The Great Fire by Jim Murphy

The Great Fire by Jim Murphy is a nonfiction account of one of the most devastating disasters in American history. In October 1871, a fire that began in a barn in Chicago spread throughout much of the city. It killed hundreds of people, destroyed thousands of buildings, and left almost 100,000 people homeless.
**Genre**
The *Great Fire* is an example of **narrative nonfiction**. In other words, the writer is telling a **story** that is **true** or factual.

**Text Structure**
The text structure of *The Great Fire* is **chronological** which means that the story is told in the **same order or sequence** in which events happened.

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**What does an author need to write a nonfiction story?**

* Eyewitness accounts
* Newspaper articles
* Drawings
* Maps
* Photographs
* First-person accounts from survivors
* Historical sources such as books, government records, etc.
About the Author

Jim Murphy grew up in New Jersey where he spent most of his free time as a child outdoors with his friends - playing baseball games, exploring an old building, and roaming around town.

He didn’t have much time or interest in reading - until a teacher named a book the students were absolutely forbidden to read. Rushing to see what the fuss was about, Jim first read the forbidden book and then kept on reading - anything he could get his hands on.

Jim attended Rutgers University and graduate school at Radcliffe College. He began his career in juvenile publishing where he worked his way up to Managing Editor. He published his first book in 1978 - Weird and Wacky Inventions.

Jim Murphy is known for his carefully researched nonfiction for young readers. He has published more than 35 books including two Newberry Honor Books - The Great Fire and An American Plague.

He lives in New Jersey with his wife and two sons.

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Re: The Great Fire Intro

Jim Murphy

Sent: Thursday, October 24, 2013 9:36 AM
To: Sidney Barton

You forwarded this message on 10/24/13 9:41 AM.

Dear Sidney Barton -- The truth is that I was a terrible reader and student until 6th grade. My 6th grade teacher, Mrs. Ryan, really worked with the kids (me especially) who weren’t doing well and encouraged us to read more and to read things we were truly interested in. My 7th grade teacher, Mr. Polino, got me interested in history. So I started to read both fiction and nonfiction. My mother let me read anything I thought interesting -- medical books, adult fiction and nonfiction, etc. In 8th grade I wanted to do a book report on Hemingway’s For Whom the Bell Tolls, but was told it was too mature for me. I wrapped the book in a plain brown book cover and wrote The Swiss Family Robinson on the outside (so I could read Hemingway in class). I had already read SFR so I did a report on it, but had fun reading the forbidden Hemingway (which, I found out, really doesn’t have anything very shocking in it). By the way, this book banning got me to read everything Hemingway wrote by the end of the school year. Hope everyone enjoys The Great Fire. I had great fun burning the town down (in words, that is).

Best, Jim Murphy
In 1871, Chicago was considered a growing city with a thriving business district - steel mills and manufacturing plants (especially tied to the railroad). Approximately 324,000 people lived in the city which is bordered by five states and Lake Michigan.

The city averaged two fires per day, and throughout the week before the Great Fire, there were at least 20 fires.

Watch the following video for an overview of what happened.

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/chicago/maps/pop_qt_fire_01.html

What caused the fire?

No one knows for certain who or what caused the Chicago Fire of 1871. We will read more about this, as we begin the book. However, many people at the time blamed a cow, a woman named Mrs. O’Leary, immigrants and even poor people. None of these were ever proven.

One theory now is that the fire could have been caused by a combustible material.
Reading Journals

For this unit, you will keep a Reading Journal that you'll make today in class.

*You will need four (4) sheets of plain white paper.
*Fold them in half into "book" form. Staple the very edge of the book - its "spine."
*Write your name on the back cover in the bottom right corner.
*These will be checked throughout the Novel Study with a major grade being taken at the end. You will be graded on thoroughness, organization and quality of your work.

Reading Journals

Sections of Reading Journal:

Front Cover - you are to create a colorful cover for this novel. Your cover must include a colored picture, the name of the novel and the author's name.
Reading Journals

Sections of Reading Journal:

**Inside Front Cover**
At the top of the inside front cover, neatly write the following: *Essential Question*

**Underneath it**, in smaller letters write this sentence:
*What lessons can we learn from disaster?*

**Underneath that**, write:
*Purposes for Reading*

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**Essential Question**
What lessons can we learn from disaster?

*Leave some space here.*

**Purposes for Reading**

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Reading Journals

Sections of Reading Journal:

**Page 1**
Write the following at the top of the page:

*Vocabulary Words*
Reading Journals

Sections of Reading Journal:

Pages 2 - 3
Write the following at the top of each page:

Text Features/Elements

Reading Journals

Sections of Reading Journal:

Page 4
Write the following at the top of the page:

Important Characters
Sections of Reading Journal:

Next Pages - In Order
Each chapter has its own page.

Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7