

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 10 ENGLISH/HOMEWORK 1

NAME (FIRST AND LAST): _____ GRADE: _____

DAY/TIME/TEACHER: _____

Read the first few pages of a short story by Jack London. The questions in the left column would help you follow the story. Respond to them in the blank space. Responses may be in point form, but try to be as clear as you can because your instructor will assess them. Write legibly.

“TO BUILD A FIRE” BY JACK LONDON

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

How would you feel if you suddenly find yourself all alone in this landscape? Explain your answer.

Where is Yukon? Do some online research if you are not sure where Yukon is.

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;

What is your impression of the man so far?

What is the lowest temperature that you have ever experienced? Emotionally, how did you feel in this extreme cold?

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. But he did not mind the appendage. It was the penalty all tobaccochewers paid in that country, and he had been out before in two cold snaps. They had not been so cold as this, he knew, but by the spirit thermometer at Sixty Mile he knew they had been registered at fifty below and at fifty-five.

He held on through the level stretch of woods for several miles, crossed a wide flat of niggerheads, and dropped down a bank to the frozen bed of a small stream. This was Henderson Creek, and he knew he was ten miles from the forks. He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He was making four miles an hour, and he calculated that he would arrive at the forks at half-past twelve. He decided to celebrate that event by eating his lunch there.

The dog dropped in again at his heels, with a tail drooping discouragement, as the man swung along the creek-bed. The furrow of the old sled-trail was plainly visible, but a dozen inches of snow covered the marks of the last runners. In a month no man had come up or down that silent creek. The man held steadily on. He was not much given to thinking, and just then particularly he had nothing to think about save that he would eat lunch at the forks and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys. There was nobody to talk to; and, had there been, speech would have been impossible because of the ice-muzzle on his mouth. So he continued monotonously to chew tobacco and to increase the length of his amber beard.

What role does the dog play in the story? (In other words, why did the author choose to include a dog as one of the "characters"?)

What effect does the simile, "like glass," have on the reader?

How does the writer portray the man in the sentence, "He was not much given to thinking, and just then particularly he had nothing to think about save that he would eat lunch at the forks

<p>Once in a while the thought reiterated itself that it was very cold and that he had never experienced such cold. As he walked along he rubbed his cheek-bones and nose with the back of his mittened hand. He did this automatically, now and again changing hands. But rub as he would, the instant he stopped his cheek-bones went numb, and the following instant the end of his nose went numb. He was sure to frost his cheeks; he knew that, and experienced a pang of regret that he had not devised a nose-strap of the sort Bud wore in cold snaps. Such a strap passed across the cheeks, as well, and saved them. But it didn't matter much, after all. What were frosted cheeks? A bit painful, that was all; they were never serious.</p> <p>Empty as the man's mind was of thoughts, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creek, the curves and bends and timber-jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet. Once, coming around a bend, he shied abruptly, like a startled horse, curved away from the place where he had been walking, and retreated several paces back along the trail. The creek he knew was frozen clear to the bottom, — no creek could contain water in that arctic winter, — but he knew also that there were springs that bubbled out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top the ice of the creek. He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger. They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes there were alternate layers of water and ice-skin, so that when one broke through he kept on breaking through for a while, sometimes wetting himself to the waist.</p> <p>That was why he had shied in such panic. He had felt the give under his feet and heard the crackle of a snow-hidden ice-skin. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, for he would be forced to stop and build a fire, and under its protection to bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins. He stood and studied the creek-bed and its banks, and decided that the flow of water came from the right. He reflected awhile, rubbing his nose and cheeks, then skirted to the left, stepping gingerly and testing the footing for each step. Once clear of the danger, he took a fresh chew of tobacco and swung along at his four-mile gait.</p> <p>In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps. Usually the snow above the hidden pools had a sunken, candied appearance that advertised the danger. Once again, however, he had a close call; and once, suspecting danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front. The dog did not want to go. It hung back until the man shoved it forward, and then it went quickly across the</p>	<p>and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys"?</p> <p>Why does the man curve "away from the place where he had been walking"? What is he avoiding?</p> <p>Explain why getting his feet wet would mean "trouble and danger."</p>
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white, unbroken surface. Suddenly it broke through, floundered to one side, and got away to firmer footing. It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to it turned to ice. It made quick efforts to lick the ice off its legs, then dropped down in the snow and began to bite out the ice that had formed between the toes. This was a matter of instinct. To permit the ice to remain would mean sore feet. It did not know this. It merely obeyed the mysterious prompting that arose from the deep crypts of its being. But the man knew, having achieved a judgment on the subject, and he removed the mitten from his right hand and helped tear out the ice-particles. He did not expose his fingers more than a minute, and was astonished at the swift numbness that smote them. It certainly was cold. He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest.

At twelve o'clock the day was at its brightest. Yet the sun was too far south on its winter journey to clear the horizon. The bulge of the earth intervened between it and Henderson Creek, where the man walked under a clear sky at noon and cast no shadow. At halfpast twelve, to the minute, he arrived at the forks of the creek. He was pleased at the speed he had made. If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six. He unbuttoned his jacket and shirt and drew forth his lunch. The action consumed no more than a quarter of a minute, yet in that brief moment the numbness laid hold of the exposed fingers. He did not put the mitten on, but, instead, struck the fingers a dozen sharp smashes against his leg. Then he sat down on a snow-covered log to eat. The sting that followed upon the striking of his fingers against his leg ceased so quickly that he was startled. He had had no chance to take a bite of biscuit. He struck the fingers repeatedly and returned them to the mitten, baring the other hand for the purpose of eating. He tried to take a mouthful, but the ice-muzzle prevented. He had forgotten to build a fire and thaw out. He chuckled at his foolishness, and as he chuckled he noted the numbness creeping into the exposed fingers. Also, he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away. He wondered whether the toes were warm or numb. He moved them inside the moccasins and decided that they were numb.

He pulled the mitten on hurriedly and stood up. He was a bit frightened. He stamped up and down until the stinging returned into the feet. It certainly was cold, was his thought...



What does the dog do that is instinctual? Explain the instinctive response.

Why does the man strike his fingers against his leg?

REFLECTION

“Man versus nature” conflicts occur when a character, or characters, find themselves at odds with forces of nature. A character struck by lightning, characters whose boat sinks in a storm and a character who struggles against hypothermia in a snow storm are all characters experiencing man versus nature conflicts.

So far, how does the short story evoke a conflict between man and nature? In the left column, list at least five human actions that resist forces of nature. In the right column, list at least five ways in which forces of nature are felt by the man. Ensure that the points are from the short story.

<p>MAN</p> 	<p>NATURE</p> 

Based on your reading of the short story so far, who do you think will win – man or nature? Explain your answer with evidence from the text.

GRAMMAR

GREEK ROOTS

- Many technical terms used in science and technology are formed by combining common Greek words.

EXAMPLE: The term biology is a combination of bios, a Greek word meaning "life," and logos, a Greek word meaning "the study of."

Word	Meaning	Word	Meaning
bio	life	-logy, -ology	science of, study of
dynamo, dynamic	power, force	-graphy	writing, recording
eco	habitat, environment	-metry, metric	measurement of
ergon	work	-osis	art, process, state, condition
geo	earth	-otic, -otics	pertaining to, of
hydro	water		
photo	light		
tele	far, distant		
thermo	heat		
zoo	animal		

For each scientific and technical term below, choose the correct definition from the list at the right side of the page and write the corresponding letter in the space provided. Then use each word in a sentence. Write the sentences in your notebook.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. biometric _____ | (a) the interaction of living things with one another and with their habitat |
| 2. biology _____ | (b) the study of animals |
| 3. hydrothermal _____ | (c) having to do with hot water |
| 4. thermodynamic _____ | (d) the calculation or measurement of the duration of human life |
| 5. zoology _____ | (e) measurement of the intensity of light |
| 6. ecosystem _____ | (f) having to do with heat produced in the earth |
| 7. geothermal _____ | (g) using the force derived from heat |
| 8. photometry _____ | (h) pertaining to life |
| 9. biotic _____ | (i) the study of bodies of water |
| 10. hydrology _____ | (j) the study of living things |

LATIN ROOTS

- Many English words have Latin roots.

EXAMPLE: Video comes from the Latin root word videre, meaning “see.”

A. For each Latin root below, provide another example of an English word. Check your words in a dictionary that gives word origins.

Latin Root	English Forms	Examples
1. dicere (say)	dic, dict	contradict, dictate, _____
2. videre (see)	vid, vis	video, visible, _____
3. mittere (send)	mit, miss	submit, mission, _____
4. audire (hear)	audio, aud	audio, audible, _____
5. scribere (write)	scrib, script	describe, script, _____
6. specere (look)	spec, spect	aspect, spectacle, _____
7. radius (ray)	radio, rad	radio, radius, _____
8. labor (work)	labor, labour	elaborate, laboratory, _____
9. ducere (bring)	duct, duce, duit	conduct, reduce, _____
10. putare (think, calculate)	put	dispute, putative, _____

B. Replace the underlined phrase with a word that contains the Latin root shown in parentheses.

- I will look closely at _____ your uniforms in the morning. (specere)
- The people listening to the show _____ clapped wildly when the concert was over. (audire)
- The device that emits heat _____ in my car is leaking again. (radius)
- The two scientists worked together _____ on this research. (labor)
- It appears that _____ you prefer him to me. (videre)
- No one can say what will happen in _____ the future. (dicere)
- The self-propelled rocket _____ will hit the target at 0900 hours. (mittere)
- The doctor gave me a written order _____ for antibiotics. (scribere)
- Josh used a machine for calculating _____ to create the database. (putare)
- You are expected to bring forth _____ two major essays this term. (ducere)

THE END