

The Chicago Fire

CCSSR2—clarify the main/central idea of a passage.

Chicago started out as a small town. Then many people moved to Chicago. They wanted to be part of the new city. They were brave. They came here to make a new life. They started with nothing. They worked hard. They made their homes good places to live.

But Chicago grew so fast people did not have time to build homes of brick. So they made them of wood. The city had to put in streets quickly. The streets were made of wood. People had just put wooden planks down to make streets. They stuck them together with tar.

Some people said to watch out. They said that all the wood was dangerous. There could be a fire. But more people kept moving here. They needed homes in a hurry. So they kept building more wooden houses.

More than 100 years ago there was a big fire in Chicago. It was 1871. It had been hot all summer. The trees and bushes were dry because they needed rain. It had not rained enough to keep them growing green.

The fire kept burning. It lasted more than 30 hours. People tried to stop it. But all the wood kept the fire burning. Finally, it started to rain. That helped to put the fire out.

When people saw how much was burned, they were worried. How would they be able to stay here? But the people who had moved here had started with nothing. They had built the city. They could have moved. But they decided to stay. They would rebuild the city of Chicago.

The day after the fire the newspaper had headline that said “Cheer up! Chicago shall rise again.” People stayed and worked together. They built new homes of brick.

People helped each other. They shared food. They shared homes. And they passed laws about building in Chicago. From then on, people would build with bricks so homes would not burn. By 1891, Chicago was a big city again. People who had stayed felt glad. They knew they had made the right choice.

Make a timeline. Show what happened.

Write what you think. Why would people stay in Chicago after the fire? Use information from the passage and your own ideas.