

## American Experience: Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

**Introduction:** The Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire of 1911 remains one of the biggest tragedies in the history of New York City, perhaps surpassed only by the 9-11 terrorist attacks. No single event during the Progressive Era did more to call attention to the need for factory reform in terms of working conditions. Unfortunately, reform was not immediate, but eventually labor laws and safety codes were enacted.

### Part I: The Struggle for Equality (32 min)

- How many New Yorkers came to pay tribute to the unidentified workers of the Triangle Fire on April 5th, 1911?  

<b>100,000</b>	<b>400,000</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>
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- Every morning, 100,000 people would hit the streets heading for work. Some girls were as young as age\_\_\_\_\_.
- What floors were the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory on?
- The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory was a desirable position because they were working in a much more modern environment: they had \_\_\_\_\_ ceilings and big \_\_\_\_\_.
- How long was the workday? \_\_\_\_\_ hours for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ a day.
- True or False** Shirtwaists were resulting in **rising** profits for the owners of the factory.
- How many blouse makers were on the island of Manhattan?
- What were garment workers in the city agitating for: Shorter \_\_\_\_\_, better \_\_\_\_\_ shops. Unions.
- What was the single largest fear for owners?
- How many stitches were the girls expected to make each hour without mistake with the new machines?
- How many breaks did you get for drinks or the bathroom?
- What was permanently done to the other exit to the factory?
- What happened October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1909?  

<b>All the workers quit</b>	<b>The fire started</b>	<b>The workers were on strike</b>
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- \_\_\_\_\_ had been shining a light on the growing inequalities in America for 20 years. The crushing poverty, cramped \_\_\_\_\_ spaces, and inhumane working conditions.
- True or False** Owners Max Blanck and Issac Harris were willing to allow their workers to unionize.
- Within 48 hours, \_\_\_\_\_ of the smallest and most vulnerable gave into the union demands.
- Who was against labor unions (Circle all that apply)?  

<b>The Establishment</b>	<b>The Police</b>	<b>City Hall</b>
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- True or False** The pickets received help from some wealthier women.

19. One by one hundreds of shirtwaist manufacturers accepted their workers demands for a union. The Triangle workers weren't so fortunate. When they finally went back on the job, they had won concessions on wages and hours but Harris and Blanck had forced them to give up the big issue: Triangle workers still lacked real power to improve the \_\_\_\_\_ on the factory floor.

**Part 2: The Fire & Aftermath**

20. What started the fire on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of the Ash Building?

21. How did owners Blanck and Harris escape?

22. **True or False** The sewing machine operators on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor were alerted early on.

23. Panic arose when the women heard the overburdened \_\_\_\_\_ pull from the masonry.

24. What was the only precaution the Triangle owners had taken? Were they useful?

25. The final hope for the Triangle workers was \_\_\_\_\_ the locked \_\_\_\_\_ to the Washington Place stairway. But no one had the \_\_\_\_\_.

26. **True or False** The firefighter's ladders easily reached the Triangle workers.

27. \_\_\_\_\_ minutes after the initial call, firefighters had the blaze at the Triangle under control.

28. What was the total number dead: \_\_\_\_\_

29. How many of the victims burned to death? \_\_\_\_\_

30. How old was the fire's youngest victim? \_\_\_\_\_

31. Max Blanck and Isaac Harris were brought up on charges of manslaughter. What was the result of those charges?

**Guilty**

**Acquitted (not guilty)**

32. 146 women and men proved that this \_\_\_\_\_ system between worker and employer doesn't work. It can never be private again.

33. The New York State Legislature funded a factory \_\_\_\_\_ commission which held months of hearings, collected testimonies from hundreds of owners and workers and inspected nearly \_\_\_\_\_ factories.

34. Within two years, the commission's findings spurred the passage of over \_\_\_\_\_ new laws.

35. They set standards for minimum \_\_\_\_\_, maximum \_\_\_\_\_, and workplace \_\_\_\_\_.