

Your point of view

Have you ever watched a TV mystery where three people witnessed the same accident, but all three had different memories? It all comes down to your point of view.

Here are some very different opinions about the Old State Capitol. Your assignment is to choose one and write an essay either defending or disagreeing with this person's opinion of the building.

"To visit England, France, Italy, Germany, Palestine, Egypt, ah! That would be happiness! And yet, so inconsistent am I, that if I had my wish, in the Louvre, I would picture home, and cry for it; in foggy England I would mourn for my Louisiana sunsets; in looking at St. Peter's [sic] I would recall the State House; floating down the Rhine I would long for the muddy Mississippi..."

From *The Civil War Diary of a Southern Woman*, written by Sarah Morgan, c. 18XX, from the book edited by Charles East, page 156.



"I have quartered one regiment in the [Capitol], a beautiful building with terraced grounds bordered with trees and flowers."

From a letter written by General Thomas Williams, 1862 during the occupation of Baton Rouge in the Civil War



"I learned, to my unspeakable grief, that the state house is burned down. Those blessed Yankees have been in the town some three weeks, and this is the result, confound them! Adieu, Home and Happiness! Yankees inhabit my first, and have almost succeeded in destroying my second. Let the whole town burn, now; without our state house, it is nothing. Without its chief ornament, what does our poor little town look like? So wretched Yankees, standing in the little room at home, look through the single window without seeing the white towers against the blue sky? How can Baton Rouge exist without our pride? I can hardly fancy it. Though desecrated, mutilated, pillaged, almost destroyed within by the Yankees in their previous visit, still we had the outside left untouched, at least until this crowning act of barbarism. Our beautiful gardens! Our evening walks! Oh Yankees! If you were only in glory! You'd have fire enough there, to introduce you to dispense with the burning of our beautiful State House!"

From *The Civil War Diary of a Southern Woman*, written by Sarah Morgan, c. 1861, from the book edited by Charles East, page 382



“It is pathetic enough that a whitewashed castle, with turrets and things – materials all ungenue within and without, pretending to be what they are not – should ever have been built in this otherwise honorable place; but it is much more pathetic to see this architectural falsehood undergoing restoration and perpetuation in our day, when it would have been so easy to let dynamite finish what a charitable fire began, and then devote this restoration-money to the building of something genuine.”

From *Life on the Mississippi*, written by **Mark Twain**, 1882, from the Signet edition, 2009, pages 221-2.



Get the hell out of here with your proposition! I wouldn't give four thousand dollars for the whole [darn] building. I wish it was burned down, and any man that will burn it down I will see that he is not prosecuted!



From *The Career of a Tinpot Napoleon, A Political Biography of Huey P. Long* (Claitor's Publishing, 1932). This is what **Governor Huey Long** said to an insurance salesman who was trying to sell insurance to cover possible damage to the Old State Capitol in a conversation overheard in 1928 by John K. Fineran.

Governor Huey Long, 1928



IMPORTANT: Some first-person accounts might be biased in one way or another. If you think the account you chose is biased explain how and why in your essay.