

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).

Daily Directions

Two Day Activity

Materials

- Computers, LCD projector.
- Reproducible copies of:
 - the **Forensic Report**
 - the **Criminalist of the Year Plaque**
 - the **Criminalist of the Year Name Plates**
 - the **Mystery Solved: Press Release**

Direction Notes

A day before you begin the activity, we must prepare for it by doing the following:

- Determine which method for displaying the case files works best for you (set of computers LCD projector printed out slides, etc.)
- Pull out the reproducible copies of the **Forensic Report** and **Student Directions** to make enough copies of them for class.
- Pull out the reproducible copies of the **Criminalist of the Year Plaque** and the **Criminalist of the Year Name Plates**.
- Pull out a reproducible copy of the **Mystery Solved: Press Release**, for the given case file, and make enough copies of them for class.

Teaching tip

Make one copy of the **Criminalist of the Year Plaque** and the **Criminalist of the Year Name Plates** each for every class that you have.



Daily Directions

Activity Day 1

Materials

- Copies of the **Forensic Report**
- **Case File**

Direction Notes

1. Pass out **Forensic Report** sheets to students.
2. Then depending on which method of case file viewing you are choosing, following the directions below.

LCD projector—Walk students through the directions and the case file by flipping through the slides.

Individual computer use—Walk students through how to flip through each page of the file as a class and then walk along the room to make sure students are on task and filling out the Forensic Report correctly.



Whole class



Individual

Forensic Report

Submitted by (Student/Teacher's Name): _____ Period: _____ Place: _____

FORENSIC REPORT

Directions: You are a **Forensic Analyst** responsible for gathering, analyzing, and documenting **Forensic Evidence** in order to solve the following mystery presented to you. At the top of the form, in each of the three areas (**Crime Scene, Police Report, and Detective's Research**), take notes and fill in each of the three boxes. Remember the objective of forensic practice is to solve the mystery. Working evidence from previous evidence presented in a report's document, in a given case.

STAGE 1: REVIEW CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHS

Forensic Categories	Describe what you see in the Crime Scene photographs.
Objects: List out all of the objects you see in the photos.	
People: Describe what the people look like in the photos.	
Sensory Details: Describe the area in the photos. What is visible in a building, in the street, etc. How do you feel the scene?	

STAGE 2: REVIEW POLICE REPORT

Accident Report: Describe what happened.	
Accident Report: Describe who was involved.	
Accident Report: What type of accident was it?	

Report Review

<input type="checkbox"/> Completed notes regarding Crime Scene Photographs <input type="checkbox"/> Completed notes regarding Police Report <input type="checkbox"/> Completed notes regarding Detective's Research <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Forensic Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Correctly Analyze &... <input type="checkbox"/> Close to Correct Analysis <input type="checkbox"/> 1 or 2 sections incorrect
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Whole class

Daily Directions

Activity Day 2

Materials

- Copies of ***Mystery Solved: Press Release***

Direction Notes

1. Ask the class if anyone would like to share their theory of what happened and why or what the motive behind the actions were.
2. After a couple of students have shared out ideas, explain that the real life historical event will be explained today as you start a new unit of study.
3. Pass out the ***Mystery Solved: Press Release*** and read it aloud in class. Begin class discussion.

Day 2 (3) Activity—Alternative

Materials

- Copies of:
 - ***Breaking News Report***or
 - ***Front Page News***or
 - ***Text Message News Alert***

Follow the “Activity Day 2” directions above and then...

4. Pass out *Breaking News Report*/*Front Page News*/*Text Message News Alert*.
5. Read the directions from the top of the *given* sheet assignment aloud and have students begin the assignment.



Read or say



STUDENT DIRECTIONS






In order to solve a History Mystery you will need to have the following:

- A **Forensic Report**
- A **Mystery File**
- A pen or pencil
- And an Open Mind

Let's review all the sections of the **Forensic Report** and the **Case File** so that you are familiar with all the areas of the file and what you need to do.

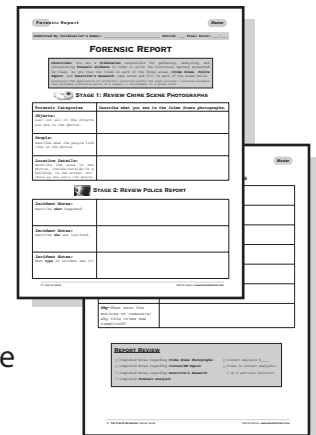
Case File Sections:

Each section will be labeled using a special symbol to distinguish each area or office it came from.

Crime Scene		If you are looking at notes and photos about the Crime Scene , they will be marked with the symbol of a <i>body outline and caution tape</i> .
Police Report		If you are looking at documents and photos with specific information about the victim's body, then these are part of the Police Report and they will be marked with a photo of a police officer writing a report
Detective's Research		And if you are looking at notes, documents, and/or photos from the Detective's Research , they will be marked with the symbol of the investigator's badge.

How do I fill out the **Forensics Report**?

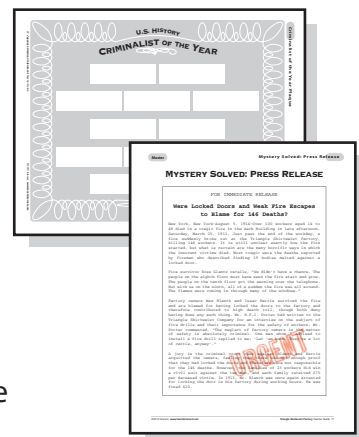
- After you view the items in each of the three areas (**Crime Scene**, **Police Report**, and **Detective's Research**) take notes and fill in each of the areas on the **Forensic Report**.
- Pay close attention to which office is reporting information and *match the symbols on your file with the symbol on your report* when you writing in your information.
- For example, if you see the symbol for the **Crime Scene** office on the top of the file page you may use that information to answer the questions about the **Crime Scene** in your **Forensics Report**.



The image shows a sample 'Forensic Report' form. It has a header section with 'Forensic Report' and 'STAGE 1: Review Crime Scene Photographs'. Below this are sections for 'Crime Scene', 'Police Report', and 'Detective's Research', each with a grid for notes. There is also a 'Report Review' section at the bottom.

How does this activity end?

- Once you have completed review the entire file and have filled out all of the sections of the **Forensics Report**, look over your answers before you turn it in to your teacher.
- The first student (or team) who is the most accurate with their analysis for this History's Mystery will become the **"Criminalist of the Month"** and receive a name plate on the class plaque.
- Finally, once the entire class has turned in their reports, you will read a **Mystery Solved: Press Release** that will tell you the background behind the case you just finished reviewing.



Keep in mind that as you review the items in the file, you are acting as if you are a **Criminalist** responsible for *gathering, analyzing, and interpreting* forensic evidence. These actions are key to helping you solve the historical mystery presented in class.

GOOD LUCK!

MYSTERY SOLVED: PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Were Locked Doors and Weak Fire Escapes to Blame for 146 Deaths?

New York, New York—August 5, 1914—Over 100 workers aged 14 to 48 died in a tragic fire in the Asch Building in late afternoon, Saturday, March 25, 1911. Just past the end of the workday, a fire suddenly broke out at the The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, killing 146 workers. It is still unclear exactly how the fire started, but what is certain are the many horrific ways in which the innocent victims died. Most tragic were the deaths reported by firemen who described finding 19 bodies melted against a locked door.

Fire survivor Rose Glantz recalls, "We didn't have a chance. The people on the eighth floor must have seen the fire start and grow. The people on the tenth floor got the warning over the telephone. But with us on the ninth, all of a sudden the fire was all around. The flames were coming in through many of the windows."

Factory owners Max Blanck and Isaac Harris survived the fire and are blamed for having locked the doors to the factory and therefore contributed to high death toll, though both deny having done any such thing. Mr. H.F.J. Porter had written to the Triangle Shirtwaist Company for an interview on the subject of fire drills and their importance for the safety of workers. Mr. Porter commented, "The neglect of factory owners in the matter of safety is absolutely criminal. One man whom I advised to install a fire drill replied to me: 'Let 'em burn. They're a lot of cattle, anyway'."

A jury in the criminal court case against Blanck and Harris acquitted the owners, feeling that there was not enough proof that they had locked the doors and therefore were not responsible for the 146 deaths. However, the families of 23 workers did win a civil suit against the two men, and each family received \$75 per deceased victim. In 1913, Mr. Blanck was once again arrested for locking the door in his factory during working hours. He was fined \$20.

Submitted By (Criminalist's Name): _____ Period: ____ Final Score: ____/____

FORENSIC REPORT

Directions: You are a **Criminalist** responsible for *gathering, analyzing, and interpreting forensic evidence* in order to solve the historical mystery presented in class. As you view the items in each of the three areas (**Crime Scene, Police Report, and Detective's Research**) take notes and fill in each of the areas below.

Forensics—"The application of scientific practices within the legal process." Locating evidence that provides conclusive proof of a suspect's involvement in a given crime.



STAGE 1: REVIEW CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHS

Forensic Categories	Describe what you see in the Crime Scene photographs.
Objects: List out all of the objects you see in the photos.	
People: Describe what the people look like in the photos.	
Location Details: Describe the area in the photos, inside/outside/in a building, in the street, etc. <i>*Notes any date and/or time details.</i>	



STAGE 2: REVIEW POLICE REPORT

Incident Notes: Describe what happened.	
Incident Notes: Describe who was involved.	
Incident Notes: What type of incident was it?	



STAGE 3: REVIEW DETECTIVE'S RESEARCH

Your Notes—Write down any and all information that you feel may be relevant or useful later to fill out Stage 4 of your report.



STAGE 4: FORENSIC ANALYSIS

What crime took place?	
Who is responsible for the crime? (<i>Perpetrators.</i>)	
Who were the <i>victims or targets</i> of the action?	
Where did the crime take place?	
When did the crime happen? (<i>Time/exact date when available.</i>)	
How was the crime committed? (<i>How was the crime carried out?</i>)	
Why —What were the <i>motives or reason(s)</i> why this crime was committed?	

REPORT REVIEW

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completed notes regarding Crime Scene Photographs | <input type="checkbox"/> Correct Analysis #_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completed notes regarding Coroner/ME Report | <input type="checkbox"/> Close to Correct Analysis— |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completed notes regarding Detective's Research | <i>1 or 2 sections incorrect</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Forensic Analysis | |

Texting Person's Name: _____ Period: ____ Final Score: ____/____

TEXT MESSAGE NEWS ALERT

(Summary)

Directions: In this activity you are acting as if you have been given the task of sharing what you just learned in class with all of your closest friends and family members via a text message. Use the basic information from the **Mystery Solved: Press Release** and your **Forensic Report** to fill out the information below.

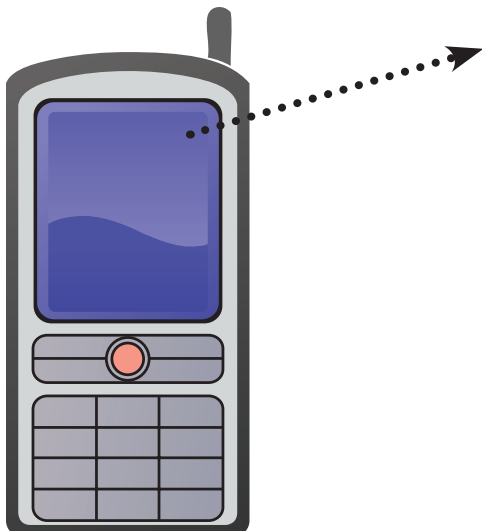
Step I. What information do you think is most important to share? (List 3 main ideas below)

1.

2.

3.

Step II. Now using 17 words or less, write in the screen on the right what your news alert text message would be about the event you just learned about in class.



Submitted By (Journalist's Name): _____ Period: ____ Final Score: ____/____

FRONT PAGE NEWS

(Essay)

Directions: You are now a newspaper journalist who has been given the front page article writing assignment. Take the basic information from the **Mystery Solved: Press Release** and write a news article about the event. Be sure to come up with a creative headline to catch the readers attention and to draw or cut and paste an image to accompany the article.

(Headline)

Date	Time	Location	Weather	Temperature	Humidity	Wind Speed	Wind Direction	Cloud Cover	Visibility	Air Quality	Soil Moisture	Plant Health	Animal Activity	Human Activity	Other Observations

[illegible]

[illegible]

Newspaper Editor Notes On Article Presented:

Reporting Group Members (Each Person's Name): _____

Period: _____

BREAKING NEWS REPORT

(Short Skit)

Directions: In this activity you are acting as if you are a television news station reporting on the information and crime you recently reviewed. Use the basic information from the **Mystery Solved: Press Release** and your Forensic Report to fill out the information below. Once you are finished filling this out please have your teacher review this sheet before you begin rehearsing your news report skit.

1. Television station you are reporting for: Channel _____

2. "On Location" reporter: _____

(This is one person reporting back to the news studio.)

3. "In Studio" anchor reporters: _____ & _____

(These are two individuals who will introduce the skit and introduce us to the "On Location" reporter for the report.)

4. Where is the "On Location" news report taking place?

"We are here live at: ☐ the courthouse ☐ the local police station ☐ the local History Museum ☐ the local school ☐ coroner's office ☐ other: _____, where it was recently discover that _____

We found some people who would talk to us about this event and this is what they had to say.

5. You must speak with at least two different people during your report.

Interview #1: (Name) _____ (Occupation) _____

• What information will they share?

Interview #1: (Name) _____ (Occupation) _____

• What information will they share?

Submitted By (Criminalist's Name): _____ Period: ____ Final Score: ____/____

CRIMINALIST THEORY

(Graphic Organizer)

Directions: You are a **Criminalist** responsible for creating a written summary of what you believe took place during the presented crime. Using your **Forensic Report**, write a short descriptive story of what you think happened noting what **Area** helps to prove your ideas.

Plot the crime, what do you think happened? Draw the sequence of events below:

```
graph LR; R1_1[ ] --> R1_2[ ]; R1_2 --> R1_3[ ]; R1_3 --> R2_1[ ]; R2_1 --> R2_2[ ]; R2_2 --> R2_3[ ]; R2_3 --> R3_1[ ]; R3_1 --> R3_2[ ]; R3_2 --> R3_3[ ]; R3_3 --> Bottom[ ]
```

Submitted By (Criminalist's Name): _____ Period: ____ Final Score: ____/____

CRIMINALIST THEORY

(Essay)

Directions: You are a **Criminalist** responsible for creating a written summary of what you believe took place during the presented crime. Using your **Forensic Report**, write a short descriptive story of what you think happened noting what Area helps to prove your ideas. Write a short story of what you think happened leading up to, during, and as a result of this crime. Be sure to note what **Area** helps to support your ideas.

For example, "The photograph of the abandoned glove (from the **Crime Scene Area**) is an excellent piece of evidence to help support my theory that the perpetrator was trying to cover his tracks and not get caught."

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]

CRIMINALIST OF THE YEAR

CRIMINALIST OF THE YEAR NAME PLATES

Directions: Type in or write in the names and dates of your top student criminalists who will be honored on the plaque.

NAME:**MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:****NAME:****MONTH:**

TEACHER FEEDBACK FORM

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Interact unit: _____

Comments: _____

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Name of student: _____ (print)

Age of student: _____ (print)

Parent or guardian: _____ (print)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Address:

Phone: _____

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