

Michael Beschloss, an American historian and *New York Times* contributor, said that “David Von Drehle is a superb writer, and with this gripping book he re-creates a famous tragedy that, almost a century later, still affects American society. With its vivid character and brisk narrative, *Triangle* makes you feel as if you were there and shows why we must all know this horrific story”. As Beschloss states in his review of *Triangle: The Fire that Changed America*, David Von Drehle has written a novel that truly shows the events of the Triangle shirtwaist factory fire in an innovative way. Through his use of imagery, Von Drehle portrays the Triangle fire in a compelling and riveting manner.

The passage to the roof was hellish. Flames in the enclosed airshaft had shattered the windows in the Greene Street stairwell...To reach open air, survivors had to skirt the growing fire on the tenth floor, start up the stairs through the flames licking, poking, and leaping in the stairway windows, and continue climbing even as their clothing and hair began to burn. Workers reached the roof gasping, coughing, and tearing at their coats and hats and scarves.

Then, when they had stopped smoldering, the escapees looked up to see a terribly dispiriting sight.

To the south and the east, there was fresh air, a wide vista-and a 130-foot drop to the pavement. To the north and west two adjoining buildings represented safety and life and future...These two havens loomed like contemptuous battleships beside a leaky little lifeboat. (Von Drehle 132)

In this passage, Von Drehle describes the frightening experience of the employees who attempted to escape from the burning building. But he does not simply tell what happened during the fire. Von Drehle uses imagery to make the reader visualize the experience. Phrases such as “Workers reached the roof gasping, coughing, and tearing at their coats and hats and scarves,” automatically creates a picture in the reader’s mind of the terror the employees endured and how difficult it was to be in their situation. In this passage, Von Drehle also uses personification as a way to create a picture for the reader of how dangerous the fire was: “...start up the stairs through the flames licking, poking, and leaping in the stairway windows.” By giving human characteristics to the fire, it allows the reader to have a better understanding of the fire and what the employees were facing. Another literary device utilized by Von Drehle in this passage is the metaphor “These two safe havens loomed like contemptuous battleships beside a leaky little lifeboat.” This metaphor gives something many readers have a picture of in their mind, and is an excellent way to portray the dismay of the escapees when they realized they had escaped the fire only to be trapped on the roof.

In only one passage of *Triangle*, Von Drehle uses three literary devices to give the reader an idea of what it was like to be trapped in the building and the fear the employees had as they tried to escape. The entire novel is filled with similar passages containing detailed descriptions of the factory and those who worked there and witnessed the fire. These descriptions help the reader to better understand the fire and the impact it had in American society. Because of his

brilliant usage of literary devices throughout the novel, Von Drehle is deserving of the Pulitzer Prize for his novel *Triangle: The Fire that Changed America*.