

A Close Reading of *The Great Fire* by Jim Murphy (excerpt)

Sample Common Core Lesson Set, updated with Mini-Assessment

by Lyn Cannaday, high school social studies teacher, with Student Achievement Partners

GRADE LEVEL: 6th Grade

TEXT TYPE: Non-fiction/informational

COURSES: ELA or social studies

LENGTH: Four to five days (variation includes time for optional assessment)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

RI.6.1; RI.6.2; RI.6.3; RI.6.4; RI.6.5; RI.6.6; RI.6.8; W.6.1, RH.6-8.7;

RI.6.9 is addressed through an optional homework task.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will learn about the Great Fire of Chicago and develop college- and career-ready reading skills by engaging in a close reading with text-dependent tasks and questions.

FLEXIBILITY:

Use professional judgment to adapt the recommended timing and scaffolds to meet student needs. Text-dependent questions may be answered as a whole class, in small groups, or individually, and either orally or in writing, as appropriate. Choices should promote rigorous student discussion.

ASSESSMENT:

Seven text-dependent reading questions aligned to the CCSS

Annotated answer key for teachers included

Lesson Set Summary

Day One

Peg-leg Sullivan and the O’Leary Family

- Students silently and independently read the entire excerpt from the *The Great Fire*¹.
- Teacher reads the entire excerpt aloud while students follow along.²
- Students answer text-dependent questions regarding the first eight paragraphs, which dramatize the story of Chicago citizens in the hours leading up to the blaze.

Day Two

A City Ready to Burn

- Students are re-acquainted with paragraphs nine through thirteen of the text.³
- Students answer text-dependent questions regarding these paragraphs, which guide them in understanding the conditions that made Chicago in the 1870’s susceptible to a massive fire.

Day Three

The Fire Spreads

- Students are re-acquainted with the final paragraphs of the text (fourteen and fifteen).
- Students answer text-dependent questions regarding these paragraphs, which explain factors relating to the spread of the fire.
- Students are guided to make inferences from data and from a map in the text.

Day Four

Culminating Writing Assignment

- Students brainstorm about fire safety laws in preparation for the culminating writing assignment.
- Students write an essay on public safety, using evidence from the text.
- Optional: Teacher may assign an additional essay, in class or for homework, comparing differing points of view on the fire.

Day Five

(optional)

Mini-Assessment⁴

- Students reread a portion of the original excerpt used for instruction and independently answer seven text-dependent questions that illustrate CCSS assessment expectations.

¹ Originally published in New York: Scholastic Inc., 1995.

² Teachers may choose to reverse the order of read-aloud and independent reading, based on student needs.

³ Teachers may choose to have students reread independently, reread in groups, or listen to text read aloud, based on student needs.

⁴ We expect the mini-assessment to take students about 25 minutes to complete, but it is encouraged that students take the time that they need to read closely.

Table of Contents

Lesson Set Summary	2
Table of Contents.....	3
The Text: Excerpt from <i>The Great Fire</i> by Jim Murphy.....	4
Day One: Annotated Lesson Plan – Peg-leg Sullivan and the O’Leary Family.....	8
Day Two: Annotated Lesson Plan – A City Ready to Burn	11
Day Three: Annotated Lesson Plan – The Fire Spreads	14
Day Four: Annotated Lesson Plan – Culminating Writing Assignment.....	18
Day Five: Mini-Assessment.....	24
Appendix A: Photograph of Chicago	34
Appendix B: Contemporary Articles.....	35
Appendix C: Comprehensive Vocabulary List	40
Appendix D: Common Core State Standards Addressed by This Exemplar	45
Appendix E: How the Grade Level of <i>The Great Fire</i> Was Determined	46
Appendix F: Explanation of Tasks Used to Teach Close Reading	48
Appendix G: Additional Resources for Common Core Implementation.....	49

The Text: Excerpt from *The Great Fire* by Jim Murphy

1 It was Sunday and an **unusually** warm evening for October eighth, so Daniel “Peg Leg” Sullivan left his **stifling** little house in the west side of Chicago and went to visit neighbors. One of his stops was at the shingled **cottage** of Patrick and Catherine O’Leary. The one-legged Sullivan remembered getting to the O’Learys’ house at around eight o’clock, but left after only a few minutes because the O’Leary family was already in bed. Both Patrick and Catherine had to be up very early in the morning: he to set off for his job as a **laborer**; she to milk their five cows and then deliver the milk to the neighbors.

-materials added to the top of a house to make it waterproof

2 Sullivan **ambled** down the stretch of land between the O’Learys’ and their neighbor, crossed the street, and sat down on the wooden sidewalk in front of Thomas White’s house. After adjusting his wooden leg to make himself comfortable, he leaned back against White’s fence to enjoy the night.

3 The wind coming off the prairie had been strong all day, sometimes **gusting** wildly, and leaves **scuttled** along the streets; the sound of laughter and **fiddle** music **drifted** through the night. A party was going on at the McLaughlins’ to celebrate the arrival of a relative from Ireland. Another neighbor, Dennis Rogan, dropped by the O’Learys’ at eight-thirty, but he, too, left when he heard the family was in bed.

-large area of grassland that is generally flat

4 Fifteen minutes later, Sullivan decided to go home. As the driver of a wagon, he would need every ounce of strength come morning. It was while pushing himself up that Sullivan first saw the fire—a single **tongue** of flame shooting out the side of the O’Leary’s barn

5 Sullivan didn’t hesitate a second. “FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!” he shouted as loud as he could. Running **clumsily** across the dirt street, Sullivan made his way directly to the barn. There was no time to stop for help. The building was already burning **fiercely** and he knew that in addition to five cows, the O’Learys had a calf and a horse in there.

6 The barn’s loft held over three **tons** of timothy hay, delivered earlier that day. Flames from the burning hay pushed against the roof and **beams**, almost as if they were struggling to break free. A shower of burning **embers** greeted Sullivan as he entered the building.

-Area above the main barn

7 He untied the ropes of the cows, but the **frightened** animals did not move. On the other side of the barn, another cow and the horse were tied to the wall, **straining** get loose. Sullivan took a step toward them, then realized that the fire had gotten around behind him and might cut off any chance of **escape** in a matter of seconds. The heat was **fiercely intense** and **blinding**, and in his rush to **flee**, Sullivan slipped on the uneven floorboards and fell with a **thud**.

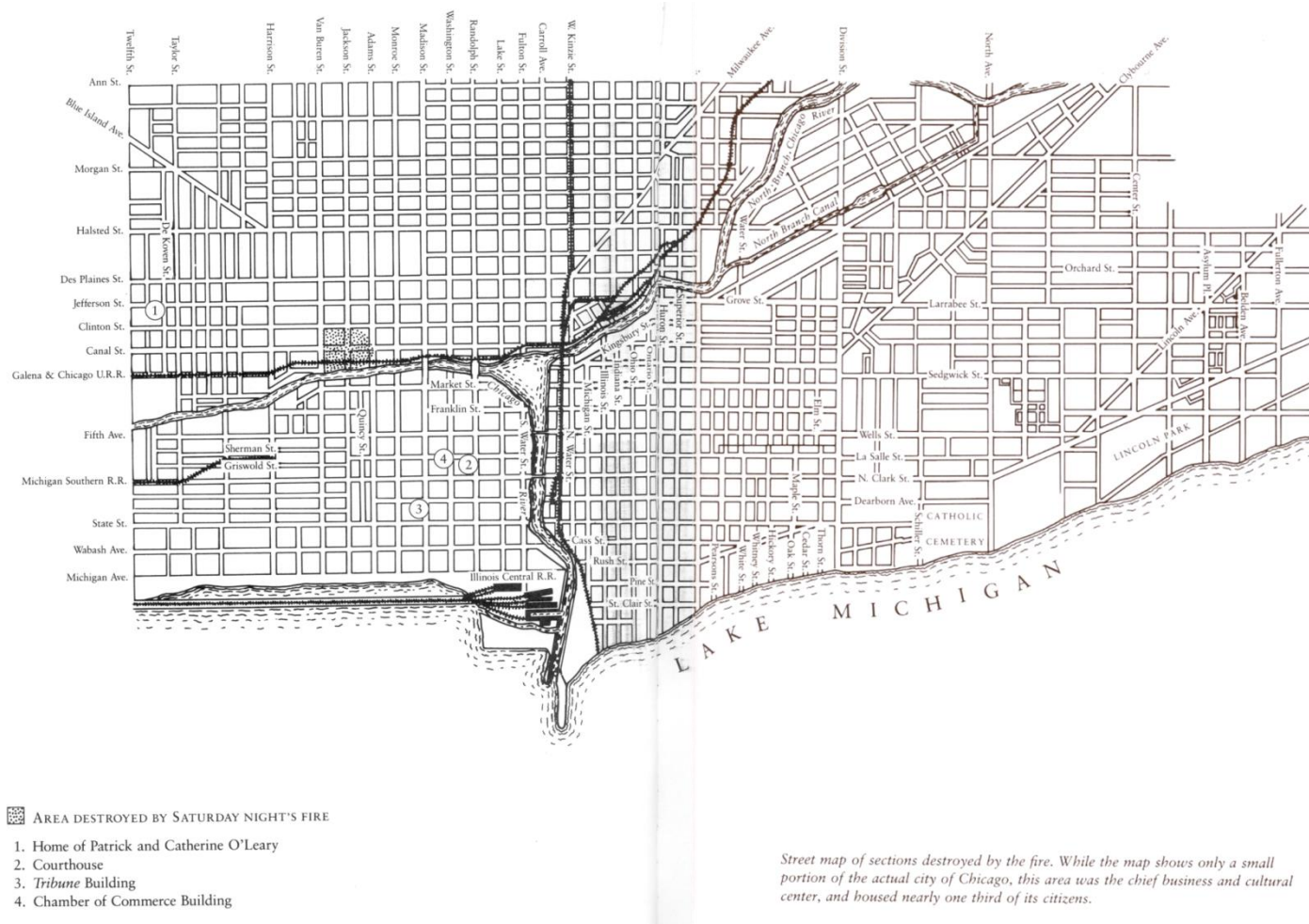
8 He **struggled** to get up and, as he did, Sullivan discovered that his wooden leg had gotten stuck between two boards and came off. Instead of **panicking**, he began hopping toward where he thought the door was. Luck was with him. He had gone a few feet when the O’Learys’ calf bumped into him, and Sullivan was able to throw his arms around its neck. Together, man and calf **managed** to find the door and safety, both **frightened**, both badly **singed**.

- 9 A shed attached to the barn was already **engulfed** by flames. It **contained** two **tons** of coal for the winter and a large **supply** of kindling wood. Fire **ran along** the dry grass and leaves, and **took hold** of a neighbor's fence. The heat from the burning barn, shed, and fence was so hot that the O'Learys' house, forty feet away, began to **smolder**. Neighbors rushed from their homes, many carrying buckets or pots of water. The sound of music and merrymaking stopped **abruptly**, replaced by the shout of "FIRE!". It would be a **warning cry** heard thousands of times during the next thirty-one hours.
- 10 Chicago in 1871 was a city ready to burn. The city **boasted** having 59,500 buildings, many of them—such as the Courthouse and the Tribune Building—large and ornately decorated. The trouble was that about two-thirds of all these **structures** were made **entirely** of wood. Many of the **remaining** buildings (even the ones proclaimed to be "fireproof") looked **solid**, but were actually jerrybuilt affairs; the stone or brick **exteriors** hid wooden **frames** and floors, all topped with highly flammable **tar** or **shingle roofs**. It was also a common practice to **disguise** wood as another kind of building material. The fancy exterior decorations on just about every building were carved from wood, then painted to look like stone or **marble**. Most churches had steeples that appeared to be **solid** from the street, but a closer **inspection** would **reveal** a wooden **framework** covered with **cleverly** painted copper or tin.
- 11 The situation was worst in the middle-class and poorer **districts**. **Lot sizes** were small, and owners usually filled them up with **cottages**, barns, sheds, and outhouses—all made of fast-burning wood, naturally. Because both Patrick and Catherine O'Leary worked, they were able to put a large **addition** on their **cottage** **despite** a **lot** size of just 25 by 100 feet. **Interspersed** in these **residential** areas were a **variety** of businesses—paint factories, lumberyards, distilleries, gasworks, mills, furniture manufacturers, warehouses, and coal **distributors**.
- 12 Wealthier **districts** were by no means free of fire **hazards**. Stately stone and brick homes had wood **interiors**, and stood side by side with smaller wood-frame houses. Wooden stables and other storage buildings were common, and trees **lined** the streets and filled the yards.
- 13 The links between richer and poorer sections went beyond the materials used for construction or the way buildings were **crammed** together. Chicago had been built largely on **soggy marshland** that flooded every time it rained. As the years passed and the town developed, a quick solution to the water and mud problem was needed. The answer was to make the roads and sidewalks out of wood and **elevate** them above the waterline, in some places by several feet. On the day the fire started, over 55 miles of pine-block streets and 600 miles of wooden sidewalks **bound** the 23,000 acres of the city in a **highly combustible knot**.
- small pieces of easy to burn wood used to start a fire
 - being happy (typically during a celebration or party)
 - fancy or elaborate
 - built poorly or quickly, especially to save money
 - able to burn
 - outside
 - a tall structure on the top of a church
 - a shed-like building that covers a deep hole used for going to the bathroom
 - where alcohol is made
 - where flour is made
 - majestic or elegant

- 14 Fires were common in all cities back then, and Chicago was no **exception**. In 1863 there had been 186 reported fires in Chicago; the number had risen to 515 by 1868. Records for 1870 **indicate** that fire-fighting companies responded to nearly 600 alarms. The next year saw even more fires spring up, mainly because the summer had been **unusually** dry. Between July and October only a few scattered showers had taken place and these did not produce much water at all. Trees **drooped** in the **unrelenting** summer sun; grass and leaves dried out. By October, as many as six fires were breaking out every day. On Saturday the seventh, the night before the Great Fire, a **blaze** destroyed four blocks and took over sixteen hours to control. What made Sunday the eighth different and particularly dangerous was the **steady** wind blowing in from the southwest.
- 15 It was this **gusting, swirling** wind that **drove** the flames from the O'Learys' barn into neighboring yards. To the east, a fence and shed of Jim Dalton's went up in flames; to the west, a barn **smoldered** for a few minutes, then **flared** up into a thousand yellow-orange fingers. Dennis Rogan had heard Sullivan's **initial** shouts about a fire and returned. He forced open the door to the O'Learys' house and called for them to wake up.

Used by permission of Scholastic Inc.

Street Map of the Sections of Chicago Destroyed by the Fire



Day One: Annotated Lesson Plan – Peg-leg Sullivan and the O’Leary Family

Initial reading of full text, plus close study of paragraphs 1-8

Summary of Activities

1. Teacher shares the passage with minimal commentary and **students read the passage independently**. (10 – 15 minutes, or more, as needed)⁵
2. Teacher or a skillful reader then **reads the passage out loud** to the class, as students follow along in the text. While reading teacher should quickly clarify key vocabulary as needed, without interrupting the flow of reading. (10 - 15 minutes)
3. Teacher asks the class to **discuss a series of text-dependent questions** and perform targeted tasks about the passage, with answers in the form of notes, annotations to the text, or more formal responses, based on student learning needs. (20– 30 minutes)

Directions for Teachers

(apply to all lessons in lesson set)

1. **Distribute the passage and have students read it independently.**
Avoid giving any background context or instructional guidance at the outset of the lesson, other than drawing students’ attention to the words for which definitions are provided in the margins (underlined in the text). Instead, ask students to attempt to read the text silently and independently. This close reading approach is critical to cultivating independence and creating a culture of close reading that students initially grapple with rich texts like Murphy’s without the aid of prefatory material, extensive notes, or even teacher explanations. It forces students to rely exclusively on the text instead of privileging background knowledge and helps level the playing field for all students as they seek to comprehend Murphy’s prose.
2. **Read the passage out loud to the class as students follow along in the text.**
Asking students to listen to *The Great Fire* exposes them a second time to the rhythms and meaning of Murphy’s language before they begin their own close reading of the passage. Reading clearly and carefully will allow students to follow Murphy’s narrative, and reading out loud with students following along improves fluency while offering all students access to this complex text. Accurate and skillful modeling of the reading provides students who may be dysfluent with accurate pronunciations and syntactic patterns of English. **Teachers may choose to reverse the order of independent reading and read-aloud to provide extra support for struggling readers.**
3. **Ask the class to discuss the set of text-dependent guided questions and perform targeted tasks about the passage, with answers in the form of notes, annotations to the text, or more formal responses, based on student learning needs.**
As students move through these questions and reread Murphy’s *The Great Fire*, be sure to check for and reinforce their understanding of academic vocabulary in the corresponding text. At times, the questions themselves may focus on academic vocabulary. The meaning of **boldfaced** words may be inferred from context. See Appendix D for a complete and vocabulary list.

⁵ The order of items one and two may be reversed, based on student needs.

Text Under Consideration	Text-dependent Questions for Student Discussion
<p>(1) It was Sunday and an unusually warm evening for October eighth, so Daniel “Peg Leg” Sullivan left his stifling little house in the west side of Chicago and went to visit neighbors. One of his stops was at the <u>shingled</u> cottage of Patrick and Catherine O’Leary. The one-legged Sullivan remembered getting to the O’Learys’ house at around eight o’clock, but left after only a few minutes because the O’Leary family was already in bed. Both Patrick and Catherine had to be up very early in the morning: he to set off for his job as a laborer; she to milk their five cows and then deliver the milk to the neighbors.</p> <p>(2) Sullivan ambled down the stretch of land between the O’ Learys’ and their neighbor, crossed the street, and sat down on the wooden sidewalk in front of Thomas White’s house. After adjusting his wooden leg to make himself comfortable, he leaned back against White’s fence to enjoy the night.</p> <p>(3) The wind coming off the <u>prairie</u> had been strong all day, sometimes gusting wildly, and leaves scuttled along the streets; the sound of laughter and fiddle music drifted through the night. A party was going on at the McLaughlins’ to celebrate the arrival of a relative from Ireland. Another neighbor, Dennis Rogan, dropped by the O’Learys’ at eight-thirty, but he, too, left when he heard the family was in bed.</p> <p>(4) Fifteen minutes later, Sullivan decided to go home. As the driver of a wagon, he would need every ounce of strength come morning. It was while pushing himself up that Sullivan first saw the fire—a single tongue of flame shooting out the side of the O’Leary’s barn.</p> <p>(5) Sullivan didn’t hesitate a second. “FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!” he shouted as loud as he could. Running clumsily across the dirt street, Sullivan made</p>	<p>1. The title of the text is <i>The Great Fire</i>; in the first sentence, what words does Murphy use to hint at the tragedy to come?</p> <p><i>Students should notice that the evening is “unusually warm” and the house is described as “stifling.” The meaning of “stifling” can be inferred using the details about the temperature and Sullivan’s decision to go out for a visit.</i></p> <p>2. What tone is the author creating by choosing “amble” and “stretch” and “leaned back”? Why does the author create this feeling or mood when the bulk of the book is about the disaster?</p> <p><i>All these verbs have a sense of relaxation and a tranquil tone which contrasts against the disaster that is coming. The author is emphasizing that disasters strike when people are not expecting it.</i></p> <p>3. In paragraphs 1-3, what details does the author use to help the reader build a personal connection to the historical figures in the story?</p> <p><i>Murphy reveals that the O’Learys are regular working folks (laborer, deliverer of milk to the neighbors.) It is endearing that Sullivan has only one leg and a nickname, Peg Leg. The neighbors stop by to talk to each other and the McLaughlins throw a party to celebrate a recently-arrived relative. Murphy presents a picture of an area where people are friendly and care about each other. (Note: in the optional homework this is contrasted against the POV of a reporter at the time of the fire.)</i></p> <p>4. Sullivan has to shout, “FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!” From this detail, what can the reader infer about the technology in Chicago at the time?</p>

his way directly to the barn. There was no time to stop for help. The building was already burning **fiercely** and he knew that in addition to five cows, the O'Learys had a calf and a horse in there.

(6) The barn's **loft** held over three **tons** of timothy hay, delivered earlier that day. Flames from the burning hay pushed against the roof and **beams**, almost as if they were struggling to break free. A shower of burning **embers** greeted Sullivan as he entered the building.

(7) He untied the ropes of the cows, but the **frightened** animals did not move. On the other side of the barn, another cow and the horse were tied to the wall, **straining** get loose. Sullivan took a step toward them, then realized that the fire had gotten around behind him and might cut off any chance of **escape** in a matter of seconds. The heat was **fiercely intense** and **blinding**, and in his rush to **flee**, Sullivan slipped on the uneven floorboards and fell with a **thud**.

(8) He **struggled** to get up and, as he did, Sullivan discovered that his wooden leg had gotten stuck between two boards and came off. Instead of **panicking**, he began hopping toward where he thought the door was. Luck was with him. He had gone a few feet when the O'Learys' calf bumped into him, and Sullivan was able to throw his arms around its neck. Together, man and calf **managed** to find the door and safety, both **frightened**, both badly **singed**.

They had no telephones or automatic fire alarms that would allow someone to quickly get ahold of the fire department.

5. The author states, "The barn's loft held over three tons of timothy hay." What can the reader infer about how this detail could impact the development of The Great Fire?

Three tons is a huge amount of fuel to grow a fire. Murphy has already mentioned that the wind was "strong and gusting wildly" that night. If the flames "break free" as Murphy suggests, the winds could carry burning hay in every direction.

6. Sullivan's behavior in paragraphs 4-6 suggests many things about his personality. What characteristics can be attributed to Sullivan based on evidence from these three paragraphs?

Sullivan ran into a burning barn through a "shower of burning embers," suggesting he is brave. He cares about saving his neighbors' animals, showing him to be compassionate. When he loses his leg in the barn he grabs onto the calf, showing that he is a calm, quick thinker even under pressure.

7. Sullivan knew the O'Learys had several animals in the barn. Which of them was he able to rescue from the fire? Which were lost?

Sullivan "knew that in addition to five cows, the O'Learys had a calf and a horse in there." Of those animals, Sullivan only saved the calf (or, rather, the calf saved him.) He untied the cows, "but the frightened animals did not move." And he had to turn around and flee the barn before he could untie the horse and cow tied to the far wall of the barn.

Day Two: Annotated Lesson Plan – A City Ready to Burn

Close study of paragraphs 9-13

Summary of Activities

1. Teacher indicates the text section under discussion today, and **students reread** it silently or in groups. (5 minutes)⁶
2. Teacher or a skillful reader then **reads the subsection out loud** to the class as students follow along in the text. More vocabulary may be discussed during this reading. (5 – 10 minutes)⁷
3. Teacher asks the class to **discuss text-dependent questions** and perform targeted tasks about the passage, with answers in the form of notes, annotations to the text, or more formal responses as appropriate (35 - 40 minutes)

⁶ The order of items one and two may be reversed, based on student needs.

⁷ Teachers may consider having students reread in groups, or pairs as an alternative to listening to the text read aloud, based on student needs.

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions for Students
<p>(9) A shed attached to the barn was already engulfed by flames. It contained two tons of coal for the winter and a large supply of <u>kindling</u> wood. Fire ran along the dry grass and leaves, and took hold of a neighbor's fence. The heat from the burning barn, shed, and fence was so hot that the O'Learys' house, forty feet away, began to smolder. Neighbors rushed from their homes, many carrying buckets or pots of water. The sound of music and <u>merrymaking</u> stopped abruptly, replaced by the shout of "FIRE!". It would be a warning cry heard thousands of times during the next thirty-one hours.</p> <p>(10) Chicago in 1871 was a city ready to burn. The city boasted having 59,500 buildings, many of them—such as the Courthouse and the Tribune Building—large and <u>ornately</u> decorated. The trouble was that about two-thirds of all these structures were made entirely of wood. Many of the remaining buildings (even the ones proclaimed to be "fireproof") looked solid, but were actually <u>jerrybuilt</u> affairs; the stone or brick exteriors hid wooden frames and floors, all topped with highly <u>flammable</u> tar or shingle roofs. It was also a common practice to disguise wood as another kind of building material. The fancy <u>exterior</u> decorations on just about every building were carved from wood, then painted to look like stone or marble. Most churches had <u>steeple</u>s that appeared to be solid from the street, but a closer inspection would reveal a wooden framework covered with cleverly painted copper or tin.</p> <p>(11) The situation was worst in the middle-class and poorer districts. Lot sizes were small, and owners usually filled them up with cottages, barns, sheds, and <u>outhouses</u>—all made of fast-burning</p>	<p>1. Coal and kindling wood are both used to start and stoke fires because they burn so quickly and easily. What detail in paragraph 9 reinforces the tremendous intensity that these two substances add to the fire?</p> <p><i>"The O'Leary house, forty feet away, began to smolder."</i></p> <p>2. What evidence does the author give to back up his argument that Chicago is a city "ready to burn?"</p> <p><i>In paragraph 10, Murphy discusses the use (or overuse) of wood as a building material in 1870's Chicago.</i></p> <p>3. The author includes a list of businesses in paragraph 11. How do these businesses contribute to the idea that Chicago is "ready to burn?" How do the locations of these businesses increase the human element of the tragedy?</p> <p><i>All of these businesses are "fire hazards" and burn both quickly and dangerously. Lumber, gas, furniture, and coal are all primary sources of fuel for a fire. Flour burns, paint gives off fumes as it burns, and warehouses might have more flammable material in them. The businesses are mixed into the same area with houses where middle-class and poor people live and sleep.</i></p> <p>4. How are the dangers in the wealthier neighborhoods different or similar to the fire risks for those who lived in poorer areas?</p>

wood, naturally. Because both Patrick and Catherine O’Leary worked, they were able to put a large **addition** on their **cottage** **despite** a **lot** size of just 25 by 100 feet. **Interspersed** in these **residential** areas were a **variety** of businesses—paint factories, lumberyards, distilleries, gasworks, mills, furniture manufacturers, warehouses, and coal **distributors**.

(12) Wealthier **districts** were by no means free of fire **hazards**. Stately stone and brick homes had wood **interiors**, and stood side by side with smaller wood-frame houses. Wooden stables and other storage buildings were common, and trees **lined** the streets and filled the yards.

(13) The links between richer and poorer sections went beyond the materials used for construction or the way buildings were **crammed** together. Chicago had been built largely on **soggy marshland** that flooded every time it rained. As the years passed and the town developed, a quick solution to the water and mud problem was needed. The answer was to make the roads and sidewalks out of wood and **elevate** them above the waterline, in some places by several feet. On the day the fire started, over 55 miles of pine-block streets and 600 miles of wooden sidewalks **bound** the 23,000 acres of the city in a **highly combustible knot**.

The wealthy areas did not have dangerous businesses, and the buildings were more likely to be built out of stone or brick. However, buildings still had wood interiors, are still standing close together and are surrounded by other flammable structures.

5. A metaphor is a form of figurative language used to compare two things that are not literally related. Murphy calls Chicago a “highly combustible knot.” Why does he make this comparison? What is he specifically referring to?

The metaphor refers to the effect of city planners creating roads and streets out of wood to keep the city above the soggy marsh on which it was built. Roads and sidewalks, like the strings of a knot, twist and turn through each other creating a tangled mess of pathways for fire.

Sidebars for Day Two

If students are intrigued to see what Chicago looked like at the time of the fire, teachers can direct them to Appendix A and/or this image from the [University of Chicago](#).

Students often disregard numbers or have no way to understand them in their own context. Teachers might consider translating the numbers in paragraph 13 into easily understood references to local landmarks.

Day Three: Annotated Lesson Plan – The Fire Spreads

Close study of paragraphs 14-15

Summary of Activities

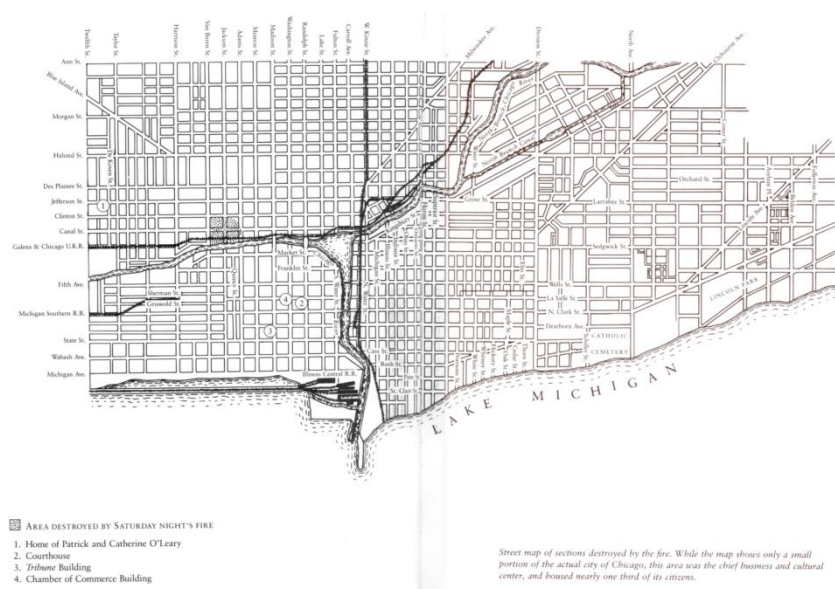
1. Teacher indicates the texts section under discussion today, and **students reread** it silently or in groups (5 minutes)⁸
2. Teacher or a skillful reader then **reads the subsection out loud** to the class as students follow along in the text. More vocabulary may be discussed during this reading. (5 – 10 minutes)⁹
3. Teacher asks the class to **discuss text-dependent questions** and perform targeted tasks about the passage, with answers in the form of notes, annotations to the text, or more formal responses as appropriate (30 - 35 minutes)

⁸ The order of items one and two may be reversed, based on student needs.

⁹ Teachers may consider having students reread in groups, or pairs as an alternative to listening to the text read aloud, based on student needs.

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions for Students
<p>(14) Fires were common in all cities back then, and Chicago was no exception. In 1863 there had been 186 reported fires in Chicago; the number had risen to 515 by 1868. Records for 1870 indicate that fire-fighting companies responded to nearly 600 alarms. The next year saw even more fires spring up, mainly because the summer had been unusually dry. Between July and October only a few scattered showers had taken place and these did not produce much water at all. Trees drooped in the unrelenting summer sun; grass and leaves dried out. By October, as many as six fires were breaking out every day. On Saturday the seventh, the night before the Great Fire, a blaze destroyed four blocks and took over sixteen hours to control. What made Sunday the eighth different and particularly dangerous was the steady wind blowing in from the southwest.</p> <p>(15) It was this gusting, swirling wind that drove the flames from the O’Learys’ barn into neighboring yards. To the east, a fence and shed of Jim Dalton’s went up in flames; to the west, a barn smoldered for a few minutes, then flared up into a thousand yellow-orange fingers. Dennis Rogan had heard Sullivan’s initial shouts about a fire and returned. He forced open the door to the O’Learys’ house and called for them to wake up.</p>	<p>1. What pattern emerges when you look at how many fires break out each year from 1863 to 1870? What does this suggest about what people should have known in 1871?</p> <p><i>The number of fires is growing at an alarming rate. The people in the city should have seen that with the number of fires growing so fast that the chances of a truly large fire were growing every day. Teachers might want to share the graph below (see Sidebar for Day Three) with students to help them grasp the pattern between 1863 and 1871.</i></p> <p>2. The author previously had personified the fire, describing it as “struggling to break free” and “greet[ing] Sullivan”, and now as having “a thousand yellow-orange fingers.” What is the author’s purpose in using this language?</p> <p><i>The author wants to suggest that the fire has a life of its own, and the people caught in the fire feel almost as if the fire is chasing them. The fire has become not just a physical force but an enemy to fight.</i></p> <p>If students struggle, the teacher might ask more guided questions: What human trait or traits might the fire have? Or, for students who continue to struggle, the question could be this explicit: Does the fire have the personality of a human, the power of a human or the shape of a human? Why do you say that? What text supports your answer?</p>

Street Map of the Sections of Chicago Destroyed by the Fire



3. Ask students to note the spread of the fire from Saturday to Sunday. The area destroyed from Saturday's fire is already shaded on the map. On Sunday the fire spread east to Michigan Avenue and north to Fullerton Avenue, but not west of Jefferson Street or south of DeKoven. Ask students to mark the extent of the Great Fire on the map using a highlighter or colored pencil.

Looking at the map and reading the text, what conditions and geographic limitations prevented the fire from spreading farther than it did? If the wind had been blowing off of Lake Michigan rather than towards it, what would have been the effect of the fire?

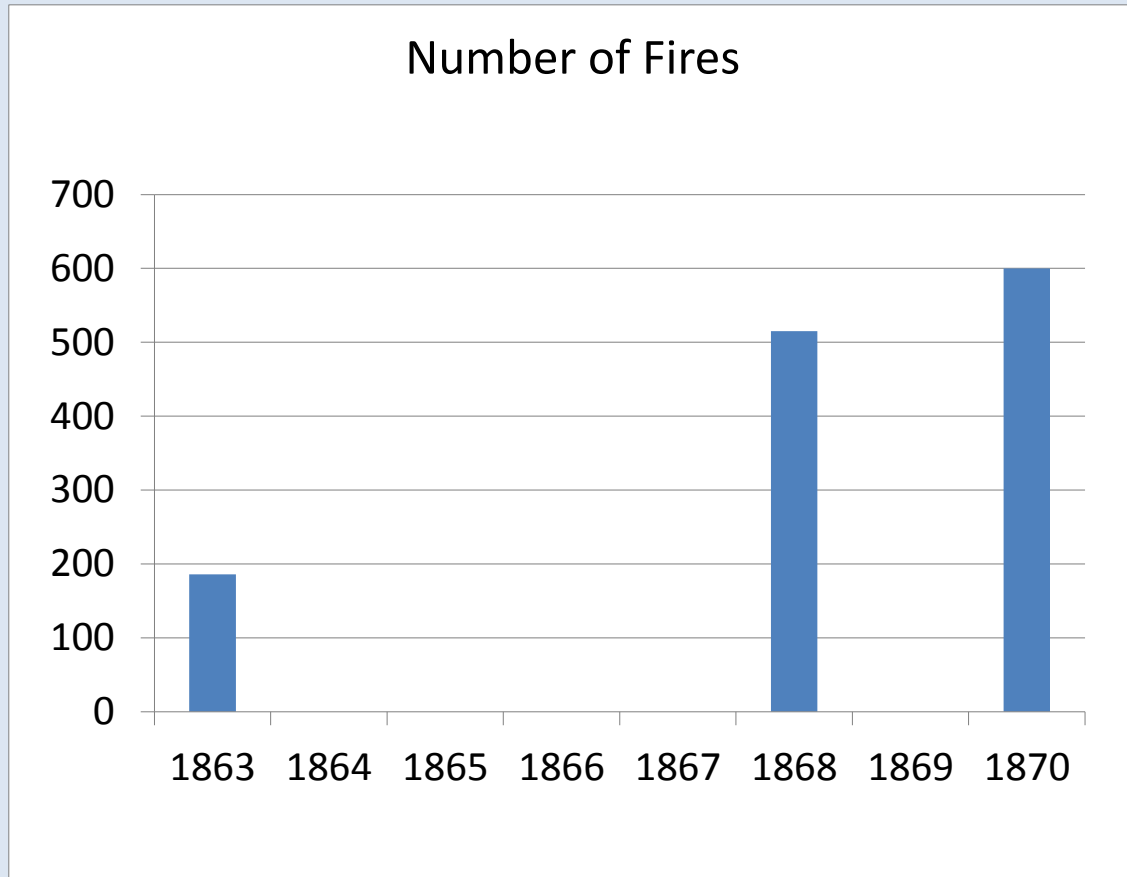
The wind coming from the southwest pushed the fire toward Lake Michigan, so south and west were largely protected by the winds, and the fire was stopped on the east by the lake itself. If the wind had changed direction and pushed the fire west, there wouldn't have been a lake to help contain the flames.

4. Despite the fact that it was in the middle of the fire, Lincoln Park never burned. Using the map and reading the text, what inferences can you draw as to reasons why a park might not have burned?

The city burned because streets and houses were pushed close together. Looking at the map, few streets exist in the park. The park also would have lacked the houses and sheds that made the rest of the city burn so quickly.

Sidebar for Day Three

Today's text contains numbers which students may ignore, particularly if they are inexperienced readers who fail to understand the importance of numbers to scientific and historical texts. The graph below, based on information in paragraph 14, gives an example of way to help students more quickly identify the pattern.



Day Four: Annotated Lesson Plan – Culminating Writing Assignment

Summary of Activities

1. Teacher introduces and **explains the culminating writing assignment**. (5 minutes)
2. **Students brainstorm** ideas for the essay in small groups. (10 – 15 minutes)
3. **Students independently write** essays based on the final prompt. (25 – 30 minutes)
4. **Optional:** Teachers may have students complete an **evidence collection chart**, to gather and organize evidence from the text, to use in the culminating writing assignment.
5. **Optional:** Teacher may assign an additional essay, either in-class or for homework.

Rationale for Day Four Activities - shifting to the final writing assignment:

Students have now studied the text multiple times. Having done so, they now all share the same background information required for writing, and no students are privileged due to previously having more detailed background knowledge. Guided practice with a map was provided on Day Three for the same reason. When students are asked to write in reference to a text before they have a firm understanding of it, less fluent readers are at a disadvantage. Under those conditions, inadequate written responses may reflect a lack of *reading* skills rather than any deficiency in *writing* skills. In such cases it would be almost impossible for a teacher to diagnose the source of the problem. Students who have moved through this piece and then move on to the writing activities that follow here should have a firm grasp on the text and the ideas the author intended to communicate.

Argumentative Writing Assignment

Instructions for Teachers:

This writing task is intended to be completed over several writing sessions. The first is a group brainstorming/note-taking session regarding the emergence and importance of fire codes (approximately 10 - 15 minutes). The information for group discussion should be prominently displayed for the class, or included on a note-taker. The teacher should decide what will work best for each class. Next, students will receive and read through their writing prompt and be given time to independently organize their argument through analyzing the prompt and returning to the text to gather relevant evidence. The final section will involve the actual recording of individual student arguments in writing. Of course, teacher discretion is critical to deciding what, if any, other scaffolds might be needed to support learner success. For example, students who need a great deal of support in structuring essays could use the introduction below for their own starter paragraph.

The Great Fire: Group Brainstorm

Today, cities have taken a number of steps to prevent fires, including implementing stricter fire codes. Fire codes are local laws that require people building any kind of structure to follow certain procedures intended to keep fire risk low. Some examples of modern fire code requirements include using building materials that are not easily flammable, like bricks, leaving adequate space between buildings, having roofs that will not catch fire if sparks land on them, installing automatic, heat-triggered sprinkler systems, and using special walls made of concrete or cement called “fire walls” to stop the spread of fire from one section of a large building to another. Fire walls became common in the mid-1900’s as concrete became a common and cheap building material.

In Chicago in 1871, there were only two fire codes: 1) stove pipes passing through roofs needed a tin or iron shield six inches above and below the wooden roofline, and 2) each home was required to have “one good painted leather fire bucket for each fireplace or stove in the building.” (Chicago Fire Bucket Ordinance, 1835).

Take a few minutes with your group to brainstorm answers to the following questions:

- Which modern fire codes would have been physically possible to require in 1871 in Chicago?
- How would laws about buildings and what materials builders were allowed to use affect people with different income levels in 1871 Chicago? Think especially about poor people like the O’Learys.

Writing Prompt for Students:

The Great Fire: A Community Responds

It is December 1871. The shock of the Great Fire has worn off and the city of Chicago needs to begin rebuilding. You have been asked to give advice to the mayor of Chicago about new fire codes that might prevent the next “Great Fire.” Which two changes to the Chicago fire code might have helped lessen the impact of the Great Fire of 1871? Construct an argument with a clear beginning, middle, and end describing the two changes you would make, using details from the text to support your choices. Be sure that your ideas are appropriate for the time period and solve problems that contributed to the 1871 fire described by the author.

Notes on appropriate student responses:

Students should recognize that changes to local laws could help limit the spread of fire, but could not prevent fire altogether. By suggesting changes to the fire code that address the key civic structural issues that fueled the fire, an excess of wood buildings and the close proximity of so many city structures, students can demonstrate their deep command of the text. The evidence collection chart that follows provides a detailed map of textual evidence that students may use, but of course, other arguments and evidence that are compelling are more than acceptable.

Evidence Collection Chart for Writing Assignment

A blank copy of this chart has been provided in the student materials file, which accompanies this lesson set. The blank chart can be provided to students to help them collect evidence from the text for the final writing assignment. The chart is filled out below as an example to illustrate how student might use it.

<i>Evidence Quote or paraphrase</i>	<i>Paragraph number</i>	<i>Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument</i>
"One of his stops was at the shingled cottage of Patrick and Catherine O'Leary."	1	Combined with evidence from paragraph 10 (see below) this shows that the O'Leary's home has a roof that is highly flammable; could support codes for different building materials
"The wooden sidewalks in front of Thomas White's house"	2	Combined with evidence from paragraph 10, establishes the O'Leary's neighborhood as highly flammable; could support code changes for building materials
"The wind coming off the prairie had been strong all day long, sometimes gusting wildly"	3	The strong winds are blamed for the spread of the fire, helping flames leap from building to building. Support for code to increase space between buildings to delay, or diminish, the effect of strong winds.
"The barn's loft held three tons of timothy hay... Flames from the burning hay pushed against the roof and beams"	6	The hay, which is a tremendous source of fuel for the fire, was stored in a wooden building, making the whole structure even more volatile. Supports changes in laws about storage of flammable material.
"A shed attached to the barn was already engulfed in flames. It contained two tons of coal for winter and a large supply of kindling wood."	9	Regarding coal and kindling, the same materials argument as the timothy hay above applies. In addition the shed and barn share a wall. If more space were required between the structures the fire might not have spread as quickly.
"The trouble was that about two-thirds of all these structures were made entirely of wood. Many of the remaining buildings Stone and brick exteriors hid wooden frames"	10	The over dependence of the fast-growing Chicago on wood as a building material was a major factor in the fast spread and massive destruction of the Great Fire, suggesting fire code changes regarding building materials might prevent fires of this magnitude in the future.
"All topped with highly flammable tar or shingled roofs"	10	The roofing materials common in 1871 Chicago are likely to accelerate the spread of fire. Building codes could require different roofing materials.

“Most churches had steeples that appeared to be solid but a closer inspection would reveal a wooden framework covered with cleverly painted copper or tin.”	10	Same rationale as above.
“Lot sizes were small, and owners usually filled them up with cottages, barns, sheds and outhouses – all made of fast burning wood, naturally.”	11	The words “filled them up” reveals that the structures are very close together, suggesting again that codes regarding adequate spacing might decrease the risk of quick spreading fires in the future.
“Stately stone and brick house had wood interiors and stood side by side with smaller wood-frame houses. Wooden stables and other storage buildings were common	12	Same rationale as above
“Buildings were crammed together”	13	Leaving adequate space between structures would have slowed the spread of the Great Fire.
“On the day the fire started, over 55 miles of pine-block streets and 600 miles of wooden sidewalks bound the 23,000 acres of the city in a highly combustible knot.”	13	The enormous amount of wood used to literally connect the buildings, businesses and residences of Chicago in 1871, provided a direct continuous path for the fire to follow as it blew across the city. Revised building materials codes might prevent this sort of disaster from occurring again.

Optional Writing Assignment

Instructions for Teachers:

The assignment below presents an opportunity to compare the viewpoints presented in two different contemporary accounts of the Great Fire. The full text of both of the articles is included in Appendix B. Both articles represent very challenging texts. This assignment may be provided to students as an extension assignment, or the teachers may choose to extend the lesson set by one or more days to cover this assignment as a class.

Writing Prompt for Students:

Elias Colbert and Everett Chamberlin in their article referred to the people in the crowded neighborhood where the fire started as “human rats”. However, another article in *The Tribune* described the same neighborhood in the following way:

“They were nearly all poor people, the savings of whose lifetime were represented in the little mass of furniture which blocked the streets, and impeded the firemen. They were principally laborers, most of them Germans or Scandinavians. Though the gaunt phantom of starvation and homelessness, for the night, at least, passed over them, it was singular to observe the cheerfulness, not to say merriment, that prevailed. Though mothers hugged their little ones to their breasts and shivered with alarm, yet, strange to say, they talked freely and laughed as if realizing the utter uselessness of expressing more dolefully their consciousness of ruin.”

Why might people describe the same neighborhood in such different ways? Which point of view does Murphy (our author) agree with? **Use specific evidence from the texts to explain your response.**

Day Five: Mini-Assessment

Teacher Directions

Purpose of Mini-Assessment:

This mini-assessment is designed as a culminating activity for students to complete after the lesson set. The questions are aligned to the CCSS reading standards and illustrate implications of the CCSS for assessment. The questions are text-dependent and require close reading and analysis of the excerpt.

Summary of Activities:

- Teacher provides students with a flexible amount of time to take the assessment to allow students sufficient time to conduct a close reading of the text. Based on data gathered through piloting this assessment, it is estimated for planning purposes that the assessment may take students around 25 minutes to complete. However, students should be allowed sufficient time to complete the task comfortably.
- Teacher has option to grade and/or discuss answers as a class. The annotated answer key is designed to support teachers in understanding and explaining which option is correct and why the other answers are incorrect.
- **NOTE: IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE VERSION OF THE TEXT USED FOR THIS MINI-ASSESSMENT BE THE VERSION INCLUDED IN THE STUDENT HAND-OUT, as the assessment asks students to reread a shorter portion of the excerpt.**

Directions to Read to Students (optional):

“Today you will reread part of the passage we’ve been studying in class, the excerpt from *The Great Fire* by Jim Murphy. You will then independently answer several questions. I will be happy to answer questions about the directions, but I will not help you with the answers to any test questions.

You may begin now, and take the time that you need to read the text closely.”

[Students then independently read the excerpt from The Great Fire and the following questions.]

Excerpt from *The Great Fire* by Jim Murphy

The Great Fire of Chicago is considered the largest disaster of the 1800s. It is rumored to have started in the barn of Patrick and Catherine O'Leary.

- (1) A shed attached to the barn was already engulfed by flames. It contained two tons of coal for the winter and a large supply of kindling wood. Fire ran along the dry grass and leaves, and took hold of a neighbor's fence. The heat from the burning barn, shed, and fence was so hot that the O'Learys' house, forty feet away, began to smolder. Neighbors rushed from their homes, many carrying buckets or pots of water. The sound of music and merrymaking stopped abruptly, replaced by the shout of "FIRE!" It would be a warning cry heard thousands of times during the next thirty-one hours.
- (2) Chicago in 1871 was a city ready to burn. The city boasted having 59,500 buildings, many of them—such as the Courthouse and the Tribune Building—large and ornately decorated. The trouble was that about two-thirds of all these structures were made entirely of wood. Many of the remaining buildings (even the ones proclaimed to be "fireproof") looked solid, but were actually jerrybuilt¹⁰ affairs; the stone or brick exteriors hid wooden frames and floors, all topped with highly flammable tar or shingle roofs. It was also a common practice to disguise wood as another kind of building material. The fancy exterior decorations on just about every building were carved from wood, then painted to look like stone or marble. Most churches had steeples that appeared to be solid from the street, but a closer inspection would reveal a wooden framework covered with cleverly painted copper or tin.
- (3) The situation was worst in the middle-class and poorer districts. Lot sizes were small, and owners usually filled them up with cottages, barns, sheds, and outhouses—all made of fast-burning wood, naturally. Because both Patrick and Catherine O'Leary worked, they were able to put a large addition on their cottage despite a lot size of just 25 by 100 feet. Interspersed in these residential areas were a variety of businesses—paint factories, lumberyards, distilleries, gasworks, mills, furniture manufacturers, warehouses, and coal distributors.
- (4) Wealthier districts were by no means free of fire hazards. Stately stone and brick homes had wood interiors and stood side by side with smaller wood-frame houses. Wooden stables and other storage buildings were common, and trees lined the streets and filled the yards.
- (5) The links between richer and poorer sections went beyond the materials used for construction or the way buildings were crammed together. Chicago had been built largely on soggy marshland that flooded every time it rained. As the years passed and the town developed, a quick solution to the water and mud problem was needed. The answer was to make the roads and sidewalks out of wood and elevate them above the waterline, in some places by several feet. On the day the fire started, over 55 miles of

¹⁰ Built cheaply or poorly constructed

pine-block streets and 600 miles of wooden sidewalks bound the 23,000 acres of the city in a highly combustible knot.

- (6) Fires were common in all cities back then, and Chicago was no exception. In 1863 there had been 186 reported fires in Chicago; the number had risen to 515 by 1868. Records for 1870 indicate that fire-fighting companies responded to nearly 600 alarms. The next year saw even more fires spring up, mainly because the summer had been unusually dry. Between July and October only a few scattered showers had taken place and these did not produce much water at all. Trees drooped in the unrelenting summer sun; grass and leaves dried out. By October, as many as six fires were breaking out every day. On Saturday the seventh, the night before the Great Fire, a blaze destroyed four blocks and took over sixteen hours to control. What made Sunday the eighth different and particularly dangerous was the steady wind blowing in from the southwest.
- (7) It was this gusting, swirling wind that drove the flames from the O'Learys' barn into neighboring yards. To the east, a fence and shed of Jim Dalton's went up in flames; to the west, a barn smoldered for a few minutes, then flared up into a thousand yellow-orange fingers.

Used by permission of Scholastic Inc.

Questions for Students**1. Reread this sentence from paragraph 5 of the passage:**

The answer was to make the roads and sidewalks out of wood and elevate them above the waterline, in some places by several feet.

Which two phrases in the sentence best help the reader determine the meaning of the word “elevate”?

- A. The answer was
 - B. to make the roads and sidewalks
 - C. out of wood
 - D. above the waterline
 - E. in some places
 - F. by several feet
- 2. What was the main reason that the middle class and poorer districts in Chicago burned down more easily than other districts in the city did?**
- A. The buildings in these districts had wooden decorations painted to look like marble or stone.
 - B. The roofs of the buildings in these districts were made of materials that burned easily.
 - C. These districts contained many wooden buildings that were built closely together.
 - D. These districts were crossed by miles of pine-block streets and wooden sidewalks.
- 3. According to the passage, how did the location of the businesses affect the Great Fire?**
- A. The location of the businesses was one reason “the situation was worst in the middle-class and poorer districts.”
 - B. The location of the businesses provided some of “the links between richer and poorer sections” of the city.
 - C. The location of the businesses meant that the “wealthier districts were by no means free of fire hazards.”
 - D. The location of the businesses helped bind “the 23,000 acres of the city in a highly combustible knot.”
- 4. How do the details in paragraphs 3 and 4 about the poor, middle-class, and wealthier neighborhoods contribute to the development of the central ideas of the passage?**
- A. The paragraphs support the idea that the fire spread widely because of the amount of wood in all three areas.
 - B. The paragraphs support the idea that wood was the most readily available resource because of the number of trees in the area.
 - C. The paragraphs support the idea that long ago people were unaware of the importance of well-constructed buildings.
 - D. The paragraphs support the idea that Chicago was different from other large cities during that time.

5. This question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: Which statement below best summarizes the central idea of this passage?

- A. The Great Fire of Chicago was one of the most damaging fires in American history.
- B. The Great Fire of Chicago quickly got out of control in some neighborhoods but not others.
- C. Chicago firefighters could not put out the fire even though many people tried to help.
- D. Chicago provided almost perfect conditions for a widespread and damaging fire.

Part B: Which sentence from the passage provides the best support for the correct answer in Part A?

- A. "Neighbors rushed from their homes, many carrying buckets or pots of water."
- B. "Chicago in 1871 was a city ready to burn."
- C. "The situation was worst in the middle-class and poorer districts."
- D. "Fires were common in all cities back then, and Chicago was no exception."

6. In the chart below, the left-hand column contains a list of details from the passage. The right-hand column is headed "Reasons Chicago Burned in October 1871 Instead of Later." Find two details that show why Chicago burned when it did, and copy each detail into one of the empty boxes.

Details from <i>The Great Fire</i>	Reasons Chicago Burned in October 1871 Instead of Later
Neighbors rushed from their homes, many carrying buckets or pots of water.	Detail 1:
The sound of music and merrymaking stopped abruptly, replaced by the shout of "FIRE!" It would be a warning cry heard thousands of times during the next thirty-one hours.	
Lot sizes were small, and owners usually filled them up with cottages, barns, sheds, and outhouses—all made of fast-burning wood, naturally.	
Chicago had been built largely on soggy marshland that flooded every time it rained.	Detail 2:
On the day the fire started, over 55 miles of pine-block streets and 600 miles of wooden sidewalks bound the 23,000 acres of the city in a highly combustible knot.	
Between July and October only a few scattered showers had taken place and these did not produce much water at all.	
On Saturday the seventh, the night before the Great Fire, a blaze destroyed four blocks and took over sixteen hours to control.	
What made Sunday the eighth different and particularly dangerous was the steady wind blowing in from the southwest.	

7. This question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: Based on The Great Fire, which statement is true about conditions in Chicago in 1870-1871?

- A. Land for building homes was abundant in Chicago.
- B. Firefighters in Chicago were inexperienced.
- C. The growth of Chicago was being carefully planned.
- D. A fire was likely to occur almost every day in Chicago.

Part B: Which sentence from the passage provides the best support for the correct answer in Part A?

- A. "Lot sizes were small, and owners usually filled them up with cottages, barns, sheds, and outhouses - all made of fast-burning wood, naturally."
- B. "As the years passed and the town developed, a quick solution to the water and mud problem was needed."
- C. "Records for 1870 indicate that fire-fighting companies responded to nearly 600 alarms."
- D. "On Saturday the seventh, the night before the Great Fire, a blaze destroyed four blocks and took over sixteen hours to control."

Annotated Answer Key

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
1	D, F	RI.6.4, RI.6.1	<p>Option A: Although “The answer was” introduces the ideas in the sentence, it does not provide context for “elevate.”</p> <p>Option B: Although the phrase “to make the roads and sidewalks” provides information about what was elevated, it does not serve as context for “elevate.”</p> <p>Option C: Although the fact that the roads and sidewalks were built “out of wood” is important to the central idea of the passage, it does not provide context for “elevate.”</p> <p>Option D: This is a correct answer: “Above the waterline” helps the reader determine what “elevate” means.</p> <p>Option E: Although the phrase, “in some places” introduces some additional helpful context, it does not give context for the meaning of “elevate.”</p> <p>Option F: This is a correct answer. “By several feet” extends the concept of “above the waterline” and thus provides context for the meaning of “elevate.”</p>
2	C	RI.6.8, RI.6.3, RI.6.1	<p>Option A: Although some buildings were characterized by painted wooden decorations, those buildings were the large and ornate ones, not the buildings in the middle class and poorer districts.</p> <p>Option B: Although it is possible that the buildings in the middle class and poorer districts had roofs that burned easily, the passage specifically describes the roofs of the larger buildings in the city; there is no textual evidence supporting the flammability of the roofs elsewhere.</p> <p>Option C: This is the correct answer. The passage makes clear that all districts had buildings made of wood that were built close together, causing these districts to burn more readily.</p> <p>Option D: Although it is probably true that all districts were crossed by wooden streets and sidewalks, the passage indicates that this “highly combustible knot” spread throughout the city; therefore, this fact does not explain why the middle class and poorer districts burned more readily than other districts did.</p>

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
3	A	RI.6.3, RI.6.1	<p>Option A: This is the correct answer. The fact that the businesses were located in the middle class and poorer districts made conditions worse there, most likely because they offered sources of fuel for the fire.</p> <p>Option B: Although the poorer and richer districts were linked by the fact that their buildings were made of wood, the passage is clear that the businesses were located in the middle class and poorer districts rather than the richer ones.</p> <p>Option C: Although there were fire hazards in the richer districts, they consisted mainly of large and small wooden buildings, stables, and trees, not businesses.</p> <p>Option D: Although the businesses were located in the middle class and poorer districts, that fact did not cause the city to be bound by a “highly combustible knot” of wooden sidewalks and roads.</p>
4	A	RI.6.5, RI.6.1	<p>Option A: This is the correct answer. The author structures these paragraphs to show commonality among the three kinds of districts.</p> <p>Option B: The passage emphasizes that the middle class and poorer districts, rather than the richer districts, were characterized by closely packed wooden buildings.</p> <p>Option C: Although the inference is logical that most buildings were made of wood because wood was the most readily available resource, there is no textual evidence supporting this inference. Wood and stone may have been equally available, but wood may have been less expensive or faster to build with.</p> <p>Option D: Although the text indicates a similarity between Chicago and other large cities at the time, it does not support an inference about how Chicago differed from other cities.</p>
5 Part A	D	RI.6.2, RI.6.1	<p>Option A: Although students may be strongly drawn to this option because it sounds as if it is what the passage might be about, there is no information in the text comparing the Great Fire to other fires in U.S. history.</p> <p>Option B: There is no textual evidence for this statement as the central idea of the passage; in fact, much of the text is devoted to showing how all neighborhoods were at risk of fire.</p> <p>Option C: Although the opening paragraphs suggest that many people tried to put out the fire, the idea that firefighters could not put out the fire even with help is not the central idea of the passage.</p> <p>Option D: This is the correct answer, and the author summarizes this idea early in the passage.</p>

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
5 Part B	B	RI.6.2, RI.6.1	<p>Option A: This option links to option C in Part A but does not support the correct response to Part A, which is D.</p> <p>Option B: This is the correct answer, supporting the statement of the central idea in option D in Part A.</p> <p>Option C: This option links to option B in Part A but does not support the correct response.</p> <p>Option D: This option links to option D in Part A but represents a misreading of the passage about the relationship between Chicago and other cities.</p>
6	<p>Between July and October only a few scattered showers had taken place and these did not produce much water at all.</p> <p>What made Sunday the eighth different and particularly dangerous was the steady wind blowing in from the southwest.</p>	RI.6.3, RI.6.2 RI.6.1	<p>Option A: Although neighbors tried to put out the fire this does not provide a reason for the fire occurring in October 1871 instead of earlier or later.</p> <p>Option B: Although the statement about warning cries indicates the pervasive nature of the fire, it does not support the reason for the fire occurring in October 1871.</p> <p>Option C: Although the large numbers of wooden buildings in the middle class and poorer districts were one reason the city was likely to burn down, this fact does not tell why the fire occurred when it did.</p> <p>Option D: Although the soggy marshland ultimately contributed to the fire because it caused so many miles of wooden roads and sidewalks to be built, this fact does not explain why the fire occurred when it did.</p> <p>Option E: Although the knot of wooden roads and sidewalks contributed to the fact that Chicago was ready to burn, it does not account for the fact that the fire started in October 1871.</p> <p>Option F: This is a correct answer. The weather conditions in the fall of 1871 explain why the fire occurred in October 1871 and not earlier or later.</p> <p>Option G: Although there was a significant fire the night before the Great Fire started, that fact does not explain why the great fire occurred the next day.</p> <p>Option H: This is a correct answer. The fact that the wind was blowing steadily helped turn a small fire into a big one and provides one reason the fire started when it did.</p>

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
7 Part A	D	RI.6.2, RI.6.1	<p>Option A: The passage does not support the inference that land was abundant; in fact, there are indications that lots were small and buildings close together, suggesting that land was scarce.</p> <p>Option B: Although it is clear that the fire got out of control, there is no textual evidence supporting the inference that firefighters lacked experience. On the contrary, the large numbers of fires would suggest that firefighters had vast experience.</p> <p>Option C: There is no textual evidence for planning in the growth of the city; there is a slight suggestion that there was less planning than desirable, given the businesses interspersed with the residences.</p> <p>Option D: This is the correct answer. The evidence in the text makes clear that the trend was for more and more fires to occur, with an average of more than one fire a day by 1870.</p>
7 Part B	C		<p>Option A: The fact that wooden buildings were packed closely together links to options A and C in Part A, but it does not support the correct response, that fires were becoming more and more common.</p> <p>Option B: The need for a solution to the water and mud problem links to option C in Part A, but it does not support the correct response.</p> <p>Option C: This is the correct answer. The fact that there were so many fires in 1870 indicates that it was likely that there was, on average, more than one fire per day.</p> <p>Option D: The fact that there was a serious but controlled fire on the night before the Great Fire started links to option B in Part A, but it does not support the correct response.</p>

Appendix A: Photograph of Chicago

Historic Photographs from Chicago: A Biography by Dominic A. Pacyga

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/pacyga/gallery/index.html>

The University of Chicago Press



Chicago Tribune Building, late 1850s. The Tribune evolved as an early supporter of the Republican Party. Notice the McVickers Theater to the left of the building. (Chicago Public Library, Special Collections and Preservation.)

Appendix B: Contemporary Articles

The Losses by the Fire

From Elias Colbert and Everett Chamberlin, Chicago and the Great Conflagration (1871)

(800 words)

Amid such a general wreck, the attempt to gather correct statistics of the losses entailed by the great conflagration, may well seem a hopeless one. So many records were destroyed; so many people driven from the city, who could alone give accurate information on some essential point; such a universal scattering and destruction among those who remained, that it is practically impossible to cover every item in the immense aggregate of loss.

We essay the task with diffidence, notwithstanding the fact that we have taken all possible pains in the investigation of loss. The following statements are probably very near the truth in the aggregate--made up of details obtained by personal inquiry from many hundreds of the parties most interested in the sad exhibit . . .

In the West Division about 194 acres were burned over, including 16 acres swept by the fire of the previous evening. This district contained several lumber-yards and planing-mills, the Union Depot of the St. Louis and Pittsburg & Fort Wayne Railroads, with a few minor hotels and factories, several boarding-houses, and a host of saloons. The buildings burned--about 500 in number--were nearly all frame structures, and not of much value, but were closely packed together. About 2250 persons were rendered homeless in this division.

In the South Division the burned area comprised about 460 acres. The southern boundary line was a diagonal, running from the corner of Michigan Avenue and Congress Street, west-south-west to the intersection of Fifth Avenue (Wells) and Polk Street. On the other three sides the bounding lines were the lake and the river--only one block (the Lind) being left in all that area. This district contained the great majority of the most expensive structures in the city, all the wholesale stores, all the newspaper offices, all the principal banks, and insurance and law offices, many coal-yards, nearly all the hotels, and many factories, the Court-house, Custom-house, Chamber of Commerce, etc.--as stated more at length in our chapter descriptive of Chicago in 1871. The number of buildings destroyed in this division was about 3650, which included 1600 stores, 28 hotels, and 60 manufacturing establishments. About 21,800 persons were rendered homeless, very many of whom were residents in the upper stories of the palatial structures devoted, below, to commerce. There were, however, many poor families, and a great many human rats, resident in the western part of this territory.

In the North Division the devastation was the most wide-spread, fully 1470 acres being burned over, out of the 2533 acres in that division. And even this statement fails to convey an idea of the wholesale destruction wrought there, because the territory unburned was unoccupied. Had there been any except widely-scattered structures in the unburned portion, they, too, would have been destroyed as the fire licked up all in its path, and paused only when there was no more food whereon to whet its insatiable appetite. Of the 13,800 buildings in that division, not more than 500 were left standing, leaving 13,300 in ruins, and rendering 74,450 persons homeless. The buildings burned included more than 600 stores and 100 manufacturing

establishments, the latter being principally grouped in the south-western part of this division. That part next to the lake, as far north as Chicago Avenue, was occupied by first-class residences, of which only one was left standing--that of Mahlon D. Ogden. Next north of these was the Water-works, and this was the initial point of a line of breweries that stretched out almost to the cemetery. The river banks were piled high with lumber and coal, which was all destroyed, except a portion near the bend of the river, at Kinzie Street. The space between the burned district and the river, to the westward, contained but little improved property. Lincoln Park lay to the northward, on the lake-shore. The fire burned up the southern part of this park--the old City Cemetery--but left the improved part untouched, except a portion of the fencing. One of the saddest among the many sad scenes that met the eye after the conflagration had done its work, was that in the old cemetery--the flames had even made havoc among the dead, burning down the wooden monuments, and shattering stone vaults to fragments, leaving exposed many scores of the remnants of mortality that had smoldered for years in oblivion.

The total area burned over in the city, including streets, was 2124 acres, or very nearly 3 1/3 square miles. The number of buildings destroyed was 17,450; of persons rendered homeless, 98,500. Of the latter, more than 250 paid the last debt of nature amid the carnage--fell victims to the Moloch of our modern civilization.

From the Chicago History Society and the Trustees of Northwestern University
<http://www.chicagohistory.org/fire/ruin/losses.html>

The Tribune Reports to Chicago on Its Own Destruction

From the Chicago Tribune, October 11, 1871
(1400 words)

During Sunday night, Monday, and Tuesday, this city has been swept by a conflagration which has no parallel in the annals of history, for the quantity of property destroyed, and the utter and almost irremediable ruin which it wrought. A fire in a barn on the West Side was the insignificant cause of a conflagration which has swept out of existence hundreds of millions of property, has reduced to poverty thousands who, the day before, were in a state of opulence, has covered the prairies, now swept by the cold southwest wind, with thousands of homeless unfortunates, which has stripped 2,600 acres of buildings, which has destroyed public improvements that it has taken years of patient labor to build up, and which has set back for years the progress of the city, diminished her population, and crushed her resources. But to a blow, no matter how terrible, Chicago will not succumb. Late as it is in the season, general as the ruin is, the spirit of her citizens has not given way, and before the smoke has cleared away, and the ruins are cold, they are beginning to plan for the future. Though so many have been deprived of homes and sustenance, aid in money and provisions is flowing in from all quarters, and much of the present distress will be alleviated before another day has gone by.

It is at this moment impossible to give a full account of the losses by the fire, or to state the number of fatal accidents which have occurred. So much confusion prevails, and people are so widely scattered, that we are unable for a day to give absolutely accurate information concerning them. We have, however, given a full account of the fire, from the time of its beginning, reserving for a future day a detailed statement of losses. We would be exceedingly obliged if all persons having any knowledge of accidents, or the names of persons who died

during the fire, would report them at this office. We also hope that all will leave with, or at No. 15 South Canal Street, a memorandum of their losses and their insurance, giving the names of the companies.

The Westside

At 9:30 a small cow barn attached to a house on the corner of DeKoven and Jefferson streets, one block north of Twelfth street, emitted a bright light, followed by a blaze, and in a moment the building was hopelessly on fire. Before any aid could be extended the fire had communicated to a number of adjoining sheds, barns and dwellings, and was rapidly carried north and east, despite the efforts of the firemen. The fire seemed to leap over the engines, and commence far beyond them, and, working to the east and west, either surrounded the apparatus or compelled it to move away. In less than ten minutes the fire embraced the area between Jefferson and Clinton for two blocks north, and rapidly pushed eastward to Canal street.

When the fire first engulfed the two blocks, and the efforts of the undaunted engineers became palpably abortive to quench a single building, an effort was made to head it off from the north, but so great was the area that it already covered at 10:30 o'clock, and so rapidly did it march forward, that by the time the engines were at work the flames were ahead of them, and again they moved on north. From the west side of Jefferson street, as far as the eye could reach, in an easterly direction--and that space was bounded by the river--a perfect sea of leaping flames covered the ground. The wind increased in fierceness as the flames rose, and the flames wailed more hungrily for their prey as the angry gusts impelled them onward. Successively the wooden buildings on Taylor, Forquer, Ewing, and Polk streets became the northern boundary, and then fell back to the second place. Meanwhile, the people in the more southern localities bent all their energies to the recovery of such property as they could. With ample time to move all that was movable, and with a foreboding of what was coming, in their neighborhood at least, they were out and in safety long before the flames reached their dwellings. They were nearly all poor people, the savings of whose lifetime were represented in the little mass of furniture which blocked the streets, and impeded the firemen. They were principally laborers, most of them Germans or Scandinavians. Though the gaunt phantom of starvation and homelessness, for the night, at least, passed over them, it was singular to observe the cheerfulness, not to say merriment, that prevailed. Though mothers hugged their little ones to their breasts and shivered with alarm, yet, strange to say, they talked freely and laughed as if realizing the utter uselessness of expressing more dolefully their consciousness of ruin. There were many owners of the building who gave themselves up to the consolation of insurance. But even that appeared to weaken as the flames spread, and they gave themselves up to their fate. Many of the victims were stowed away in the houses on the west side of Jefferson street, while there on Clinton, caught between two fires, had rushed away, losing all but their lives and little ones. How many of these latter ones were abandoned, either from terror or in the confusion, it is impossible to guess, but every now and then a woman wild with grief would run in and out among the alleys and cry aloud her loss.

The firemen were working with extraordinary perseverance. When it seemed impossible for a man to stand without suffocation they carried their hose, sprinkling the houses opposite and endeavoring to stop its spread in a westerly direction. But it was evident by midnight that human ingenuity could not stem that fiery tide. At the same time, so burdened were the minds of the citizens with the conflagration that the question of where it would end never entered

their minds. Engine No. 14, which had retreated gradually north on Canal Street to Foes' lumber yard, or rather where that yard had been two days before, was suddenly surrounded in a belt of flame, and abandoned to its fate . . .

But, while it seemed as if the demon of flame had reached a desert and needs must die, a new danger appeared to threaten the city. From the South Side, in the neighborhood of Adams street, whereabouts no one on the West Side could guess with any degree of certainty, rose a column of fire, not large, but horribly suggestive. Such engines as could be moved were called from the West to protect the South Side property, and the flames left to die of inanition.

The Fire as Seen from the Windward

The fire of Saturday burned the region in the West Division from Van Buren street northward to Adams, and all east on Clinton street to the river, Murry Nelson's elevator alone standing. The light from the burning remnants of these eighteen acres of ruins illuminated the heavens on Sunday evening. Precisely at half-past 9 o'clock the fire bells sounded an alarm, and a fresh light, distinct from the other only to those living west of the fire, sprung up. The wind at the time, as it had been for the preceding forty-eight hours, was strong from the southwest. This fire commenced on DeKoven Street, at the corner of Jefferson, and one block north of Twelfth Street. The wind carried this fire straight before it, through the block to the next block, and so on northward, until it reached Van Buren Street, where it struck the south line of the district burnt the night before. Here this fire ought to have stopped, and here, under ordinary circumstances, it would have stopped. But the wind though fierce and direct, carried the flames before it, cutting as clean and well defined a swath as does the reaper in the fold, the fire gradually but rapidly extended laterally, and in the very teeth of the wind, worked backward nearly to Twelfth Street, and thence extended east to the river. It worked against the wind along the west line of Jefferson Street to Van Buren. North of Twelfth street it cast its burning brands across the river, firing the tan yard of the Chicago Hide and Leather Company. As the fire widened at its base its direct line to the northeast was also widened, and thus many hours after the first sheet of flame had reached Van Buren street, other lines coming from the base would reach the same point . . .

The route of the fire was distinctly visible. In five minutes after the first flame had reached Van Buren Street from the southeast, we could see the incipient fire in the South Division as a point three blocks to the north. The blazing brands borne before it had fallen into the sheds and shanties near the Armory, and at once the blaze mounted high.... From the river to Market street, thence to Franklin and Wells, in a northeast direction, it made its way as if directed by an engineer, in an air line, striking Madison street east of Wells, and near LaSalle. But, preceding the actual blaze was the shower of brands, falling upon roofs, breaking through windows, falling into yards, and each brand starting a new fire. The fire was in full blast in the rear of the Union Bank and Oriental Buildings, before the actual fire had reached Wells street, three blocks to the southwest. In like manner the Chamber of Commerce building was in flames, the roof of the Court House was ablaze, the old TRIBUNE office was half destroyed, as distinct conflagrations. For a long time the Sherman House resisted destruction, and before it was abandoned the fire had commenced in a dozen places on the North Division. Any one who will take a map will see that the line from the point where the fire began, to the Water Works, was the exact line of the southwest wind. The fire was not continuous. Standing to the windward we could see the fire raging at various points along this line at the same time. The intervening gaps were rapidly overwhelmed by the flames, and shortly after Lill's brewery and the Water Works were ablaze . .

No obstacle seemed to interrupt the progress of the fire. Stone walls crumbled before it. It reached the highest roofs, and swept the earth of everything combustible. The gale was intense in its severity. Having reached the lake, we on the west had high hopes that the destructive work would be confined to the distinct path thus mown through the very heart of the city . . .

The hope that, as the fire had extended to the lake at Chicago avenue, and the wind was blowing fiercely from the west and south, that part of the North Division westward of the line of the fire would escape, was an idle one. Gradually all Clark Street was included, and thence to the west until the coal beds at the river were reached. The scene about daylight was terrific. The entire North Division, from the river to the lake, and as far north as North Avenue, was one seething mass of blaze. The roar of this fire was appalling . . . Just before daylight there was one continuous sheet of flame . . . making a semicircle the inner line of which was about seven miles long. All east of this was a perfect ocean of blaze.

From the Chicago History Society and the Trustees of Northwestern University
<http://www.chicagohistory.org/fire/conflag/tribune.html>

Appendix C: Comprehensive Vocabulary List

The role of vocabulary in this lesson set:

The chart below lists the various academic vocabulary words teachers have identified in *The Great Fire*. **It is important to note the very high number of words recommended for instruction in these passages**, more than many of us have been used to teaching. This reflects the importance of vocabulary to comprehending the complex text called for by the CCSS. Students who are behind need to learn even more words. This can only happen if we can teach word meanings efficiently; devoting more time and attention to those words that merit it, and less to those that can be learned with less time and attention. Clearly, there will not be time in a four-to-five-day lesson set to explicitly teach all the words listed below. Many of the words, however, can be taught quickly, while others deserve explicit and lengthy examination. Teachers should make intentional choices based on professional judgment, the needs of students, and the guidance provide below.

The organization of the charts below:

Each vocabulary word below has been measured against two criteria:

1. Can students infer the meaning of the word from context?
2. How much time and attention does the word merit?

1. Can students infer the meaning of the word from context?

The definitions of many words can be inferred in part or in whole from context, and practice with inferring word meanings is an integral part of instruction.

The words in the **first group** have meanings which **can be inferred from context** within the text. Words in this category are printed in **bold** below as well, as in the scaffolded version of the student text.

Words in the **second group** have meanings, or are being used in ways, which **cannot reasonably be inferred from context** within the text alone. These words are printed in underline, here and in the text, and their definitions are provided in the margins of the text for reference.

2. How difficult is the word?

Left column words are **quicker and easier to learn**—ones that are concrete, have only one meaning, or are limited to a specific topic area, such as fires or the ocean etc. These words should be addressed swiftly, when they are encountered and only as needed.

Right column words **take more time and attention to master**—ones that are abstract, represent concepts unlikely to be familiar to many students, have multiple meanings, are a part of a word family, and/or are likely to appear again in future texts. These words require more instructional time.

Quicker to learn; meaning can be determined from context			Harder to learn; but meaning can be determined from context		
Para	Vocabulary Word	Definition	Para	Vocabulary Word	Definition
1	unusually	Oddly, strangely	4	tongue	A tongue-shaped section of a fire
1	stifling	Intensely hot	7	intense	Strong
1	cottage	Small, humble home	10	entirely	Completely
1	laborer	Worker	10	remaining	Unburned
2	ambled	Walked in a relaxed way	10	reveal	Show
3	gusting	Blowing	10	framework	Interior support system on which the house is built
3	scuttled	Blew	11	addition	An extension of a building
3	fiddle	Violin used to play folk music	11	despite	Without being affected by
3	drifted	Floated	11	interspersed	Placed between other things
5	clumsily	Awkwardly, without coordination	11	variety	A great many types
5	fiercely	Furiously	13	elevate	Raise up
6	ton	A unit of weight equal to 2,000 pounds	13	highly combustible knot	Extremely easy to set on fire
6	beams	Long, sturdy pieces of timber used to support a building	14	exception	Something that does not follow a rule
6	embers	Small burning bits of material	14	indicate	Show
7	frightened	Scared	14	unrelenting	Unstopping
7	straining	Fighting	15	initial	First
7	escape	Getting away			
7	blinding	Preventing sight			
7	flee	Run away from			
7	thud	A booming sound			

Quicker to learn; meaning can be determined from context			Harder to learn; but meaning can be determined from context		
Para	Vocabulary Word	Definition	Para	Vocabulary Word	Definition
8	struggled	Worked hard, fought			
8	panicking	Becoming paralyzed by fear			
8	managed	Succeeded in			
8	singed	Lightly burned			
9	engulfed	Surrounded by			
9	contained	Held			
9	supply	Source			
9	ran along	Moved across			
9	took hold	Consumed			
9	smolder	Burn slowly			
9	abruptly	Suddenly			
9	warning cry	Loud, shouted alarm			
10	boasted	Proudly advertised			
10	structures	Buildings			
10	solid	Built from substantial materials			
10	frames	The wooden “skeleton” of a building			
10	tar	Thick, black substance, used like glue			
10	shingle roofs	A roof covered with rectangular wooden, metal or slate tiles			
10	disguise	To change the appearance of something so it appears to be something else			
10	exterior	Outside			

Quicker to learn; meaning can be determined from context			Harder to learn; but meaning can be determined from context		
Para	Vocabulary Word	Definition	Para	Vocabulary Word	Definition
10	marble	A type of stone used in building			
10	inspection	Examination			
10	cleverly	Creatively			
11	districts	Areas			
11	lot sizes	Area of property			
11	residential	An area where people live			
11	distributors	People who supply goods to stores or other people			
12	hazards	Dangers			
12	interiors	Inside areas			
12	trees lined	Ran in lines along streets			
13	crammed	Stuffed			
13	soggy	Wet, damp			
13	marshland	An area of land that is flooded at high tide and remains waterlogged at all times			
13	bound	Tied			
14	drooped	Bend or hang downward limply			
14	blaze	Fire			
14	steady	Consistent			
15	swirling	Move in a twisting pattern			
15	drove	Pushed			
15	flared	Shot up			

Quicker to learn; but meaning cannot be determined from context			Harder to learn; meaning cannot be determined from context		
Para	Vocabulary Word	Definition	Para	Vocabulary Word	Definition
1	<u>shingled</u>	Materials added to the top of a house to make it waterproof	10	<u>ornately</u>	Fancy or elaborate
3	<u>prairie</u>	Large area of grassland that is generally flat	12	<u>stately</u>	Majestic or elegant
6	<u>loft</u>	Area above the main barn			
9	<u>kindling</u>	Small pieces of easy to burn wood used to start a fire			
9	<u>merrymaking</u>	Being happy (typically during a celebration or party)			
10	<u>jerrybuilt</u>	Built poorly or quickly, especially to save money			
10	<u>flammable</u>	Able to burn			
10	<u>exterior</u>	Outside			
10	<u>steeple</u> s	A tall structure on the top of a church			
11	<u>outhouses</u>	A shed-like building that covers a deep hole used for going to the bathroom			
11	<u>distilleries</u>	Where alcohol is made			
11	<u>mills</u>	Where flour is made			

Appendix D: Common Core State Standards Addressed by This Exemplar

RI.6.1	Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
RI.6.2	Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
RI.6.3	Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).
RI.6.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
RI.6.5	Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.
RI.6.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.
RI.6.8	Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
RI.6.9 (through optional homework)	Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).
W.6.1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
RH.6-8.7	Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Appendix E: How the Grade Level of *The Great Fire* Was Determined

Regular practice with complex texts is necessary to prepare students for college- and career-readiness. The excerpt from *The Great Fire* has been placed at grade 6 for the purpose of this exemplar. This section of the exemplar provides an explanation of the process that was used to place the text at grade 6 for the purpose of illustrating why this text meets the expectations for text complexity in Reading Standard 10. *Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards* and the *Supplement to Appendix A: New Research on Text Complexity* lay out a research-based process for selecting complex texts. According to *Appendix A*, the first step in selecting grade-level appropriate texts is to place a text within a grade-band according to a quantitative text complexity score.

Quantitative Analysis of the Excerpt from *The Great Fire*:

<i>The Great Fire</i>	Quantitative Measure #1	Quantitative Measure #2
	Flesch-Kincaid	Lexile
	9.0	1000L

After gathering the quantitative measures, the next step is to place the quantitative scores in the Conversion Table found in the *Supplement to Appendix A* (www.corestandards.org/resources) and determine the grade-band of the text.

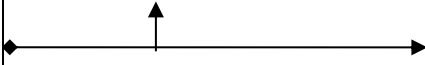
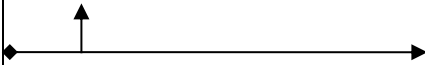
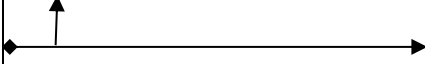
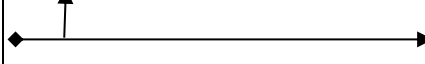
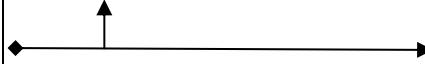
Figure 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures⁷

Common Core Band	ATOS	Degrees of Reading Power®	Flesch-Kincaid ^s	The Lexile Framework®	Reading Maturity	SourceRater
2 nd – 3 rd	2.75 – 5.14	42 – 54	1.98 – 5.34	420 – 820	3.53 – 6.13	0.05 – 2.48
4 th – 5 th	4.97 – 7.03	52 – 60	4.51 – 7.73	740 – 1010	5.42 – 7.92	0.84 – 5.75
6 th – 8 th	7.00 – 9.98	57 – 67	6.51 – 10.34	925 – 1185	7.04 – 9.57	4.11 – 10.66
9 th – 10 th	9.67 – 12.01	62 – 72	8.32 – 12.12	1050 – 1335	8.41 – 10.81	9.02 – 13.93
11 th – CCR	11.20 – 14.10	67 – 74	10.34 – 14.2	1185 – 1385	9.57 – 12.00	12.30 – 14.50

To find the grade **level** of the text within the designated grade-band, engage in a systematic analysis of the characteristics of the text. The characteristics that should be analyzed during a qualitative analysis can be found in Appendix A of the CCSS. (www.corestandards.org)

The next page shows an example of a qualitative analysis of the complexity of *The Great Fire*.

Sample Qualitative Analysis of the Excerpt from *The Great Fire*:

Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Where to place within the band?					
		early 6 – mid 6	end 6-early 7	Mid-end 7	Early – mid 8	End 8	NOT suited to band
Structure: (both story structure or form of piece)	The structure of the text is mostly cause and effect, showing the main reasons the Great Fire started in Chicago when it did. The relationship between the main idea and supporting details is clear.						
Language Clarity and Conventions	The vocabulary used in the text is accessible to the average sixth grader and appropriate for grade level. The few words that may be challenging for this audience are surrounded by strong context clues that will enable students to understand the unfamiliar terms. The sentence structure varies from simple to complex but are of average length and can be dissected easily if needed.						
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	The passage is self-contained, meaning that no outside knowledge is required. Students may or may not know the location of Chicago, but a lack of knowledge of that fact will not impact understanding. Also, no prior knowledge of the Great Fire is needed, as the text describes it fully. Students will need to infer that wood burns easily, but there is context in the text to support that inference.						
Purpose	The purpose is singular – to explain the reasons the Great Fire started.						
Overall placement: Grade 6	The text, as indicated by both quantitative and qualitative data, should be assigned to Grade 6. While sufficiently complex and of high quality, the text does not place unreasonable demands on the student, as the vocabulary level, syntax, and knowledge demands help with accessibility.						

Appendix F: Explanation of Tasks Used to Teach Close Reading

The tasks below are all components of the lessons above.

Reading Task: Students will silently read the passage, first to develop a sense of the whole, and then they can listen to the teacher while they read along in their heads. This second read will both deepen understanding and boost fluency for students who need that. Subsequent readings will be chunked and students will be in pursuit of a variety of information and understandings about the particulars of the great fire.

Vocabulary Task: Most of the meanings of words in the exemplar text can be discovered from context. Teachers can use discussions to model and reinforce how to learn vocabulary from contextual clues, and students must be held accountable for engaging in this practice since it's an essential element of comprehension.

Sentence Syntax Task: There are some difficult sentences in this passage. Teachers should engage in a close examination of such sentences to help students discover how they are built and how they convey meaning. It is crucial that the help they receive in unpacking text complexity focuses both on the precise meaning of what the author is saying and why the author might have constructed the sentence in this particular fashion. That practice will in turn support students' ability to unpack meaning from syntactically complex sentences they encounter in future reading.

Discussion Task: Students will discuss the exemplar text in depth with their classmates and their teacher. This gives students another active encounter with the text, and proving their positions in peer discussion helps reinforce the use of text evidence.

Writing Task: Students will write a persuasive paragraph on the role of government in protecting people from the sort of disaster represented by the Chicago Fire. Teachers might afford students the opportunity to revise their paragraphs after participating in classroom discussion or receiving teacher feedback, allowing them to refashion both their understanding of the text and their expression of that understanding.

Assessment Task: This mini-assessment is designed as a culminating activity for students to complete after the lesson set. The questions are aligned to the CCSS reading standards and illustrate implications of the CCSS for assessment. The questions are text-dependent and require close reading and analysis of the text. Based on data from piloting, it is estimated for planning purposes that the assessment may take students around 25 minutes to complete. However, students should be allowed sufficient time to complete the task comfortably.

Appendix G: Additional Resources for Common Core Implementation

Additional Close Reading Sample Lessons:

- <http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/close-reading-exemplars>

Shift 1 - Complexity: *Regular practice with complex text and its academic language*

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literary complex texts
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf
- See the Text Complexity Collection on www.achievethecore.org

Shift 2 – Evidence: *Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational*

- See Close Reading Exemplars for ways to engage students in close reading on
<http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/close-reading-exemplars>
- See the Basal Alignment Project for examples of text-dependent questions
<http://www.achievethecore.org/basal-alignment-project>

Shift 3 – Knowledge: *Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction*

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literacy complex texts
http://wwwcorestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf