

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 10 ENGLISH/HANDOUT 2

Activity:

Watch this music video, "Sleep Forever." Your instructor will stop the video at 10:00:

<https://www.shortoftheweek.com/2011/09/22/sleep-forever/>

Complete the story by narrating what's going to happen next. Use as many words and phrases from Jack London's short story, "To Build a Fire," as possible.

Here are the lyrics of the song:

"Sleep Forever"

*As I finally meet my end
I won't be scared, I won't defend
The things I've done
I don't need him like you do
I don't fear him like you do*

*As the world revolves the sun
I hope the light that I become can
Sleep for once
I will leave it like you do
I won't lead it like you do
I won't leave it like they do
I don't need him like they do*

*I just want to sleep forever
Never see tomorrow
Or lead or follow
I don't want to work forever
Know what I know
Or beg or borrow*

*Just like our mothers
Who gave us our homes
We'll be just like our fathers
And go out on their own
'Cause we are the colors
Of all that you see
We'll be just like our brothers
And take to the streets
Take to the streets*

*I just want to sleep forever
Never see tomorrow
Lead or follow*

*As my world it hides behind
The words only your wars define
They read a lot like news
But I fear it more than you
I fear it more than you*

*I just want to sleep forever
 Never see tomorrow
 Or lead or follow
 I don't want to work forever
 Know what I know
 Or beg or borrow*

*Just like old lovers
 Who never leave home
 We'll forget the city
 And forget the roads
 'Cause we are all rebels
 Never do what we're told
 We may not grow money
 But man we grow old
 Man we grow old*

*I just want to sleep forever
 Never see tomorrow
 Or lead or follow
 I don't want to work forever
 Know what I know
 Or beg or borrow*

*Just like our mothers
 Who gave us our homes
 We'll be just like our fathers
 And go out on our own
 'Cause we are the colors
 In all that you see
 We'll be just like our brothers
 And take to the streets*

*'Cause we are all children
 Yeah, we are all man
 It may not be much
 But we do what we can
 Don't need no preacher
 To make us believe
 That everything's perfectly
 F*****d up like me*

An excerpt from "To Build a Fire"

DAY had broken cold and gray, exceedingly cold and gray, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon trail and climbed the high earth-bank, where a dim and little-travelled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland. It was a steep bank, and he paused for breath at the top, excusing the act to himself by looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun nor hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful orb, due south, would just peep

above the sky-line and dip immediately from view.

The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. It was all pure white, rolling in gentle undulations where the ice-jams of the freeze-up had formed. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hair-line that curved and twisted from around the spruce-covered island to the south, and that curved and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce-covered island. This dark hair-line was the trail — the main trail — that led south five hundred miles to the Chilcoot Pass, Dyea, and salt water; and that led north seventy miles to Dawson, and still on to the north a thousand miles to Nulato, and finally to St. Michael on Bering Sea, a thousand miles and half a thousand more.

But all this — the mysterious, far-reaching hair-line trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weirdness of it all — made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a newcomer in the land, a chechaquo, and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty-odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold; and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, ear-flaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

As he turned to go on, he spat speculatively. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled. He knew that at fifty below spittle crackled on the snow, but this spittle had crackled in the air. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below — how much colder he did not know. But the temperature did not matter. He was bound for the old claim on the left fork of Henderson Creek, where the boys were already. They had come over across the divide from the Indian Creek country, while he had come the roundabout way to take a look at the possibilities of getting out logs in the spring from the islands in the Yukon. He would be in to camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true, but the boys would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready. As for lunch, he pressed his hand against the protruding bundle under his jacket. It was also under his shirt, wrapped up in a handkerchief and lying against the naked skin. It was the only way to keep the biscuits from freezing. He smiled agreeably to himself as he thought

of those biscuits, each cut open and sopped in bacon grease, and each enclosing a generous slice of fried bacon.

He plunged in among the big spruce trees. The trail was faint. A foot of snow had fallen since the last sled had passed over, and he was glad he was without a sled, travelling light. In fact, he carried nothing but the lunch wrapped in the handkerchief. He was surprised, however, at the cold. It certainly was cold, he concluded, as he rubbed his numb nose and cheek-bones with his mittened hand. He was a warm-whiskered man, but the hair on his face did not protect the high cheek-bones and the eager nose that thrust itself aggressively into the frosty air.

At the man's heels trotted a dog, a big native husky, the proper wolf-dog, gray-coated and without any visible or temperamental difference from its brother, the wild wolf. The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. In reality, it was not merely colder than fifty below zero; it was colder than sixty below, than seventy below. It was seventy-five below zero. Since the freezing-point is thirty-two above zero, it meant that one hundred and seven degrees of frost obtained. The dog did not know anything about thermometers. Possibly in its brain there was no sharp consciousness of a condition of very cold such as was in the man's brain. But the brute had its instinct. It experienced a vague but menacing apprehension that subdued it and made it slink along at the man's heels, and that made it question eagerly every unwonted movement of the man as if expecting him to go into camp or to seek shelter somewhere and build a fire. The dog had learned fire, and it wanted fire, or else to burrow under the snow and cuddle its warmth away from the air.

The frozen moisture of its breathing had settled on its fur in a fine powder of frost, and especially were its jowls, muzzle, and eyelashes whitened by its crystallized breath. The man's red beard and mustache were likewise frosted, but more solidly, the deposit taking the form of ice and increasing with every warm, moist breath he exhaled. Also, the man was chewing tobacco, and the muzzle of ice held his lips so rigidly that he was unable to clear his chin when he expelled the juice. The result was that a crystal beard of the color and solidity of amber was increasing its length on his chin. If he fell down it would shatter itself, like glass, into brittle fragments.

A) Complete the story.

[illegible]

- B) Read the following review of the music video that you saw. Explain the underlined words.

Starring band frontman John Gourley, “Sleep Forever” is a tale of isolation and hopelessness as one man and his dogsled team battle against the bitter Alaskan wilderness and attempt to defeat an ever-increasing sense of desperation.

Ragen makes the most of his striking setting by employing sprawling aerial shots and striking time-lapse photography to traverse the snow-covered landscapes of America’s largest state. The opening 2-minutes of Sleep Forever are filled with such majestic images of the scenery it feels almost as if you are watching a video made by the Alaskan tourist board. This feeling of serenity doesn’t linger long though and soon images of igloo walls dripping with blood, masked gunmen and ominous red moons give Ragen’s video a complete reversal in ambience.

It’s not all doom and gloom though as brief appearances of comedy and uplifting musical moments unite with the darker ingredients in Ragen’s vision to blend into something altogether innovative and refreshing. “Sleep Forever” may be a music video at heart, but its extended length and captivating content make for a short that would be happy rubbing shoulders with any narrative piece doing the rounds at the moment.

MEDIA LITERACY

What connections, if any, can we find between the lyrics of the song and the visuals in “Sleep Forever”?

In anticipation of our novel study, read the following New York Times article about *The Catcher in the Rye* and discuss any concerns that you might have before we begin reading and studying the novel.

SECTIONS



HOME



SEARCH

The New York Times

ARCHIVES | 1989

In a Small Town, a Battle Over a Book

By SETH MYDANS and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES

If a group of local parents had let her speak to them before "The Catcher in the Rye" was banned from her high school, Shelley Keller-Gage says she would have told them she believes it is a highly moral book that deals with the kinds of difficulties their own children are facing.

But Mrs. Keller-Gage, an English teacher, was asked not to speak, and a small group of people led by a woman who says she has not read - and never would read - such a book, persuaded the school board to ban it this month from the Boron High School supplementary reading list.

"Unfortunately, what happened is not at all unusual," said Anne Levinson, assistant director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom in Chicago.

"Censorship is still very much with us. As a matter of fact, I think 'The Catcher in the Rye' is a perennial No. 1 on the censorship hit list."

Ms. Levinson said J. D. Salinger's 1951 novel about a troubled teen-ager named Holden Caulfield seems to have a narrow lead over John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men" and "Grapes of Wrath" in arousing the objections of communities or special-interest groups that are increasingly moving to ban books. 'Undercurrent of Fear'

On Wednesday, People for the American Way, a group that opposes censorship, issued a report listing 172 incidents in 42 states of attempted or successful censorship in schools in the last year, illustrating what the group's president, Arthur Kropp, called "an unreasonable undercurrent of fear about the so-called 'dangers' of public school instruction."

The report, the group's seventh annual censorship roundup, said efforts to restrict books and curriculums from classrooms and school libraries were on the rise nationwide, with nearly half of them succeeding.

The Boron board's 4-to-1 vote has aroused this town of 4,000 at the edge of the Mojave Desert, and when Mrs. Keller-Gage, a 35-year-old Boron native, goes out, she said she hears a buzzing: "That's her. There she goes."

Although "The Catcher in the Rye" is now banned from Boron's classrooms, it has gained a new readership among townspeople, and Helen Nelson, the local librarian, has a waiting list of 15 people for the book, which she says has been sitting on the shelf all these years pretty much unnoticed.

Offending Passage Is Marked

Ed Roberts, a school board member who works for a transportation company, carries a copy in the front seat of his pickup truck. He has shown one passage to people so often that the book frequently falls open to that section, whose profanity he finds objectionable.

Jim Sommers, the head of the school board, who operates Jim's Mobil Service, says he is halfway through the book, though he is having a hard time keeping up his interest. He, too, objects to the profanity.

"There's 69 other books on that list," said Mr. Sommers, referring to the state-approved supplementary reading list. "I'm sure they'll find another good one. The students are going to get a full and complete education without that book."

Vickie Swindler, the parent who raised the first objections when her 14-year-old daughter, Brook, showed her the book, has been calling her friends, reading passages from it, mostly the one on page 32 with three goddamns.

When she found out about the language in it, Mrs. Swindler said, "I called the school, and I said, 'How the hell did this teacher get this book?' "

"Yes, there's harshness and profanity in society," said F. O. Roe, a board member who runs a furniture and flower shop, responding to the argument that the book's contents are no longer as shocking as they once were. "But we don't have to accept them, just the same as we don't have to accept the narcotics that are in the streets and the murders that are happening all over the country. We live in harmony in this little town. It's almost like it's sitting off to the side of the rest of the country." Message for Townspeople? Mrs. Keller-Gage said the Salinger book might carry a particular message for people like these.

"These people are being just like Holden, the ones who are trying to censor the book," she said. "They are trying to be catchers in the rye."

The book derives its title from a passage in which Holden Caulfield describes his vision of himself as a protector of innocence:

"Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all," he says. "Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around - nobody big, I mean, except me. And, I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff - I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all."

Mrs. Keller-Gage said she observed this same poignant and ultimately impossible hope among the Boron townspeople who banned the book.

"They're wanting to preserve the innocence of the children," she said, "and I think that instead of trying to preserve their innocence, we have to try to deal with these children losing their innocence. I think society is the one that is kind of taking the innocence away. Things are not innocent anymore, and I think we've got to help them deal with that, to make reasonable choices, to be responsible citizens."

When she assigned the book to her students, Mrs. Keller-Gage said, she told them: "If you're looking for titillation, go home and turn on HBO, because you're not going to get it from this book."

For those whose parents objected to the book, she offered an alternate, Ray Bradbury's "Dandelion Wine," which she said was "the most innocent book

I could think of that would still be at their reading level."

"These books they are trying to censor are comparatively mild in contrast to some of the things that are available to the kids," said Donna Hulsizer, who wrote the report issued by People for the American Way, a private, non-partisan group based in Washington.

Clearly, though, "The Catcher in the Rye" is a disturbing book that has become a symbol to people who wish to control reading matter in the schools. Ms. Hulsizer said the objections to its language seemed to mask deeper concerns that were harder to express.

"I think there is the idea that children should not be exposed to things that are at all troubling or disturbing to them," she said.

Ms. Levinson said the library association had found that attacks on the book over the years covered several concerns.

"Usually the complaints have to do with blasphemy or what people feel is irreligious," she said. "Or they say they find the language generally offensive or vulgar, or there is a sort of general 'family values' kind of complaint, that the book undermines parental authority, that the portrayal of Holden Caulfield is not a good role model for teen-agers."

In Boron, the only board member who voted against the ban was Warren Hurst, a retired high school history teacher. "It isn't a book that I personally would just go pick up and read," he said, "but I have no objections whatsoever if someone else wants to read it. I just would never vote to ban a book."

The fifth board member, Dennis Davies, an electrician, voted with the majority to ban the book.

As the school year began this week, Mrs. Keller-Gage's three dozen copies of "The Catcher in the Rye" were on a top shelf of her classroom closet, inside a tightly taped cardboard box.

In their place, she said, she would be assigning "Fahrenheit 451," by Ray Bradbury, a novel about book burning.