Read closely and think clearly and creatively!
Common Core Literacy Frames and Activities

This set of resources supports applying the competencies of the Common Core to The Great Chicago Fire.

It emphasizes the use of graphic organizers to guide students’ thinking about the story. PARCC TECRs (Technology Enhanced Constructed Responses) use graphic organizers to assess students’ comprehension and interpretation. These are “paper” TECRs that will help students analyze the story so they can create their own reports, plays, and artwork based on this important event in Chicago’s history.

The Literacy/Thinking/History Connection
Every history contains answers to these questions.
  • What challenges did people face?
  • What choices did people make?
  • What effects did they have?
  • What ideas can we learn by thinking about this history?

Historical fiction helps students imagine that history from the point of view of people who were there. The following activities will help students answer these big questions based on The Great Chicago Fire.

Learning Activity List
Comprehend and Infer:
Draw Vocabulary—word-picture charts and/or matching games
Make up text-based questions about characters, places, events, that other students answer with evidence, citing the page number.
Add more to the Pictures: What else could be part of that picture?
Draw pictures of actions characters take—add what might happen

Summarize: Write a summary that supports the theme

Construct: PARCC includes the Prose Constructed Response (PCR) as a culminating part of each sequence of questions about a reading. Students can write constructed responses based on the PARCC formats:
  • Write the journal of one of the characters
  • Write the next part of the story—the sequel
  • Explain how Mrs. O’Leary makes a claim and supports it with evidence.
  • Dramatize the story—use dialogue from the story and your own added dialogue.

Create:
Communicate the theme of the book in a…Song Collage Poem Play or Exhibit—Visit the Chicago History Museum to see their exhibit, then create yours.

Create a story about your own community—how people met challenges with grit.
Expand Vocabulary
CCSSRL3.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

Students can contribute to a display of words from the book. They can infer their meaning by looking closely at the drawings and reading the text on the page where they occur.

Infer Meaning from Context
Each student can contribute pictures to a “Pictionary” or sentences to a glossary. We sorted these words into categories to help students think about the ways the writer uses words to communicate about the people, places, and events in the story.

Place Words: landmark, route, building, bridge, side street, shack, beach, shore, rooftop

Words about People: occupation, brave, courage, grateful, spirit, burden, grit

Words about Events: discover, cause, effect, explosion, escape, challenge, discover, journey, collapse

Objects that People Had or Found: steam, object, belongings, trunk, carriage, relic, wreckage, debris, combination, lantern, bundles

Adjectives that Describe Things: fused, twisted, limp, giant, overloaded

Analyze Nonliteral Language
The writer uses vivid images to help students understand the story. Students can infer what they mean by reading the text and looking closely at the illustration.

• Gem of the Prairie (p. 7)
• sea of people (p. 23)
• beast of fire (p. 28)
Complete the Story Map
CCSSRL3.3. Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events. Then figure out the theme.

Sequence Events
Draw or tell how it started, what happened next, how it ended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>How I Feel</th>
<th>Evidence from the Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The fire starts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am on the bridge.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get to the lake.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Infer how one character feels at different times during the story.

Character: ____________________________

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</table>

Infer Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Action that Shows this Trait</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Infer the Theme (CCSSRL3.2): What is the message or lesson of the story?

___________________________________________________________________

Why do you think that is the message the writer wants you to understand?
Show Causes and Effects

CCSS RI3.3 Analyze relationships—Describe the relationship between a series of historical events...using language that pertains to ...cause/effect.

Construct this diagram with words or pictures.
Tell causes of the fire.
Tell its effects on the city.

What did people need most after the fire?
__grit ___stores ___carriages ___water

Support your choice with evidence from the story.
Interpret Illustrations

CCSSRL3.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

Choose any page that shows people.  Page:______________________
List what the illustration shows about the story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>What the Illustration Shows Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feelings</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Mood** means how the writer and illustrator want the reader to feel. For example, look closely at the picture on pages 24 and 25.

**How do you feel when you look at that illustration?**

What does the artist do to help you feel that way?
- Look at the faces of the characters. What feelings do they show?
- Look at how the characters are standing. How do they make you feel?
- Look at the kinds of colors and shades the artist uses. Why did the artist use those colors?
- What else does the artist do to help you feel that way?

The writer helps, too.
What details does the writer use that help make that mood clear?

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
Plan Your Own Historical Fiction

CCSSW3.3 Write narratives in which they:

a. Establish a situation, introduce a narrator and/or characters, and organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
b. Employ dialogue and descriptions of characters’ actions, thoughts, and feelings.
c. Use temporal words and phrases to signal event sequence.
d. Provide a sense of closure.

What is the time and place of your historical story?
When: _________________________  Where:   ______________________________

What is your message or theme?

________________________________________________________________________

Who are your characters? ________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What challenge or problem will the characters face?

________________________________________________________________________

List the main events.
First, ______________________________________________________
Then, ______________________________________________________
Then, ______________________________________________________
At the end, _____________________________________________________

What are two characters’ main traits—and how will their actions show those traits?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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Write the story! Use techniques that the writer of The Great Chicago Fire used—dialogue, descriptions of the characters’ actions, thoughts, and feelings.
Chicago History Museum Exhibit, Activities, and Resources

At the museum, your students will learn about the fire in the Chicago at the Crossroads exhibit.

They can participate in two learning activities:

**The Great Chicago Fire—at the museum, students in grades 3-5**

Use an oversized map, icons, photographs and first-hand accounts to trace the events of October 8–10, 1871, and collaboratively tell the story of the fire.

**Painted Memories: The Great Chicago Fire—Student Workshop**

Although there are no photographs of the Great Chicago Fire, artists recorded their memories of it so vividly that today, more than a century later, we can understand this important event through their work. This workshop invites students to share written and physical responses to *Memories of the Chicago Fire*, a historic painting by Julia Lemos. Then, using excerpts from Lemos’s written account, take their analysis one step further, gaining insight into the lives of the people who experienced the fire. The workshop concludes with an opportunity for students to create a cover for their own fire narrative. *45-minute experience (per class); recommended for grades 3 and 4. Available on Tuesdays and Thursdays.*