

Triangle Fire Study Guide

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/triangle/player/>

THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

According to the film, what countries of origin were represented among New York City's 100,000 garment workers?

What brought these immigrants to America, and what motivated them to work such long hours?

How did the realities of their working lives contrast with their dreams and their observations of promise and opportunity in America?

INSIDE THE TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST FACTORY

Why was working at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory a desirable job? Describe the factory environment.

In what ways was it modern? What does historian Annelise Orleck mean when she asserts that "Triangle was a plum"?

What was a typical day like for workers at the Triangle factory?

How much money did the workers earn? For what reasons did bosses dock workers' pay?

What does historian Steve Fraser mean when he says that the bosses treated workers "like animals, like pieces"?

DEMANDING A UNION

What changes were shirtwaist workers agitating for when they made the decision to go out on strike?

Why did factory owners like Harris and Blanck see unionization as a threat and as a personal attack?

How would unionization affect conditions at the factory?

Why was an industry-wide strike unthinkable before the shirtwaist workers gathered in November 1909 and heard Lemlich's speech?

How did the police and mayor respond? What was the impact of the general strike by shirtwaist workers?

Who was Anne Morgan what was her view of the garment workers' strike?

THE FIRE AND ITS AFTERMATH

What caused the fire that broke out at the Triangle factory on March 25, 1911?

What did workers discover when they ran to the Washington Place stairway? Why was this door locked?

How many people died in the Triangle fire?

Why were factory owners Harris and Blanck brought up on charges of manslaughter?
What was the outcome of this case?

What concrete changes did the government institute to make workplaces safer for
factory workers? Which of these laws are still in effect at workplaces today?