

Directions

Read this story. Then answer questions 1 through 6.

This is a science fiction story that takes place in the future.

Snow Day in Space

by Roxanne Werner

- 1 The clock must be frozen. Or maybe the space station fell into a time warp and I'm trapped in my math lesson forever. The truth is that time doesn't fly when you're waiting for something, and I've waited for a friend for a long time.
- 2 *Crackle.* "The radius . . ." *Crackle.* Static swirls across the holo-video screen, burying my teacher's image in a blizzard of white noise that my dad and I nicknamed snow.
- 3 A voice comes over the loudspeakers. "Magnetic storm. Communications down. Remain in shielded areas. Technicians report to . . ."
- 4 The announcement drones on, but I don't listen. A snow day. Hurray for space weather!
- 5 Eleven years ago, my birth on Space Station Alpha made history. I was the first human born off-planet. My parents knew just what to name me—Jemison Mae, after Mom's hero, Mae Jemison, the first black female astronaut. Except I feel more like a science experiment than a hero.
- 6 It didn't take doctors long to discover I was different. Sure, on the outside I look normal. Just your average 11-year-old girl. But inside I flunk every test. My bones are too thin and my muscles are too weak. It seems humans don't grow well in the low-gravity, antiseptic halls of space stations. Not well enough to survive on Earth, anyway. I am sentenced to life in space.
- 7 After they figured this out, no other kids were allowed on board the space station. But new studies show that older children won't be harmed by a short stay. Today, a shuttle will arrive carrying a new technician and her family, including a girl my age. My first friend, Vianna. Freed from class by the snow day, I race down the corridor to message her.

GO ON

- 8 Spending 11 years on the station has its advantages. I know more about it than anyone else does, even the commander. Other than my parents and me, most people spend one or two years here, then return to Earth. I've explored every inch of the place and uncovered some useful items.
- 9 When I was five, one of the techs showed me the Space Alpha Text booth, or S.A.T. "Practice your letters on this, Jem," he said. "No one uses it now that we have the holo-video." The small room held a keyboard and the outdated communications system. I sat for hours fascinated by the way the screen lit up as I tapped the keys. The booth became my secret hideout, a place to disappear.
- 10 Now I shut the door and slide behind the keyboard. Vianna and I have been exchanging messages for months. We're not allowed to tie up the holo-video system with chatter, but I got the S.A.T. going after looking through old manuals. I tap in my code and read her message: *Jem, something's wrong—a storm.*
- 11 I type back: *Don't worry. It's a magnetic storm, a snow day. We get them a lot.*
- 12 Vianna's words flash back: *You sure? My parents and the pilot look worried.*
- 13 Before I can answer, a message flashes in caps: *WE CAN'T DOCK!*
- 14 I bolt out the door, heading for the command room. The tension stops me in the doorway like a force field.
- 15 "Captain, the holo-video won't work during the storm," my father is saying. "They'll have to try docking by sight."
- 16 "With shields up, they don't have visual. They're flying blind," the captain says. I clear my throat. "Could they lower the shields?"
- 17 The captain shakes his head. "Dropping the shields would kill them. Even with shields they're in danger in a full-blown storm like this."
- 18 "No!" I cry.
- 19 My father puts his hands on my shoulders. "Jem, we're doing everything we can."
- 20 Tears slide down my cheeks. "Snow days are supposed to be fun."
- 21 He sighs. "Snow days can be fun, when you're safe at home. But like real snow on Earth, it can be dangerous if you're stranded or traveling. The shuttle's shields aren't as strong as the station's. If the holo-video worked, we could talk them in."

22 "Can you text them in?" I ask. "With the S.A.T.?"
23 The captain looks over. "What are you talking about?"
24 "An old system, before holo-video," my father explains. "It hasn't been used in years."
25 "Does it still work?" says the captain.
26 "It does," I blurt out. "I've been texting Vianna for months."
27 "You're in touch with the shuttle?" My father rushes me to the S.A.T. booth.
28 Techs swarm my hideout. I give one tech my code and watch her fingers fly over the keyboard. Messages flash back and forth as techs feed docking coordinates to the shuttle.
29 Minutes pass.
30 Then the message I've waited for fills the screen:
31 *Jem, meet me in the docking bay.*
-Vianna

GO ON

1 According to the story, what does it mean when Jem says, “I am sentenced to life in space” (paragraph 6)?

- A** She cannot use the video system on the station.
- B** She must wait for her friend to arrive at the station.
- C** She must stay on the station in order to remain healthy.
- D** She cannot leave the station because of the magnetic storm.

2 Read this sentence from paragraph 14.

The tension stops me in the doorway like a force field.

What does the word “tension” mean as it is used in this sentence?

- A** excitement
- B** disappointment
- C** surprise
- D** worry

3 What does paragraph 27 reveal about Jem’s father?

- A** He does not think that Jem understands the problem.
- B** He does not want Jem to be in the command room.
- C** He is surprised that Jem can communicate with the shuttle.
- D** He thinks it is wrong for Jem to use the S.A.T. booth.

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4 How does Jem cause the events that happen in paragraph 28?

- A** Jem tells the crew how to get information to the shuttle.
- B** Jem becomes upset when the shuttle cannot dock.
- C** Jem asks if the shields on the shuttle can be lowered.
- D** Jem leaves her lessons because the shuttle is arriving soon.

5 Which quotation from the story identifies the setting?

- A** “The announcement drones on, but I don’t listen.” (paragraph 4)
- B** “Eleven years ago, my birth on Space Station Alpha made history.” (paragraph 5)
- C** “They’ll have to try docking by sight.” (paragraph 15)
- D** “I give one tech my code and watch her fingers fly over the keyboard.” (paragraph 28)

6 Which quotation **best** supports a theme of the story?

- A** “But new studies show that older children won’t be harmed by a short stay.” (paragraph 7)
- B** “Spending 11 years on the station has its advantages.” (paragraph 8)
- C** “If the holo-video worked, we could talk them in.” (paragraph 21)
- D** “Messages flash back and forth as techs feed docking coordinates to the shuttle.” (paragraph 28)

GO ON

Directions

Read this article. Then answer questions 7 through 12.

Saving Snow Leopards

by Pamela Crowe

“Mountain Ghost”

- 1 The snow leopard is rarely seen by humans. This mysterious cat lives in 12 Asian countries among the world’s tallest mountains.
- 2 The snow leopard is smaller than the tiger, the lion, and the leopard of Africa and Asia. It weighs as much as a cheetah, but is shorter and stockier. The cat’s compact shape and thick fur help keep it warm in glacier-chilled air. Dark markings dapple its light-gray coat, camouflaging it in rocky terrain. Big paws make padding over snow easier. An extra-long tail provides balance on steep, rugged ground.
- 3 You might think the snow leopard would be safe living in such harsh, remote places. But it faces multiple threats from humans. The cat has lost important stretches of habitat. (A habitat is the place that fills an animal’s needs—mainly food, shelter, and mates.) Mining, wars, and overgrazing by farm animals have all led to this loss of habitat.

Protecting the Herd

- 4 The loss of habitat has caused a food shortage. Snow leopards eat wild goats and sheep. When farm animals eat too much vegetation, wild plant eaters can’t find enough food to stay healthy. Females don’t have enough babies. Over time, the numbers of wild goats and sheep go down, and snow leopards have less to eat. Then the big cats eat livestock, and the herders kill the leopards to protect their livelihoods.
- 5 Agencies are working to save the cats and help herders at the same time. Some agencies give herders wire mesh and wood to keep snow leopards from entering their stables at night. Some pay herders for the animals they lose to snow leopards. In exchange, the herders stop killing snow leopards and leave more room and plants for the wild goats and sheep.

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- 6 Are the conservation programs working? Researchers estimate that only 3,500 to 7,500 snow leopards are alive today. But they need more reliable ways to count leopards before they will know.
- 7 That's where scientists like Dr. Kyle McCarthy are needed. He traveled to Kyrgyzstan to test ways of estimating snow leopard numbers. He camped in the mountains with Dr. Jennifer McCarthy (his wife) and other co-workers. They saw no leopards, but they hadn't expected to. Instead, they looked for evidence the cats left behind. "You have to find something related to them: poops, scrapes (claw marks), and pee," Dr. Kyle McCarthy says.
- 8 The group collected scat (poop) for DNA analysis. Along with the waste material of digestion, scat contains cells from the animal's own body. DNA is material inside those cells that, like fingerprints, can identify an individual animal.
- 9 The team also used automatic cameras. The scientists placed motion-and-heat-sensitive cameras along a mountain ridge. When a snow leopard neared one of these "camera traps," the camera snapped its picture.
- 10 Each snow leopard's spot pattern is different. Researchers compared patterns in the photos to identify cats. The cameras had taken photos of 15 different snow leopards at two study sites.

A Close Encounter

- 11 Shannon Kachel, Dr. Kyle McCarthy's graduate assistant, has searched for snow leopards in Tajikistan, where he almost saw one. "I was hiking along a ridgeline in the late afternoon and came around the corner of a rock outcropping to find a steaming, fresh kill site with snow leopard signs all round," Kachel says. "I could see and hear where the cat had knocked some rocks loose as it ran away from me, but even though I waited until it was nearly dark, I never saw the cat."

GO ON

12 “Most people will never see a snow leopard, yet it has a right to exist,” Dr. Kyle McCarthy says. “It’s too magnificent to think about losing.”

THREATS TO SNOW LEOPARDS	
Illegal hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Snow leopards are hunted for their fur and bones.
Loss of habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">People and livestock move into snow leopard range.
Loss of prey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fewer prey are available to snow leopards when wild sheep and goats are hunted.Livestock compete with the wild sheep and goats for food and the number of wild animals is reduced.
Killed by herders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sheep and goat herders kill the leopards when the leopards eat livestock.
Lack of effective protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The areas in which the snow leopards live are too large to protect.Many countries cannot afford to pay for protection.
Lack of awareness and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Herders do not understand the importance of snow leopards to the ecosystem.

7 What does the word “conservation” mean as it is used in paragraph 6?

- A** action
- B** education
- C** preparation
- D** protection

8 How does paragraph 9 connect to paragraph 6 in the article?

- A** by describing a method for counting snow leopards
- B** by describing what it is like to see a snow leopard
- C** by explaining why snow leopards are rarely seen by humans
- D** by explaining how scientists identify individual snow leopards

9 Which idea **best** explains why Dr. McCarthy and his co-workers traveled to Kyrgyzstan?

- A** “The loss of habitat has caused a food shortage.” (paragraph 4)
- B** “But they need more reliable ways to count leopards before they will know.” (paragraph 6)
- C** “They saw no leopards, but they hadn’t expected to.” (paragraph 7)
- D** “Researchers compared patterns in the photos to identify cats.” (paragraph 10)

GO ON

10 Which idea from the article **best** supports the main idea?

- A** “The snow leopard is smaller than the tiger, the lion, and the leopard of Africa and Asia.” (paragraph 2)
- B** “Researchers estimate that only 3,500 to 7,500 snow leopards are alive today.” (paragraph 6)
- C** “Each snow leopard’s spot pattern is different.” (paragraph 10)
- D** “The cameras had taken photos of 15 different snow leopards at two study sites.” (paragraph 10)

11 How is the article **mainly** organized?

- A** compare and contrast
- B** sequence of events
- C** question then answer
- D** cause and effect

12 How does the table at the end of “Saving Snow Leopards” support the main idea of the article?

- A** by showing reasons why snow leopards are struggling to survive
- B** by listing ways to better protect snow leopards
- C** by presenting new information about the habitat of snow leopards
- D** by providing evidence that there are fewer snow leopards alive now than in the past

GO ON

Directions

Read this story. Then answer questions 13 through 18.

This story is based on a folktale from Australia.

The Scarlet Ribbon

by Emily Hoffman

1 Long ago, in Australia, there lived a girl named Kanikiya. From the time she was small, Kanikiya loved to dance. She moved as gracefully as the brolgas, the tall, slender cranes that courted along the riverbank. The people in the camp would often see Kanikiya dancing down by the water, for she wore a scarlet ribbon around her neck, and it floated as she moved. People believed she danced like moonlight shining on the running river.

2 Dancing was fine for a young child, but by the time she was twelve, the people in the camp did not approve of such frivolity in a young woman. She should be working, they insisted. Only the youngest children danced away the day.

frivolity = carefree behavior

3 Kanikiya's mother, hearing disapproval around the camp, warned her that she must stop dancing. "Remember the story of the lazy girl who would not work," she said. "She turned into a dingo. The rest of her life she ran with packs of wild dogs, preying on sheep at night."

4 Kanikiya, who knew the camp legends, shivered at her mother's words. Such tales frightened her. But she knew she wasn't lazy. It wasn't laziness that made her forget her work. The need to dance surged through her. She could not stop dancing any more than she could stop breathing. She feared that if she stopped doing either, she would die.

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5 Flocks of silvery gray brolgas stopped near Kanikiya's camp during their migration in the spring and fall of each year. Then, more than any other time, Kanikiya would forget her work, steal to the river, and watch the birds dance as the day darkened. As if impelled by a strong, mysterious force, Kanikiya would join in their dance at the river's edge, her scarlet ribbon flying behind her. If only I could dance with the cranes all my life, thought Kanikiya as she trudged back to the camp, then I would be at peace. One spring evening Kanikiya's mother found her daughter dancing near the river before she had finished gathering cabbage palms for their evening meal.

impelled = moved or driven into action

6 "I can do nothing with you, Kanikiya!" her mother shouted. "I have decided. You must not leave the camp until the brolgas have left. I feel they have powers over you that must be broken." While her mother spoke, Kanikiya felt tears gather. She sensed the eyes of the brolgas upon her. Glancing up, she marveled as they dipped their heads and danced a slow, mournful dance. They understand my sorrow, Kanikiya thought, the knowledge warming her.

7 Her mother grabbed her arm, pulling her toward the camp. Within Kanikiya's heart something died as she left the river that evening. Plodding up the bank, she felt her life begin to ebb away. The next day, instead of going out to gather food, Kanikiya stayed in the camp. She wove baskets from the reeds the other children collected. Day followed day in a mournful blur. She couldn't eat. She wouldn't smile. The heaviness in her heart grew, and because of that she became weaker. As she worked, she listened to the happy calls of the brolgas and imagined herself dancing with them, twirling, dipping, and free. At night she danced with the birds in her dreams.

8 If only I could dance with them again, she'd think each morning upon waking, then I would find rest for my soul. Soon the call of the brolgas became too strong for Kanikiya to deny. One morning before dawn she heard them calling her. Slipping out of the camp, she rushed down to the riverbank to dance with the cranes.

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- 9 Just this one time, she thought as she whirled, her scarlet ribbon floating behind her. Just this once, then peace will visit me again. Later that morning, she was not found at her weaving. Her mother looked for her throughout the camp and, not finding her there, searched near the river.
- 10 As Kanikiya's mother neared the water, she found dozens of wild brolgas dancing and dipping to the sound of the wind in the trees. Fearful of their savage dance, she turned to go. But before she started up the path, she noticed one graceful crane in the center of the flock, a scarlet ribbon tied around her neck, dipping her head in greeting.

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13

Which detail from paragraph 1 **best** supports a theme of the story?

- A** The folktale takes place long ago.
- B** Kanikiya likes to wear a scarlet ribbon.
- C** The brolgas are birds that live along the river.
- D** Kanikiya has a talent that is recognized by others.

14

Read this sentence from paragraph 6.

They understand my sorrow, Kanikiya thought, the knowledge warming her.

What does the phrase “the knowledge warming her” suggest?

- A** a feeling of comfort
- B** sadness and disappointment
- C** a feeling of anger
- D** wisdom and clear thinking

15

What does the word “mournful” mean as it is used in paragraph 7?

- A** angry
- B** bored
- C** nervous
- D** sad

GO ON

16

Which sentence from the story **best** shows how a character’s actions help to develop the story?

- A** “You must not leave the camp until the brolgas have left.”
(paragraph 6)
- B** “She wove baskets from the reeds the other children collected.”
(paragraph 7)
- C** “Slipping out of the camp, she rushed down to the riverbank to dance with the cranes.” (paragraph 8)
- D** “Her mother looked for her throughout the camp and, not finding her there, searched near the river.” (paragraph 9)

17

Which statement **best** describes how Kanikiya changes from the beginning to the end of the story?

- A** She realizes that she must leave her home to find happiness.
- B** She learns that the most important thing is to obey the rules.
- C** She discovers that the birds love her more than she loves them.
- D** She is frightened by camp tales and then sees that they are untrue.

18

Which detail would be **most** important to include in a summary of the story?

- A** Kanikiya is often seen near the river by others.
- B** Kanikiya’s mother tells her a story about a girl.
- C** Kanikiya feels like she must dance.
- D** Kanikiya weaves baskets.

STOP