

The Great Fire

Jim Murphy

Characters:

Catherine and Patrick O'Leary — Owners of the barn where the Great Fire began.

James Hildreth — Ex-alderman who thought the best way to save Chicago during the fire was by blowing up parts of it.

Julia Lemos — Widow who single-handedly saved her five small children and elderly parents.

Joseph E. Chamberlain — Reporter from the Chicago Evening Post.

Horace White — Editor in Chief of the Chicago Tribune.

Alexander Frear — A man visiting relatives in Chicago

Claire Innes — Twelve-year-old whose family had recently moved to Chicago.

Daniel "Peg Leg" Sullivan — First person to notice the fire in O'Leary's barn.

Questions:

Where does this story take place? (**Chicago, Illinois**)

On what date did the Great Fire take place? (**October 8, 1871**)

Where is it rumored that the Great Chicago Fire started? (**O'Leary's barn**)

Who was the first to notice the fire in O'Leary's barn? (**Daniel "Peg Leg" Sullivan**)

Two-thirds of all structures in Chicago in 1871 were made of what material? (**Wood**)

Why, in 1871 Chicago, were sidewalks and many streets made of wood? (**Because of mud problem stemming from building on swampland**)

What weather conditions existed in the summer and fall of 1871 that contributed to the danger of fire? (**Drought**)

Fire engines in the time of the Great Chicago Fire were pulled by what? (**Horses**)

The names of the first two fire engines at the fire scene were what? (**"America" and "Little Giant"**)

What street corner was near where the fire started? **(DeKoven and Jefferson)**

Fire engine pumps were powered by what during the time of the Great Fire? **(Steam)**

How many times must the lever on a fire signal box be pulled to signal a second alarm for a fire? **(Four)**

What newspaper reporter was present as St. Paul's Church caught fire? **(Joseph Chamberlain)**

What visiting New Yorker had a sister-in-law whose house was in the path of the fire? **(Alexander Frear)**

What was the name of the girl in the story who left her home with her family, carrying only a bundle with clothes and food? **(Claire Innes)**

What was the northernmost street that the fire reached? **(Fullerton Avenue)**

What newspaper building was considered "fireproof", but did not prove to be the case? **(The Tribune Building)**

What newspaper editor left his home with "a talented green parrot"? **(Horace White)**

Who survived the heart of the fire by hiding behind a pile of bricks? **(Claire Innes)**

Who created firebreaks by purposely blowing up selected buildings and thus saved several blocks of other homes from destruction? **(James Hildreth)**

What city, when answering Chicago's pleas for help, sent almost their whole firefighting crew to the scene, leaving only one working engine in their own city? **(Milwaukee)**

Who needed to get four of her children from the half-orphanage just before the fire reached their house? **(Julia Lemos)**

How many homeless people sought refuge from the fire in Lincoln Park? **(Thirty thousand)**

What finally brought the fire to an end? **(Rain)**

How many people were left homeless after the fire? **(One hundred thousand)**

What was the Chicago in desperate need for after the fire? **(Drinking water)**

Approximately how many people perished in the fire? **(Three hundred)**

What was sold at the first business set up in the burned-out area? **(Chestnuts)**

Who was reunited with her family after finding her father after the fire? **(Claire Innes)**

In What Book...

Did a fire watchman send fire engines to the wrong location?

Were fires noted to be common, and in fact, thought to be as exciting and dramatic as a night at the theatre?

Would a circle of fire engines be formed to contain a fire?

Were there no telephones, radios and televisions to tell people of the calamity that had befallen the city of Chicago?

Was a girl separated from her family while fleeing a natural catastrophe?

Did winds blow so hard as if caused by a hurricane?

Did "unburned gases rise within a column of smoke and then explode high in the sky?"

Did bridges collapse and make it impossible for ships to escape to Lake Michigan?

Did post-fire photographs remind people of burned out cities from the Civil War just a few years earlier?

Were 17,500 buildings and 73 miles of streets destroyed?

Was it prophesied that the city would "be a better city as well as a greater one, than she was before her disaster?"