Name_____

The Sticky Explosion

Molasses is a dark, sweet, sticky substance that most people only think about using for baking. However, enjoying molasses as a treat is not all this food is known for, especially to anyone who lived in Boston, Massachusetts, during the early 1900s. In fact, these people learned that molasses can be dangerous.

On January 15, 1919, disaster struck at the United States Industrial Alcohol Company. A tank holding 2.5 million gallons of molasses exploded. A wave of hot molasses poured from the tank burning and destroying whatever or whomever was unlucky enough to be in its path.

The spread of the molasses was not contained to the Industrial Alcohol Company building. The substance spread throughout the street, taking down structures, animals, and people. Twenty-one people died as a result of the explosion. Cleanup of the sticky substance took weeks. The source of the explosion was eventually blamed on the tank, which was described as simply not being large enough to hold the amount of molasses that it had contained.

Text Questions

1. Which would be a good source to learn more about the production of molasses?
   a. a website of a company currently producing molasses
   b. a flyer advertising where to purchase organic products, including molasses
   c. an article comparing honey and molasses
   d. a newspaper from 1919 with articles about the molasses explosion
2. Which statement is a fact about the story?
   a. Twenty-one people died as a result of the molasses explosion.
   b. The Industrial Alcohol Company knew there were problems with the molasses tank but did nothing to stop the explosion.
   c. The people of Boston, Massachusetts, fought for the closing of the industrial plant after the explosion occurred.
   d. The source of the explosion was never discovered.
3. What does the word *source* mean as it is used in the third paragraph?
   a. resource
   b. cause
   c. ending
   d. supply
4. What conclusion can be drawn about the molasses explosion in Boston?
   a. In any industrialized plant, proper equipment and safety measures must be ensured at all times for the safety of everyone.
   b. Infectious disease can be a result of any natural disaster.
   c. Molasses will always be made in the United States regardless of past dangers in the process.
   d. People who do not consume molasses would not be interested in the 1919 explosion.
5. Using information from the text, explain what could have been done to prevent the explosion at the factory.

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LIVEWORKSHEETS