

The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire

History's Mysteries—Solve the Crime of the Time



About the authors

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WELCOME TO THE TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST FIRE!

In this hands-on investigative activity, students are given an authentic task: to think like criminalists and review mock forensic files of a historical event. Students gather, analyze, and interpret evidence, engaging in tasks such as examining physical objects (e.g., a model of a guillotine, bullets, a blood-spattered uniform), poring over photographs, analyzing documents, and reading maps and charts. A PowerPoint® presentation includes an introduction to the task, a coroner's report, and several types of sources from the "crime scene." Students then fill out a "forensic report" graphic organizer, hypothesize how the event took place, and conclude by reading a "Mystery Solved" handout that provides historical background on the "crime." Optional extension activities include having students create a "breaking news" TV report, write a front-page newspaper article, or compose a "news alert" text message. Grades 6–12.



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Purpose and Overview

Activity Introduction

Welcome to *History's Mysteries: Solve the Crime of the Time*. Included are investigative case files that cover some of the main areas of world history standards-based curriculum. The central purpose of these files is to spark interest and excitement in students for further study of a given unit.

A History Mystery is rooted in having students act like a criminalist whose job is to gather, analyze, and interpret forensic evidence. Real-life criminalists are skilled in studying everyday items, examining bullets, and analyzing documents. Likewise, in a history class a teacher's job is to help students develop critical thinking skills also based in gathering, analyzing and interpreting data.

In this hands-on investigative activity, students are given an authentic task—to think like criminalists and review mock forensic files of a historical event. Each file contains primary and secondary source replica/realia that students analyze in order to hypothesize how a given event took place.

This activity works best as an introduction to a world history unit, but it may also be used as a way to review before a DBQ based assessment at the end of a unit. Students are motivated to solve each Mystery both with accuracy and speed as the first student/team to do so correctly wins a "Criminalist of the Year" nameplate for classroom display.

How does a History Mystery work?

Students are given the task of reviewing a historical event case file and filling out a Forensic Report. Once this initial step is completed, students then read a **Mystery Solved: Press Release** that reveals all the accurate details of the real life History Mystery.

Each *History's Mysteries Case File* review and **Forensic Report** are completed in a single (60 minute) class session. The follow up **Mystery Solved: Press Release** reading and follow up activities (**Front Page News, Breaking News Report, or Text Message News Alert**) can take another half to full one hour class period.

Each unit comes with reproducible student analysis sheets, teacher directions, student directions, CD-ROM that allows students to view the files on a computer (or the entire class with an LCD projector).



Teaching tip

For more scaffolding and challenge to the activity, you can also add a step where students work on a **Front Page News Article, Breaking News Report, or a Text Message News Alert** in which students further synthesize what they believed took place in either an essay, short skit, or short summary form (for better language mastery, beginner or advanced writing skills, ELL and/or AP Students).

What conditions did industrial workers have to face in the early 20th century?



AREA 1:
CRIME SCENE



March 25, 1911,
New York City

AREA 2: POLICE REPORT



Incident Type	
<input type="checkbox"/> Robbery	
<input type="checkbox"/> Assault	
<input type="checkbox"/> Kidnapping	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Murder	
<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to Comply with Current Law	
<input type="checkbox"/> Conspiracy (a secret agreement between two or more people to perform an unlawful act)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Espionage (the systematic use of spies to get military or political secrets)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	

POLICE INCIDENT REPORT

Incident Date	03/25/1911
Address of Incident	Asch Building 23-29 Washington Place, New York City, New York Northern corner of Washington Square East
Arrested Suspected perpetrator(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female Name(s): Max Blanck and Isaac Harris (Triangle Waist Company owners) Suspect(s) arrested for: Murder Charges: Manslaughter in the 1 st degree
Victim(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Male <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Female Name(s): 141 females/5 males—see attached list Age(s): 14-48
Details	Saturday afternoon floors 8-10 of the Asch Building caught on fire and 146 workers died by flame, fumes, or jumping out of the building

**AREA 3:
DETECTIVE'S RESEARCH**



Max Blanck and Isaac Harris were the owners of The Triangle Shirtwaist Company, which hired workers to sew together clothing in the Asch Building in New York City.

When the fire in their company building began, both Blanck and Harris fled to the building's roof and survived.

