

# **“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.**



# **Essential Question #2**

**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?!?**

**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



# **Chronological Order**

**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.**



# Vocabulary

**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**



# Definitions—Continued

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.**

Facts

Personal  
Reactions



# **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.**