

# The Haymarket Square Riot (May 4, 1886)

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by Tim Bailey

## UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ resources, designed to align to the Common Core State Standards. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original source materials of historical significance. Through a step-by-step process, students will acquire the skills to analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned viewpoints on primary source materials.

Over the course of five lessons the students will examine, explain, and evaluate the text of an article published in the *Chicago Herald* on May 5, 1886, which provides a reporter's account of the Haymarket Riot in Chicago on the previous evening. The students will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding by identifying key words from the text and then writing summaries of selections from this news account in their own words. By the end of the unit, the pupils will articulate their understanding of the account by answering a choice of thought-provoking questions ("prompts") in a persuasive (argumentative) essay and supporting their conclusions and viewpoints with explicit evidence from the text.

## UNIT OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Identify and explain the meaning of "key words" and important phrases in a historical newspaper article
- Explain and summarize the meaning of the text, on both literal and inferential levels
- Develop a viewpoint and write a persuasive (argumentative) essay, supported by evidence from the text

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

You can use this essential question to stimulate discussion throughout the unit:

- Which group was primarily responsible for the violence that occurred in the Haymarket Square rally—the police officers, the speakers, or the crowd of workers?

## NUMBER OF CLASS PERIODS

While the unit is intended to flow over a five-day period, it is possible to complete the material in less time. For example, the first two days can be used to ensure understanding of the process by having Lessons 1 and 2 completed in class. You can then assign Lessons 3 and 4 as homework. The persuasive (argumentative) essay would then be written in class on the third day.

**GRADE LEVELS:** 7–12**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on . . . topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**LESSON 1****OVERVIEW**

Students will “read like a detective” to gain a clear understanding of a contemporary newspaper account from the *Chicago Herald* about the Haymarket Square Riot in Chicago on the night of May 4, 1886. Through reading and analyzing the original text, the students will know what is explicitly stated, draw logical inferences, and demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary using the author's words and then restating that summary in their own words. The first lesson will be a whole-class exercise.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The rapid expansion of American industry after the Civil War was paralleled by the emergence of labor unions to improve and protect the interests of workers. Between the 1870s and 1900, American big business achieved significant gains in efficiency, productivity, and profitability. However, industrial workers were increasingly subjected to long hours (10 to 12 hours of work each day and a six-day work week), low wages (average pay was \$1.50 per day), and abysmal and unsafe working conditions.

Workers formed labor organizations to represent their interests and gain bargaining power. The largest and most influential labor union in the 1870s and 1880s was the Knights of Labor. The national organization of skilled and unskilled workers (including African Americans and women) had 700,000 members by 1886. A major objective of the Knights of Labor was an eight-hour workday without any reduction in pay for its members. Typically, the Knights of Labor favored arbitration over strikes to settle

disputes. However, local branches of this loosely organized union had the power to call work stoppages to put pressure on employers.

During the economic recessions of 1873–1870 and 1882–1886 employers threatened layoffs and pay reductions. The prospect of employers agreeing to an eight-hour workday seemed unlikely. Yet on May 1, 1886, the workers at the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company in Chicago began a strike. In support of the strike, tens of thousands of workers from the building-trades’ unions marched on Michigan Avenue. Two days later, on May 3, the Chicago police were called to protect strikebreakers who had crossed the picket lines to work in the McCormick plant. Police and striking workers scuffled on the picket lines; several strikers were killed and others were injured.

On the following evening, May 4, a rally against alleged police brutality was planned for Haymarket Square in Chicago. Due to the cold and rainy weather, the anticipated crowd of 20,000 was reduced to about 2,000 demonstrators. The rally proceeded peacefully with many speeches and supportive responses from the demonstrators, as nearly four hundred police watched. Around 10:30 p.m., when only two hundred or so demonstrators remained, the police ordered the end of the rally and forcibly dispersed the crowd. At this point, someone threw a pipe bomb filled with dynamite at the police, and the explosion killed seven policemen and injured sixty others. In the midst of the chaos, the police fired into the crowd of demonstrators, killing four workers and wounding nearly one hundred people. In the *Chicago Herald*, the incident at Haymarket Square was described as a “murderous storm.”

Many Americans quickly concluded that labor unions were responsible for the violence. Martial law was declared in Chicago, labor leaders were rounded up and their homes were searched without warrants, and union newspapers were shut down. Although the bomber was never found, eight labor leaders and anarchist agitators were convicted of inciting violence (although there was no evidence they knew the unknown bomber). Seven defendants were sentenced to death by hanging and one to a fifteen-year prison term. On appeal, Illinois governor Richard Oglesby commuted two death sentences to life in prison, and one defendant committed suicide in November 1887. Four were hanged on November 11, 1887. In 1893, Governor John Altgeld pardoned the three remaining inmates. The Haymarket Square incident discredited the Knights of Labor, and its membership and popularity declined.

## MATERIALS

- Account of the Haymarket Riot, *Chicago Herald*, May 5, 1886 (excerpts). Source: *Illinois during the Gilded Age*, Digital Collections and Collaborative Projects, Northern Illinois University Libraries, <http://gildedage.lib.niu.edu/islandora/object/niu-gildedage%3A24071>
- Summary Organizer #1
- Overhead projector, Elmo projector, or similar device

## PROCEDURE

1. Distribute copies of the excerpts from the “Account of the Haymarket Riot” from the *Chicago Herald* and ask the students to read it silently to themselves. Resist the temptation to provide an extensive historical context for this article as the goal is for the students to develop ideas and draw

conclusions based solely on the author's account.

2. Explain that the students will learn how to do in-depth analysis for themselves by reading and understanding the *Chicago Herald* article on the riot and then being able to tell, in their own words, what the article said. In this first lesson, the whole class will work together to summarize the first selection from the text.
3. Distribute Summary Organizer #1 to all the students and display it in a format that everyone can see. Summary Organizer #1 provides the first selection from the text.
4. "Share read" the text with the students. This is done by having the students follow along silently while you begin reading aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. After a few sentences, ask the class to join in with the reading while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model for the class. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
5. Explain that the first step is to select "Key Words" from the text and then use those words to create a summary sentence that demonstrates an understanding of the first selection from the text.
6. Guidelines for selecting the key words: Key words are important to understanding the text. They are usually nouns or verbs. Don't pick "connector" words (*are, is, the, and, so, etc.*). The number of key words depends on the length of the text. This selection is 122 words, so you can pick six or seven words. Since the students must know the meaning of the words they choose, you will have opportunities to teach students how to use context clues, word analysis, and dictionary skills to discover word meanings.
7. Students will now select six or seven words from the text that they believe are key words and write them down on their organizer.
8. Survey the class to find out what the most popular choices are. You can write them down and have the class discuss the options and vote on the final choice, based on guidance from you. For example, the class might decide on the following words: *policemen, dead, rioters, citizens, wounded, hand grenade* (you can allow a very short phrase if it makes sense as a unit), and *thrown*. Now, no matter which words the students had previously selected, have them write the words agreed upon by the class or chosen by you into the Key Words section.
9. Explain to the class that they will write a sentence that summarizes the first section of the article using the key words. For example, "Several policemen were killed and a number of rioters and civilians were wounded when a hand grenade was thrown into the crowd." This should be a whole-class negotiation process. The students might decide they don't need some of the words to make the sentence even more streamlined. The students will copy the final negotiated sentence into their organizer.
10. Now tell the students to restate the summary sentence in their own words. Again, this is a class negotiation process. For example, "Policemen were killed and other people were hurt because someone threw a bomb."
11. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult; the students can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or on a separate vocabulary form.

## LESSON 2

### OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will “read like a detective” and explore the second selection from the *Chicago Herald* report on the Haymarket Square Riot of 1886 in Chicago. Through reading and analyzing the original text, the students will know what is explicitly stated, draw logical inferences, and demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary and then restating that summary in their own words. In this lesson the students will work with partners and in small groups.

### MATERIALS

- Summary Organizer #2

### PROCEDURE

1. Discuss what the class did in the previous lesson and what they decided was the meaning of the first selection.
2. Explain that today they will be going through the same process with partners and in small groups.
3. Distribute Summary Organizer #2 with the second selection from the article.
4. Share read the Summary Organizer #2 text with the class as described in Lesson 1.
5. Review the procedure from Lesson 1, reminding students that they will select key words from the text, use the key words to summarize the text, and then restate the summary in their own words.
6. Pair the students up and have them negotiate which key words to select. Because this text selection is 226 words, they can choose up to ten key words. After they have decided on their words, both students will write them in the Key Words section of their organizer.
7. Now put two pairs together. These two pairs go through the same negotiation process to come up with a final list of ten key words. Be strategic in how you make your groups to ensure the most participation by all group members.
8. Each group will use their key words to build a sentence that summarizes what the reporter wrote. Try to make sure that everyone contributes to the process. It is very easy for one student to take control and for the other students to let them do so. All of the students should write their negotiated sentence into their organizer.
9. Ask the groups to share out their summary sentences. This should start a teacher-led discussion that points out the qualities of the interpretations of the text. How successful were the groups at understanding the article, and were they careful to use the key words in summarizing the text?
10. Each group will now restate the summary sentence in their own words. Again, this is a group negotiation process. After they have decided on a sentence, they should write the final version into their organizers.
11. Have students share out their sentences. Discuss the clarity and quality of the groups’ interpretations of the text selection.
12. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult; the students can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or on a separate vocabulary form.

## LESSON 3

### OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will “read like a detective” and explore the third selection from the *Chicago Herald* report on the Haymarket Square Riot of 1886 in Chicago. Through reading and analyzing the original text, the students will know what is explicitly stated, draw logical inferences, and demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary and then restating that summary in their own words. In this lesson the students will be working individually on their summaries unless you believe they need another day of additional support from a partner or small group.

### MATERIALS

- Summary Organizer #3

### PROCEDURE

1. Discuss what the class did in the previous lessons and what they decided was the meaning of the first and second selections.
2. Distribute Summary Organizer #3 with the third selection from the article.
3. Share read the Summary Organizer #3 text with the class as described in Lesson 1.
4. Tell the students that they will be working independently on the third selection of the Account of the Haymarket Riot. Review the process of selecting key words, writing a summary using those key words, and then restating the summary in their own words.
5. Because this paragraph is 189 words, the students can pick up to eight key words. After choosing their words, they will write them in the Key Words section of their organizer.
6. Using the key words, the students will build a sentence that summarizes the meaning of this section of the text. They should write their summary sentence into their organizer.
7. The students will now restate the summary sentence in their own words. This should be added to their organizer.
8. Have students share out their restated summaries. Discuss the clarity and quality of the different interpretations of the account.
9. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult; the students can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or on a separate vocabulary form.

## LESSON 4

### OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will “read like a detective” and explore the fourth selection from the *Chicago Herald* report on the Haymarket Square Riot of 1886 in Chicago. Through reading and analyzing the original text, the students will know what is explicitly stated, draw logical inferences, and demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary and then restating that summary in their own words. In this

lesson the students will be working individually.

## MATERIALS

- Summary Organizer #4

## PROCEDURE

1. Discuss the text summaries the students came up with for the first, second, and third sections of the text in the previous lessons.
2. Hand out Summary Organizer #4, which contains the fourth selection from the account, and tell the students that they will be working on their own again to summarize this part of the text.
3. Share read the fourth selection from the article with the students as described in Lesson 1.
4. Because this paragraph is 246 words, the students can pick up to ten key words. After choosing their words, they will write them in the Key Words section of their organizer.
5. Using these key words, the students will build a sentence that summarizes the fourth selection from the article. They should write their summary sentence into their organizer.
6. The students will now restate the summary sentence in their own words and write it into their organizer.
7. Have the students share out their restated summaries and discuss the clarity and quality of the different interpretations of the reporter's account of the riot.
8. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult; the students can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or on a separate vocabulary form.

## LESSON 5

### OVERVIEW

This lesson has two objectives. First, the students will synthesize the work of the last four lessons and demonstrate that they understand the *Chicago Herald* account of the Haymarket Square Riot of 1886. Second, the students will answer a question in a short persuasive or argumentative essay that requires them to make inferences from the text and support their conclusions with explicit information from the text.

## MATERIALS

- Account of the Haymarket Riot, *Chicago Herald*, May 5, 1886 (excerpts). Source: *Illinois during the Gilded Age*, Digital Collections and Collaborative Projects, Northern Illinois University Libraries, <http://gildedage.lib.niu.edu/islandora/object/niu-gildedage%3A24071>
- Summary Organizers #1–#4 from the previous four lessons

## PROCEDURE

1. Distribute the excerpts of the *Chicago Herald* article on the Haymarket Riot of 1886 and ask the

students to read it silently to themselves.

2. Ask the students for their best summary of selection one. This is done as a class negotiation or discussion. You may write this short sentence on the overhead or similar device. The same procedure is used for selections two, three, and four. When you are finished, the students should have a summary of the *Chicago Herald* article in only a few sentences to help them organize their essay.
3. Each student will write a short persuasive or argumentative essay addressing one of the prompts below. If they are not familiar with writing an argumentative essay, you can lead a short lesson on the process, and then assign the essay for homework or for the next lesson. Remind the students that any arguments they make must be backed up with words taken directly from the *Chicago Herald* news article. The first prompt is designed to be the easiest.

### Prompts

1. The writing style of the journalist who wrote this story might be termed “sensationalist.” Is it or is it not? Use examples from the article to support your argument.
2. According to this article, what issues led to the gathering in Haymarket Square, and was the government’s reaction to the gathering appropriate? Use examples from the article to support your argument.
3. Is this article biased toward one side or the other? Use examples from the article to support your argument.



## HANDOUTS FOR THE HAYMARKET RIOT

## Account of the Haymarket Riot, *Chicago Herald*, May 5, 1886 (excerpts)

Policeman Joe Deegan [Mathias J. Degan] and three unknown Bohemians dead, Policemen Sheehan, Barrett, Redden, Keller, and Miller mangled and dying, thirty-five other policemen wounded more or less severely, and nobody knows how many citizens and rioters wounded is the result of an encounter between the police and an Anarchistic meeting in the old market square at the corner of Randolph and Desplaines streets. . . . Mayor Harrison was early on the scene, but it was not until after 10 o'clock that the police determined to disperse the crowd by reading the riot act. A bomb or hand grenade thrown into their ranks wrought terrible havoc with life and limb, and then ensued a scene of wild carnage with revolvers, bludgeons, and other missiles. . . .

Three thousand men and boys stood around three barrels and boxes erected as a platform on the square at 8 o'clock last evening. August Spies, the editor of the *Arbeiter Zeitung* the Anarchist organ in this city, stood upon one of the barrels. He made a brief speech to the crowd, and then introduced A. R. Parsons, one of the prominent leaders of the Socialists of Chicago. The latter told his hearers that instead of getting ten hours' pay for eight hours' work statistics proved that workingmen to-day were only getting two hours' pay for ten hours' work, and if they worked eight hours at the same wages they would only be getting three hours' pay for eight hours' work. He warned his audience that the time would come when the brutal oppression of the capitalists would drive every one save themselves into the ranks of socialism. . . . Samuel Fielden, a grim-visaged Anarchist, wearing a black slouch hat, then leaped upon a barrel. He said that the newspapers of the city charged the Socialists with cowardice, saying that they would sneak away from real danger. They were there to-night to repel the lie and prove that they were willing to risk their lives in the cause. It were a glorious death to die like a hero rather than be starved to death on 60 cents a day. . . .

. . . South of Randolph on Desplaines street a body of men was dimly seen approaching in measured tread. . . . The silent marchers came nearer, until the gas lamps on Randolph street threw their flickering light upon them. Then a hundred stars and a thousand brass buttons flashed in horizontal and perpendicular lines at the street intersections. The silent marchers were 400 police officers arranged in platoons, and choking the street from gutter to gutter. . . . Just as the officers reached the barrels upon which Spies, Parsons, and Fielden were standing a serpentine stream of fire burst from a window or the roof of Crane Brothers' manufacturing establishment on the opposite side of the street. It burned like the fuse of a rocket and hissed as it sped through the air. The mysterious stranger sputtered over the heads of the Anarchists and fell amid the officers. There was an explosion that rattled the windows in a thousand buildings, a burst of flame lit up the street, and then a scene of frightful and indescribable consternation ensued. The mysterious meteor was the fuse of a bomb hurled from the Crane Building by an Anarchist. . . .

Over a score of officers were stretched upon the ground. Blood gushed from a hundred wounds, and the air was filled with the agonizing cries of the dying and injured. Those who escaped the deadly missiles which flew from the boom wavered for a moment. They dashed over the mangled bodies of their comrades with drawn revolvers, the glittering barrels of which were belching fire every instant. Bullets sped into the howling Anarchists in murderous storms, strewing the street with dead and dying. . . . Officers and Socialists fall in hand-to-hand combat, and others were brought to earth by the assassin. Bystanders who had been attracted by the roar of the battle shared no better. They were shot down where they stood, or overtaken by the leaden storm while fleeing. The street was littered with the victims. . . . The officers were crazed with fury. They pressed forward into the teeth of a hurricane of bullets and stones.

. . . The result of this terrible encounter will not be known for hours. Two policemen are already dead. John Degan, shot in the region of the heart; Olaf Hanson, and twenty-one others are more or less wounded, five of them seriously. Fifty or more of the strikers must be dead and wounded. The street was strewn with them, and many escaped, dragging broken limbs behind them. One, a boy, died in a drug store at the corner of Halsted and Madison streets, and an unknown Bohemian lies dead in the Desplaines Street Station.

## Summary Organizer #1

### *Original Text:*

Policeman Joe Deegan [Mathias J. Degan] and three unknown Bohemians dead, Policemen Sheehan, Barrett, Redden, Keller, and Miller mangled and dying, thirty-five other policemen wounded more or less severely, and nobody knows how many citizens and rioters wounded is the result of an encounter between the police and an Anarchistic meeting in the old market square at the corner of Randolph and Desplaines streets. . . . Mayor Harrison was early on the scene, but it was not until after 10 o'clock that the police determined to disperse the crowd by reading the riot act. A bomb or hand grenade thrown into their ranks wrought terrible havoc with life and limb, and then ensued a scene of wild carnage with revolvers, bludgeons, and other missiles. . . .

### *Summary:*

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### *In Your Own Words:*

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### *Key Words:*

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## Summary Organizer #2

### *Original Text:*

Three thousand men and boys stood around three barrels and boxes erected as a platform on the square at 8 o'clock last evening. August Spies, the editor of the *Arbeiter Zeitung* the Anarchist organ in this city, stood upon one of the barrels. He made a brief speech to the crowd, and then introduced A. R. Parsons, one of the prominent leaders of the Socialists of Chicago. The latter told his hearers that instead of getting ten hours' pay for eight hours' work statistics proved that workingmen to-day were only getting two hours' pay for ten hours' work, and if they worked eight hours at the same wages they would only be getting three hours' pay for eight hours' work. He warned his audience that the time would come when the brutal oppression of the capitalists would drive every one save themselves into the ranks of socialism. . . . Samuel Fielden, a grim-visaged Anarchist, wearing a black slouch hat, then leaped upon a barrel. He said that the newspapers of the city charged the Socialists with cowardice, saying that they would sneak away from real danger. They were there to-night to repel the lie and prove that they were willing to risk their lives in the cause. It were a glorious death to die like a hero rather than be starved to death on 60 cents a day. . . .

### *Summary:*

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### *In Your Own Words:*

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### *Key Words:*

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### Summary Organizer #3

#### *Original Text:*

. . . South of Randolph on Desplaines street a body of men was dimly seen approaching in measured tread. . . . The silent marchers came nearer, until the gas lamps on Randolph street threw their flickering light upon them. Then a hundred stars and a thousand brass buttons flashed in horizontal and perpendicular lines at the street intersections. The silent marchers were 400 police officers arranged in platoons, and choking the street from gutter to gutter. . . . Just as the officers reached the barrels upon which Spies, Parsons, and Fielden were standing a serpentine stream of fire burst from a window or the roof of Crane Brothers' manufacturing establishment on the opposite side of the street. It burned like the fuse of a rocket and hissed as it sped through the air. The mysterious stranger sputtered over the heads of the Anarchists and fell amid the officers. There was an explosion that rattled the windows in a thousand buildings, a burst of flame lit up the street, and then a scene of frightful and indescribable consternation ensued. The mysterious meteor was the fuse of a bomb hurled from the Crane Building by an Anarchist. . . .

#### *Key Words:*

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#### *Summary:*

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#### *In Your Own Words:*

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## Summary Organizer #4

### *Original Text:*

Over a score of officers were stretched upon the ground. Blood gushed from a hundred wounds, and the air was filled with the agonizing cries of the dying and injured. Those who escaped the deadly missiles which flew from the boom wavered for a moment. They dashed over the mangled bodies of their comrades with drawn revolvers, the glittering barrels of which were belching fire every instant. Bullets sped into the howling Anarchists in murderous storms, strewing the street with dead and dying. . . . Officers and Socialists fall in hand-to-hand combat, and others were brought to earth by the assassin. Bystanders who had been attracted by the roar of the battle shared no better. They were shot down where they stood, or overtaken by the leaden storm while fleeing. The street was littered with the victims. . . . The officers were crazed with fury. They pressed forward into the teeth of a hurricane of bullets and stones.

. . . The result of this terrible encounter will not be known for hours. Two policemen are already dead. John Degan, shot in the region of the heart; Olaf Hanson, and twenty-one others are more or less wounded, five of them seriously. Fifty or more of the strikers must be dead and wounded. The street was strewn with them, and many escaped, dragging broken limbs behind them. One, a boy, died in a drug store at the corner of Halsted and Madison streets, and an unknown Bohemian lies dead in the Desplaines Street Station.

### *Key Words:*

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### *Summary:*

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### *In Your Own Words:*

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