History in Fiction

Compare a fictional disaster scene with historical evidence.

8.RL.3.B "Compare and contrast fictional portrayals of a time, place, or character with historical accounts of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that appear in both the fictional and historical accounts, circle details that appear only in the fictional story, and number two historical facts. Use your marks to notice where the author uses history and where the author invents details.

The Morning the City Shook

1. Fictional scene, April 18, 1906. Twelve-year-old Rosa woke when her bed slid across the floor of her family's San Francisco apartment. "The whole city is shaking itself apart," her father shouted. Outside, Rosa saw the clock tower bend like a reed and watched a wall of fire race down every street at once. She grabbed her violin before joining neighbors in the plaza. That night, she played one tune, and the flames stopped at the edge of the park.

2. Historical accounts report that a major earthquake struck San Francisco at 5:12 a.m. on April 18, 1906. The shaking damaged buildings, broke water and gas lines, and started fires. Fires burned for several days because damaged water mains limited firefighting. More than 200,000 people, over half the city's population, were left homeless. The earthquake and fires destroyed about 28,000 buildings. Recovery efforts began soon afterward, as residents and workers cleared debris and organized aid across the city.

3. Rosa's story is invented, but its setting draws on the disaster's real effects. In the story, her family camps in Golden Gate Park, where she hears adults worry that food will run out. Historical accounts describe thousands of displaced residents sleeping in parks and other open spaces after the earthquake. Rosa's father tells her that the city will rebuild in a week. In fact, reconstruction took years, although San Francisco began rebuilding soon after the disaster that spring.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What real time and place do the fictional scene and the historical account share? Use one detail from each account.

2. How does the fictional scene portray the fires differently from the historical account?

3. Identify one way the author changes the history of recovery in Rosa's story. What is the historical account instead?

4. Compare the kinds of details used in the fictional and historical accounts. How does each kind of detail shape the reader's understanding of the disaster?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly three sentences comparing the fictional and historical accounts. Name one shared historical element, one invented or altered fictional element, and explain how the author's fictional choice shapes a reader's understanding.

ANSWER KEY

History in Fiction

GRADE 8 · 8.RL.3.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that appear in both the fictional and historical accounts, circle details that appear only in the fictional story, and number two historical facts. Use your marks to notice where the author uses history and where the author invents details. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What real time and place do the fictional scene and the historical account share? Use one detail from each account.	**Both are set in San Francisco during the April 18, 1906 earthquake. The fictional scene shows Rosa during the shaking, and the historical account gives the date and time of the earthquake.**
2	How does the fictional scene portray the fires differently from the historical account?	**The fictional scene makes the fire seem to race down every street at once and stop after Rosa plays music. The historical account says fires burned for several days because damaged water mains limited firefighting.**
3	Identify one way the author changes the history of recovery in Rosa's story. What is the historical account instead?	**Rosa's father says the city will rebuild in a week, but the historical account says reconstruction took years.**
4	Compare the kinds of details used in the fictional and historical accounts. How does each kind of detail shape the reader's understanding of the disaster?	**The fictional account uses Rosa, dialogue, and dramatic images to make the disaster feel personal. The historical account uses dates, numbers, causes, and effects to show the disaster's scale and provide documented information.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Both accounts place the earthquake in San Francisco on April 18, 1906. The fictional account invents Rosa and her violin music stopping the flames, while the historical account explains that damaged water mains made fires harder to fight. By following one child, the fiction makes the disaster feel personal and hopeful, while the historical account shows its wider causes and scale.

Accept other accurate comparisons supported by the passage, including the camps in open spaces, the fire details, or the length of reconstruction. For the open task, require all three parts: a shared element, an invented or altered element, and an explanation of the author's effect.