**Sample Introduction**

**The Great Chicago Fire: A Legend in Chicago History**

The Great Chicago Fire is a story that every Chicago citizen knows about. Who could forget the legend of Mrs. O’Leary’s cow? The fire began on the evening of October 8, 1871. Since Chicago averaged about two fires a day; the beginnings were somewhat normal. However, as the mistakes mounted and the fire grew out of control; Chicago would have its first legend. In the end over 73 miles of road, 120 miles of sidewalks and 17,500 buildings would be destroyed…or roughly 1/3 of the city. **The Great Chicago Fire would become Chicago’s greatest story.**

**Sample Background**

**A City Made of Wood**

Chicago, like many cities of its time was built almost entirely of wood; which meant if you didn’t put a fire out quickly it had the potential to be very dangerous and deadly. People of that time were used to hearing the alarms of the fire halls. The previous night there had been a large fire. This may have been part of the reason for all of the mistakes made. In the end though, it would be a falsely accused cow that would make the headlines.

**Sample Content Section One**

**The Cow that Made Chicago Famous**

Everyone who has heard of the Great Chicago Fire has heard of Mrs. O’Leary’s cow. Unfortunately, many people believe the story to be true. However, Chicago Tribune reporter, Michael Ahern admitted in 1893 that he had fabricated the story. Most historians agree that Daniel “Pegleg” Sullivan, who actually reported the fire, was most likely the culprit having ignited a lantern while steeling milk. The cow would be exonerated (along with Mrs. O’Leary) by the Chicago City council in 2003.

**Sample Content Section Two**

**A Devastating Fire**

Had the Great Chicago Fire been just another major fire of the time period, people would probably not talk about it today. However, when a fire wipes out 1/3 of the city and causes the kind of damage this fire caused, people remember. The fire got out of hand quickly after many human errors, a shifty wind and very dry conditions. In addition to the mass amounts of structural damage, 300 lives were lost and 90,000 Chicagoans were left homeless.

**Sample Section Three**

**Chicago: A History of Disaster**

The destruction and mayhem of the Great Chicago Fire is well known by most people, even outside of Chicago. However, Chicago has had many other cases of disaster as well. In 1903 the Iroquois Theater caught fire and over 100 lives were lost. In 1915 the Eastland passenger ship sank and took over 800 lives. Disaster also struck in 1958 when Our Lady of Angels parochial school burnt down taking nearly 100 lives in the process. Chicago has a history of disaster and loss of life.

**Significance**

**Rebounding from Defeat**

Obviously, the Great Chicago Fire was important to our history. It took nearly 300 lives and cost the city countless amounts of money. However, the Fire also showed that Chicagoans know how to rebuild, rebound and most importantly survive. After the fire, Chicago became the major city it is today. There is perhaps no disaster in American history that is so closely tied to its history than this one.

**Conclusion**

**Chicago + The Great Fire= Chicago History**

All cities need stories and Chicago is no different; and all of the stories cannot be happy and positive. However, the Great Chicago Fire proved that what appears on the surface to be a sad, horrific event can have a positive outcome and make a city proud. Chicago is a great city because, like its people it learns from its mistakes. There is no better story to prove this than that of the Great Chicago Fire. After all, Chicago did decide to honor it by putting a star on its flag.