

The Chicago Fire

CCSSR2: Determine **central ideas or themes** of a text and analyze their development; **summarize** the key supporting details and ideas.

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

However, Chicago grew so fast that people did not have time to build homes of brick, and they built them of wood instead. The city had to put in streets quickly, which meant the streets were also made of wood. People just put wooden planks down to make streets, and stuck the planks together with tar.

Some people said to be very careful because all of that wood was dangerous, especially if there was a fire. But more people kept moving here, and they all needed homes in a hurry. So they kept building more wooden houses.

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

The fire continued burning. In fact, it lasted more than 30 hours. People tried to stop it, but because of all the wood, the fire kept on burning. Finally, it started to rain and that helped to put the fire out.

When people saw how much was burned, they were extremely worried. They wondered how they would be able to stay here. Yet the people who had moved here had started out with nothing. They were the ones who had built the city. They could have moved, but they decided to stay and rebuild the city of Chicago.

The day after the fire, the newspaper ran a headline that said “Cheer up! Chicago shall rise again.” People stayed in Chicago and they worked hard together. They built brand new homes made of brick.

People helped each other by sharing their food and their homes. They passed new laws about building in Chicago that stated that, 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.

Support the Main Idea

What is the main idea of this passage?

Underline five sentences in the passage that support that idea.