

## Lesson 2

# Understanding Historical Texts



### Learning Target



Explaining information in historical texts, including what happened and why, can help you understand the connections among various events and ideas in the text.

- **Read** Writers of **historical texts** often organize **information** to answer the questions “What happened?” and “Why did it happen?” This is sometimes called **cause and effect**. Cause and effect is a relationship in which one thing brings about, or causes, something else to occur. Historical texts don’t just describe several events or ideas. The texts also explain why they happened and why they matter.

**Look at the illustrations below. One shows an event that happened. The other shows why it happened. Think about which event is which.**



► **Think** Consider what you’ve learned about causes and effects and why writers use them to organize their writing. Remember, understanding what happened and why helps you understand what happens around you every day.

In the chart below, describe what happened in the first illustration. Then explain why the event happened.

What Happened?	Why?
→	

- **Talk** Share your chart with a partner.
- Based on the events in the illustrations, what do you think the boy will do next?
  - Explain why the boy will do that next.

 **Academic Talk**  
 Use these words and phrases to talk about the text.  
 • **cause and effect**   • **information**   • **historical text**

# The Model T

by Thomas A. Moore

- 1 When the first cars were produced, only wealthy people could afford them. Henry Ford wanted to build a car that the average working person could afford. In 1908, the Ford Motor Company introduced a new, low-cost car. It was called the Model T and sold for \$825. Although the car was reasonably priced, Ford kept thinking of ways to make it even cheaper. He knew that the lower the price, the more customers he would gain and the more money he would make.
- 2 Ford's early cars were all handcrafted. This meant that each automobile was slightly different from the next. It also meant that each took a long time to make. Ford decided his cars would no longer be handcrafted. They would be put together in exactly the same way, saving time and money. In 1913, Ford began producing cars with the help of a moving assembly line.
- 3 The moving assembly line achieved Ford's goal of turning out a car faster and for increasingly lower prices. In time, Ford's factory was turning out one automobile every 90 minutes. By 1915, the Ford Motor Company was earning record profits. And by 1918, half of all cars in the United States were Model Ts. Almost overnight, the United States became a nation on wheels.



## Close Reader Habits

**Underline** words and phrases that help you figure out why more people began owning cars.

**Explore**

**How did the production of Henry Ford's Model T lead to more people owning cars?**



Look for details that answer the questions "What happened?" and "Why?"

**Think**

- 1** What did the Ford Motor Company do in 1908 and 1913? Why did these events occur? Write the details in the chart.

**What Happened?**

**Why?**

**1908**

**1913**

**Talk**

- 2** In 1913, Henry Ford decided his cars would no longer be handcrafted. Discuss how this decision led to a new way of making cars. Write down an idea you talked about with your partner.

**HINT** One thing can cause another thing to happen.

**Write**

- 3 Short Response** Explain why half of all cars in the United States were Model T's by 1918. Include text details telling what happened and why. Use the space provided on page 30 to write your response.

# The Bicycle's First Century

by J. Soo



- Two centuries ago, bicycles did not look like the bikes you know today. Invented by a Frenchman around 1790, the first bicycle had two wheels and a wooden frame. It worked like a scooter. Then, in 1816, a German improved on this design. He connected a bar to the front wheel. This allowed the rider to steer the bicycle. Later, in 1839, a Scottish blacksmith made yet another improvement. He added foot pedals, which let riders put force on the wheels. Now bicycles could move faster.
- In the 1870s, the “high-wheel” bicycle appeared. It was called this because the front wheel was far larger than the rear wheel. The pedals turned the front wheel only, but the size of that wheel meant that each turn of the pedals took the rider a greater distance than before. On the high-wheel bicycle, the rider sat up high, over the front wheel. Consequently, when the large front wheel struck a rut or rock in the road, the rider could be pitched head-first over the front of the bicycle! The high-wheel bicycle wasn’t very safe.
- In 1885, an Englishman made the first “safety” bicycle. The bicycle was now beginning to look more like the modern one you see every day. Its front and rear wheels were the same size, and sprockets and chains linked the pedals and the rear wheel. In the 1890s, inventors added air-filled rubber tires. Then came a coaster brake and adjustable handlebars. The first hundred years of the bicycle—from 1790 to the 1890s—brought many changes, and the next century would bring even more improvements.

## Close Reader Habits

How does each bicycle model improve upon the model before it? Reread the article. **Underline** details that tell *why* each model was an improvement.



History texts often tell how one event caused several other events to occur. This is called a series of events.

**Think** Use what you learned from reading the article to respond to the following questions.

- 1** Reread paragraph 1. Choose the **two** statements that **best** tell why the bicycle was a better machine by 1839.
- A** A bar allowed the rider to steer.
  - B** A wooden frame meant that the bicycle was lighter.
  - C** Foot pedals meant that bicycles could move faster.
  - D** The first bicycles could move like a scooter.
  - E** The front wheel was larger than the rear wheel.

- 2** This question has two parts. Answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

**Part A**

What conclusion can you draw about what happened to many riders of the bicycles described in paragraph 2?

- A** They would be able to see over other bicycle riders.
- B** They were likely to get hurt if they hit a rock.
- C** They could not go as fast using the larger wheels.
- D** They found ways to link the large and small wheels together.

**Part B**

Which **two** sentences in paragraph 2 **best** support the answer to Part A? **Circle** them in the passage.

**Talk**

- 3** Based on information in the text, what changes to bicycle designs came about in the 1800s? What can you conclude about why the designs kept changing?

**Write**

- 4 Short Response** Explain how the design of the bicycle was improved in the 1800s and why the changes were necessary. Use details from the text to support your answer. Use the space provided on page 31 to write your answer.

**HINT** Be sure to use words that show why the changes were made, such as *because* and *since*.





**WORDS TO KNOW**

As you read, look inside, around, and beyond these words to figure out what they mean.

- **convinced**
- **folly**
- **revolutionize**



Robert Fulton was the inventor of the steamboat.

from

# FULTON'S SUCCESS

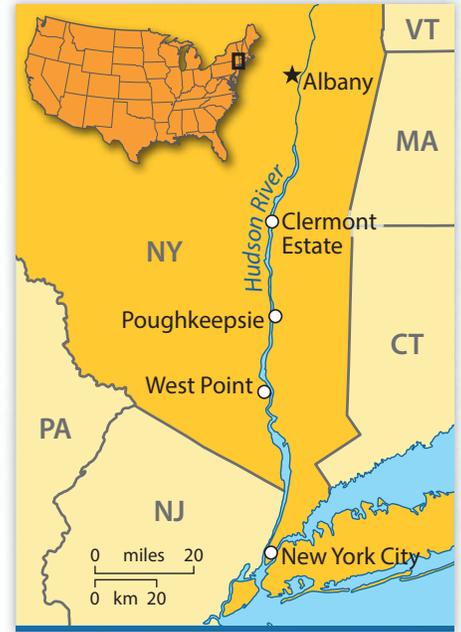
by Lois Miner Huey, *Cobblestone*

- 1 “Fulton’s Folly,” people jeered as they passed Browne’s Shipyard in New York City. It was 1807. Browne’s was the site where inventor Robert Fulton and his partner, Robert R. Livingston, Jr., were building a very strange boat. The two men knew that putting a steam engine onboard a vessel was still new and dangerous. But they ignored the taunts. They were convinced that Fulton’s steamboat ideas, combined with Livingston’s financial backing, would revolutionize transportation in America. And they were right.
- 2 On August 17, after devoting about five months to its construction, Fulton launched a vessel that measured 150 feet long, 13 feet wide, and 9 feet deep.

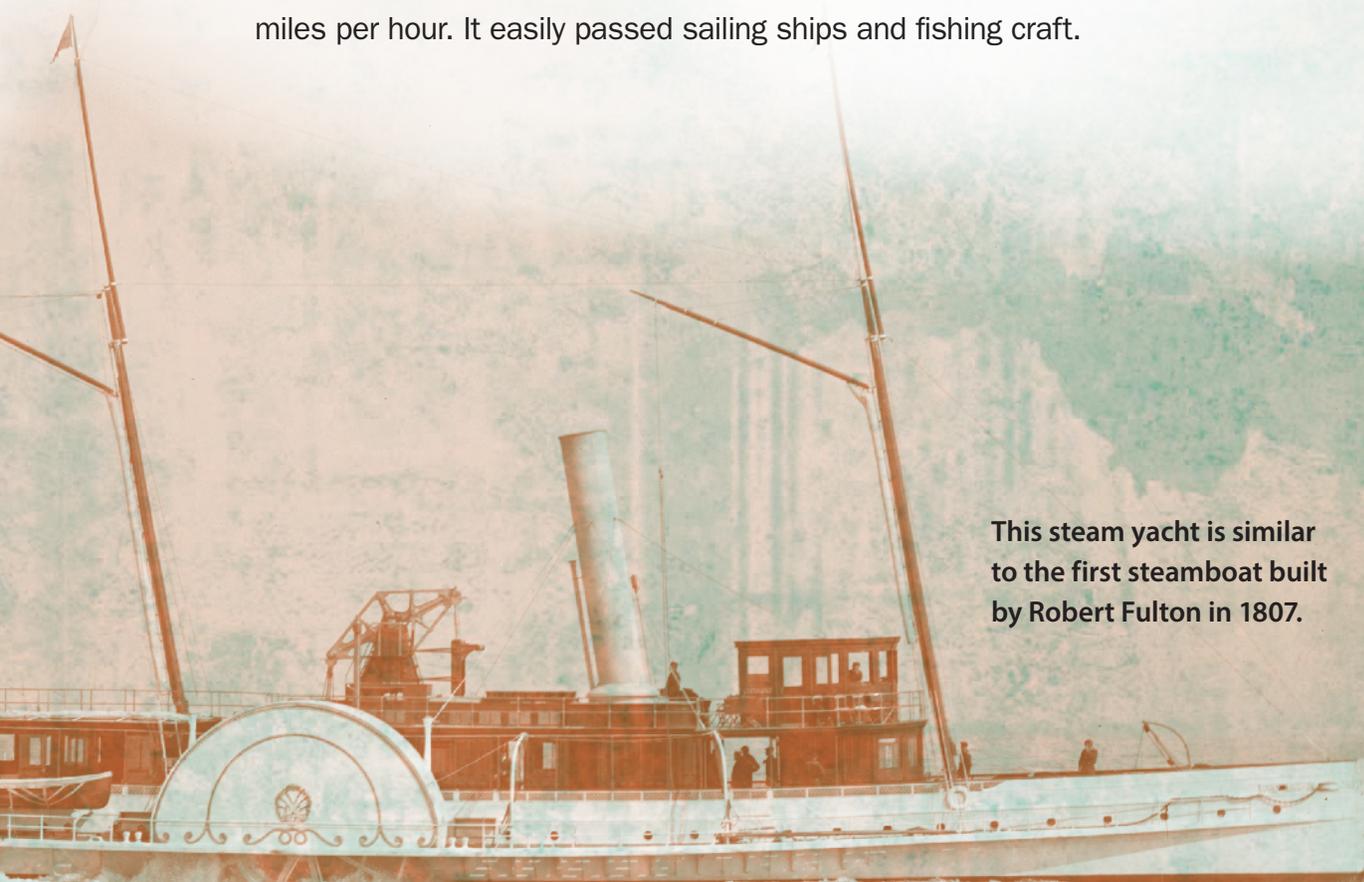
3 Fulton and a group of invited guests prepared to steam up the Hudson River from New York City to Albany. Albany is the state capital. The guests had to put up with primitive conditions. There were no cabins, no beds, and a roaring, uncovered steam engine mounted in the center of the boat. There was also the fear of the engine's exploding!

4 They cast off at 1 P.M. The vessel puffed away from the dock and stalled. The passengers' whispering turned into loud mumbles, which eventually gave way to shouts of dismay. Sensing their fear, Fulton promised to return to the dock if he could not fix the problem.

5 After a short time, there was a huge blast of smoke. Once again, the boat churned upriver. It was described as looking like a giant teakettle. The vessel's engine let off steam and rained down sparks that sizzled in the water. The noise was deafening, but the boat was moving. The passengers cheered. The boat chugged upstream against the tide at a fast four to five miles per hour. It easily passed sailing ships and fishing craft.



**Fulton's route up the Hudson River from New York City to Albany**



**This steam yacht is similar to the first steamboat built by Robert Fulton in 1807.**



**A replica of Robert Fulton's steamboat sails the Hudson River in 1909.**

- 6 In its wake, the boat's two side paddlewheels left waves of foamy water and lots of terrified onlookers. Nothing like it ever had been seen before. Darkness fell, but the boat continued its journey. With a full moon and warm breezes, the passengers stayed up all night singing songs by candlelight. They had mostly forgotten their fears.
- 7 The next day, the boat docked at Livingston's estate, called Clermont. After spending the night, it continued steaming to Albany the following morning. It pulled into that city at 5 P.M. on August 19. The boat had made the 150-mile trip in 32 hours of travel time. Crowds cheered its arrival. No longer a joke, "Fulton's Folly" had become the first successful steamboat in America.

**Think**

Use what you learned from reading the history article to respond to the following questions.

- 1** Which sentence from the article tells why Fulton and Livingston kept working on their boat even though others thought they were being foolish?
- A** “The two men knew that putting a steam engine onboard a vessel was still new and dangerous.”
  - B** “They were convinced that Fulton’s steamboat ideas . . . would revolutionize transportation in America.”
  - C** “Fulton and a group of invited guests prepared to steam up the Hudson River from New York City to Albany.”
  - D** “The boat had made the 150-mile trip in 32 hours of travel time.”

- 2** This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

**Part A**

Read the sentence from paragraph 3 of “Fulton’s Success.”

The guests had to put up with primitive conditions.

What does the word primitive mean as it is used in the sentence?

- A** original and unusual
- B** restful and cozy
- C** natural and ancient
- D** rough and uncomfortable

**Part B**

Which detail from the article **best** supports your answer to Part A?

- A** “The vessel puffed away from the dock and stalled.”
- B** “Fulton launched a vessel that measured 150 feet long, 13 feet wide, and 9 feet deep.”
- C** “. . . no cabins, no beds, and a roaring, uncovered steam engine . . .”
- D** “. . . also the fear of the engine’s exploding!”

**3** This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

**Part A**

Which statement **best** explains why some people who saw Fulton’s boat steaming up the Hudson River were terrified?

- A** They were excited about Fulton’s strange new invention.
- B** The new steamboat looked and sounded dangerous.
- C** The people were upset that they were not allowed to ride on the steamboat.
- D** The steamboat was oddly shaped and easily passed the other boats on the river.

**Part B**

Underline **three** sentences from paragraph 5 that **best** support your answer in Part A.

After a short time, there was a huge blast of smoke. Once again, the boat churned upriver. It was described as looking like a giant teakettle. The vessel’s engine let off steam and rained down sparks that sizzled in the water. The noise was deafening, but the boat was moving. The passengers cheered. The boat chugged upstream against the tide at a fast four to five miles per hour. It easily passed sailing ships and fishing craft.



**Write**

What conclusion can be drawn about why the steamboat was known as “Fulton’s Folly” and how it became “Fulton’s Success”? Reread the text.

**Underline** details that show the reasons the steamboat was a success.

**4 Plan Your Response** First, identify why the steamboat was originally called “Fulton’s Folly.” Then identify what turned it into a success. Use a chart to help organize your thoughts by explaining “What happened?” and “Why?”

**5 Write an Extended Response** Use evidence from the text and the information in your chart to describe why the steamboat was called “Fulton’s Folly” and how it eventually became “Fulton’s Success.”

---



---

