

9-12 and Triangle Factory Tragedy

What Role Should the Government Play in the Relationship Between the Owners and Workers?



UFCW. "Remembering the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire."

<https://www.uncw.org/remembering-the-1911-triangle-shirtwaist-factory-fire/>

Supporting Questions

1. What caused the Triangle Factory Tragedy?
2. How did socialist philosophy impact the garment worker strike?
3. Were Harris and Blanck guilty of manslaughter?

9-12 and Triangle Factory Tragedy

What role should the government play in the relationships between the owners and triangle workers?

<p>Content Angle and Standards</p>	<p>D1.5.9-12. Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources.</p> <p>D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.</p> <p>D2.His.6.9-12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.</p> <p>D2.His.7.9-12. Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.</p> <p>D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.</p> <p>D2.His.15.9-12. Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical argument.</p> <p>D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.</p>
<p>Staging the Compelling Question</p>	<p>In staging the compelling question:</p> <p>Display the following photographs for the class to view. In a Think-Pair-Share, have students answer the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What can you conclude about working conditions during the American Industrial Revolution based on these photographs? 2. How do these conditions compare to working conditions that exist today in the United States?

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The Remedial Herstory Project
The New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies



“The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire: One Hundred Years After” at NYU Open House; 6 taken by the author on March 24, 2011.



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Supporting Question 1

What caused the Triangle Factory Tragedy?

Supporting Question 2

How did socialist philosophy impact the garment worker strike?

Supporting Question 3

Were Harris and Blanck guilty of manslaughter?

Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Using evidence from the sources, write a paragraph explaining what caused the Triangle Factory tragedy.	Write a newspaper article from the point of view of a journalist witnessing the garment workers strike. In the article, address if you believe the socialist philosophy impacted the garment worker strike or not.	Using evidence from the sources, write a paragraph explaining if Harris and Blanck are guilty of manslaughter.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
<p>Source A: Before the Fire: A Description of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory and Fire</p> <p>Source B: William Gunn Shepherd Account</p> <p>Source C: Women Trade Unions</p> <p>Source D: Blame Shifted on All Sides for Fire Horror, New York Times</p> <p>Document E: Stories of Survivors, Witnesses, and Rescuers</p>	<p>Source A: Clara Lemlich</p> <p>Source B: Anne Morgan</p> <p>Source C: Eva McDonald Valesh Fires First Gun in Fight</p> <p>Source D: Diary of a Factory Worker</p>	<p>Source A: Stories of Survivors in the New York Times</p> <p>Source B: Samuel Gompers</p> <p>Source C: "Great American Trials"</p> <p>Source D: Closing Statements of Attorneys in Trial</p> <p>Source E: Smithsonian Magazine</p> <p>Source F: "147 Dead, Nobody Guilty" Literary Digest</p>

<p>Summative Performance Task</p>	<p>ARGUMENT: <i>[What role should the government play in the relationship between the owners and Triangle workers?]</i> Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that evaluates the need to study, remember, and/or celebrate this expedition using specific claims and relevant evidence from sources while acknowledging competing views.</p>
	<p>EXTENSION. After the above lessons, consider one of the following extensions to the learning.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion: Consider facilitating a discussion of the analysis questions. Ask students to share their response with someone, or if they already worked in a group, ask them to nominate someone to represent their group to the class as a whole. Capitalize on differences between group responses. Why did one group answer differently than another? What impacted them or stood out more? Four Corner Debate: Consider a "four-corner debate." In the corners of the room tack up a piece of paper with four differing and possible answers to the inquiry question. After students complete the lesson packet, pose the question to the room at large and ask students to move to the corner of the room (or in between locations) that represent their answer. Then, ask students to explain their choice. As students discuss they are allowed to move closer or further from ideas. This is a great strategy for kinesthetic learning. Socratic Seminar: Consider doing a "Socratic seminar" to extend the learning and get students to question what they still don't know or understand. Start with the inquiry's question. Students should be encouraged to answer one another's question directly, but also to answer the question with another question. This continues the conversation and gets at more rich ideas. The teacher should try to say as little as possible and let the students lead the dialog. One strategy for this is to seat students in a circle. Give each of them a cup and 2-3 tokens. When a student makes a substantive contribution to the discussion the teacher will walk over and place a token in the cup signaling that they have contributed. Students will become aware of who has spoken and who has not, and leave space for one another. Structured Academic Controversy: Consider turning the lesson into a "structured academic controversy." Take the overarching question and turn it into a "debate." Students can choose or be assigned a side in the debate and use the documents provided to argue their "answer" to the

	<p>overarching question. They can argue over interpretations and credibility of some documents.</p> <p>5. Reacting to the Past: Consider doing some role play with your class. Reacting to the Past is an active learning pedagogy of role-playing games designed by Barnard University. In Reacting to the Past games, students are assigned character roles with specific goals and must communicate, collaborate, and compete effectively to advance their objectives. Reacting promotes engagement with big ideas, and improves intellectual and academic skills. Provide students with a set of rules about staying in character and what types of things they must know about their character. Students should be provided with a packet of role sheets with instructions on their individual goals and strategies for game play. Students can use sources and information from these activities, and can search for more details online about their individual character. Reacting roles and games do not have a fixed script or outcome. While students are obliged to adhere to the philosophical and intellectual beliefs of the historical figures they have been assigned to play, they must devise their own means of expressing those ideas persuasively in papers, speeches, or other public presentations.</p>
<p>Taking Informed Action</p>	<p>UNDERSTAND The way women were treated in the past often times persists into the present in how we teach about it or in societal norms that have not changed. Students can examine the way that this issue is addressed in textbooks and standards, as well as exploring the ways that the issues at play are still relevant.</p> <p>ASSESS Students should consider <i>what should be done</i> today to correct either the portrayal of women from this period in history or the issues at play?</p> <p>ACT Students could take informed action in one of the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find an article or book about history that misrepresents women and gender in history and write to the author or editor. 2. Write a letter to the Secretary of Education for your state about the teaching of women and gender history. 3. Investigate women and gender rights issues that persist and engage with the movement by attending a protest, signing a petition, or donating to the cause. 4. Make a PSA video, blog, or social media post with the intent to persuade the audience to better understand women from history or a persistent gender rights from this inquiry.

**Featured sources are suggested and links are provided. It may be that these links are broken and we apologize in advance for the inconvenience.*

Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of the government's role in worker safety after the Triangle Factory tragedy that killed over 100 garment workers. The first exposed the dangers of working in garment factories and started a discussion of the role and responsibility owners and the government have to ensure safe working conditions.

This inquiry highlights the following additional thematic standards from NCSS:

- **POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.
- **TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.
- **CULTURE:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

This inquiry also highlights the following additional thematic standards from the Common Core:

- Key Ideas and Details 1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- Key Ideas and Details 3. Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- Key Ideas and Details 7. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- Key Ideas and Details 8. Evaluate the hypotheses, data, analysis, and conclusions in a science or technical text, verifying the data when possible and corroborating or challenging conclusions with other sources of information.
- Key Ideas and Details 9. Synthesize information from a range of sources (e.g., texts, experiments, simulations) into a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept, resolving conflicting information when possible.
- Text Types and Purposes 8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

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It is important to note that this inquiry requires prerequisite knowledge of some key terms, which are defined and provided to students in the inquiries where relevant. Students should have an understanding of working conditions industrial workers faced in a variety of factory environments.

Note: This inquiry is expected to take 3-4 class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (e.g., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, featured sources, writing). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiry to meet the needs and interests of their students. This inquiry lends itself to differentiation and modeling of historical thinking skills while assisting students in reading the variety of sources.



Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question:

Display the following photographs for the class to view. In a Think-Pair-Share, have students answer the following questions:

3. What can you conclude about working conditions during the American Industrial Revolution based on these photographs?
4. How do these conditions compare to working conditions that exist today in the United States?



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Supporting Question 1

The lesson for this supporting question was influenced by a lesson by youngworkers.org:

Safe Jobs for Youth. "What Caused the Triangle Factory Fire: An Inquiry Using Primary Source Documents."

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h3d4-Vj5LHwsd9kcKvwB3M0OnBAv2pKw/view>

The first supporting question: what caused the Triangle Factory tragedy?

The formative task is: Using evidence from the sources, write a paragraph explaining what caused the Triangle Factory tragedy.

Teachers may implement this task with the following procedures:

1. Introduce the lesson by posing the following question for students to discuss in partners, then as a class: Ask: Are there laws today that protect people at work and/or school from fire? What are they? (outward doors, push bars, sprinklers, hoses, extinguishers, emergency plans, multiple exits, clear paths to exits, marked exits, alarms, smoke alarms, fire drill plans, release window-bars)
2. Divide students into small groups of 4 or 5. Students will work together to create their own account of what caused the Triangle Factory fire.
3. Provide sources to students. After reading the primary sources, the groups should develop their own account of what caused the Triangle Factory fire.
4. Have each group share their account of the Triangle Factory fire. Have students discuss similarities and differences in the accounts once all groups have shared.
5. Have students complete the formative task by writing a paragraph that contains evidence from the provided sources.
6. Lead a closing reflection with students that addresses their surprises, possible misconceptions, and further questions about the topic. The closing discussion can also be used as an opportunity to discuss modern workplace tragedies.

The following sources were selected to allow students to explore the tragedy of the Triangle Factory fire. While reading the sources, students should identify how the fire started, what was done to save the women, and how it was possible that so many individuals would die in this tragic event.

- **Featured Source A: Before the Fire: A Description of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory and Fire**

Like many other factories in the beginning of the twentieth century, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory was a loft factory. This means that the factory was not in a separate building, but in the top three floors of an office building. The Triangle Factory was on the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors of a building called the Asch Building. The factory produced shirtwaists, a woman's blouse. Shirtwaists were in great demand for the growing number of women office workers during that time, and the Triangle Factory was one of the most successful garment factories in New York City. It employed one thousand workers, mostly immigrant women who knew little or no English. They worked long hours in hazardous and unhealthful conditions for very low wages.

Workers were crowded elbow-to-elbow and back-to-back at rows of tables. Pieces of fabric were scattered on the floor or stored tightly in bins. Cutting machines ran on gasoline. Smoking was not allowed, but workers often smoked while the bosses looked the other way. Water barrels with buckets for putting out fires were not always full. There was one rotting fire hose, attached to a rusted valve.

There was only one exit from the workroom and it was down a hall so narrow that people had to walk one by one. There were four elevators but only one was working. The stairway was as narrow as the hall. There were two doors leading from the building; one was closed or locked from the outside and the other opened inward.

The Fire Starts

On March 25, 1911, the day of the fire, the offices below the factory were closed for the weekend. About half of the workers were in the factory on that Saturday. The fire spread too quickly to be extinguished by the small water supply and the fire hose did not work. In the rush to get down the narrow hall and stairways to the doors, people were trampled. Some tried to break through the locked door. Others rushed to the other door and were crushed as they tried to pull it inward to open it. As people crowded into the elevator, others tried to ride down on the tops of the cars, hanging on the cables. Soon there were so many bodies in the shafts that the one working elevator could no longer be used. Women, girls, and men trapped in the workroom threw themselves out of the windows and fell to their death on the street. Others tried to use the fire escape, but it was too weak to hold so many people and soon melted in the heat. Firefighters from Engine Companies 72 and 33 were first on the scene. Once they arrived, they had several problems. The ladders only reached to between the sixth and seventh floors. Water from the hoses only reached to the seventh floor. The nets and blankets that the firefighters spread to catch the jumping workers tore and the people crashed through to die on the street. The number of people who died was 146, including 13 men. Nineteen bodies were found against the locked door. Twenty-five bodies were found in the cloakroom. Some bodies were so badly charred that they could not be identified, even as to sex. Sixty-two jumped nine stories to their deaths. The bodies were taken to the Bellevue Morgue or lined up along the Green Street for parents and family member to come and identify their lost loved ones.

Adapted from Gale Research-Discovering US History, galenet.gale.com

- **Featured Source B: William Gunn Shepherd Account**

William Gunn Shepherd, a young reporter for the newspaper, The New York World, happened to be at the scene of the fire when it began. From a phone across the street, he gave a minute by minute account to his city editor. The World published them the following day.

Minute By Minute by William Gunn Shepherd At 4:35 o'clock yesterday afternoon a fire was discovered in the rear of the eighth floor of the Triangle Waist Company. At two o'clock this morning Fire Chief Croker estimated the total dead as 154. More than a third of those who lost their lives did so in jumping from windows. The first firemen who arrived found thirty bodies on the sidewalks of Washington Place and Greene Street.

Every available ambulance in Manhattan was called to carry the dead to the morgue. Bodies were burned to blackness or reddened to a sickly color or to shoulders or legs sticking out of burned clothing. Men and women, boys and girls littered the street; that is actually the condition the streets were littered.

The fire began in the eighth story. The flames shot up through the other two stories. The Triangle Waist Company occupied all three floors. The estimate of the number of employees at work was made by Fire Chief Croker at about 1,000. The owners of the factory say 700 men and girls were at work. Before smoke came out of the windows, the loss of life had begun. The first sign that persons in the street knew that these three top stories had turned into red furnaces in which humans were being caught and incinerated was when screaming men and women and boys and girls crowded out on the window ledges and threw themselves into the streets far below. They jumped with their clothing ablaze. The hair of some of the girls streamed up aflame as they leaped. Thud after thud sounded on the sidewalks. It is a horrible fact that on both sides of the building there grew mounds of the dead and dying. And the worst horror of all was that in this mound of the dead an arm or leg moved or a cry sounded.

Inside the building it was frightful. The flames took so many that they died instantly. When Fire Chief Croker could make his way into these three floors, he found sights that stunned him, that sent him back and down into the street with quivering lips. The floors were black with smoke. And then he saw as the smoke drifted away bodies burned to bare bones. There were skeletons bending over sewing machines.

The elevator boys saved hundreds. They each made twenty trips from the time of the alarm until twenty minutes later when they could do no more. Fire was burning in the shaft and at the cables. People ran for their own lives. Some, about seventy, chose to climb a ladder to the roof. A few remembered the fire escape. One narrow door led to this fire escape. They fought and struggled and breathed fire and died trying to get to that door.

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Shivering at the fall below them, scorched by the fire behind, some were still on the windowsills when the first firemen arrived. The nets were spread below quickly. Citizens were asked to hold the nets but the force of the bodies in the long falls made the nets useless. Screaming girls and men tore the nets from the grasp of the holders, and the bodies struck the sidewalks and lay just as they fell.

Inside the building the fire burned. The flames caught all the flimsy lace stuff and linens that go into the making of spring and summer shirtwaists and fed upon the rolls of silk. The cutting room was filled with fabric on long tables. The employees had been working at the rows and rows of machines. Sadly the spring day helped the fire; many of the window facing south and east were open and the wind had full play. The experts say that each floor became a whirlpool of fire. Any way the trapped workers ran they met a curving sweep of flame. Many fell and died. Others fought their way to the windows or the elevator or fell fighting for a chance at the fire escape. This tragedy occurred in a fireproof building. Except for the three stories of blackened windows at the top, you would not be able to tell where the fire had happened. The walls still stood. A thin tongue of flame now and then licked around a window sash. On the ledge of a ninth-story window two girls stood silently watching the arrival of the first fire engines. Twice one of the girls made a move to jump. The other stopped her. They watched firemen rig the ladders up against the wall. They saw the last ladder lifted and pushed into place. They saw that it reached only to the seventh floor. For the third time, the more frightened girl tried to leap. The bells of arriving fire wagons must have risen to them. The other girl pointed in the direction of the sounds. But she talked to ears that could no longer hear. Scarcely turning, her friend dived head first into the street. The other girl drew herself up. The crowds in the street were stretching their arms up at her shouting and begging her not to leap. She looked down as if to assure them she would remain brave. But a thin flame shot out of the window at her back and touched her hair. In an instant her head was aflame. She tore at her burning hair, lost her balance, and came shooting down upon the mound of bodies below. From opposite windows watchers saw again and again friendships formed in the instant of death-girls who placed their arms around each other as they leaped. In many cases their clothing was flaming or their hair flaring as they fell.

By eight o'clock the supply of coffins was gone, and those that had already been used began to come back from the morgue. By that time bodies were lowered at the rate of one a minute, and there were not enough wagons, so that four, sometimes six, coffins were loaded on each wagon. At times throughout the night the very horror of their job overcame the most experienced of the policemen and morgue attendants at work under the moving finger of the searchlight. The crews were completely changed no less than three times.

Adapted from The New York World 26 March 1911. Reprinted in Allon Schoener, Portal to America: The Lower East Side, 1870-1925 (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 1967), 171172. New York Times, March 26, 1911, p. 4

- **Featured Source C: Women Trade Unions**

Women Trade Unions While male workers in New York City had formed unions, women workers were not organized and had no recognized union. Women discovered that when the men workers won rights, it was at the expense of the women – not the bosses. For example, when the men were given a half-cent pay raise, women’s paychecks were a half-cent less. Convinced that women workers would benefit from their own union, several women were able to start the first all women’s union in 1909 called the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). Another important union at the turn of the twentieth century was the Women Trade Union League (WTUL). This union was formed in 1903 to try to bring more women into the unions.

In 1909, garment workers had a strike that was called the "Uprising of the 20,000" – one of the largest strikes in the history of New York City. Workers at the Triangle Factory went out on strike and picketed the factory. They were joined by thousands of immigrant women in the shirtwaist industry. The strike lasted for three winter months. Triangle Factory owners Max Blanck and Isaac Harris hired new workers and called in thugs to break the picket lines. By the strike’s end, the women in some factories had won a shorter working day, a small pay increase, and some safety changes, but their union had not been recognized. This meant that the bosses did not have to talk with the union people. Though many factories agreed to make improvements, the Triangle Factory refused to make changes in safety and kept a fifty-nine hour workweek.

Eight months after the strike, one of the strikers came to the WTUL to tell them of a fire in a factory in Newark, New Jersey, in which 25 working women had died. The WTUL demanded an investigation of all factory buildings and unsafe working conditions. However, no action by the city was taken and the women’s union remained powerless.

Adapted from <http://galenet.gale.com> Discovering U.S. History.

- **Featured Source D: Blame Shifted on All Sides for Fire Horror, New York Times**

Government leaders of the city, county, and state met yesterday to talk about responsibility for the conditions at the Asch Building, at University Place and Green Street, where Saturday evening's fire cost 142 lives, the latest victim dying in a hospital yesterday.

The Building Department was blamed for the inadequate fire escape. But President McAneny of the Building Department said that the Department was in no way to blame for the disaster and that it was "outrageously unfair" to hold it responsible. He went on to say that the plans for the building were filed eleven years ago and at that time, were in agreement with the law. President McAneny said that his Building Inspectors never have time to look at buildings except those being built. He added that several of his small force of inspectors were terribly incompetent. District Attorney Whitman hired two engineers yesterday to look at the building to decide who was responsible and their report will be ready in April. He went on to say that New York State Labor Law says that

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responsibility for fire protection in factories, particularly for fire escapes is the responsibility of the State Labor Commission.

But State Labor Commission President Williams refused to accept this and said that the Appeals Court in 1903 stated that the Building Department has complete control over fire escapes in New York City.

In Albany, the state capital, the Legislature has been asked to name a committee to investigate the fire. The last report of the State Labor Department on the Asch Building said that stairway conditions made it impracticable to change the doors so that they would open outward and that such a change would increase fire danger. The same report said that the Triangle Waist Company's factory was not overcrowded. The total number of employees then, however, was 400 while on Saturday, the day of the fire it had grown to over 600.

Investigations in New York City are continuing. Fire Marshal Beers had the waist company's owners, the building's owner, and thirteen others before him in an investigation to determine the exact cause of the fire. He said that there was no explosion; that a lighted match thrown into waste near oil cans, or into clippings under cutting table No. 2, on the Greene Street side of the eighth floor, started the fire. In answer to evidence that no smoking was permitted, he declared he had many cigarette cases, picked up near the spot of the fire's start, and could prove that smoking was constantly done.

Fire Chief Croker disagreed with the evidence given by the Fire Marshal that the doors within the factory were not locked. He said that his men had to chop through them to get inside, and if they were not locked, they were at least closed so firmly that only an axe could get through the door.

At the Asch Building itself, the fire lines have been withdrawn and there is only a guard on the sidewalk surrounding the building. Crowds of curious people have come from all directions, blocking traffic in Washington Square and in Washington Place, Waverley Place, and Greene Street.

Adapted from the New York Times, March 28, 1911. p. 1

- **Featured Document E: Stories of Survivors, Witnesses, and Rescuers**

1. Max Rother, a tailor, was on the Washington Place side of the building on the eighth floor when he heard the cry of "fire" coming from the Greene Street side of the loft. Hanging over the heads of the sewers at the machines in the room was a line of clothes in flames. With the manager, Max Burnstein, he tried to put the fire out with pails of water. While doing this, the rope on which the clothes were hung burned in half and the burning clothes fell over their heads. Soon the room was in flames. Rother ran for the stairs on the Greene Street side of the building and escaped. He does not know what happened to Burnstein, the manager.

2. Cecilia Walker, 20 years old, who lives at 29 Stanton Street, slid down the cable at the Washington Place elevator and escaped with burned hands and body bruises. She was on the eighth floor of the

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building when the fire started. Running over to the elevator shaft she rang for the car, but it did not come. As she passed the sixth floor sliding on the cable she became unconscious, she said, and does not know what happened until she reached St. Vincent's Hospital, where she is now. "A girl and I," she told the doctors at the hospital, "were on the eighth floor, and when I ran for the elevator shaft my girl friend started for the window on the Washington Street side. I looked around to call her but she had gone."

3. Benjamin Levy of 995 Freeman Street, the Bronx, one of the first men to arrive at the burning building, says that it was ten minutes after the fire started before the first fire engine arrived. Mr. Levy is the junior member of the firm of 1. Levy & Son wholesale clothing manufactures just around the corner, at 3 and 5 Waverley Place. "I was upstairs in our work-room," said he, "when one of the employees who happened to be looking out of the window cried that there was a fire around the corner. I rushed downstairs, and when I reached the sidewalk the girls were already jumping from the windows. None of them moved after they struck the sidewalk. Several men ran up with a net, which they got somewhere, and I seized one side of it to help them hold it. "It was about ten feet square and we managed to catch about fifteen girls. I don't believe we saved over one or two however. The fall was so great that they bounced to the sidewalk after striking the net. Bodies were falling all around us, and two or three of the men with me were knocked down. The girls just leaped wildly out of the windows and turned over and over before reaching the sidewalk. "I only saw one man jump. All the rest were girls. They stood on the windowsills tearing their hair out in the handfuls and then they jumped. One girl held back after all the rest and clung to the window casing until the flames from the window below crept up to her and set her clothing on fire. Then she jumped far over the net and was killed instantly, like all the rest." One of the policemen who were checking up on the bodies as they were being shipped to the Morgue told of one heap of bodies in which a girl was found still alive when the others were taken off her. She died before an ambulance doctor could reach her.

4. Samuel Levine, a machine operator on the ninth floor, who lives at 1982 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, told this story when he had recovered from his injuries at the New York Hospital: "I was at work when I heard the shout of 'Fire!' The girls on the floor dropped everything and rushed wildly around, some in the direction of windows and others toward the elevator door. I saw the elevator go down past our floor once. It was crowded to the limit and no one could have got on. It did not stop. Not another trip was made. "There were flames all around in no time. Three girls, I think from the floor below, came rushing past me. Their clothes were on fire. I grabbed the fire pails and tried to pour the water on them, but they did not stop. They ran screaming toward the windows. I knew there was no hope there, so I stayed where I was, hoping that the elevator would come up again. "I finally smashed open the doors to the elevator. I guess I must have done it with my hands. I reached out and grabbed the cables, wrapped my legs around them, and started to slide down. I can remember getting to the sixth floor. While on my way down, as slow as I could let myself drop, the bodies of six girls went falling past me. One of them struck me and I fell to the top of the elevator. I fell on the dead body of a girl. My back hit the beam that runs across the top of the car. "Finally I heard the firemen cutting their way into the elevator shaft, and they came and let us out. I think others were taken out alive with me."

5. **M. Samilson** of the firm of Samilson & Co., on the second floor of the building, was standing at one of the windows of his office just after the fire was discovered. In the next few minutes, he said, he saw several bodies shoot past the window from above, most of the girls. When the firemen reached him at nearly 6 o'clock, he was still standing there horrified. He says he could not tear himself away. Few of the girls that fell from the windows on the ninth floor, it was learned, jumped of their own accord. They were pushed forward by the frightened crowd in the room behind them.

6. One of the bookkeepers, **Morris Lewine**, said he was on the top floor. He threw the books into a safe when the cry of fire was raised. He then made his way to the roof, followed by two girls. He found a ladder and made his way with one of the girls to the roof of the next building. He did not know what became of the second girl.

7. **Thomas Gregory**, an elevator man, who works at 103 Bleecker Street, said he was going home when he came to the fire. He says he ran into the building and made three trips in the elevator, taking down about fifteen persons at each trip. He said he left the hallways of the upper floors crowded with frenzied men and women, who fought to get into the elevator and clawed his face and neck. After the third trip the machinery broke down, he said. He said there were two elevators when he went into the building. One was on the ground floor, and one was on one of the upper floors. He saw no operator.

8. A man who said he was **Samuel Tauber** and that he had been employed as a foreman in the Triangle Company shops told about a fire on the eighth floor which happened two years ago. He said that on this occasion the motor, which supplies power for the two hundred sewing and cutting machines on that floor, had emitted a flame, which set fire to some cuttings nearby. He said that this fire had not been serious, but that it had thrown the girls working there into a panic. Tauber said that he believed yesterday's fire might have been caused in the same way.

9. **Frank Fingerman**, employed by the firm of M. S. Work & Co., in Washington Place East, turned in a fire alarm from a Broadway box when he heard the cries of the women in the factory building. "I saw as I ran," he said, "a boy and a girl standing together at a Greene Street window. He was holding her, and she seemed to be trying to jump. They were still there when I came back from the firebox. As the smoke began to come out of the window above them the boy let the girl go, and she jumped. He followed her before she struck the ground. "Four more came out of the same window immediately. The crowds were jamming our own door until I could not pass out and the street was packed right up to the fire trucks."

10. **Frederick Newman**, the New York University law student who with Charles P. Kramer, had charge of the rescue party of the New York University students up on the roof of their institution, said this after the work was done: "We were in the library of the building in the top floor when we noticed a gust of smoke coming from the building across the courtyard. Sparks drifted in at the open library window and as we jumped from our seats we saw the girls crowding at the windows. We saw a man leap out and then the girls began to follow him."

11. O. S. Smith, another student, was on his way from the Astor Place Subway station to the law library when he first caught sight of the fire. "I was stopped by police at Waverley Place and Greene Street," he said. "Across the street we could see the bodies of five women. As I looked I saw an arm raised and I knew that one of the women was alive. I called out to a policeman standing near. His only answer was, 'Get back there and mind your own business.' I pointed out the woman to him and told him something ought to be done, as the water was pouring down upon her. He didn't understand me, perhaps for nothing was done."

12. Alfred K. Schwach, a student, saw girls rushing to the rear factory windows, their hair on fire, to pause at the window for a moment and then jump out. "I saw four men," he said, "who tried to catch the girls. They seized horse blanket from a truck horse in Waverley Place and held it out. It gave way like paper as the girls struck it."

13. Pauline Grossman, 18 years old, who was injured by leaping from a window of the factory as the fire was growing on the eighth floor, says three male employees of the factory made a human chain of their bodies and swung across a narrow alleyway to the building fronting in Greene Street. She declares a number of person's passed across the men's bodies and escaped from the burning building by entering a window of the building opposite. "As the people crossing upon the human bridge crowded more and more over the men's bodies the weight upon the body of the center man became too great and his back was broken. She said he fell to the passageway below and the other two men lost their holds upon the windowsills and fell. Persons who were crossing upon the human bridge dropped with them to the passageway."

14. Celia Saltz was working at her sewing machine when the fire started. She raced to the door and the force of the crowd pushed her into the elevator as soon as the doors opened. She said, "I even forgot that I had a younger sister working with me ... I began to scream for my sister. I had lost her, I had lost my sister." Celia fainted in the elevator but woke up on the floor of the store across the street. I opened my eyes and I saw my sister bending over me. I began to cry. I couldn't help it. My sister, Minnie, was only fourteen."

Adapted from MuseumNetwork. Com

15. Pauline Cuoio Pepe was a nineteen-year-old sewing machine worker at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. "It was all nice young Jewish girls who were engaged to be married. You should see the diamonds and everything. Those were the ones who threw themselves from the window. What the hell did they close the door for? What did they think we were going to steal? What are we gonna do, steal a shirtwaist? Who the heck wanted a shirtwaist?" asked Pepe. " We never went out the front door. We always went one by one out the back. There was a man there searching, because the people were afraid we would take something, so that door was always locked. Adapted from <http://www.csun.edu/~ghy7463/mw2.html>

16. Rose Freedman was the last living survivor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. She died on February 15, 2001, at the age of 107. Freedman survived the fire by running up one flight of stairs, to the top floor. That's where the company owners and managers worked, and she thought they would have a way to escape. She was right. Rather than unlocking any of the doors below to save the women, the men had run to the roof, where they were lifted to safety. In the following years, Freedman spoke out about the conditions that led to the fire. The owners tried to buy her silence; she refused. Freedman went on to attend college, get married, and raise a family. After almost a century, she found herself back in the news as the oldest survivor of the fire. She gave speeches and granted interviews and a story about her life was made and aired on many public television stations.

Adapted from <http://www.npr.org/programs/watc/features/2001/010325.triangle.html>

Handout 1: Primary Document Analysis (page 1)

Document	Quote	What it means	Why does it matter?

Handout 1: Our account of the story

1. Describe the working conditions for women in the textile industry in 1911.

2. What caused the fire? Think about all the things that led to the fire. What caused so many people to be killed in this fire?

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question: How did socialist philosophy impact the garment worker strike?

The formative task is: Write a newspaper article from the point of view of a journalist witnessing the garment workers strike. In the article, address if you believe the socialist philosophy impacted the garment worker strike or not.

Teachers may implement this task with the following procedures:

1. Introduce the lesson by reviewing the idea of socialist.
2. Provide students with sources to read and analyze independently or with a partner.
3. Have students complete the formative task by writing at least a paragraph that contains evidence from the provided sources.
4. Lead a closing reflection with students that addresses their surprises, possible misconceptions, and further questions about the topic.

The scaffolds and other materials may be used to support students as they work with sources:

- Guiding questions included with documents to support student understanding and application of information.

The following sources were selected to help students determine how socialist philosophy impacted the garment worker strike after the Triangle Factory fire.

Historical Context:

The Triangle Waist Company was in many ways a typical sweated factory in the heart of Manhattan, at 23-29 Washington Place, at the northern corner of Washington Square East. Low wages, excessively long hours, and unsanitary and dangerous working conditions were the hallmarks of sweatshops.

Even though many workers toiled under one roof in the Asch building, owned by Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, the owners subcontracted much work to individuals who hired the hands and pocketed a portion of the profits. Subcontractors could pay the workers whatever rates they wanted, often extremely low. The owners supposedly never knew the rates paid to the workers, nor did they know exactly how many workers were employed at their factory at any given point. Such a system led to exploitation...

The International Ladies' Garment Workers Union organized workers in the women's clothing trade. Many of the garment workers before 1911 were unorganized, partly because they were young immigrant women intimidated by the alien surroundings. Others were more daring, though. All were ripe for action against the poor working conditions. In 1909, an incident at the Triangle Factory sparked a spontaneous walkout of its 400 employees. The Women's Trade Union League, a progressive association of middle class white women, helped the young women workers picket and fence off thugs and police provocation. At a historic meeting at Cooper Union, thousands of garment workers from all over the city followed young Clara Lemlich's call for a general strike.

With the cloakmakers' strike of 1910, a historic agreement was reached, that established a grievance system in the garment industry. Unfortunately for the workers, though, many shops were still in the hands of

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unscrupulous owners, who disregarded basic workers' rights and imposed unsafe working conditions on their employees...

Near closing time on Saturday afternoon, March 25, 1911, a fire broke out on the top floors of the Asch Building in the Triangle Waist Company. Within minutes, the quiet spring afternoon erupted into madness, a terrifying moment in time, disrupting forever the lives of young workers. By the time the fire was over, 146 of the 500 employees had died.

Kheel Center, Cornell University. "SWEATSHOPS & STRIKES BEFORE 1911." Remembering The 1911 Triangle Factory Fire. Last modified February 13, 2014. <https://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/story/sweatshopsStrikes.html>.

- **Featured Source A: Clara Lemlich**

First let me tell you something about the way we work and what we are paid. There are two kinds of work - regular, that is salary work, and piecework. The regular work pays about \$6 a week and the girls have to be at their machines at 7 o'clock in the morning and they stay at them until 8 o'clock at night, with just one-half hour for lunch in that time.

The shops. Well, there is just one row of machines that the daylight ever gets to - that is the front row, nearest the window. The girls at all the other rows of machines back in the shops have to work by gaslight, by day as well as by night. Oh, yes, the shops keep the work going at night, too.

The bosses in the shops are hardly what you would call educated men, and the girls to them are part of the machines they are running. They yell at the girls and they "call them down" even worse than I imagine the Negro slaves were in the South.

There are no dressing rooms for the girls in the shops. They have to hang up their hats and coats - such as they are - on hooks along the walls. Sometimes a girl has a new hat. It never is much to look at because it never costs more than 50 cents, that means that we have gone for weeks on two-cent lunches - dry cake and nothing else.

The shops are unsanitary - that's the word that is generally used, but there ought to be a worse one used. Whenever we tear or damage any of the goods we sew on, or whenever it is found damaged after we are through with it, whether we have done it or not, we are charged for the piece and sometimes for a whole yard of the material.

At the beginning of every slow season, \$2 is deducted from our salaries. We have never been able to find out what this is for.

Lemlich Clara. New York Evening Journal. November 28, 1909. Cited in Leon Stein, ed., Out of the Sweatshop: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy. Quadrangle/New Times Book Company New York, 1977.

Questions:

1. *When was this document written in relation to the fire?*
2. *What qualifies her to speak about the Triangle factory?*
3. *What were the conditions like in the factory?*

4. *Does it surprise you that these conditions were known before the fire?*

- **Featured Source B: Anne Morgan**

Miss Anne Morgan, daughter of J. Pierpont Morgan, is a recent applicant for membership in the Women's Trade Union League, and when her name has been passed upon she will become a regular member, paying \$1 a year, which is the fee. This is the league to which the striking shirtwaist makers belong, and the application for membership means that Miss Morgan is interested in the attempt these girls are making for their own betterment. In joining the league she gives her moral support...

"I have only known something of this strike for a short time," said Miss Morgan to a Times reporter last night, "and I find other people to whose attention it has not been brought do not know anything about it. If we come to fully recognize these conditions, we can't live our own lives without doing something to help them, bringing them at least the support of public opinion.

"We can see from the general trade conditions how difficult it must be for these girls to get along. Of course, the consumer must be protected, but when you hear of a woman who presses forty dozen skirts for \$8 a week something must be very wrong. And fifty-two hours a week seems little enough to ask.

"Rose Schneiderman told me of a woman who had worked in a box shop in Chicago for thirty years and could not in ten hours a day make enough to live on—she could only do it by working twelve to fourteen hours. Those conditions are terrible, and the girls must be helped to organize and to keep up their organizations, and if public opinion is on their side they will be able to do it."

"Miss Morgan Aids Girl Waiststrikers." *New York Times*. Last modified December 14, 1909. Retrieved from <http://www.nzdl.org/cgi-bin/library.cgi?e=d-00000-00---off-0whist--00-0---0-10-0---0---0direct-10---4-----0-1l--11-en-50---20-about---00-0-1-00-0-0-11-1-0utfZz-8-00&a=d&f=1&c=whist&cl=CL1.12&d=HASH01c92089164d1c22bdfb6012>.

Questions:

1. *Who is Anne Morgan?*
2. *What qualifies her to speak about the Triangle factory?*
3. *What were the conditions like in the factory?*
4. *Does it surprise you that a woman in her position would support the workers?*

- **Featured Source C: Eva McDonald Valesh Fires First Gun in Fight**

The opening gun in Miss Anne Morgan's campaign for a new trade union movement was fired yesterday morning by Mrs. Eva McDonald Valesh who, in a speech before the Women's Forum, at No. 23 West 44th street, said the socialists were using strikers for their own "dangerous purposes." The speaker charged that the Woman's Trade Union League was "full of socialism, marked by its perfunctory interest for the strikers."

"Do you want to go on record as saying that?" demanded a woman in the audience.

"I do, and I'll write it down if you like," said Mrs. Valesh.

The speaker began by criticising the executive committee of the shirtwaist strikers for turning down an offer which, she said, was made through her informally by the Associated Waist and Dress Manufacturers.

"It was made informally, but I was assured that the organization would stand by it if the strikers agreed," she went on. "The manufacturers proposed to submit the differences to a committee to be composed of either Samuel Gompers, John Mitchell or any labor leader they might name, a representative of the manufacturers, and a third man to be designated by the other two. The strikers committee refused to consider any overture but one agreeing to the closed shop.

"What is that strikers' committee? Eighteen men and two girls were present the day I saw them--the men all socialists, connected with the trade perhaps, but ignorant of what the girls want. And to show you the feminine view point, those girl strikers are actually grateful to the men who are using them for their own purposes. It's so nice of the men, who know so much more than we, to serve on our committees, they say.

"I propose," Mrs. Valesh went on, "to start a campaign against socialism. This strike may be used to pave the way for forming clean, sensible labor unions, and I want to enroll every woman of leisure, every clubwoman, in the movement. The existing unions aren't doing what they ought to stem the tide of socialism this country. The Woman's Trade Union League is dominated by socialism, though I won't deny they have helped the shirtwaist strikers some.

"Socialism is a menace... There's nothing constructive about socialism. It just makes those ignorant foreigners discontented, sets them against the government, makes them want to tear down. And socialists are using the strikers."

"How about the suffragists?" demanded Mrs. William H. McCartney.

"That's different," said Mrs. Valesh. "The suffragists have used the strikers, but they've helped them, given them spiritual vision, and, besides, the suffragists say frankly to the strikers, 'We want votes for women, while the socialists veil their purposes under all sorts of pretences...'

Miss Morgan's name was not mentioned during the meeting, but Mrs. Valesh said afterward that she might be considered as representing Miss Morgan.

"New Trade Union: Eva McDonald Valesh Fires First Gun In Fight." New York Daily Tribune. Last modified January 22, 1910, p. 9. Retrieved from <http://www.nzdl.org/cgi-bin/library.cgi?e=d-00000-00---off-0whist--00-0---0-10-0---0---0direct-10---4-----0-11--11-en-50---20-about---00-0-1-00-0-0-11-1-0utfZz-8-00&a=d&f=1&c=whist&cl=CL1.12&d=HASH01c92089164d1c22bdfb6012>.

- **Featured Source D: Diary of a Factory Worker**

When I got to the League Mary[A] asked me to attend a conference. I was sure that we were going to get some money out of it and went. But it proved to be one of those fake affairs held by our supposed-to-be friend for the purpose of forming a new organization that would make it its business to drive the Socialists out of the union movement. If I hadn't felt so sad in general there was an opportunity for some good fun. It was to laugh the way those swell ladies were worrying about the welfare of us working girls.

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"Why, they've been completely neglected by us," pleaded Eve[B], the temptress. "And the horrid Socialists lost no opportunity to enlighten them about the principles of Socialism. What will become of us if this is permitted to go on? We must at once start some systematic work in order to educate the girls out of Socialism." I guess she'll have a hard job.

Big strong Ann, who's got more money than she can count, sat there and continually nodded her head in approval of what Eve had to say. I would just love to make her roll up her sleeves and do an honest day's work, like us girls have to do all the time. I'll bet you ten to one that our union wouldn't seem too radical to her then.

"Labor conditions are too serious a matter," said one of the painted ladies. "Especially now," she added. "When living costs so much the Socialists are liable to light a terrible fire of revolt." I honestly wish they would.

"Those Socialists are dangerous," chimed in another, who has been changing her charitable occupations and husbands more frequently than some people do their clothes, and was therefore considered an authority on both subjects. "Their principles go to bring about the disruption of the home," continued the worthy matron.

I felt just like telling them that our homes can no longer be disrupted, for the most of us working people have no homes, but my opinion wasn't asked and I kept mum. I've gone through too much to care for their jabbering; it's only that they're trying their best to make trouble. I wouldn't be at all surprised if they'd be glad to see the League go to the dogs, but not on your life—we've too many good fighters in there.

Malkiel, Theresa S. *"The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker."* Co-operative Press: New York, 1910, 172-74.

<http://www.nzdl.org/cgi-bin/library.cgi?e=d-00000-00---off-0whist--00-0----0-10-0---0---0direct-10---4-----0-11--11-en-50---20-about---00-0-1-00-0-0-11-1-0utfZz-8-00&a=d&f=1&c=whist&cl=CL1.12&d=HASH01c92089164d1c22bdfb6012>.

Analysis: How did socialism impact the success of the garment worker strike?

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question: Were Harris and Blanck guilty of manslaughter?

The formative task is: Using evidence from the sources, write a paragraph explaining if Harris and Blanck are guilty of manslaughter.

Teachers may implement this task with the following procedures:

1. Introduce the lesson by posing the following question for students to discuss in partners, then as a class: If a situation similar to the Triangle Factory fire happened today, who would be held responsible?
2. Provide students with sources to read and analyze independently or with a partner.
3. Have students complete the formative task by writing a paragraph that contains evidence from the provided sources.
4. Lead a closing reflection with students that addresses their surprises, possible misconceptions, and further questions about the topic.

The scaffolds and other materials may be used to support students as they work with sources:

- Guiding questions included with documents to support student understanding and application of information.

The following sources were selected to engage students in determining if Harris and Blanck were guilty of manslaughter.

- **Featured Source A: Stories of Survivors in the *New York Times***

Cecilia Walker, 20 years old, who lives at 29 Stanton Street, slid down the cable at the Washington Place elevator and escaped with burned hands and body bruises. She was on the eighth floor of the building when the fire started. Running over to the elevator shaft she rang for the car, but it did not come. As she passed the sixth floor sliding on the cable she became unconscious, she said, and does not know what happened until she reached St. Vincent's Hospital, where she is now.

"A girl and I," she told the doctors at the hospital, "were on the eighth floor, and when I ran for the elevator shaft my girl friend started for the window on the Washington Street side. I looked around to call her but she had gone."

Jump Before Firemen Arrive

According to several eye witnesses, the flames were pouring from the windows and the girls jumping to the sidewalk for several minutes before the first fire truck with ladders arrived. Benjamin Levy of 995 Freeman Street, the Bronx, one of the first men to arrive at the burning building, says that it was all of ten minutes after the fire started before the first fire engine arrived. Mr. Levy is the junior member of the firm of I. Levy & Son wholesale clothing manufactures just around the corner, at 3 and 5 Waverley Place.

"I was upstairs in our work-room," said he, "when one of the employes who happened to be looking out of the window cried that there was a fire around the corner. I rushed downstairs, and when I reached the sidewalk the girls were already jumping from the windows. None of them moved after they struck the

sidewalk. Several men ran up with a net which they got somewhere, and I seized one side of it to help them hold it.

"It was about ten feet square and we managed to catch about fifteen girls. I don't believe we saved over one or two however. The fall was so great that they bounced to the sidewalk after striking the net. Bodies were falling all around us, and two or three of the men with me were knocked down. The girls just leaped wildly out of the windows and turned over and over before reaching the sidewalk.

"I only saw one man jump. All the rest were girls. They stood on the windowsills tearing their hair out in the handfuls and then they jumped.

"One girl held back after all the rest and clung to the window casing until the flames from the window below crept up to her and set her clothing on fire. Then she jumped far over the net and was killed instantly, like all the rest."

One for the policemen who were checking up the bodies as they were being shipped to the Morgue told of one heap in which a girl was found still alive when the others were taken off her. She died before an ambulance doctor could reach her.

Elevator Made One Trip.

Samuel Levine, a machine operator on the ninth floor, who lives at 1,982 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, told this story when he had recovered from his injuries at the New York Hospital: "I was at work when I heard the shout of 'Fire!' The girls on the floor dropped everything and rushed wildly around, some in the direction of windows and others toward the elevator door. I saw the elevator go down past our floor once. It was crowded to the limit and no one could have got on. It did not stop. Not another trip was made.

"There were flames all around in no time. Three girls, I think from the floor below, came rushing past me. Their clothes were on fire. I grabbed the fire pails and tried to pour the water on them, but they did not stop. They ran screaming toward the windows. I knew there was no hope there, so I stayed where I was, hoping that the elevator would come up again.

"I finally smashed open the doors to the elevator. I guess I must have done it with my hands. I reached out and grabbed the cables, wrapped my legs around them, and started to slide down. I can remember getting to the sixth floor. While on my way down, as slow as I could let myself drop, the bodies of six girls went falling past me. One of them struck me and I fell to the top of the elevator. I fell on the dead body of a girl. My back hit the beam that runs across the top of the car.

"Finally I heard the firemen cutting their way into the elevator shaft, and they came and let us out. I think others were taken out alive with me."

M. Samilson of the firm of Samilson & Co., on the second floor of the building, was standing at one of the windows of his office just after the fire was discovered. In the next few minutes, he said, he saw several bodies shoot past the window from above, most of the girls. When the firemen reached him at nearly 6 o'clock, he was still standing there horrified. He says he could not tear himself away.

Few of the girls that fell from the windows on the ninth floor, it was learned, jumped of their own accord. They were pushed forward by the panicstricken crowd in the room behind them.

One of the bookkeepers, Morris Lewine, said he was on the top floor. He threw the books with the exception of a ledger into a safe when the cry of fire was raised. He then made his way to the roof, followed by two girls. He found a ladder and made his way with one of the girls to the roof of an adjoining building. He did not know what became of the second girl.

Thomas Gregory, an elevator man, who works at 103 Bleeker Street, said he was going home when he came to the fire. He says he ran into the building and made three trips in the elevator, taking down about fifteen persons at each trip. He said he left the hallways of the upper floors crowded with frenzied men and women, who fought to get into the elevator and clawed his face and neck. After the third trip the machinery broke down, he said. He said there were two elevators when he went into the building. One was on the ground floor, and one was on one of the upper floors. He saw no operator.

"*Stories of Survivors. And Witnesses and Rescuers Outside Tell What They Saw.*" *New York Times*. Last modified March 26, 1911, p. 4. Retrieved from https://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/primary/newspapersMagazines/nyt_032611_2.html.

- **Featured Source B: Samuel Gompers**

The laws for the protection of the workingman are not fully enforced until such disasters occur. Dr. Chas.P. Neill, United States Commissioner of Labor, speaking of the necessity for legal compensation for death or injury by accidents, said: This is the only country in the world where an appeal for help has to be made following an industrial disaster. All countries where there is industrial advancement such as we enjoy have the necessary machinery to provide for the victims without an appeal to charity. The fund of \$30,000 raised for the relatives of the recent factory fire in New York, while it does credit to the charitable inclination of the citizens of New York, is an indictment of the maladjustment of our social system."

Too long, in dealing with the trade unions, has there been an assumption by employers, wholly unfounded, that their class represents law and order, responsibility, and high standing, the distinction of individual merit and the authority of superior class integrity. Too often what they really stand for is no more than a colossal and unblushing gall, unscrupulous and insatiable greed.

Samuel Gompers "Hostile Employers See Yourselves as Others Know You." American Federationist. Last modified May, 1911. p. 356-361. Retrieved from https://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/primary/newspapersMagazines/af_0511.html.

Questions for Analysis:

1. *Based on this document, was anyone at fault for the fire or the rescue effort?*
2. *What quote from the document shows that*

- **Featured Source C: "Great American Trials"**

The trial took over three weeks, and 155 witnesses testified. one of the most gripping descriptions of what had happened came from Kate Alterman, a Triangle employee who survived the fire. First, she described how, amidst the chaos, she saw one Margaret Schwartz die in the flames because no one could open the Washington Place stairway door:

I saw Bernstein, the manager's brother, trying to open the door but he couldn't. He left; and Margaret was there, too, and she tried to open the door and she could not. I pushed her on a side. I tried to open the door, and I couldn't.... And then she [Margaret] screamed at the top of her voice, "Open the door! Fire! I am lost, there is fire!"

Horrified, Alterman watched the fire consume Schwartz. Alterman then described how she survived a mad dash through the fire raging through the Greene Street stairway:

And then I turned my coat on the wrong side and put it on my head with the fur to my face, the lining on the outside, and I got hold of a bunch of dresses and covered the top of my head. I just got ready to go and somebody came and began to chase me back, pulling my dress back, and I kicked her with my foot and she disappeared.

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I tried to make my escape. I had a pocketbook with me, and that pocketbook began to burn. I pressed it to my heart to extinguish the fire, and I made my escape right through the flames: the whole door was a flame right to the roof.

Once she was on the roof, firemen eventually rescued Alterman. Despite Alterman's dramatic testimony and that of other witnesses, however, the trial turned upon the question of whether Blanck and Harris knew that the Washington Place door was locked. Judge Crain read his instructions to the jury on this point:

You must be satisfied from the evidence, among other things, before you can find these defendants guilty of the crime of manslaughter in its first degree not merely that the door was locked, if it was locked, but that it was locked during the period mentioned under circumstances bringing knowledge of that fact to these defendants.

But it is not sufficient that the evidence should establish that the door was locked, if it was locked, during such a period; nor yet that the defendants knew that it was locked during such a period, if it was locked ... Was the door locked? If so, was it locked under circumstances importing knowledge on the part of these defendants that it was locked? If so, and Margaret Schwartz died because she was unable to pass through, would she have lived if the door had not been locked and she had obtained access to the Washington Place stairs and had either remained in the stairwell or gone down to the street or another floor?

"Triangle Shirtwaist Fire Trial: 1911 ." *Great American Trials*. Encyclopedia.com. Last modified October 16, 2020. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/law/law-magazines/triangle-shirtwaist-fire-trial-1911>.

Questions for Analysis:

1. Based on this document, was anyone at fault for the fire or the rescue effort?
2. What quote from the document shows that?

● Featured Source D: Closing Statements of Attorneys in Trial

Prosecution Protecting the Victims

Gentlemen, you recall the testimony of Katie Rabinowitz, or Mrs. Gartman, because she was one of the last witnesses to testify. You remember how she told you that he saw Margaret Schwartz fall up against the partition; you remember how she accounted for every step at the time of the fire on the ninth floor; you remember how she testified how that door was tried and there was no chance to get out, it was locked. I do not believe that any jurymen sitting in that box will forget as long as he lives the story of Kate Alterman of the tragic last moments of Margaret Schwartz. A truer story never was told than that. You remember they had been friends, Mrs. Gartman, Margaret Schwartz, the deceased in the indictment, and Kate Alterman had been friends. You remember how she called her Kate, and she then called back Margaret, and there was no sound that came after that. She died at that ninth floor door and they were passing out of the eighth floor then and these were the conditions between the eighth and the ninth floor, (pointing to the handrail exhibits).

Yes, Brown opened that door on the eighth floor and there /were no dead bodies there, but there were on the ninth. The stairs were not burned while the doors were up, and the rails proved it, the pictures prove it, the sill, the stiles, the case proves it, and the lock itself proves it, besides all the human testimony that there is in this case.

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Gentlemen, believe this testimony (pointing to the handrail exhibit) , believe the testimony of these honest little girls that were here, and that told their stories from their hearts, believe them, as you must, and one of the most awful and greatest crimes of history has been proven and is now to be punished in this Court. The testimony of those honest children is before you and you cannot get away from it in this case, and then these things (indicating the handrail exhibits) have brought no lawsuits. These things have no bias. Here are the photographs, here are the rails, here are the sills, there is the casing, the material that they were working with, the pocketbook from Blanck, the lock, that lock shot, and that bolt there, that held them back – these are the mute witnesses that are speaking to you, and that tell you that every single item of this crime has been proven to mathematical demonstration.

Yes, in the words of the defendants' counsel, 1911 has been a bitter year for the poor families from whom these dear ones have been taken by the neglect of these defendants. Margaret Schwartz died, Margaret died at the Washington place door on the ninth floor because that door was locked and that bolt held that door. Safety and all was on the other side for her and the others, and this safety was kept from her. Why? To prevent these defendants, who had five hundred people under their keeping -- their lives – from the paltry expense of a watchman.

I have done my duty. The People now look to you to do yours. God grant that you will.

Defense of Harris and Blanck

Well Gentlemen, you of course are expected to recall all of this evidence. To my mind it is a human impossibility. When it comes to one of these long trials, with every confidence in the Jury system there ought to be some better way than there is of preserving the testimony. To my mind I think it would be a splendid idea if the Jury were furnished with transcripts of the testimony from day to day because then they might keep it green in their recollection; but whatever may be the deficiency of a human effort, I think as the testimony went along you gathered sufficient of it so that you may pass upon these two questions:

- Beyond a reasonable doubt, did the People prove that Harris and Blanck killed Margaret Schwartz through the negligent way they conducted their business?
- Beyond a reasonable doubt did the People prove not only that that door was locked, because that is of no consequence, did they prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Margaret Schwartz died because that door was locked? Did they prove that that door was locked. Did they prove anything against these defendants?

Gentlemen of the Jury 1911 is drawing to a close. 1911 was a bitter year for these two men. Thirty years ago were these men in a shop not equipped with electric lights, and electric power, with stairs made of wood and which we climbed together, I labored in one of those shops. The progress that has been made in that is wonderful. I admire the confidence that has been reposed in me by them to present this case to you. Never, never in all my life, and never again in the balance of it I hope will there be such a responsibility resting on me. I took their case; since the day they were indicted I have slept with it and I have pondered with it and labored with it. I do hope, I really hope that I have brought to you the conviction of their innocence.

"TRANSCRIPTS OF CRIMINAL TRIAL AGAINST TRIANGLE OWNERS." Last modified November 1, 1911.
<http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/triangletrans/18>.

Questions for Analysis:

1. *Based on this document, was anyone at fault for the fire or the rescue effort?*

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2. *What quote from the document shows that?*

- **Featured Source E: Smithsonian Magazine**

The trial was high drama with counsel for the defense Max Steuer discrediting Kate Alterman, a key witness and survivor of the fire, by convincing the jury that she had been coached and memorized her tale. After three weeks of trial with more than 100 witness testimonies the two men ultimately beat the rap on a technicality – that they did not know a second exit door on the ninth floor was locked – and were acquitted by a jury of their peers. Although the justice system let the families of the workers down, widespread moral outrage increased demands for government regulation....

The media at the time attributed the cause of the fire to the owners' negligence and indifference because it fit the crowd-pleasing narrative of good and evil, plus a straight-forward telling of the source of the fire worked better than a parsing of the many different bad choices happening in concert. Newspapers mostly focused on the factory's flaws, including poorly maintained equipment. Court testimony attributed the source of the blaze to a fabric scrap bin, which led to a fire that spread explosively – fed by all the lightweight cotton fabric (and material dust) in the factory.

Like many other garment shops, Triangle had experienced fires previously that were quickly extinguished with water from pre-filled buckets that hung on the walls. Blanck and Harris dealt with fire hazards to their equipment and inventory by buying insurance, and the building itself was considered fireproof (and survived the fire without structural damage). Workplace safety, however, was not a priority for the owners. Workman's compensation was non-existent at the time. Ironically the nascent workmen's compensation law passed in 1909 was declared unconstitutional on March 24, 1911 – the day before the Triangle fire...

The Triangle factory fire gave rise to progressive reformers call for greater regulation and helped change attitudes of New York's Democratic political machine, Tammany Hall. The politicians woke up to the needs, and increasing power, of Jewish and Italian working-class immigrants. Affluent reformers such as Frances Perkins, Alva Vanderbilt Belmont and Anne Morgan also pushed for change. While politicians still looked out for the interests of the moneyed elite, the stage was being set for the rise of labor unions and the coming of the New Deal. The outrage of Triangle fueled a widespread movement.

Liebhold, Peter. "Why the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Makes for a Complicated History." Smithsonian Magazine.

Last modified December 21, 2018.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/triangle-shirtwaist-factory-fire-makes-complicated-history-180971019/>.

Questions for Analysis:

1. *Based on this document, was anyone at fault for the fire or the rescue effort?*

2. *What quote from the document shows that?*

- **Featured Source F: "147 Dead, Nobody Guilty" *Literary Digest***

Nine months ago 147 persons, chiefly young women and girls, were killed by a fire in the factory of the Triangle Waist Company at Washington Place and Greene Street, of New York. All of the subsequent evidence, as well as the facts of the tragedy, convinced that New York papers that this factory where hundreds of girls



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were compelled by circumstances to work for their livings was a veritable fire-trap, though not worse, perhaps, than hundreds of buildings in the city. Last week, Issac Harris and Max Blanck, owners of the Triangle Company, under trial for manslaughter in the first or second degree, were acquitted by a New York jury on their third ballot, after being out an hour and forty-five minutes. While the press in the main seem inclined to accept the verdict itself without serious challenge, many papers are gravely troubled over its practical implication that no one is responsible for that wholesale slaughter, and the feeling is widely expressed that, whatever the explanation of the outcome, justice has in fact been balked. It is "one of the disheartening failures of justice which are all too common in this country," declares the New York Tribune, which goes to say:

The point of view of those who must day after day submit themselves to risks similar to those which obtained in the Triangle factory is thus voiced by the New York Call (Socialist):

There are no guilty. There are only the dead, and the authorities will forget the case as speedily as possible.

Capital can commit no crime when it is in pursuit of profits.

Of course, it is well known that those who were killed in the Triangle disaster are only part, and a small part, of those murdered in industry during the passing year. There are only 147 incinerated and mangled. But there were thousands of others who met a similarly agonizing fate during this year of 1911.

The whole capitalist system is based upon such unspeakable systematic murder, and those who defend the capitalist system defend those murders.

Perhaps the men on the jury had no thought of condoning murder, but that is what they did. They freed of the punishment legal guilt might bring two men who profited by the conditions that made such a disaster inevitable. They did it because they recognized the basic fact that their own interests were involved in such an action. They stood by their fellow manufacturers and set them free.

Questions for Analysis:

1. *Based on this document, was anyone at fault for the fire or the rescue effort?*
2. *What quote from the document shows that?*

Analysis: Were Harris and Blanck guilty of manslaughter? Use evidence from the documents to defend your answer.

Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined the cause of the Triangle Factory fire and the aftermath of the fire. Students have been able to answer supporting questions to help them answer the compelling question: What role should the government play in the relationship between the owners and Triangle workers?

Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students will be participating in a socratic seminar to discuss and debate the role the government should play in the relationships between the owners and Triangle workers. At the end of the socratic seminar, students will write a response (½ to 1 page) that addresses what they believe the role the government should play in the relationships between the owners and Triangle workers.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- *The government should not be involved in situations like this because the Triangle Fire was a private business*
- *The government should get involved in relationships between owners and workers because it could ensure tragedies like this won't happen often or at all*
- *Government intervention during this time would be the only way to mandate companies to create safe working conditions for their employees*

To support students in their writing, provide students with the following socratic seminar preparation sheet. In addition to the analysis questions and formative assessments completed over the course of this inquiry, students will be able to prepare for the socratic seminar by summarizing major points, developing questions for the seminar, and taking notes during the seminar to remain involved.

To support students in their writing they can use this provided organizer for a body paragraph:

First Argument	
Write a topic sentence that summarizes the paragraph and tells how this proves the thesis	<i>(Repeat the first part of your thesis)</i>
Provide background information here. Cite anyone you paraphrase or quote!	<i>When...</i>

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What textual evidence proves this? Describe 1 or 2 HAPP elements about the source of your evidence.	
What textual evidence proves this? Insert a short quote here.	
What makes this quote credible, valid, or helpful in providing insights to this issue?	<i>The quote revealed...</i>
Who disagrees or disputes a piece of your argument? Describe 1 or 2 HAPP elements about the source of your evidence.	<i>Others claimed that...</i>
What textual evidence do you have? Insert a short quote here.	
What makes this quote seem untrue, inaccurate, or only partly true?	<i>While it may be true that _____, it was clear that...</i>

To extend their arguments, once students have written or formed an argument, consider doing one of the following extension activities:

1. **Discussion:** Consider facilitating a discussion of the analysis questions. Ask students to share their response with someone, or if they already worked in a group, ask them to nominate someone to represent their group to the class as a whole. Capitalize on differences between group responses. Why did one group answer differently than another? What impacted them or stood out more?
2. **Four Corner Debate:** Consider a "four-corner debate." In the corners of the room tack up a piece of paper with four differing and possible answers to the inquiry question. After students complete the lesson packet, pose the question to the room at large and ask students to move to the corner of the room (or in between locations) that represent their answer. Then, ask students to explain their choice. As students discuss they are allowed to move closer or further from ideas. This is a great strategy for kinesthetic learning.

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3. **Socratic Seminar:** Consider doing a "Socratic seminar" to extend the learning and get students to question what they still don't know or understand. Start with the inquiry's question. Students should be encouraged to answer one another's question directly, but also to answer the question with another question. This continues the conversation and gets at more rich ideas. The teacher should try to say as little as possible and let the students lead the dialog. One strategy for this is to seat students in a circle. Give each of them a cup and 2-3 tokens. When a student makes a substantive contribution to the discussion the teacher will walk over and place a token in the cup signaling that they have contributed. Students will become aware of who has spoken and who has not, and leave space for one another.
4. **Structured Academic Controversy:** Consider turning the lesson into a "structured academic controversy." Take the overarching question and turn it into a "debate." Students can choose or be assigned a side in the debate and use the documents provided to argue their "answer" to the overarching question. They can argue over interpretations and credibility of some documents.
5. **Reacting to the Past:** Consider doing some role play with your class. Reacting to the Past is an active learning pedagogy of role-playing games designed by Barnard University. In Reacting to the Past games, students are assigned character roles with specific goals and must communicate, collaborate, and compete effectively to advance their objectives. Reacting promotes engagement with big ideas, and improves intellectual and academic skills. Provide students with a set of rules about staying in character and what types of things they must know about their character. Students should be provided with a packet of role sheets with instructions on their individual goals and strategies for game play. Students can use sources and information from these activities, and can search for more details online about their individual character. Reacting roles and games do not have a fixed script or outcome. While students are obliged to adhere to the philosophical and intellectual beliefs of the historical figures they have been assigned to play, they must devise their own means of expressing those ideas persuasively in papers, speeches, or other public presentations.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by doing one of the following suggested action activities:

1. Find an article or book about history that misrepresents women and gender in history and write to the author or editor.
2. Write a letter to the Secretary of Education for your state about the teaching of women and gender history.
3. Investigate women and gender rights issues that persist and engage with the movement by attending a protest, signing a petition, or donating to the cause.
4. Make a PSA video, blog, or social media post with the intent to persuade the audience to better understand women from history or a persistent gender rights from this inquiry.