

## The Chicago Haymarket Riot

Read each of the excerpts below for homework. On a separate sheet of paper, write whose point of view each excerpt reflects and the possible bias.

1. The following excerpt is taken from the opening address of William P. Black, attorney for the anarchists.

... They [the anarchists] assembled there, gentlemen, under the provision of our Constitution, to exercise the right of free speech, to discuss the eight-hour question, to discuss the situation of the working men. They assembled there incidentally to discuss what they deemed outrages at McCormick's. No man expected that a bomb would be thrown; no man expected that anyone would be injured at that first meeting, but while some of these defendants were there and while this meeting was in peaceful progress, the police, with a devilish design, as we expect to prove, came down upon that body with their revolvers in their hand and pockets, ready for immediate use, intending to destroy the life of every man that stood upon that market square.

2. These statements were made by eyewitnesses to the riot on the night of May 4:

[August] Spies started out by saying that the meeting was intended to be a peaceable one. It was not called to raise a disturbance, and then gave his version of the affair at McCormick's the day before. The crowd near the speaker's wagon was in sympathy with the speakers. There was occasionally applause. I heard a few Germans talk with one another. I heard Parsons call out toward the close of the speech, "To arms! To arms! To arms!" Fielden, toward the end of his speech, told the crowd to kill the law, to stab it, to throttle it, or else it would throttle them.

—Henry Heineman  
Reporter, *Chicago Daily News*

... I went down to the meeting and mingled with the crowd, going from point to point and hearing all that was said. First, Spies made a speech a little incendiary, and then he introduced Parsons, who struck me as more [radical]. The crowd did not strike me as being sympathetic with the speakers. Those on the outskirts jeered them. ... Those directly around the speaker's stand cheered them vigorously. ... A little after 10 o'clock I left the meeting and got home about 10:20 o'clock.

—Mayor Carter Harrison

As we approached the truck, there was a person speaking from the truck. Capt. Ward said, "I command you, in the name of the people of Illinois, to immediately and peaceably disperse." Almost immediately, Mr. Fielden, who was speaking, turned so as to face the captain and myself, stepped from the end of the truck toward the sidewalk, and said in a loud tone, "We are peaceable." Almost instantly after that, I heard from behind me a hissing sound, followed by a terrific explosion.

—Captain John Bonfield,  
Inspector of Police

3. Here are excerpts from addresses made by four of the eight convicted anarchists:

Your decision, your verdict, our conviction is nothing but an arbitrary will of this lawless court. . . . It is true we have called upon the people to arm themselves. It is true that we told them time and again that the great day of change is coming. It was not our desire to have bloodshed. We are not beasts.

—August Spies

This verdict is a death-blow against free speech, free press, and free thought in this country, and the people will be conscious of it too.

—Adolph Fischer

Nor do I deny, that I, too, have spoken at meetings, saying that, if every workingman had a bomb in his pocket, capitalistic rule would soon come to an end. . . .

—George Engel

. . . I have violated no law of this country. Neither I nor my colleagues here have violated any legal right of American citizens. We stand upon the right of free speech, of free press, of public assemblage, unmolested and undisturbed. We stand upon the constitutional right of self-defense, and we defy the prosecution to rob the people of America of these dearly bought rights. Seven men are to be exterminated because they insist upon the inalienable rights granted them by the Constitution. Seven men are to be exterminated, because they demand the right of free speech and exercise it.

—Albert R. Parsons

4. This statement was made by Judge Joseph E. Gary after the trial was over:

Section 253, Chapter 38, Revised Statutes, provides that, "when twelve or more persons, any of them armed with clubs or dangerous weapons, or thirty or more, armed or unarmed, are unlawfully, riotously, or tumultuously assembled in any city . . . it shall be the duty of each of the municipal officers . . . to go among the persons so assembled . . . and in the name of the state command them immediately to disperse." A crowd of people, variously estimated by different witnesses as from eight to two thousand filled a public street of the city after ten o'clock at night. They were listening to, and shouting their approval of, speeches, urging them in language most exciting, and with arguments the most persuasive that the speakers knew how to use, to violence and bloodshed. . . . Each man has the full right to entertain and advance . . . such opinions as suit himself . . . but if he proposes murder as a means of enforcing them he puts his own life at stake. . . . And no clamor about free speech or the evils to be cured or the wrongs to be redressed will shield him from the consequences of his crime. His liberty is not a license to destroy.