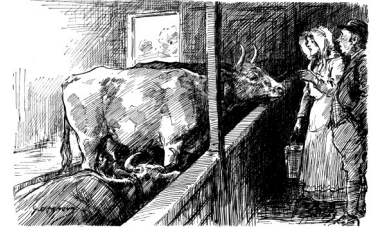




Name _____ Date _____

READING SELECTION #6

Mrs. O'Leary's Cow Speaks Up



- 1 I know who burned down Chicago in 1871. I am not the guilty one, and neither is my owner, Mrs. O'Leary. The fire was caused by Daniel Sullivan, the man who sometimes came to my barn. He started the fire that burned down half the city, but everyone blames me, the cow, instead.
- 2 What really happened? Well, the night of the fire, old Daniel hobbled in the barn around 8:30. You see, his mother's cow lived in the barn with me, and he had come to feed her. He must have been tired, because after he fed her, he sat down in the hay and fell fast asleep. That's when he dropped his pipe. I watched the pipe set the hay on fire. The fire quickly spread over the entire barn. Smoke filled the air making it hard to breathe. So, we all started mooing and squawking and neighing to wake him up. When Daniel woke up and saw what he had done, he quickly jumped to his feet. I thought he was going to run away, but he didn't.
- 3 Daniel began rescuing us by opening our stalls and untying our ropes. He led us all outside. By then, Mrs. O'Leary had come out to see why we were making such a fuss. The fire grew bigger and bigger. A strong wind blew fiery ash next door, and that house caught on fire too. Then another. Then another. I watched with my big brown eyes as most of the neighborhood went up in smoke. Mrs. O'Leary was lucky. Her house didn't catch fire, but I watched my barn burn to the ground.
- 4 The rest of Chicago wasn't as lucky as Mrs. O'Leary. The awful fire burned for two whole days. It burned down houses, shops, and business buildings all over the city. People ran to the lake to get away from the flames. Screeching fire engines pulled by horses raced through the streets clanging their bells. It was scary with so much fire and smoke, noise and confusion, and panic everywhere! Some people were even killed—all because Daniel fell asleep with a pipe in his mouth! Other people became too tired to fight the fire any longer. The fire finally stopped when a light rain fell on the city. It gave the exhausted firemen a little help in putting out the flames. But, the damage was already done.
- 5 Nobody knows Daniel did it, and he'll never tell. Instead, everyone blames me. Me! A cow! They say *I* knocked over a lantern in the barn. They say *I* started the fire. At first I was angry at Daniel Sullivan for saying it was my fault, but now I understand. It was impossible for him to tell the truth. If he told people that his carelessness had started the fire that burned down Chicago, he'd be in a heap of trouble. But if it were just a cow that did it, who would care? They don't send cows to jail, do they? I remind myself, too, that Daniel saved our lives. He let us out when we could have been trapped. What a brave thing to do!
- 6 I guess I don't really mind being blamed for the fire if it helps Daniel stay out of trouble. However, I wish people remembered me for something good, instead of for starting the Great Chicago Fire. I sure hope Daniel learned a lesson and stops smoking that pipe!

