

Long ago, there was a very big fire in Chicago. That was in 1871. After the fire, there was a lot of trash. Many blocks had burned. Many houses were gone. There was so much trash people needed to move it out of the way. They wanted to build new homes. It was hard to go down the street. The streets were full of burned wood.

People traveled by walking or riding horses. They had wagons. They did not have dump trucks. In fact, trucks had not been invented. It would be much later before people had trucks. So moving things was hard.

A leader had a plan. He said they should put the trash in the lake. He said that would be a way to get rid of the trash. And then they would have more land. Some people said that was a waste of time. They should build houses first. But other people said they could do both. They could move the trash. They could build, too.

So they did. It was hard work. They put lots of old wood from the fire in wagons. Horses pulled the wagons. They started with the trash near the lake. They moved that trash. They put it in the lake. Then they went farther. Block by block, they took the trash. They moved it to the lake.

Soon there was a lot of trash at the edge of the city. Next they got dirt. They got it from places that had burned. They piled the dirt on top. Little by little it got bigger. They called that landfill.

Some people wanted to build there. But they did not build on new land. They planted grass. They planted trees. That took time. It took a lot of work. Some people said it would be better to build there. They wanted new homes. But leaders said it should be a big park.

They made Chicago a better city. Leaders said the land could be a special place. It would be a great park. It was next to downtown. Many people would be able to go there. The city was very crowded. It was good to have open land. Thousands of people worked in offices downtown. They could come there during their lunch hour.

You can see that park today. It is Grant Park. Because it is downtown, many people go there every day. Thousands of people work downtown. They can all go to the park.

*Directions: Choose the best answer for each question*

1. Why did people want to move trash.

- a. to make the streets pretty
- b. to be able to travel
- c. to prevent another fire
- d. to use their carts

2. Why did the leader want to put the trash in the lake?

- a. so it would not burn
- b. so it could float away
- c. so the city would have more land
- d. so the city would look better

3. Why did leaders make the new land a park?

- a. to prevent a fire
- b. to grow grass
- c. to wait until it was time to build
- d. to give people a place to enjoy

4. Why would a worker want to go to a park at lunchtime?

- a. to get food
- b. to get outside
- c. to see the grass
- d. to see the landfill

5. *Write your own answer to this question.*

Why did the leaders want Chicago to have a big new park?

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**TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking**

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

**Answers:** *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	b	c	d	b

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

5. They wanted to make the downtown a better place to work.

*This is a letter someone might have written after the Chicago fire.*

Dear Mother,

I hope you are well. I miss the family. Don't worry. I am doing fine. As you know, we had a big fire. I was scared. But it turned out all right for me. I don't have a place to live right now. I'm living in a tent. But I am healthy. And soon I will have a new home.

When the fire started, we all ran out into the street. We had never seen such a big fire. There was smoke. You could not see the stars because of the smoke.

You would have been proud of me. I did not run away. I went to help. I knew that this would be a big job. The fire department could not put the fire out. If we ran, the city was lost.

I joined a line of people passing buckets along. One person was at the river's edge. He pulled water from the river in the bucket. Then he gave that to the next person in line. We all kept passing the bucket along. The last person handed it to a fireman who would pour it on the street to stop the fire from going farther.

We wanted to keep doing that. But the fire kept coming closer. We had to turn back. We walked all the way downtown. Even there the fire was burning. I was afraid.

I went into the river. It was cold. Then I swam to the other side of the river. There were many people in the river. They were in boats. One of them pulled me up into his boat. He said, "We need to pull together to get through this." I don't know how to find him now. I want to thank him. He did not have to take care of me. He had his whole family to take care of in that boat.

Now I am very tired, so I will stop my letter. I have been working hard all day. We are building our new home. I hope you can come to visit soon. Can you bring some clothes? Don't worry. We have enough. I would like some new ones. The stores are not open yet.

Your loving son, John

*Directions: Choose the best answer for each question*

6. Why did John write the letter.

- a. to ask for clothes
- b. to tell his mother he was fine
- c. to tell about the fire
- d. to tell how they put out the fire

7. Why does John ask for clothes?

- a. He lost his in the fire.
- b. He wants to look good.
- c. He wants to get clean clothes.
- d. He knows his mother will send them.

8. Why did John help put out the fire?

- a. He was afraid.
- b. He wanted to save the city.
- c. He wanted to be a hero.
- d. He wanted his mother to be proud of him.

9. Why did the man pull John out of the river?

- a. because there was room in the boat
- b. because John was drowning
- c. because he wanted to be a hero
- d. because people should help each other

10. *Write your own answer to this question.*

Why do you think John tells his mother how he helped fight the fire?

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**Answers:** *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	6	7	8	9
Answer	b	a	b	d

Question 10 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

10. Because he wants her to be proud of him.