The Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire:

The Reforms that Followed

Mackenzie Zappe

Junior Division

Individual Website

Word Count: 495

When thinking of a topic to fit this year’s theme, I remembered learning about the fire reforms in history. Digging deeper I looked to see what had caused these changes; the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire. This event both fit the theme, of leadership and legacy, and my interests, of the turn of the century and its impact on today.

To start off my research, I began looking for a newspaper from that time in order to understand what had happened the day of the fire. Once I realized that legislation was involved I searched for laws, bills, or websites that told about the changes that were made. One half of my research was for the reform and the other for the happenings of the fire and history behind the company. I soon found interviews with survivors that explained both what it was like in the burning factory and how the situation was handled. Then I located a book describing everything about the factory from the beginning to the reforms in the end. Using the bibliography in the back of the book, I was able to locate even more sources about the reforms and the legislation.

The first thing I did when I opened Weebly the first time to create my product was to pick sections and sub-sections. A few of these sections and sub-sections changed throughout the process of creating my product, but primarily, they stayed the same. The next thing that I did was add spacers, text boxes, picture holders, etc. to my sections. I planned where everything was going to go. I decided to make the quotes stand out by coloring them red; like fire. These quotes, I got from a variety of primary and secondary sources. I added video clips as well. Finally, I added evidence to support my thesis.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire demonstrated the theme, leadership and legacy, in history because it led to fire safety reforms for public places, which still impact today. Workers’ safety was greatly increased because of the leadership the Triangle fire took in order to jump start the reforms. Also the legacy of the tragedy left upon us enables us to continue living safely.

Before I began my research on the Triangle fire, I knew very little about the topic. I knew about the event, but not the in-depth content. As I began to research I found that many of the victims were protesters in the strike against the Triangle factory. My understanding continued to change as I found out the issues with the ‘fireproof’ building.

If this fire did not happen on March 25th 1911, many a more death fire could have occurred. This fire motivated reforms to fix the fire escapes, and to organize fire drills. The Triangle fire changed the way we dealt with fire. It helped improve factories for the young immigrant workers. Like George Washington (shaping presidency), this fire helped paved the road for others to shape our nation.