

Week of April 6-10, 2020

Mrs. Swigart

Hello! I hope everyone is doing well. You conquered the 1st week! Congratulations! My "office hours" are Monday 1-3, Tuesday 11-1, and Thursday 3-5. Of course, you can always email me and I will try to get back to you as soon as I can. Please feel free to email me any questions you may have. As far as turning in work goes, you can either share a doc with me, or turn it into the school. Hard copies are at the school so you don't need to print anything. Loose leaf paper works for me as well for turning in assignments. I do ask that your name is written, with the date, class period, and the choice number. You got this! - Mrs. Swigart

Class	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3 (Enrichment)
7th Grade Literature	Read the article "Death by Molasses!" and answer the "Close Reading Questions:...", "Know the News," and "Heading Hashtags"	Read a book of your choosing for 30 minutes. Then pick one prompt from the Independent Reading Journal Prompts Options. Your explanations should be at least a paragraph long (7-9 sentences). If you choose a project, please use complete sentences.	Write your own short story about the Molasses Wave of 1919. Make sure setting, conflict, character development, introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution are evident and clear. (There should be at least a couple of pages.)

DEATH BY MOLASSES!

A century ago, a 15-foot-tall wave of syrup crashed through a crowded Boston neighborhood, killing 21 people. The horrific accident led to new safety regulations—and justice for poor immigrants. BY BRYAN BROWN

As You Read, Think About: What caused the molasses flood? How did people respond to it?

January 15, 1919, was a perfectly lovely day—until the moment disaster struck.

The weather was quite warm for winter in Boston, Massachusetts. Around noon, a neighborhood called the North End was lively and busy. Workers ate their lunches in the mild air. Large ships pulled in and out of nearby Boston Harbor.

The elevated train ran on its tracks.

Antonio Distasio, 9, was out in the street. So were his sister Maria and his friend Pasquale Iantosca, both 10.

They were members of the North End's large Italian immigrant community.

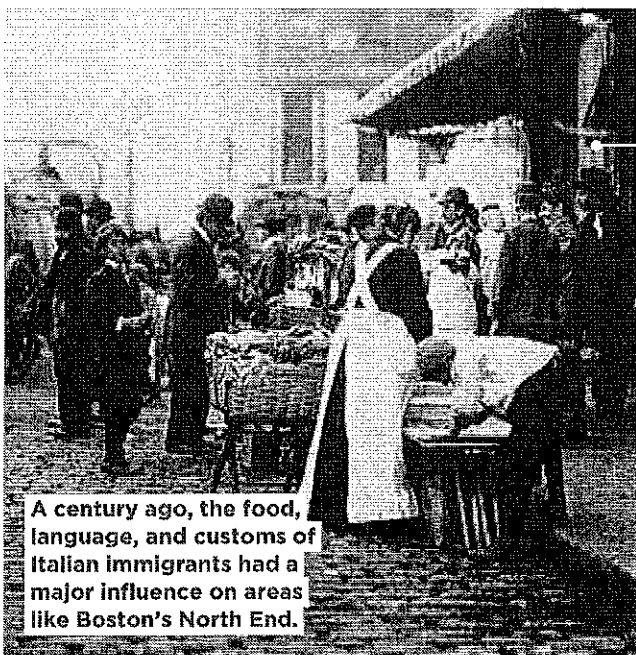
The children were helping their families by gathering scrap firewood.

By chance, the kids happened to be next to the neighborhood's major eyesore, a 50-foot-tall steel tank. It was filled with molasses. That thick syrup was once a popular sweetener.

People hated the ugly tank. It cast a shadow over the neighborhood. It often oozed brown goo. And when it was full, as it was now, the tank would groan. It sounded like a huge beast with a stomachache.

At about 12:40 p.m., patrolman Frank McManus was making a call at a phone box on Commercial Street. That was near the tank. Suddenly, he heard "a tremendous rumbling, grinding sound," he later said. He also heard "the rat-tat-tat of what →

ILLUSTRATION BY BRAD WALKER (MOLASSES); LEWIS HINE/NATIONAL CHILD LABOR COMMITTEE COLLECTION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION



A century ago, the food, language, and customs of Italian immigrants had a major influence on areas like Boston's North End.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS Between 1880 and 1920, about 4 million Italian people came to the U.S.—part of a mass migration from Europe and Asia. Many settled in Boston's North End and in pockets of other cities, creating distinct neighborhoods and putting their stamp on their adoptive country.

REGULATIONS A set of standards that companies must legally follow, such as for safety or fairness. Before the 1930s, there were few controls on what businesses could do. The molasses flood helped lead to an era of regulations that affected every part of American life.

sounded like machine-gun bullets.” That was actually the sound of thousands of metal rivets popping out. The rivets had held the tank together.

McManus turned to see the giant structure burst apart. A wall of thick, dark liquid came roaring out.

“Send all available rescue vehicles and personnel immediately!” he managed to shout into the phone. “There’s a wave of molasses coming down Commercial Street!”

THE DARK WAVE

Molasses usually moves very slowly. But the 2.3 million gallons under pressure in the tank burst forth like lava from a volcano. The syrup formed a wave 15 feet high that surged at 35 miles an hour.

Antonio turned to see the brown flood bearing down on Maria. Pasquale’s father, looking out a window, saw his son swallowed up. People on the street vanished.

The wave ripped the local firehouse from its foundation. It crushed houses and swept them away. Then a huge piece of the tank hit a column of the elevated railroad. That caused

part of the track to collapse.

Somehow, brakeman Royal Albert Leeman was able to stop his train. He scrambled across the damaged track and kept another train from plunging into the street.

MOLASSES BURST FORTH FROM THE TANK LIKE LAVA FROM A VOLCANO.

“In seconds,” historian Stephen Puleo wrote years later, the North looked like “a bombed-out war zone.”

TRAPPED IN THE MUCK

Several city blocks were soon covered in molasses. At some points, it was waist-deep. Now, cooling in the air, the syrup began to harden. Rescue workers rushed to free people trapped in the muck.

A *Boston Post* reporter described the scene. “Here and there struggled a form, whether it was animal or human being was impossible to tell.” In the end, 21 people were killed, including Maria and Pasquale.

Another 150 people were injured.

As for Antonio, the wave had smashed him into a lamppost. That knocked him out. A firefighter who found the boy thought he was dead. Hours later, Antonio awoke. He was covered with a sheet in a room where victims’ bodies had been laid. His family stared at him in wonder. Incredibly, he was alive!

THE ROOTS OF DISASTER

How could such a tragedy have happened? The flood is a classic tale of greed and prejudice.

At the time, molasses was very valuable. People could get rich turning it into a substance called industrial alcohol. That was used in explosives (*see sidebar, below*).

In 1915, a company called United States Industrial Alcohol (USIA) built the tank in the North End to store molasses. The location was perfect. Ships pulling into Boston Harbor could pump millions of gallons of the syrup directly into the tank.

But USIA rushed its construction. It cheated on materials to save money. The tank’s steel walls were too thin to

Why Molasses Mattered

Until the late 1800s, molasses was a staple of American homes. Like most sugar, it is made from sugarcane, which grows in the Caribbean and other warm places. For many years, sugar was too expensive for most Americans to afford. Molasses was a cheaper way to sweeten cookies, cakes, and countless other foods.

During World War I (1914-18), molasses was put to a new use: making bombs. Companies could earn a great deal by converting molasses into industrial alcohol, a key component of explosives. That is the main reason United States Industrial Alcohol built the tank in Boston’s North End. The company needed a place to store shipments of molasses before converting it into this valuable substance.



hold the heavy liquid. And the tank was never inspected or tested for safety.

USIA counted on the fact that nobody from the North End would complain. That is because most people in the area were poor immigrants from southern Italy. Many Americans viewed those newcomers with caution and prejudice. Even if residents had raised concerns about the tank, it would have been hard for them to find someone who would help.

Just days before the incident, ships had pumped the tank almost completely full. As usual, USIA ignored the tank's ominous groaning.

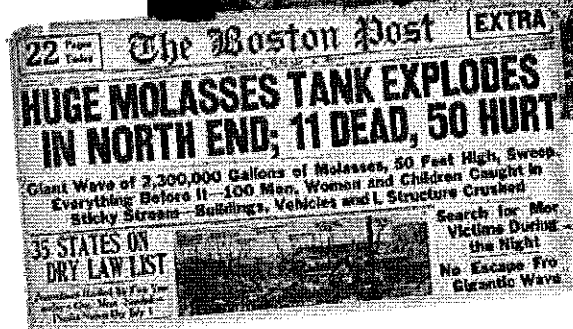
A HISTORIC TRIAL

After the molasses flood, many people rushed to sue USIA, including the families of the dead. A Massachusetts court put 119 cases together to be argued as one. This type of lawsuit, in which multiple parties sue the same person or company, is known as a class action suit. The court appointed Hugh Ogden to judge the evidence. Ogden was a former military officer.

USIA's lawyers insisted the disaster was not the company's fault. They claimed the tank had been blown up by antigovernment terrorists.

The plaintiffs (the people who sued) argued that the tank's cheap construction showed USIA's "utter disregard of the rights of the public," as their lawyer put it.

The trial took three years. More than 1,000 people testified. The trial included many technical experts, such as engineers and architects. That was unusual for the time. The experts explained why the tank might have broken apart.



Above: The North End after the molasses tank disaster. Left: The Boston Post's report the day after the flood. It greatly underestimated the number of injured and dead.

Finally, in April 1925, Ogden made a ruling. He said that USIA was to blame for the disaster. He ordered the company to pay a total of \$628,000. (That is equal to about \$8 million today.) The company had to pay plaintiffs for the deaths of loved ones or for property that had been destroyed.

That money could hardly repay families for their losses. Yet the ruling was a victory. For the first time in U.S. history, ordinary people had beaten a powerful company in court!

THE TRIAL'S IMPACT

Over time, the molasses flood was largely forgotten, even in Boston. Today, the only reminder is a plaque on Commercial Street. But the impact of the trial was huge, says Puleo, the historian. Since then, courts have relied on technical experts. Just as important, he says, "almost all of the

building construction standards we take for granted today were created by the decision." Now, builders who want to put up a new school or a high-rise building have to submit detailed plans to authorities. They also have to let inspectors visit the construction site.

The incident had an effect on the lives of Italian immigrants too. Before the disaster, most people in the North End were not citizens. That meant they had no political power. But afterward, many immigrants around the country applied for citizenship. They realized it could help them shape their destiny in the U.S.

Safety, justice, and the lives of immigrants in America: "That all changed with the molasses flood case," says Puleo. ♦

Write About It! Explain the causes and effects of the molasses disaster. Include evidence to support your ideas, and be sure to consider both immediate and long-term effects.

ANA CASANOVA/GETTY IMAGES (MOLASSES TANK); MOVING MOMENT/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (BISCUITS); STOCKPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES (GROWN SUGAR); NORVAN CHAN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (GUGAR CANE); THE GRANGER COLLECTION (NORTH END); THE BOSTON POST/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (NEWSPAPER)

Textual Evidence

KEY STANDARD
RI.6-8.1

Close-Reading Questions: Death by Molasses!

Refer to the article on pages 18-21 to respond to the questions below. Include evidence from the text that supports your responses.

1. A simile is a comparison that uses *like* or *as*. Find at least two similes and explain how they help readers understand the disaster.

2. What caused the molasses flood?

3. What was unusual about the trial? What was its impact?

©2019 by Scholastic Inc. All rights reserved. Permission granted to teachers and subscribers to make copies of this page to distribute to their students.

Swigart 7th Lit.
Opt. 1 pg. 1

Central Ideas

KEY STANDARD
R.6-8.2

Heading Hashtags

You've probably seen hashtags online. A hashtag is a word or phrase with the symbol # before it that helps people categorize and find posts about a topic. As you read "Death by Molasses!" on pages 18-21, stop and record the central idea of each section. Then think of at least one hashtag that summarizes each central idea. For example, you could use #WaveOfMolasses or #disaster for the first section.

SECTION	CENTRAL IDEA	HASHTAG(S)
Introduction		
The Dark Wave		
Trapped in the Muck		
The Roots of Disaster		
A Historic Trial		
The Trial's Impact		

©2019 by Scholastic Inc. All rights reserved. Permission granted to teachers and subscribers to make copies of this page to distribute to their students.

Comprehension

Know the News: Death by Molasses!

Read the article on pages 18-21, then answer the questions.

- Which conclusion can you draw about the molasses flood from the article?
 - Italian immigrants raised concerns before the molasses tank was built.
 - Antigovernment terrorists were responsible for the flood.
 - The disaster was caused by the carelessness of United States Industrial Alcohol (USIA).
 - The flood was Boston's worst disaster.
- Which detail best supports the conclusion in question 1?
 - Many Americans viewed Italian immigrants with prejudice.
 - Companies could get rich turning molasses into industrial alcohol.
 - The flood killed 21 people and injured 150.
 - A lawyer said the tank's construction showed "utter disregard of the rights of the public."
- The first section of the article mostly uses which text structure?
 - description
 - cause/effect
 - problem/solution
 - compare/contrast
- Why is Stephen Puleo included in the article?
 - He died in the molasses flood.
 - He alerted other rescue workers.
 - He is a historian who has studied the disaster.
 - He covered the flood for *The Boston Post*.
- Which was *not* an effect of the flood?
 - Part of an elevated railroad track collapsed.
 - The tank was never tested for safety.
 - Houses were crushed and swept away.
 - Molasses trapped people as it hardened.
- What does *ominous* mean in this sentence? "As usual, USIA ignored the tank's ominous groaning."
 - amusing
 - loud
 - quiet
 - threatening
- Which of these is the best example of a class action lawsuit?
 - An employee accuses her boss of firing her because of her age.
 - A group of people sue a factory for polluting a river near their homes.
 - Two business partners sue each other.
 - The government sues a company for breaking a federal law.
- Details about how the tank was built would best fit in which section of the article?
 - "The Dark Wave"
 - "Trapped in the Muck"
 - "The Roots of Disaster"
 - "The Trial's Impact"
- Based on the sidebar on page 20, which statement is true?
 - Molasses is still a staple of American homes.
 - Sugar was less expensive than molasses.
 - Molasses was used to make explosives.
 - Sugarcane grows best in cold places.
- Which of these statements is an opinion?
 - The molasses flood trial led to important construction standards for the future.
 - The plaintiffs didn't receive enough money from the ruling in the trial.
 - Many Americans in 1919 were suspicious of Italian immigrants.
 - USIA cheated on materials when building its molasses tank.

©2019 by Scholastic Inc. All rights reserved. Permission granted to teachers and subscribers to make copies of this page to distribute to their students.

Independent Reading Journal Prompts page 1

Following is a list of journal prompts. Use whatever helps you to arrive at good, interesting reflections. Remember, you journal entries should be your reflections, connecting your novel to universal ideas, current events, history, yourself, etc. Also, pay attention to the writer's craft. Have fun!

Please label your journal entry.

- Describe the problem/conflict of this book.
- Summarize the main events in this book so far.
- Who is your favorite or least favorite character? Why?
- Do any of the characters remind you of yourself, a family member, or a friend? How?
- Are there situations in the story where you would have acted differently than one of the characters? Describe what you would have done.
- Compare and contrast two characters. Include at least three important similarities and three important differences.
- Describe the setting (time and place). Does it remind you of anywhere you are familiar with?
- Describe the climax (the turning point of the story when the action reaches a critical point).
- What do you like best about the story? The least? Why?
- Does this story remind you of other books you have read, movies you have seen, or experiences you have had? Describe the similarities.
- Write a letter to a friend recommending this book.
- If you could ask the author one question, what would it be? Why do you want to know this?
- Why do you think the author wrote this selection?
- What did the author do in order to "hook" the reader? Explain.
- What "pictures" does the author create in your mind? Draw and describe them.
- Have you learned anything interesting that you didn't know before reading this selection? Explain.
- Are the characters believable? Why or why not?
- Write a letter to one of the characters giving him/her advice on how to handle a problem or situation he/she is facing. Be sure to include a greeting and a closing.
- If you could spend one day with a character, who would it be and what would you do? Explain why you chose these activities for this particular character.
- How has the main character changed over the course of the story? What do you think is the cause of the change?
- What was the best part of this book? Explain.
- Are there any parts you would change? Explain.
- How did you feel while reading this book? Why did you feel this way?
- Pretend you are a character in the story. Write a diary entry as the character, explaining what has happened to you and how you feel about it.
- Using the text, illustrate a descriptive passage, a key scene, or a character (this should take some time and effort . . . no stick figures!). Describe the picture.
- Create a timeline of important events in the story. Give corresponding page numbers by each event.
- What are two attributes that describe a particular character? Give at least two examples for each attribute that support your opinion.
- Prepare an interview with your favorite character in the book. Prepare at least 10 questions to ask the character. Write the character's answers to the questions.
- Cast the film version of the book. Decide which real life actors and actresses should play the parts of the main characters. Include photos and descriptions of the stars you've selected and an explanation of why each is "perfect" for the part.

- Turn the book or a portion of it into a comic book with comic-style illustrations and dialogue bubbles.
- Create a poem that a character in the book would write. The poem may focus on a situation in the book or describe how the character feels about what is happening.
- Write a postscript or a continuation to the story, explaining future occurrences in the characters' lives.
- Write a letter from one character to another.
- Design a travel brochure focusing on the setting of the book. Include a map with explanatory notes of significant places. Describe the type of activities that tourists might find there.
- Create the front page of a newspaper based on the events in the book.
- Develop a fact sheet about the book, listing 10 facts that you learned from reading it. The facts must be written in complete sentences and include details you didn't know before reading the book.
- Design a book jacket for the book. Include an original book blurb and information about the author on the jacket along with your review comments. The jacket should "sell" the book to other readers.
- Make a list of 10 or 15 rules by which the main character in the book lives. Tell how these rules compare to the rules you live by. Tell how the character's life would have been different if you had been living it.
- Pretend that you are a fortune-teller and predict what each of the main characters will be doing in their lives ten years after the story ends. Explain your prediction for each character.
- Write a letter of recommendation for one of the main characters in the book. It can be a letter of recommendation for a job or for college admission. Discuss the good and bad points of the character and why you are recommending that character for the job or school.

(taken from Mr. Crumb and L. Cornwell)

I liked the way that the writer...

I didn't like...because...

This novel makes me realize...

The most important thing about this novel is...

If I were (name of character), I would (wouldn't) have

What happened in the novel was very realistic (unrealistic) because...

I agree (disagree) with the writer about ...

I think the title is a good (strange/misleading) choice because....

A better title for this book would be...because....

In my opinion, the most important word (sentence/paragraph) in this novel is...because...

If I could talk to (name of character), I would say...

The novel is similar to (different from) other novels I have read because...

The novel is similar to (different from) other novels by this writer because ...