“The Story of an Eyewitness”

Focus: Informative Nonfiction and Author’s Perspective
Essential Question #1

What influence does an author’s background have on his or her writing?

An author’s background brings personal experience and insight into the literature and allows the readers to develop an understanding of the writer’s voice, life, and personality.
In what ways does the author’s perspective affect a feature story?

A feature story goes beyond “just the facts” reporting that characterizes a traditional news story; the writer often includes detailed descriptions and personal feelings. The author’s perspective may reflect his attitude or beliefs about a subject.
What do you know about the San Francisco earthquake of 1906?

Create a K-W-L chart on your paper.

Fill in what you “Know” about the event and what you “Want to Know” about it.
Facts about the Event

• San Francisco sits on top of the San Andreas fault, a 650-mile crack in the earth’s crust that runs along the California coast.

• On April 18, 1906, parts of the fault line buckled, bent, and slid past each other by as much as 21 feet!!!

• This created the great San Francisco earthquake, which was followed by devastating fire that destroyed much of the city.
Some Pictures of the San Andreas Fault
Some Pictures after the Earthquake
Most newspaper feature stories that describe an event are written in chronological order.

What does that mean?

Chronological order means that the story is told in the order in which events happen in time.
Now, let’s look at some of the vocabulary words used in this selection.

- compel
- conflagration
- contrivance
- dear
- enumeration
- flank
- flotsam
- menace
- refugee
- surmount

How many of these words do you recognize? Do you know the definitions of any of them?
Let’s Check the Definitions

Use context clues to determine the meanings of the words.

1. Jack London reported that the smoke from the _____ after the earthquake could be seen one hundred miles away.
   refugees, flotsam, conflagration, menace
   **conflagration**

2. He could not give an _____ of all the buildings destroyed because there were too many to mention.
   compel, enumeration, flank, surmount
   **enumeration**

3. He described how the _____ had fled with as much as they could carry.
   refugees, contrivance, dear, menace
   **refugees**

4. People carried bedding and anything that was _____ to them.
   conflagration, surmount, enumeration, dear
   **dear**

5. The _____ of the fire threatened rich and poor alike.
   flank, menace, flotsam, surmount
   **menace**
6. London compared the city to a shipwreck and its people to the _____ that covers the waves when a great ship goes down.

contrivance, flotsam, flank, compel

flotsam

7. With both sides of the street on fire, people were often _____ by burning buildings.

conflagration, surmounted, dear, flanked

flanked

8. Thousands of people were _____ against their will, to abandon their possessions.

compelled, contrivance, refugee, enumeration

compelled

9. People had to _____ the hills in order to escape.

flotsam, compel, dear, surmount

surmount

10. The great earthquake and fire proved that all the clever _____ of modern life cannot protect us from the forces of nature.

contrivances, compels, flotsams, menaces

contrivances
As You Read

Pay attention to the details that Jack London uses to describe what he witnesses. In your notes, record facts and Jack London’s personal reactions to the destruction he observes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facts</th>
<th>Personal Reactions</th>
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Life Lessons—Follow-Up

Since Jack London actually witnessed the devastation of the earthquake and the citizens’ reactions to it, he was able to learn several lessons about survival and the human spirit.

In your notes, record ONE life lesson that you learned from reading this informational text. Then, list at least two examples from the text to support your idea.