters.	**Labor organizers had already been pressing for change. Their earlier efforts show that demands for reform did not begin with the fire.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

An inspector should require factories to keep exit doors unlocked while workers are inside. Survivors testified that a ninth-floor exit door was locked, suggesting that a locked door could trap workers during a fire. The fire escape also collapsed as people tried to flee, so a blocked indoor route could leave workers with an unsafe alternative. This is my proposed measure, not a specific rule the passage says New York adopted.

Accept other supported safety proposals, such as inspecting fire escapes or ensuring that upper floors have usable exits. The response must use details from two different paragraphs and distinguish the proposed measure from a documented rule.