

The Cocoanut Grove fire

1942 | Grade 4 · Explain with evidence

Teacher note: this topic includes loss, violence, discrimination, or criminal allegations. Preview and choose a suitable reading together. No reenactment of harm is needed.

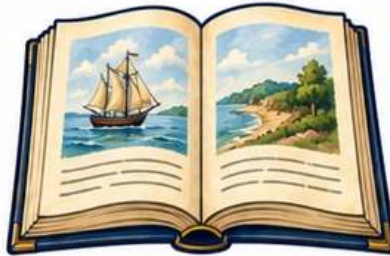
Words to know

protect — keep someone or something from harm

damage — harm that makes something less safe or useful

change — become different

Look closely



Modern topic illustration created for Massachusetts History Explorers. It is not a historical artifact.

Read the story

A terrible fire struck the Cocoanut Grove nightclub in Boston. Four hundred ninety-two people died. The disaster led to changes in fire safety and advances in caring for burn injuries.

Investigators examined exits, materials, and crowd conditions. Disaster history can explain why safety rules change. Students should follow current school plans; this reading does not replace emergency guidance.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. State the main idea. Support it with two details from the reading.
2. Explain a change or challenge described in the text. Which words support your answer?
3. Use one vocabulary word in a new sentence about this event.
4. What can the image and caption help explain? What can they not tell you?

Follow-up reading: Jackie Robinson's Boston tryout

1945

Jackie Robinson tried out for the Boston Red Sox in 1945, but the team did not sign him. In 1947 he broke modern Major League Baseball's color barrier with the Brooklyn Dodgers.

The Boston tryout occurred two years before his Dodgers debut. Racism shaped baseball opportunities. The Red Sox did not integrate their major-league team until Pumpsie Green joined in 1959.

Compare the two readings. Explain one similarity or difference using a detail from each. Their order does not prove that one caused the other.

Teacher guide & source trail

Original classroom adaptation. Suggested reading levels are instructional choices, not standardized readability certifications. Use professional judgment and learner feedback.

ELA practice: RI.4.1: refer to details; RI.4.2: main idea and summary; RI.4.3: explain events; RI.4.7: interpret visual information; W.4.2 and SL.4.1: explain and discuss.

These tasks support selected skills in the [Massachusetts 2017 ELA framework](#); they do not establish mastery of an entire standard.

Answer guidance

Factual anchor: A terrible fire struck the Cocoanut Grove nightclub in Boston. Four hundred ninety-two people died. The disaster led to changes in fire safety and advances in caring for burn injuries. Investigators examined exits, materials, and crowd conditions. Disaster history can explain why safety rules change. Students should follow current school plans; this reading does not replace emergency guidance.

Accept accurate main ideas and explanations supported by the text. Vocabulary meanings are in the opening word bank. For picture questions, use the caption and credit below; distinguish what is visible from what is inferred. For comparison, accept a specific connection supported by both readings. Do not require personal accounts of trauma.

Continue the inquiry

[Research source for this event ↗](#)

[Research source for follow-up ↗](#)

[Event page, accessible HTML reading, and vocabulary game ↗](#)

Image: Original site illustration.

[Image source and rights record ↗](#)

The PDF contains selectable English text and embedded fonts. For adjustable text and browser reading tools, use the event's [HTML page](#). External sources may need adult guidance.