

Name: _____ Date: _____

Go to Scope
Online to listen
to the words
and definitions
read aloud.

Vocabulary:

"Our Beautiful Town Is Gone"

- 1. douse (dowss)** *verb*; To douse something is to drench it, either by sticking it into a liquid or by throwing a liquid over it. To put out a campfire, you might douse it with a bucket of water. Some people don't like to eat broccoli unless they douse it in ranch dressing.
- 2. harrowing (HAR-oh-ing)** *adjective*; *Harrowing* is usually used to describe personal experiences that are very distressing—that is, that severely upset, worry, or terrify you. Seeing a dark rain cloud on your walk home from school might make you worry about getting wet, but it would not be harrowing. Being lost at sea on a small boat during a bad storm? That would definitely be harrowing!
- 3. inferno (in-FUR-noh)** *noun*; An inferno is a large fire that is dangerously out of control. A wildfire spreading quickly through a forest is an inferno. The flame on a lit candle is not an inferno.
- 4. kindling (KIND-ling)** *noun*; To start a fire, you need kindling—small sticks and other materials that burn easily and help get your firewood ignited. Dry twigs and pieces of paper or cardboard are often used as kindling.
- 5. mobilize (MOH-buh-lahyz)** *verb*; To mobilize something is to make it mobile—that is, able to be moved. Your grandma might do yoga every morning to mobilize her tight shoulders.

Mobilize is often used to describe bringing people or things together, organizing them, and preparing them for action. A government might mobilize troops for war. You might mobilize your classmates to donate canned food to a food bank.
- 6. resilient (rih-ZIL-yuhnt)** *adjective*; To be resilient is to be able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult situations.

7. smolder (SMOHL-der) *verb*; To smolder is to burn slowly, producing smoke but no flames. A fire may smolder for days after its flames die out. A smoldering fire can still spread and even ignite into flames again.

Smolder can also mean "to feel strong emotions but keep them hidden." A friend might say that he is not mad at you after you accidentally spill orange juice all over his shirt. But if he tightens his fists or clenches his jaw, you could say his anger is smoldering.

8. vegetation (vej-ih-TEY-shuhn) *adjective*; Vegetation is the plant life found in a particular habitat or area. You won't find much vegetation in a desert—only scattered bushes and cacti. A forest, on the other hand, might have a lot of vegetation, that is, many types of plants, trees, and flowers.

Directions: In the space below or on the back of this page, list any other words from the article whose definitions you are not sure about. For each word, use context clues to try to figure out the meaning. Then look up the word in a few different dictionaries. Discuss the meaning of the word with your teacher or peers. Then write a definition for the word and one example sentence using the word.

Vocabulary Practice

"Our Beautiful Town Is Gone"

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

1. smolder

- Ⓐ simmer
- Ⓑ freeze

2. harrowing

- Ⓐ frightening
- Ⓑ pleasant

3. mobilize

- Ⓐ divide
- Ⓑ prepare for action

4. resilient

- Ⓐ tough
- Ⓑ tired

Directions: Choose the best answer to each question.

5. Which would a person more likely be doused in?

- Ⓐ perfume
- Ⓑ a warm jacket

6. How might a harrowing movie make you feel?

- Ⓐ full of joy
- Ⓑ scared

7. Which is an example of vegetation?

- Ⓐ vines and wildflowers
- Ⓑ rain and snow

8. Which item might someone keep next to a fireplace to use as kindling?

- Ⓐ an old newspaper
- Ⓑ a glass of water

Directions: Complete each unfinished sentence in a way that makes the meaning of the boldfaced word clear.

9. The charcoal in our backyard grill **smoldered** after dinner. The _____

10. What began as a small kitchen fire was now an **inferno**, _____

11. After Jacob lost the student council election, he showed great **resilience**. He _____

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Close-Reading Questions

"Our Beautiful Town Is Gone"

1. In the section “Bustling Town,” Lauren Tarshis includes details about the history of Paradise and what the town was like before the fire. Why might Tarshis have included these details? (text structure, author’s purpose)
2. According to the article and the sidebar “What Causes Wildfires in California?” on page 8, how is climate change affecting wildfires in California, and why is it having this effect? (cause and effect)
3. What challenges did the people of Paradise face when trying to escape the fire? (key ideas and details)

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Critical-Thinking Questions

"Our Beautiful Town Is Gone"

1. If you had to choose just a few of your most beloved things to take with you during a fire, as Eleanor did, what would you choose, and why?
2. At the end of the article, Holly Fisher says that the people of Paradise are resilient—meaning they are able to bounce back from difficult experiences and move forward. If someone who experienced something difficult was having a hard time, what are some things they could do to feel more resilient?

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Preparing to Write Your Letter

Writing prompt: Write a letter to a person or family featured in "Our Beautiful Town Is Gone." Think about how you would feel in their situation. In your letter, offer the kind of support that you would hope to receive in such a situation.

Directions: Use the prompts below to help you write the first draft of your letter. After you've written the first draft, read it carefully and make any revisions you need or want to make. Be sure to proofread your final draft.

Be sure to include a salutation: the word "Dear" followed by the name of the person or people you are writing to.

Write today's date at the top of your letter.

October 1, 2019

Dear _____,

What you write next is up to you, but here are some ideas:

- Offer sympathy. Tell them you are thinking about them and wishing them well. If you practice a religion, you might tell them you are praying for them.
- Tell them what you thought about or felt when you read the article and watched the Behind the Scenes video about the article.
- Tell them about something that helped you get through a difficult time.
- Ask if there is anything you can do to help.
- Ask them any questions you had after reading the article or watching the video. Be sure to be respectful of their feelings and their privacy—it might help to think about how you would feel if someone asked you the questions you have in mind.

Start by introducing yourself. Tell the person you are writing to how old you are, which state you live in, and where you learned about them and the Camp Fire.

Sincerely,
Sam Feldman
Sam Feldman

Use a closing like "Sincerely" or "Best wishes." Then sign your name by hand, even if you type the rest of your letter. Finally, print or type your name underneath your signature.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Nonfiction Quiz

Directions: Read “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone.” Then answer the questions below.

- How does the section “Bustling Town” contribute to the article?
 - It explains where Paradise is located.
 - It introduces the people the article focuses on.
 - It illustrates America’s obsession with gold.
 - It helps readers understand what Paradise was like before the fire and what was lost.
- According to the article, wildfires are _____. (Choose TWO answers.)
 - often beneficial to the environment
 - abnormal events
 - intensifying because of climate change
 - less damaging than they once were
- Author Lauren Tarshis explains that on the morning of November 8 few people in Paradise were concerned when they first noticed smoke. Which line helps explain why?
 - “Fire deposits nutrients in the soil, which helps new plants grow.” (p. 7.)
 - “The weather in California and around the world has been getting hotter and less predictable.” (p. 7)
 - “Wildfires have always been a fact of life in California.” (p. 7)
 - “Over the decades, Paradise grew into a large, bustling town.” (p. 6)
- On page 8, Tarshis writes, “Like flaming birds, they flew across the river, igniting more fires wherever they landed.” This line contains
 - a simile that helps readers understand why the Feather River couldn’t stop the fire from spreading to Paradise.
 - hyperbole that emphasizes the fire’s high temperature.
 - a metaphor that shows the number of fires that were burning in and around Paradise.
 - a simile that helps readers understand how hard firefighters were working.
- Later on page 8, Tarshis quotes Kevin McKay, who says, “I thought to myself, ‘This could be it.’” This quote helps readers understand that Kevin
 - was confident the bus would make it to Chico.
 - was unsure whether the main fire had reached the town limits yet.
 - thought the fire would soon be under control.
 - worried that they might not make it out alive.
- Tarshis most likely wrote this article to _____. (Choose TWO answers.)
 - detail the history of the U.S. Forest Service
 - inspire readers with a story of a community’s strength and courage in the face of disaster
 - help readers better understand wildfires
 - tell the story of the American West

Constructed-Response Questions

Directions: Write your answers in a well-organized response.

- According to the article, how can human activity affect nature? Use text evidence to support your answer.
- Holly Fisher says the people of Paradise are resilient. What does she mean? How does Tarshis develop this idea in the article?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Nonfiction Quiz

Directions: Read “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone.” Then answer the questions below.

- Which section of the article helps readers understand what Paradise was like before the fire?
 (A) the introduction
 (B) “Life Continues”
 (C) “Like Flaming Birds”
 (D) “Bustling Town”
- According to the article, wildfires are _____. (Choose TWO answers.)
 (A) important
 (B) unusual
 (C) becoming more destructive
 (D) disappearing
- On page 7, Tarshis writes that “wildfires have always been a fact of life in California.” This line helps explain why
 (A) the state’s wildfires are getting worse.
 (B) wildfires keep forests healthy.
 (C) people weren’t worried on the morning of the Camp Fire.
 (D) strong winds spread fires.
- On page 8, author Lauren Tarshis writes, “Like flaming birds, they flew across the river, igniting more fires wherever they landed.” This line contains a simile that
 (A) helps readers understand why the Feather River couldn’t stop the fire from spreading to Paradise.
 (B) emphasizes the fire’s high temperature.
 (C) compares the Camp Fire to fires in the past.
 (D) helps readers understand how hard firefighters were working.
- Later on page 8, Tarshis quotes Kevin McKay, who says, “I thought to myself, ‘This could be it.’” This quote helps readers understand that Kevin
 (A) was confident the bus would make it to Chico.
 (B) was unsure whether the main fire had reached the town limits yet.
 (C) thought the fire would soon be under control.
 (D) worried that they might not make it out alive.
- Tarshis most likely wrote this article to _____. (Choose TWO answers.)
 (A) detail the history of the U.S. Forest Service
 (B) inspire readers with a story of a community’s strength and courage in the face of disaster
 (C) help readers better understand wildfires
 (D) tell the story of the American West

Constructed-Response Questions

Directions: Write your answers in a well-organized response.

- According to the article, what is one way that human activity negatively affects nature? Use text evidence to support your answer.
- Holly Fisher says the people of Paradise are resilient. (To be resilient is to be able to recover quickly from difficult situations.) How does Tarshis develop this idea in the article?

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Video Discussion Questions

Behind the Scenes: "Our Beautiful Town Is Gone"

After Reading "Our Beautiful Town Is Gone"

1. How does the first section of the video (0:11 — 0:54) help you understand why the wildfire in Paradise, California, was so devastating? Consider both the narration and the visuals.
2. 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?
3. Using details from the video, explain how Lauren Tarshis's second trip to Paradise was different from her first trip. What does the video help you understand about the town and its recovery after the fire?
4. At the end of the video, Tarshis 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 and the article.

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Read, Think, Explain

Identifying Nonfiction Elements

Use this activity with “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone.” See *Scope’s* “Glossary of Nonfiction Terms” for definitions of the words that appear in bold.

Before Reading Text Features, Mood

1. Read the **headline** and **subheading** and study the image on pages 4-5. What **mood** do these features create?

2. Consider the photo at the top of pages 6-7. What does it tell you about the fire?

3. What does the sidebar “What Causes Wildfires in California?” help you understand?

4. Read the subheadings throughout the article. Based on your preview of the article, write one sentence predicting what the article will be mainly about.

During Reading

Text Structure, Mood, Tone

5. **A.** Check (✓) the statement that BEST describes the **text structure** (the way the author organizes information) in the section “Beloved Things.”

The author gives a chronological account of the evacuation of Paradise.

The author describes how the fire spread through Paradise.

The author compares and contrasts how different people in Paradise reacted to the fire.

- B.** Explain how you know.

6. How would you describe the **mood** of the section “Breathing Fire”? Explain how the author creates this mood.

7. Reread the section “Life Continues.” What is the author’s **tone** as she writes about the people of Paradise and their future? Explain your answer.

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Read, Think, Explain

Identifying Nonfiction Elements

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4. Read the subheadings throughout the article. Based on your preview of the article, write one sentence predicting what the article will be mainly about.

During Reading

Text Structure, Mood, Tone

5. Text structure is the term for how an author organizes information. In the section “Bustling Town,” the author uses a sequence-of-events structure.

Which of the following words and phrases in the section help you identify this text structure?

- Ⓐ *For centuries; 170 years ago; In 1848; by 1849; Over the decades*
- Ⓑ *Maidu tribe; white settlers; '49ers; Kids like Eleanor*
- Ⓒ *California Gold Rush; wilderness; American West; Debbie's Restaurant*

6. How would you describe the **mood** of the section “Breathing Fire”? Explain how the author creates this mood.

7. A. Tone is the author’s attitude toward the subject matter or toward the reader or audience. Circle the word that best describes the author’s tone in the section “Life Continues,” when she writes about the people of Paradise and their future.

discouraged

confused

hopeful

B. Briefly explain how you know.

After Reading

Central Idea/Details and Objective Summary

8. A. Below is a **central idea** of the section "Bigger and Deadlier" and three **supporting details**. Two details DO support the central idea. Cross out the detail that DOES NOT.

Central Idea Wildfires play an important role in nature.		
Detail #1 "Wildfires also open the pinecones of certain species of pine trees." (p. 7)	Detail #2 "Wildfires help forests stay healthy by clearing away dead branches and brush." (p. 7)	Detail #3 "Experts now think that sparks from electrical lines ignited dry grass on a remote hillside. (p. 7)

- B. Briefly explain why the detail that you crossed out does NOT support the central idea above.

9. An **objective summary** is a short statement or paragraph that tells what an article is about. Draw a line through the three sentences below that should definitely NOT be included in an objective summary of "Our Beautiful Town Is Gone."

- a. The town of Paradise seemed like a great place for kids to grow up.
- b. The Camp Fire destroyed thousands of homes and killed 85 people.
- c. Last year, Paradise, California, experienced the deadliest wildfire in the state's history.
- d. On the morning of the fire, Eleanor had cereal for breakfast.
- e. Many '49ers stayed in California after the Gold Rush.
- f. The Camp Fire was likely started by sparks from electrical lines.

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Summarizing

An objective summary is a short statement or paragraph that tells what an article or a story is about.
It does not include irrelevant details or the opinions of the person writing it.

Directions: Answer the questions below to help you write an objective summary of “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone.”

1. Who is the article mainly about? (It can be an individual or a group of people.)

2. What significant event does the article describe?

3. How does this event affect the main person(s) in the article?

4. What is the situation of the main person(s) in the article today?

5. Are there any other important details you haven’t mentioned? Write them here.

Directions: Your turn! Write an objective summary of “Our Beautiful Town Is Gone.” You can use the information in your answers from questions 1-5 in any order. Most of the information from your answers should be included in your summary, but leave out any details you find unnecessary.

Summary of "Our Beautiful Town Is Gone"

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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Summarizing

An objective summary is a short statement or paragraph that tells what an article or a story is about.
It does not include unimportant details or the opinions of the person writing it.

Directions: Follow the prompts in the margins to complete the summary of "Our Beautiful Town Is Gone."

Last November, the people of Paradise, California, lived through the deadliest wildfire in the state's history. The fire was caused by _____

1. What caused the fire?

On the morning of the fire, few people were concerned by the smoke they saw in the distance because _____

2. Why were the people of Paradise not worried about the smoke?

_____. But the fire moved quickly toward the town, forcing residents to evacuate. As people tried to leave, they _____

3. What challenges did people encounter during the evacuation?

_____. But the people of Paradise faced the fire with courage and determination. People like Kevin McKay and Josh Fisher _____

4. How did Kevin and Josh help during the fire?

_____. Many did make it to safety, but the fire would continue to burn for 16 days. Eighty-five people died.

Today, only a small number of people have moved back to Paradise because the fire destroyed most homes and the smoke poisoned the water. But the people of Paradise _____

5. What are the people of Paradise doing now?

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Exploring Text Features

Authors use text features to bring attention to important details. In a nonfiction article, text features include titles, subheadings, photos, captions, charts, and maps.

Directions: Answer the questions below to help you explore the text features in "Our Beautiful Town Is Gone."

1. Read the **headline** and subheading and study the image on pages 4-5. What **mood** do these features create?

2. How does the collection of photos titled "Faces of Paradise" contribute to the article?

3. Read the sidebar "What Causes Wildfires in California." Why might the author have chosen to include this information?

4. Read the subheadings throughout the article. Describe how the tone of the subheadings changes throughout the article.

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Central Ideas and Details

A central idea of a text is one of the main points the author is making.

(Sometimes a central idea is called a main idea.)

A central idea can always be supported with details from the text.

Directions: Follow the prompts below to explore the central ideas and supporting details in "Our Beautiful Town Is Gone."

1. Reread the section "Like Flaming Birds." Which statement BEST expresses the central idea of this section?

- Ⓐ Ten thousand people had to evacuate Paradise because of a wildfire back in 2008.
- Ⓑ The Camp Fire destroyed a chunk of land the size of a football field every second.
- Ⓒ The Camp Fire was much worse than the wildfires Paradise had experienced in the past.
- Ⓓ Josh Fisher was a firefighter.

2. Read a central idea of the section "Bigger and Deadlier" in the box below. Then read the lines from the article listed under it. Which detail does NOT support the central idea?

Central Idea:
Wildfires play an important role in nature.

- Ⓐ "Fire deposits nutrients in the soil, which helps new plants grow." (p. 7)
- Ⓑ "Then in the spring and summer, all that vegetation dries out in the sun—and becomes the perfect kindling for fire." (p. 7)
- Ⓒ "Wildfires also open the pinecones of certain species of pine trees." (p. 7)
- Ⓓ "Wildfires help forests stay healthy by clearing away dead branches and brush." (p. 7)

I chose _____ because _____

3. Read the details from the section "Life Continues" listed below. In the box, write a central idea that these details support.

Central Idea:

Detail 1: "Kevin McKay is still driving a school bus—and studying to become a history teacher." (p. 10)

Detail 2: "Schools have been relocated to neighboring towns." (p. 10)

Detail 3: "Lucas's dad, Josh, continues to fight fires." (p. 10)

4. Consider a central idea of the whole article, which is written below. We wrote one detail from the article that supports this idea. Write two more supporting details in the spaces provided.

Central Idea:
The Camp Fire was dangerous and destructive.

Supporting detail 1:

"Every second, it devoured a chunk of land the size of a football field." (p. 8)

Supporting detail 2:

Supporting detail 3:

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Central Ideas and Details

A central idea of a text is one of the main points the author is making.

(Sometimes a central idea is called a main idea.)

A central idea can always be supported with details from the text.

Directions: Follow the prompts below to explore the central ideas and supporting details in "Our Beautiful Town Is Gone."

1. Read a central idea of the article stated in the box below. Then check the boxes next to the THREE details that best support the central idea.

Central Idea:

The Camp Fire was dangerous and destructive.

- ☐ "The fire, which became known as the Camp Fire, burned for 16 more days. Eighty-five people lost their lives." (p. 9)
- ☐ "Experts now think that sparks from electrical lines ignited dry grass on a remote hillside." (p. 7)
- ☐ "Every second, [the fire] devoured a chunk of land the size of a football field." (p. 8)
- ☐ "Fires are common in the forests around Paradise." (p. 6)
- ☐ "Nearly 14,000 houses would be burned to the ground." (p. 6)

2. Read the details from the article listed below. In the box, complete the central idea that these details support.

Central Idea:

Wildfires can _____

Detail 1: "Fire deposits nutrients in the soil, which helps new plants grow." (p. 7)

Detail 2: "Wildfires help forests stay healthy by clearing away dead branches and brush." (p. 8)

Detail 3: "Wildfires also open the pinecones of certain species of pine trees." (p. 7)

Note: *Scope* does not accept Google Docs. If you are e-mailing your entry, please send a .pdf or .doc file.

Dear Paradise Contest

Write a letter to a person or family featured in the article. Think about how you would feel in their situation. In your letter, offer the kind of support that you would hope to receive in such a situation. Five writers will be chosen at random to receive *Wildfire* by Rodman Philbrick. We will share the letters with the people of Paradise.

My name: _____

My home phone number: _____ My grade: _____

My teacher's name: _____ My teacher's e-mail: _____

School name: _____

School address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

School phone number: _____

My parent or legal guardian consents
to my participation in this contest.

Parent's or legal guardian's signature: _____

Include this form with your entry and send both to: scopemag@scholastic.com
or mail them to: Dear Paradise Contest, c/o *Scope*, P.O. Box 712, New York, NY 10013-0712

ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY November 15, 2019!