



History Scene Investigation

Case: Tragedy at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory

Directions: In small teams, you will be working for the HIS department to analyze primary sources and images from a History Mystery that took place in the United States in 1911. Record your team's findings from each of the files to piece together the stories that shaped this historic event.

Mission Briefing

What do you think is happening in the photograph taken outside the Asch building in New York City?

What details make you think that?

Based on this photo, what do you wonder?

File #1: Women's Fashion Early 1900s

Describe the typical fashion for women in the early 1900s.

What is a "shirt waist"?

File #2: Working Conditions

How much money per week did girls in the sweatshops make, on average?

Describe the working conditions of the sweatshop.

How did the bosses treat the girls working for them?

File #3: The Triangle Walk-Out and Union Meeting Account


What did the employees of the shirtwaist industry do in 1909?

What did Samuel Gompers say should be more important to the shirtwaist manufacturers than convenience and profit?

File #4: 9th Floor Testimonial and Photograph

Why couldn't the women on the 9th floor escape using the Washington Place stairway door?

Where had the fire started?



Looking at the photograph of the damage on the 9th floor, what other obstacles did the workers on that floor face when trying to escape?

File #5: Floor Plan and 3D Diagram

How many workers could the Triangle Shirtwaist Company owners have working on the 9th floor?

Besides being a fire safety hazard, why else was having so many employees crowded on this floor bad for the employees' health?

Give 4 examples of the many failures for escape or survival on the 9th floor.

File #6: Survivor's Interview – Pauline Pepe's Interview Transcript

How many hours a day and days a week did Pauline Pepe work at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory?

How did Pauline describe the room where she worked?

File #7: Casualties – Death Certificate and Casualties List

What did the coroner say was the cause of Rosaria Maltese's death?

Rosaria's sister was also killed in the fire. What was her name and age?

Give at least 3 facts that you notice regarding the list of fire victims.

File #8: A New York Times Article (printed May 26, 1911)

How many people died in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire on March 15th, 1911?

How did most of the victims die?

Who were the owners of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company?

THINK: What good do you think would come of this tragedy?