Words to Know

Directions: As you come across words in bold in “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone,” ask yourself if you know them or if you can figure them out from context. Check their meanings here. Then complete the activity on the following page.

1. abandoned: “Some roads were completely blocked by burning tree limbs, electrical wires, and cars abandoned by terrified drivers.” (p. 8)
   Meaning: left behind or no longer used

2. dousing: “Josh stood on his truck, battling back flames with a powerful hose, dousing new fires as they erupted.” (p. 9)
   Meaning: pouring a lot of liquid over

3. evacuate: “In 2008, about 10,000 people from the town had to evacuate when a massive fire closed in.” (p. 7)
   Meaning: leave a dangerous place

4. ignited: “Experts now think that sparks from a faulty electrical wire had ignited dry grass on a remote hillside.” (p. 6)
   Meaning: set fire to; caused to burn

5. mobilized: “Firefighters in Paradise mobilized.” (p. 6)
   Meaning: came together to take action

6. plume: “All seemed normal—except for the plume of smoke rising out of the forest in the distance.” (p. 6)
   Meaning: a narrow cloud of something, like dust or smoke, that rises into the air

7. predictable: “The weather in California and around the Earth has been getting hotter and less predictable.” (pp. 6-7)
   Meaning: able to be predicted, or figured out in advance

8. refuge: “As the fire burned across Paradise, hundreds of people took refuge in a supermarket parking lot, which Josh Fisher and other firefighters were protecting.” (p. 9)
   Meaning: shelter from danger

Continued on next page >
**Video Discussion Questions**

**Directions:** Watch the video "Behind the Scenes: Our Beautiful Town Is Gone." Then answer the questions below.

1. **How does the first section of the video (0:11 to 0:54) help you understand why the November 2018 wildfire in Paradise, California, was so devastating?** Consider both the narration and the visuals.

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2. **Who invited author Lauren Tarshis to visit Paradise? Why did Lauren decide to go?**

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3. **According to the video, where did the fire start? Why did it spread so quickly?**

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(Continued on next page)
Video Discussion Questions, p. 2

4. What is the mood (or feeling) of the section from 4:27 to 5:28? How do the narration, interviews, music, and visuals help create this mood?

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5. How was Lauren’s second trip to Paradise different from her first trip? Explain using details from the video.

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6. At the end of the video, Lauren says that “there are powerful lessons we can all learn from the people of Paradise.” Explain what these lessons are in your own words, using examples from the video.

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Video Activity
“Video Discussion Questions”

Answers will vary but should be similar to:

1. The narration in this section explains that the wildfire destroyed the town of Paradise and killed 85 people. It was one of the largest wildfires in history and the deadliest to hit California in a century. On-screen, we see images of a burned-out town, a house on fire, and crosses marking graves. These elements help you understand why the fire was so devastating.

2. Holly Fisher, who lived in Paradise with her family, invited Lauren to visit the town. Lauren decided to go because, as an author, she has learned that listening to people share stories of a difficult experience can give them “comfort and strength.”

3. The fire started in the town of Pulga, which is close to Paradise. It spread quickly because the area was very dry, and because powerful winds blew chunks of burning trees all around the area, starting many new fires.

4. The mood of this section is scary and suspenseful. The narration says that “panic grew” as the fire spread. Images of burning homes, a dark cloud of smoke, and social media posts about the fire are shown on-screen, as survivors describe the frightening scenes they faced while trying to escape. Fast, tense music plays throughout.

5. On her first trip to Paradise, Lauren saw homes and businesses in ruin and very few signs of life. But on her second trip, she saw glimmers of hope. Many businesses had reopened and houses were being rebuilt. People had come from around the country to help.

6. From the people of Paradise, we can learn how to be resilient and positive in the face of enormous challenges. For example, Holly explains how “you have to find something to help you move forward” instead of sinking into negativity. And Lucas offers the advice to “take a breath and stay calm” in a difficult situation.
Words to Know, p. 2

9. resilient: “We are resilient, and I’m certain we will rebuild a beautiful Paradise together.” (p. 9)
   Meaning: able to recover; not easily destroyed

10. smoldering: “Like so many devastating California wildfires, the smoldering brush quickly exploded into a raging wall of flames.” (p. 6)
    Meaning: burning and smoking slowly without flames

11. wilderness: “But many fell in love with the California wilderness, the feeling of wide-open possibility in the American West.” (p. 6)
    Meaning: a wild and natural area in which few people live

Directions: Choose the word that is most similar in meaning to each word in bold.

1. dousing
   A soaking    B drying

2. evacuate
   A leave      B stay

3. resilient
   A weak       B strong

4. refuge
   A shelter    B threat

Directions: For each statement below, fill in the circle to show whether you think it’s true or false. Briefly explain your choice.

5. If someone spends a lot of time in the wilderness, they probably appreciate nature.
   A true   B false
   Reason: __________________________

6. When a movie is predictable, you don’t know what will happen next.
   A true   B false
   Reason: __________________________

Continued on next page >
Words to Know, p. 3

Directions: Rewrite each sentence below using one of the words in the box.

abandoned    ignited    mobilized    plume    smoldering

7. The rising cloud of smoke could be seen from miles away.

8. The police officers took action when they learned of the bank robbery.

9. The toddler was happy to find a stuffed bear that had been left behind.

10. The building caught on fire when someone knocked over a candle.

11. The campers made sure their fire was no longer burning or smoking before they went to sleep.
Close-Reading Questions: After reading “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone,” go back and reread sections to answer the questions below.

1. Reread the beginning of the article, on pages 4-5. What details in this section help you understand how dangerous the Paradise fire was?

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2. How does author Lauren Tarshis describe Paradise before the fire? Why do you think she includes these details?

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________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
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3. Based on “Bigger and Deadlier,” what is climate change? How has it affected wildfires in California?

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________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________________________________________
4. According to “Flaming Birds,” how was the November 2018 fire different from other wildfires that had threatened Paradise before?

________________________________________________________________________________________________________
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5. Reread “Beloved Things.” What challenges did people like Eleanor Weddig, Lucas Fisher, and Kevin McKay face when trying to escape the fire?

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6. In “Grueling Fight,” what dangers did people experience in the supermarket parking lot? How did Josh Fisher and other firefighters help?

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7. What is the main idea of the section “Life Continues”?

________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
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Continued on next page >
8. In the last section of the article, Tarshis explains that “the town’s strength didn’t come from the wood and bricks of the houses and buildings” but from the people. What evidence in the article supports this statement?

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9. Look at the “Faces of Paradise” sidebar on page 7. Why do you think Tarshis told the story of the Paradise fire through the eyes of these different people?

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Think About It!

**Directions:** After reading “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone,” go back and reread sections to answer the questions below. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

**Close-Reading Questions:**

1. Reread the beginning of the article, on pages 4-5. What details in this section help you understand how dangerous the Paradise fire was?

2. How does author Lauren Tarshis describe Paradise before the fire? Why do you think she includes these details?

3. Based on “Bigger and Deadlier,” what is climate change? How has it affected wildfires in California?

4. According to “Flaming Birds,” how was the November 2018 fire different from other wildfires that had threatened Paradise before?

5. Reread “Beloved Things.” What challenges did people like Eleanor Weddig, Lucas Fisher, and Kevin McKay face when trying to escape the fire?

6. In “Grueling Fight,” what dangers did people experience in the supermarket parking lot? How did Josh Fisher and other firefighters help?

7. What is the main idea of the section “Life Continues”?

**Critical-Thinking Questions:**

8. In the last section of the article, Tarshis explains that “the town’s strength didn’t come from the wood and bricks of the houses and buildings” but from the people. What evidence in the article supports this statement?

9. Look at the “Faces of Paradise” sidebar on page 7. Why do you think Tarshis told the story of the Paradise fire through the eyes of these different people?
Think About It!

**Close-Reading Questions:** Read “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone.” Then go back and reread sections of the article to answer the questions below. We’ve started the first two answers for you.

1. Reread the first section. Why did Eleanor Weddig pinch herself on the morning of November 8, 2018?

   Eleanor Weddig pinched herself because

   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
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2. When people in Paradise first saw smoke, why weren’t they worried?

   They weren’t worried because

   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
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Continued on next page >
3. Reread the section “Bigger and Deadlier.” Why have wildfires in California gotten bigger and harder to fight, according to scientists?

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4. What are “flaming birds”? How did they make the fire in Paradise worse?

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Continued on next page >
5. Based on “Beloved Things,” what kept people from quickly driving out of the town of Paradise?

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6. Look at the section header “Grueling Fight.” What was the fight, and where did it happen?

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______________________________
The tone, or feeling, of the final section is hopeful. What details from this section help create a hopeful tone?

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Critical-Thinking Question (big question about the whole story):

Think about Lucas and Eleanor, the two kids featured in this story. How did the fire change their lives? What stayed the same? Use evidence from the article to support your answers. (Continue on the back if you need more space.)
Exploring Text Features

Directions: Answer the questions below to help you explore the photos, captions, and other text features in the nonfiction article “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone.”

1. Study the headline, subhead, and picture on pages 4-5. What mood do these text features help create?

_________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________

2. What does the photo on page 6 tell you about the 2018 wildfire in Paradise?

_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________

3. Read the first two section headers on pages 6-7. Write new headers for those sections.

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_______________________________________________________________________________________

4. Study the “Faces of Paradise” on page 7. What do the photos have in common, and why do you think it was important to include them?

_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________

5. How are the photographs at the top of page 8 connected to the section “Grueling Fight” on page 9?

_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________

6. Look at the photo at the bottom of page 8 and read the caption. What do you learn from these features about escaping a big wildfire?

_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________

Storyworks S-T-R-E-T-C-H What additional photo, chart, or other visual would you like to see with the article? Why do you think it would be helpful?

_______________________________________________________________________________________

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Summary of “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone”

“Our Beautiful Town Is Gone” is about _________________________________.

After sparks from a wire ignited dry grass, _________________________________.

Wildfires, like the one in Paradise, have become _________________________________.

Once people realized the fire would spread to Paradise, they _________________________________.

As people tried to leave the town, they _________________________________.

People such as Josh Fisher and Kevin McKay _________________________________.

Today, the people of Paradise _________________________________.

1. Begin with a topic sentence that tells what the article is mainly about.

3. How have wildfires changed in recent years? Why?

5. What problem did people face as they tried to drive to safety?

6. What did Josh Fisher and Kevin McKay do during the fire?

7. What are the people of Paradise doing now?

A summary is a short retelling of the most important parts of a story. It should include the information that someone would need to know to understand the story, without minor details or your own opinion.

Directions: Complete the summary below, using the prompts in the margins to help you.
Quick, Tell Me What Happened!

Your friend Landon was absent from school and didn’t get to read “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone” in Storyworks. You call him to tell him about it, but he has only one minute before he must rush off to the doctor’s office. Quick, give him a short summary!

Directions: Follow the prompts below to write a one-paragraph summary. Remember, a summary is a brief retelling of the most important parts of the story, without minor details or your own opinion.

1. Decide what the article is mainly about. Think about:
   - What do the headline and subhead on pages 4-5 suggest the article is about?
   - What appears in the picture on pages 4-5?
   - What problems does the article tell you about?

   Use your answers to create a topic sentence for your summary.

2. Decide what the most important information in the article is. Go through each section and jot down notes about what you think is necessary to know to explain what you wrote in your topic sentence. Your notes don’t have to be complete sentences. We’ve given you some examples (and crossed out what doesn’t belong).

**Opening Section**

the morning of November 8, 2018

deadliest wildfire in California’s history
—Eleanor pinched her leg.

“Bigger and Deadlier”

Continued on next page >
Quick, Tell Me What Happened! p. 2

“Flaming Birds”
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

“Beloved Things”
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

“Grueling Fire”
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

“Life Continues”
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Look at your notes. Cross out anything you wrote that is not necessary. Add anything that’s missing. Ask yourself:
   * Did I include information about what happened? Where and when it happened?
   * Why it happened? Who was involved? How it ended?
   * Is there a detail or two describing the main topic?
   * Did I write details that aren’t essential for understanding the main topic?
      Get rid of those! (See example on page 1.)

4. Number your notes above so you can retell them in an order that makes sense.

5. Use your topic sentence and your notes to write your one-paragraph summary on a separate sheet of paper, retelling what happened in your own words. Reread it to make sure it’s clear and that it sums up what’s important in the article. Then you can share your summary with your friend Landon!

Tip!
Use your notes to summarize the article out loud with a partner. This will help you decide if you need to add or take out any information.
The main idea of a section or a whole article is an important idea that the author wants you to know about the topic. Looking at the details can help you figure out what the main idea is. What do they mainly describe? You can also use the titles of sections as clues.

**Directions:** Complete the chart below. Use the prompts to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Main idea</th>
<th>How do you know?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First section, starting at the beginning of the article</td>
<td>Before the November 8, 2018 wildfire, Paradise, California, was a beautiful and lively place.</td>
<td>Give two details from this section that describe Paradise before November 8, 2018:</td>
</tr>
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<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bigger and Deadlier”</td>
<td>Write the main idea:</td>
<td>The main idea is supported by the details below. Think about how climate change has affected wildfires:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Wildfires are growing bigger and harder to fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• As the climate gets hotter and less predictable, scientists say that fires are getting deadlier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Many of California’s worst fires have happened during the past 10 years, a time with record-high temperatures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Flaming Birds”</td>
<td>The November 2018 wildfire was more dangerous than past wildfires that had threatened Paradise.</td>
<td>Give two more details from this section that explain why the 2018 wildfire was especially dangerous:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The fire was moving so fast that a piece of land the size of a football field burned every second.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Continued on next page >**
### Finding the Main Ideas, p. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Main idea</th>
<th>How do you know?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| “Beloved Things” | **Write the main idea:** The main idea is supported by the details below. Think about what they tell you about the challenges people faced as they tried to escape:  
• People had time to grab only a few possessions before leaving their homes.  
• Cars were slowed down by traffic jams and blocked roads.  
• Many didn’t know if their loved ones had escaped safely or not. |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| “Grueling Fight”   | As they tried to take refuge from the flames, people faced terrifying conditions. | Give three details from this section that explain what it was like to be trapped in the city during the fire:  
•                                                                                                                                                           |
| “Life Continues”    | **Write the main idea:** The main idea is supported by the details below. Think about what they tell you about the people of Paradise:  
• Thousands of people who lost their homes relocated to nearby towns.  
• People still do regular things, like have playdates and birthday parties and go to work.  
• Residents of Paradise are making plans for their future. |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
The main idea of a section or a whole article is an important idea that the author wants you to know about the topic. Looking at the details can help you figure out what the main idea is. What do they mainly describe? You can also use the titles of sections as clues.

**Directions:** Complete the chart below. Use the prompts to help you.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Main idea</th>
<th>How do you know?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First section, starting at the beginning of</td>
<td>Before the November 8, 2018 wildfire, Paradise, California, was a beautiful</td>
<td>Give two details from this section that describe Paradise prior to November 8,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the article</td>
<td>and lively place.</td>
<td>2018:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bigger and Deadlier”</td>
<td>Write the main idea:</td>
<td>The main idea is supported by the details below. Think about what they tell you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>about why wildfires are getting worse:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Wildfires are growing bigger and harder to fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>are getting deadlier</td>
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<td>• Many of California’s worst fires have happened during the past 10 years, a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>time with record-high temperatures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Flaming Birds”</td>
<td>Write the main idea. Think about the details on the right:</td>
<td>Give two more details from this section that explain why the 2018 wildfire was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>especially dangerous:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Main idea</th>
<th>How do you know?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| “Beloved Things”   | Write the main idea. Think about what the section mainly describes:       | We’ve given you one detail that supports the main idea. Write two more details:  
|                    |                                                                           | • People had time to grab only a few possessions before leaving their homes.  
|                    |                                                                           | •                                                                                                                                   |
| “Grueling Fight”   | Write the main idea. Think about what the section mainly describes:       | Give three details from this section that support the main idea:  
|                    |                                                                           | •                                                                                                                                   |
|                    |                                                                           | •                                                                                                                                   |
| “Life Continues”   | Write the main idea:                                                      | Give three details from this section that support the main idea:  
|                    |                                                                           | •                                                                                                                                   |
Understanding Text Structures

Directions: Text structure is the way an author organizes information in a piece of writing. Authors use different text structures for different purposes. Common text structures are listed in the boxes on the right. Use the information in these boxes to help you answer the questions below about “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone.”

1. What is the main purpose of the article?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Which text structure does the author use overall in the article to achieve this purpose? _____________________________________________

2. In the opening section, the author describes the town of Paradise. What details does she include to help you picture the town in your mind?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Why do you think the author begins the article this way?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Continued on next page >
3. In the section “Bigger and Deadlier,” the author explains that climate change is worsening wildfires in California and the American West. On the lines below, write two negative effects climate change is having on wildfires. (You may quote lines from the article or rewrite them in your own words.)

Effect 1: 

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

Effect 2: 

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

4. In the section “Flaming Birds,” the author describes some of the differences between the 2018 wildfire and other wildfires. Which type of text structure is this? Support your answer using examples.

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

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5. In the section “Life Continues,” the author uses a problem-and-solution text structure to explain what the people who had lived in Paradise are doing to deal with the loss of their town and their homes. What are some examples of the ways people from Paradise are tackling the problem of having their lives disrupted?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

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____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
A Letter of Hope

Directions: Write a letter with a message of hope to one of the people you read about in the article “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone.” Use the prompts in the margins to guide you.

Dear ___________________________

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
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___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

Sincerely,
________________________________________

Today’s date goes here.

1. Start by telling the person how you heard about his or her story.

2. Then explain what you learned about the fire in Paradise, California.

3. End with a message of hope. What do you want to say to help this person feel better?

Now copy your work neatly onto a separate sheet of paper. Don’t forget to proofread!

Send your letter to “Fire Contest,” c/o Storyworks P.O. Box 712 New York, NY 10013-0712 and we’ll share it with the person you chose.
Research Kit

Directions: Read the article “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone” in the September 2019 issue of Storyworks. Then follow the steps below, which will lead you on a research journey inspired by the story.

STEP 1: Reread the section “Bigger and Deadlier.” Think about how America’s wildfires have changed as a result of climate change. Then consider the following question:

How is climate change affecting our planet?

This is the big question that will guide your research. Start by getting some background from these resources:

- https://climatekids.nasa.gov/climate-change-meaning
- https://climateclassroomkids.org/educators/climate-101

STEP 2: To further explore the question, choose one of the two research paths below.

Research Path 1

Choose another type of natural disaster that scientists say has become worse because of climate change. Find out why and how.

You can choose a type of disaster such as:

- hurricanes
- droughts
- heat waves
- or go online to find another

Research Path 2

Choose a kid or teen who is working to fight climate change. Find out what this changemaker is doing and why.

You can choose a kid or teen such as:

- Greta Thunberg
- Alexandria Villaseñor
- Xiuhtezcatl Martinez
- or go online to find another

Continued on next page >
STEP 3: Think about the questions you’ll need to answer to complete your project. Then start to hunt for answers! Visit your school or public library and ask your librarian or your teacher to help you find nonfiction books about your topic. You can also search for information online—but make sure you’re using trustworthy resources, such as online encyclopedias, well-known newspapers and magazines, and government websites. Here are some sites that can help get you started on your research path:

- https://www.c2es.org/category/climate-basics/extreme-weather
- https://players.brightcove.net/1543299976/default_default/index.html?videoId=6049660666001

STEP 4: Turn the information you’ve collected into a dazzling final product!
Select one of the choices below.

**Choices for Research Path 1:**

1) Using a free online program like Canva, create an infographic showing how climate change has affected your chosen type of natural disaster.
2) Write a letter to a kid living in the 1700s, explaining how the type of natural disaster has changed since his or her time and why.
3) Create a 5- to 10-minute-long movie about a kid who survives the natural disaster. Be sure to include details about how climate change made the disaster more dangerous.

**Choices for Research Path 2:**

1) Pretend your chosen changemaker is giving a speech at an upcoming school assembly. Write a short speech you could give to introduce him or her to your fellow classmates.
2) Using Weebly for Education,* create a website about your changemaker, explaining what he or she has done to fight climate change and why other kids should join in and help.
3) Write and film a short TV news interview in which you and a classmate play the interviewer and the changemaker. The interviewer should ask why the kid or teen decided to take action.

*Ask your teacher for a log-in.
"Our Beautiful Town Is Gone" Quiz

Directions: Read the feature “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone” in the September 2019 issue of Storyworks. Then fill in the bubble next to the best answer for each question below.

1. What was the first sign of the wildfire for people living in Paradise?
   A) burning buildings  B) blocked roads
   C) sparks  D) smoke

2. Climate change has made wildfires ______.
   A) easier to manage  B) harder to control
   C) more predictable  D) much brighter

3. The wildfire was able to spread across the Feather River because of the ______.
   A) dry grass  B) tall trees
   C) wet ground  D) strong wind

4. What does the word abandoned mean in the phrase “cars abandoned by terrified drivers”?
   A) set on fire  B) broken
   C) left behind  D) cleaned

5. Which conclusion can you draw from “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone”?
   A) People in Paradise care about each other.
   B) Forest fires cause little damage to towns.
   C) Wildfires have become less of a problem over the years.
   D) People only look out for themselves during an emergency.

6. Which line from the article supports the answer to question 5?
   A) “Schools, playgrounds, businesses, the hospital—all would be destroyed.”
   B) “But in recent years, America’s wildfires have become bigger and harder to fight.”
   C) “Kevin McKay, after six long hours, delivered his 22 students to a parking lot outside of town.”
   D) “In the months after the fire, the town of Paradise has remained mostly empty.”

Constructed Response

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, write your answer to each question in a well-organized response. Make sure you support your answers with information and details from the article.

7. What are two descriptive details the author uses to help you feel as if you were in Paradise during the fire?

8. Briefly describe Eleanor Weddig’s experience from the time the fire started to now.
“Our Beautiful Town Is Gone” Quiz

Directions: Read the feature “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone” in the September 2019 issue of Storyworks. Then fill in the bubble next to the best answer for each question below.

1. The article is mainly about _____.
   A the history of Paradise, California
   B how wildfires have changed over time
   C wildfires around America
   D how people in Paradise reacted to a fire

2. Which is true of the people who first built Paradise in the 1800s?
   A Many became rich from the gold they found.
   B They enjoyed living in the California wilderness.
   C They enjoyed eating pancakes at Debbie’s Restaurant.
   D They liked living in a large, bustling town.

3. What has caused wildfires to become harder to fight in recent years?
   A cooler temperatures
   B bustling towns
   C electrical wires
   D climate change

4. Which phrase from the story supports the answer to question 3?
   A “. . . sparks from a faulty electrical wire had ignited dry grass on a remote hillside.”
   B “. . . the smoldering brush quickly exploded into a raging wall of flames.”
   C “The weather . . . around the Earth has been getting hotter and less predictable.”
   D “They built new towns, places like Paradise.”

5. The wildfire was able to spread across the Feather River because of the _____.
   A dry grass
   B tall trees
   C wet ground
   D strong wind

6. Why did some people abandon their cars during the fire?
   A Roads were blocked.
   B Their cars were too full.
   C They didn’t want their cars to catch fire.
   D They didn’t know where they were going.

7. What conclusion can you draw from “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone”?
   A People survive disasters only when they focus on their own safety.
   B People in Paradise helped each other to get through difficult times.
   C Forest fires are unusual in California.
   D Forest fires are impossible to contain.

8. Which line from the story supports the answer to question 7?
   A “But in recent years, America’s wildfires have become bigger and harder to fight.”
   B “Paradise had been threatened before . . .”
   C “Nobody knows what the future will bring for Paradise.”
   D “We are resilient, and I’m certain we will rebuild a beautiful Paradise together.”

Constructed Response

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, write your answer to each question in a well-organized response. Make sure you support your answers with information and details from the article.

9. What are two descriptive details the author uses to help you feel as if you were in Paradise during the fire?

10. Briefly describe the experience of one person featured in the article, from the time the fire started to the present.
“Our Beautiful Town Is Gone”

To the teacher: We suggest using these questions with the lower-Lexile version of the story, supported by the lower-Lexile audio version. Select the ones that are best for your students, depending on where they are in their acquisition of English. Ask them orally or choose questions to create your own written assignment. If students are ready, prompt them to follow up their answers with more details.

Yes/No Questions
These questions allow students who are new to English to show their understanding with a simple answer.
1. Was Paradise a new town in California? (No, it wasn’t.)
2. Were people in Paradise used to having wildfires? (Yes, they were.)
3. Was the wind blowing during the 2018 fire? (Yes, it was.)
4. Did Eleanor save all of her favorite things? (No, she didn’t.)
5. Did most of the houses in Paradise burn down? (Yes, they did.)
6. Was Eleanor able to move home after the fire? (No, she wasn’t.)

Either/Or Questions
These questions allow slightly more-advanced students to use language from the question in their answer.
1. Is Josh Fisher a firefighter or a school-bus driver? (He is a firefighter.)
2. Does climate change make controlling wildfires easier or harder? (It makes it harder.)
3. Did Kevin McKay keep 22 students safe on his bus, or did he drop them off? (He kept them safe on his bus.)
4. Did people return to their homes in 6 weeks or 16 weeks? (They returned in six weeks.)
5. Are people hopeful or worried about the future of Paradise? (They’re hopeful.)

Short Answer Questions
1. In what ways was Paradise’s November 2018 wildfire different from its past wildfires? (The 2018 fire was much bigger. It moved faster because of the wind and burned up larger chunks of land each second.)
2. If your home was on fire and you could save only three items, what would they be? (Answers will vary.)

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My name: ____________________________

Teacher’s name: ____________________________

School name: ____________________________

School address: ____________________________

(Remember to include city, state, and ZIP code!)

School phone: ____________________________

Parent’s name and email (optional): ____________________________

See page 9 of the September 2019 issue of Storyworks for more information about this contest.

My Response

Write a letter to one of the people in the article, telling them what you learned about the Paradise fire and sharing your own message of hope for them. See page 2 for a template.

Entries will be judged on:

- a clearly stated main idea
- good organization and transitions
- effective use of supporting evidence
- grammar, spelling, and punctuation
A Letter of Hope

**Directions:** Write a letter with a message of hope to one of the people you read about in the article "Our Beautiful Town Is Gone." Use the prompts in the margins to guide you.

Dear ____________________,

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

Sincerely,
____________________________________

Put the name of the person you’re writing to here.

Today's date goes here.

1. Start by telling the person how you heard about his or her story.

2. Then explain what you learned about the fire in Paradise, California.

3. End with a message of hope. What do you want to say to help this person feel better?

Sign your name here.

Now copy your work neatly onto a separate sheet of paper. Don’t forget to proofread!

Send your letter to “Fire Contest,” c/o Storyworks P.O. Box 712 New York, NY 10013-0712 and we’ll share it with the person you chose.