

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

“With No Less Fury”

Reading historic documents can be a challenge. One reason is that in the past, people wrote more formally than we do today. Another reason is that you are likely to run into a lot of words you don't know.

Quite often, though, you can use context to get a rough idea of what the word refers to.

The passage below is an excerpt from the *Annals*. It was written by Tacitus, one of the great historians of the ancient world. Read it through [several times, if it will help]. Then see how well you used context clues to figure out some unfamiliar words.

Nero at this time was at Antium, and did not return to Rome until the fire approached his house, which he had built to connect the palace with the gardens of Maecenas (*my-SEE-nus*). It could not, however, be stopped from devouring the palace, the house, and everything around it. However, to relieve the people, driven out homeless as they were, he threw open to them the Campus Martius* and the public buildings of Agrippa, and even his own gardens, and raised temporary structures to receive the **destitute** multitude. Supplies of food were brought up from . . . neighboring towns, and the price of corn was reduced to three **sesterces** a peck [about 8 quarts]

These acts, though popular, produced no effect, since a rumor had gone forth everywhere that, at the

very time when the city was in flames, the Emperor appeared on a private stage and sang of the destruction of Troy, comparing present misfortunes with the calamities [disasters] of antiquity.

At last, after five days, an end was put to the **conflagration** at the foot of the Esquiline hill. . . . But before people had laid aside their fears, the flames returned, with no less fury this second time. . . . [Rome] is divided into fourteen districts, four of which remained uninjured, three were leveled to the ground, while in the other seven were left only a few shattered, half-burnt **relics** of houses.

. . . [In time, Rome was rebuilt. But despite] the **striking** splendor of the restored city, old men will remember many things which could not be replaced.

*Campus is Latin for *field*; In Nero's time, Campus Martius (Field of Mars) was an area outside the city of Rome, where emperors had built pools, temples, and the world-famous Pantheon.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the word or phrase that best defines the following words.

1. conflagration

- (A) firefighting efforts
- (B) heavy rainfall
- (C) large death toll
- (D) large, destructive fire

2. destitute

- (A) fleeing from harm
- (B) frightened
- (C) impoverished
- (D) lost

3. relic

- (A) foundation or base
- (B) remains; surviving object
- (C) residents; inhabitants
- (D) stories

4. sesterces

- (A) boatloads
- (B) ears of corn
- (C) unit of currency
- (D) unit of weight

5. striking

- (A) expected
- (B) impressive
- (C) offensive
- (D) renewed

ONE MORE STEP: Write a brief paragraph or two, using your own words to paraphrase what Tacitus wrote.