The following is a passage adapted from the New York Times about a sequence of events that occurred when a fisherman fell overboard from his ship. Please read the passage and alert the researcher when you are finished. You will then answer some questions about the passage.

John Aldridge leaned over the railing of the lobster boat to grab the coolers.

And then the handle snapped.

Suddenly Aldridge was flying backward, tumbling across the deck toward the back of the boat, which was wide open, just a flat, slick ramp leading straight into the black ocean a few inches below. Aldridge grabbed for the side of the boat as it went past, his fingertips missing it by inches.

Aldridge was 45, a fisherman for almost two decades. He had a thriving business, 800 traps sitting on the bottom of the Atlantic, and two times a week he'd take the boat out overnight, spend an 18-hour day hauling in their catch and return the next morning to Montauk loaded down with lobster and crab.

As Aldridge treaded water, he realized that his boots were not pulling him down; in fact, they were lifting him up, weirdly elevating his feet and tipping him backward.

Treading water awkwardly, Aldridge reached down and pulled off his left boot. Straining, he turned it upside down, raised it up until it cleared the waves, then plunged it back into the water, trapping a boot-size bubble of air inside. He tucked the inverted boot under his left armpit. Then he did the same thing with the right boot. It worked; they were like twin pontoons, and treading water with his feet alone was now enough to keep him stable and afloat.

The boots gave Aldridge a chance to think. He wasn't going to sink — not right away, anyway. But he was still in a very bad situation. He tried to take stock: It was about 3:30 a.m. on July 24, a clear, starry night lit by a full moon. The wind was calm, but there was a five-foot swell, a remnant of a storm that blew through a couple of days earlier. The North Atlantic water was chilly — 72 degrees — but bearable, for now. Dawn was still two hours away. Aldridge set a goal, the first of many he would assign himself that day: Just stay afloat till sunrise.

The sun rose on John Aldridge at about 5:30 on the morning of July 24. He was cold, thirsty and tired — he'd been awake for 24 hours — but he was still alive and afloat. Now that it was light, he gave himself a new assignment: find a buoy. To most people, the Atlantic Ocean 40 miles south of Montauk is just a big, undifferentiated expanse of waves, but Aldridge knew roughly where he fell overboard — a few miles south of the 40-fathom curve. And he knew that several lobster fishermen had trawls nearby — he knew them by name, in fact. Each lobster trawl is a string of 30 to 50 traps, spaced 150 feet apart at the bottom of the ocean, and at the end of each string, a rope extends up from the last trap to the surface, where it is tied to a big round vinyl buoy. If Aldridge could make his way to a buoy, he figured, he would be more visible to the searchers, and it would be easier to stay afloat.

After a few hours, he spotted a buoy a couple of hundred yards away and began swimming toward it. He took a sock off one foot and stretched it over his right hand, to give himself more pull. But it was slow going with the boots under his arms, and the current was against him. Each time he looked up, the buoy was a little farther away.

Aldridge realized he was exhausting

himself, and he decided to cut his losses. He was able to see that the buoy he had been swimming toward had a flag on top of it, which lobster fishermen attach to the west end of their strings. Lobster traps are always laid out along an east-west line, so Aldridge figured that a mile or so to the east of the unreachable buoy, he would find the other end of that string of traps, and with it, another buoy. He started swimming east — with the current this time instead of against it — stopping briefly at the top of each swell to see if he could catch sight of the eastern buoy. It was painful work. His legs were cramping. He couldn't feel his fingers. The sun, rising higher in front of him, was blinding. But finally, after more than an hour, he spotted a buoy, and using the current, he was able to angle himself directly into it. He grabbed the rope and held on.

Aldridge could see the plane and the helicopters running their patterns, but everyone searching for him seemed to be at least a mile to the east. Clinging to the buoy, he realized that the Coast Guard thought he was still drifting. Even if they'd figured out more or less where he fell in, their search patterns hadn't taken into account the possibility that he snagged a buoy. Aldridge knew if he wanted to have a chance of being found, he had to get himself farther east. He took out his buck knife and started chopping away at the rope that held the buoy in place. When he got it free, he tied it around his wrist and began swimming east again, holding the buoy in front of him.

He willed himself to keep kicking until eventually — he doesn't know how much time went by — he reached another buoy. He recognized that it belonged to his friend Pete Spong, a Rhode Island fisherman who owned a lobster boat called the Brooke C. He untied the rope from his wrist and tied himself to Brooke C's buoy. That way, at least someone would find his body, and his parents would have something to bury.

After 18 hours in the open ocean, Aldridge felt the energy leaving his body and gave in to exhaustion.

Aldridge's body was found several days later. Despite all of his effort and knowledge of the sea, he was unable to stay alive. Doctors performing the autopsy reported that the muscle scarring evident in his arms and legs showed that he had initially put all his effort into treading water and staying alive, but in the end was unable to keep going.

Aldridge's fate is a common one for fishermen lost at sea. Search and rescue teams rarely find fishermen during rescue missions, and falling into the ocean frequently means death for the individual.

Rescue workers describe how being stranded in vast areas such as oceans and deserts quickly drains what little hope a person has. The stress associated with these conditions is too much. While Aldridge was a particularly skilled fisherman and utilized his knowledge of the oceans to stay alive for as long as possible, in the end even he could not fight long enough for help to arrive.

In the past decade, nearly 600 fisherman have died while fishing in the United States. A third of these deaths occurred when the fisherman fell overboard.

Init: _____

Questions

1) How would you rate John Aldridge's perseverance (circle one number)?

1 2 3 4 5

No perseverance High perseverance

2) How would you rate the perseverance of the rescuers (circle one number)?

1 2 3 4 5

No perseverance High perseverance

3) What could John Aldridge have done differently?

4) What could the rescuers have done differently?