



# **ROBERT L. MERRITT MIDDLE SCHOOL**

## 8<sup>TH</sup> Grade Learn-At-Home Packet Reading

Week 1

Read the text. Then answer the questions.

## from “To Build a Fire”

by Jack London

*In the following excerpt from the short story “To Build a Fire,” a man and his dog travel through the cold Canadian wilderness.*

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.

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.

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. 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 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 half-past 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.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1** The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A:** Which inference about the man is **best** supported by the events in the text?

- (A) The man is trying to meet up with others where he will be safe.
- (B) The man is involved in some kind of race across wild forestland.
- (C) The man is out on a hike enjoying the elements of nature around him.
- (D) The man is searching for a missing person whom he needs to find soon.

**Part B:** Which sentence from the excerpt **best** supports your answer in part A?

- (A) "Yet the sun was too far south on its winter journey to clear the horizon."
- (B) "He was pleased at the speed he had made."
- (C) "If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six."
- (D) "He reflected awhile, rubbing his nose and cheeks, then skirted to the left, stepping gingerly and testing the footing for each step."

- 2** Which **two** sentences from the text **best** support the inference that the man is cautious and alert?

- (A) "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."
- (B) "He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger."
- (C) "As he walked along he rubbed his cheek-bones and nose with the back of his mittened hand."
- (D) "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."
- (E) "Also, he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away."
- (F) "He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest."



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- 3** The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A:** Which statement **best** expresses a theme of the text?

- (A) One should not travel the woods in winter.
- (B) Any careless behavior can result in a disaster.
- (C) Those who are prepared will always survive the wild.
- (D) Animals are better equipped for danger than humans.

**Part B:** Which sentence from the text **best** supports your answer in part A?

- (A) "Once in a while the thought reiterated itself that it was very cold and that he had never experienced such cold."
- (B) "He stood and studied the creek-bed and its banks, and decided that the flow of water came from the right."
- (C) "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."
- (D) "He chuckled at his foolishness, and as he chuckled he noted the numbness creeping into the exposed fingers."

- 4** Which sentence from the text **best** supports the idea that dangers are often disguised by seemingly harmless elements?

- (A) "But rub as he would, the instant he stopped his cheekbones went numb, and the following instant the end of his nose went numb."
- (B) "Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow."
- (C) "Once again, however, he had a close call; and once, suspecting danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front."
- (D) "He struck the fingers repeatedly and returned them to the mitten, baring the other hand for the purpose of eating."

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- 5** The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A:** Read the sentences from the text.

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 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.

What does the word floundered **most likely** mean?

- ☐ (A) staggered helplessly
- ☐ (B) swam strongly
- ☐ (C) spotted unexpectedly
- ☐ (D) paddled calmly

**Part B:** Which phrase from the sentences **best** helps the reader understand the meaning of floundered?

- ☐ (A) "... it went quickly across the white, unbroken surface."
- ☐ (B) "Suddenly it broke through ..."
- ☐ (C) "... and got away to firmer footing."
- ☐ (D) "It had wet its forefeet and legs ..."

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- 6** The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A:** Read the sentences from the text.

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.

What does the word crypts **most likely** describe?

- ☐ (A) the dog's learned talents
- ☐ (B) the dog's thought process
- ☐ (C) the dog's disorderly nature
- ☐ (D) the dog's innermost impulse

**Part B:** Which sentence from the passage **best** supports your answer in part A?

- ☐ (A) "The dog did not want to go."
- ☐ (B) "It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to it turned to ice."
- ☐ (C) "This was a matter of instinct."
- ☐ (D) "He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest."



Read the text. Then answer the questions.

## For the Love of MOOCs

Despite their apparent benefits, current MOOCs are not a plausible alternative to traditional education. The term MOOCs was first used in 2008 to refer to a learning alternative termed “Massive Open Online Courses.” This learning model allows students all over the globe to participate in a network of college level courses from the comfort of their homes and offices. MOOC students watch a coordinated series of videos, similar to online tutorials. These videos usually run 10–15 minutes—the maximum attention span of the average student. The capacity to rewind portions or replay complete videos further reinforces learning. A standardized multiple-choice assessment indicates mastery of a given topic and allows students to move on in the scope and sequence of learning. Students also participate in live online chats and discussion groups to add to the social aspect of learning. Some MOOCs even feature one-on-one or small group encounters, during which major concepts are reviewed and discussed. This design and pedagogy not only mimics the classic lecture and small-group models used in universities today, it often surpasses them, according to many studies.

While this information is convincing on paper, the reality of MOOCs in their present form is that they lack one major aspect of learning support: interaction-driven success. Harvard and MIT recently released the findings of a 2012–2013 study that determined 95% of students taking MOOC courses dropped their course before making it to the end. What is causing this student retraction in MOOCs? Most students take MOOCs because they can’t afford traditional college, and MOOC learning is free. Therefore, cost is not a factor for high dropout rates. MOOCs also offer ease of attendance that makes them more attractive than traditional university education. Anyone with a computer can sign on and learn at a pace that fits their learning style and schedule. So it’s apparent that strict attendance guidelines are also not a factor for widespread dropout. The prerecorded, video-based learning format has long ago been tested as effective, and most people today have already used the Internet to find and explore information. Therefore, it seems technology roadblocks are not to blame, either.

The only major difference between MOOCs and traditional brick-and-mortar schools is human contact. The simultaneous stimulation of both teacher and classmates in a physical classroom beats a virtual lecture in cyberspace any day of the week. Regular, in-person contact reinforces instruction, promotes idea exchange, and offers a recognized pathway from beginning to end. Students who are not consistently steered back on the right track often fall off of it. MOOCs lack this constant feedback and assurance that students are succeeding. They may use assessments and live chats, but personal teacher engagement seems to be key. Many MOOC providers are now trying to provide the technology for more personal one-on-one connections, such as virtual labs, in which students have access to instructors who guide them through real-world experiences in real-time.

Future MOOCs will have a recognizable place in the nation's learning profile. Student debt has passed \$1 trillion. The cost of a college education is up 72%. Graduates on average are accepting first jobs that pay 15% less than they once did. Social pressure to attend college and achieve a degree drives students to take on this financial burden. Today, one of the largest MOOC providers offers lectures from professors in nearly 100 universities. This provider offers 400 courses attended by upwards of five million eager learners. If MOOCs continue to improve, this method of learning will likely become the preferred form of higher learning. The only thing MOOCs will lack is a football team to cheer on to victory.

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- 7** The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A:** Which statement **best** describes the author's point of view?

- (A)** MOOCs can provide the exact same social experience as other schools.
- (B)** MOOCs will revolutionize education once they are improved.
- (C)** MOOCs will never replace traditional schools.
- (D)** MOOCs have failed to attract a large student population.

**Part B:** Which **two** sentences from the text **best** support your answer in part A?

- (A)** "Students also participate in live online chats and discussion groups to add to the social aspect of learning."
- (B)** "Most students take MOOCs because they can't afford traditional college, and MOOC learning is free."
- (C)** "Anyone with a computer can sign on and learn at a pace that fits their learning style and schedule."
- (D)** "Future MOOCs will have a recognizable place in the nation's learning profile."
- (E)** "If MOOCs continue to improve, this method of learning will likely become the preferred form of higher learning."



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- 8** The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A:** Which statement **best** describes a main claim the author makes in the text?

- (A)** MOOC videos fall short in their ability to support the maximum attention span of the average student.
- (B)** Live chats and discussion groups in MOOCs provide adequate reinforcement of the social aspect of learning.
- (C)** Current MOOCs are unsuccessful because they lack real-time human interaction.
- (D)** Virtual chats and video lectures will be the key to true success for the MOOC learning model.

**Part B:** Which sentence from the text **best** supports your answer in part A?

- (A)** "The only major difference between MOOCs and traditional brick-and-mortar schools is human contact."
- (B)** "The prerecorded, video-based learning format has long ago been tested as effective, and most people today have already used the Internet to find and explore information."
- (C)** "Regular, in-person contact reinforces instruction, promotes idea exchange, and offers a recognized pathway from beginning to end."
- (D)** "Students who are not consistently steered back on the right track often fall off of it."

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- 9 The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A:** Read the sentences from the text.

Harvard and MIT recently released the findings of a 2012–2013 study that determined 95% of students taking MOOC courses dropped their course before making it to the end. What is causing this student retraction in MOOCs? Most students take MOOCs because they can't afford traditional college, and MOOC learning is free. Therefore, cost is not a factor for high dropout rates. MOOCs also offer ease of attendance that makes them more attractive than traditional university education. Anyone with a computer can sign on and learn at a pace that fits their learning style and schedule. So it's apparent that strict attendance guidelines are also not a factor for widespread dropout. The prerecorded, video-based learning format has long ago been tested as effective, and most people today have already used the Internet to find and explore information. Therefore, it seems technology roadblocks are not to blame, either.

What does the word retraction **most likely** mean?

- (A) condition
- (B) withdrawal
- (C) confusion
- (D) rebuttal

**Part B:** Which word from the sentences best helps the reader understand the meaning of retraction?

- (A) dropped
- (B) learning
- (C) ease
- (D) roadblocks

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- 10** The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A:** Read the sentences from the text.

The only major difference between MOOCs and traditional brick-and-mortar schools is human contact. The simultaneous stimulation of both teacher and classmates in a physical classroom beat a virtual lecture in cyberspace any day of the week. Regular, in-person contact reinforces instruction, promotes idea exchange, and offers a recognized pathway from beginning to end. Students who are not consistently steered back on the right track often fall off of it.

What does simultaneous mean as it is used in the text?

- ☐ (A) at the same time
- ☐ (B) at different places
- ☐ (C) with understanding
- ☐ (D) with difficulty

**Part B:** Which word from the sentences **best** helps the reader understand the meaning of simultaneous?

- ☐ (A) difference
- ☐ (B) both
- ☐ (C) week
- ☐ (D) recognized



Read the texts. Then answer the questions.

## Why Even Argue Climate Change?

Imagine that scientists around the world have received a transmission from an alien planet telling us that spaceships were coming to Earth. Their presence would greatly alter the planet we live on. How would we respond? If they posed a threat to the air we breathe, the oceans we need, and our weather system itself, would governments ignore them? Fortunately, no such extraterrestrial risk exists. Human beings, however, constantly threaten the balance of our planet, and not enough people are crying out for action.

Recent polls showed that nearly half of Americans doubt that climate change is a danger, even though 97% of all qualified experts agree that something has to be done. The reasons for this difference are complex and stem from a small group of naysayers who have spread doubt about the existence of climate change. The extremely complicated interaction of temperature, atmosphere, and forces of nature on earth create a difficulty in stating simple truths. However, no one would question the boiling point of water, because it's obvious and proven. Despite the opposition, experts agree that our world is changing and will continue to change if we don't lessen our carbon dioxide output into the atmosphere.

Global temperatures have risen dramatically, and with an increase of every 2°F, we'll continue to see falling crop yields, heavier rains, bigger storms, water shortages in dry areas, and more wildfires. By the year 2100, average temperatures could rise by as much as 12 degrees. As the poles and glaciers melt, ocean levels are rising and threatening to swallow coastlines. Oceans are also getting warmer, and coral reefs are dying off. Scientists measuring air bubbles in ice cores dating 800,000 years old have determined that our air today contains far more CO<sub>2</sub> than ever before. When we burn coal or oil, we release carbon buried eons ago. This carbon would never have entered our atmosphere if we hadn't used it as fuel.

Critics point to natural phenomena such as volcanic eruptions to explain changes in our environment. However, sophisticated computer models show that humans have a large role. Doubters also cite scientific conspiracy, claiming that scientists will profit from distorting facts. Yet these deniers are paid hundreds of millions of dollars by environmentally unfriendly industries to create skepticism and doubt.

If we continue our environmentally irresponsible practices, the consequences will be great. We must act now to reduce our carbon dioxide output and reduce the dangers we face, both now and in the future. Taking action now will give us a chance to save the planet we all call home.

## Trapped Underground

It's a sound no copper miner ever wants to hear—a solid, swift *whomp*, and then no sound at all. As I listened into the blackness, I had no sense of sound, of up, down, left, right, sideways. I was trapped.

We were Yellow crew, 28 miners and 5 support personnel, working a vein about 1,200 feet below the surface when all the walls behind me collapsed. I was trapped in a storage room; my team was either on the other side of that wall or they were crushed. A horrifying burn spread through my guts, though as my body rebelled, I found the will to scream, "I'm still alive!"

I called out only once because nothing came back, not even an echo, so, like a blind man, I flailed out, realizing we all become stupid when we're disoriented, and yes, convinced we will not be on Earth for too much longer. This flailing, it is acceptance of what we all know will happen soon enough, only intensified by the thought, *This is it, right now*.

Suddenly, I remembered I had a light on my helmet, which gave me a boost of hope for survival. When that light came on, I understood the meaning of all religions; I had to forget the end, focus on the now, the next task, the thing that might buy me time or a way out, because if I gave into panic and did nothing, my brain would eat me up.

I had a backhoe to dig my way out, but I knew it would suck the oxygen out of the dumpster-sized box I was trapped in. Then a hole opened before my face, and I saw men from my crew before me, breathed deep as the extra oxygen rushed in.

We were still trapped, but we were united—survivors. We organized ourselves into crews who cleared fallen rock and scavenged the underground site for things that had fallen in with us: batteries to charge our headlamps and cardboard boxes for bedding.

We spent hours pondering about just how much oxygen we had—not in cubic feet, but in hours, hopefully days. Though our situation was dire, we tried to feel lucky; we had been spared, while our buddies were buried behind us.

The heat was the worst, along with the thirst. We found an underwater spring, which wasn't much more than a dribble, but it kept us alive. (For what?)

We were sleeping when we heard the faintest vibration. Within five hours, the whirling diamond teeth of a well bit punched through the ceiling with an oxygen hose, a light optic cable with video feed, and a very long extension cord.

Some had to lose weight to leave through a 23-inch bit hole, a ride which lasted a lifetime, breathing in bottom-of-the ocean blackness and then suddenly, sun. Sun! And sound—such sound, such cheering, winches squealing, the president talking to me, my wife wailing, my kid's "Daddy! Daddy, Daddy!" and in that moment I realized that hope and luck can change a life.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer these questions about “Why Even Argue Climate Change?”

- 11 What is the author’s main claim in the text? Support your answer with details from the text.

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- 12 The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A:** How does the author respond to conflicting viewpoints?

- (A) by stating that critics of climate change have motives greater than debating the facts
- (B) by avoiding mentioning arguments made by those who disagree with his or her views
- (C) by proving that a great percentage of the nation is unsure about the existence of climate change
- (D) by presenting specific instances of climate change in places across the globe

**Part B:** Which sentence from the text **best** illustrates the author’s response to critics?

- (A) “Human beings, however, constantly threaten the balance of our planet, and not enough people are crying out for action.”
- (B) “This carbon would never have entered our atmosphere if we hadn’t used it as fuel.”
- (C) “Doubters also cite scientific conspiracy, claiming that scientists will profit from distorting facts.”
- (D) “Yet these deniers are paid hundreds of millions of dollars by environmentally unfriendly industries to create skepticism and doubt.”

**GO ON →**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- 13** The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A:** Read the paragraph from the text.

Recent polls showed that nearly half of Americans doubt that climate change is a danger, even though 97% of all qualified experts agree that something has to be done. The reasons for this difference are complex and stem from a small group of naysayers who have spread doubt about the existence of climate change. The extremely complicated interaction of temperature, atmosphere, and forces of nature on earth create a difficulty in stating simple truths. However, no one would question the boiling point of water, because it's obvious and proven. Despite the opposition, experts agree that our world is changing and will continue change if we don't lessen our carbon dioxide output into the atmosphere.

What does the word naysayers **most likely** mean?

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> (A) scientists   | <input type="radio"/> (C) opponents  |
| <input type="radio"/> (B) corporations | <input type="radio"/> (D) supporters |

**Part B:** Which **two** words from the paragraph **best** help the reader understand the meaning of naysayers?

- |                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> (A) polls   | <input type="radio"/> (D) doubt      |
| <input type="radio"/> (B) experts | <input type="radio"/> (E) opposition |
| <input type="radio"/> (C) complex | <input type="radio"/> (F) output     |

- 14** Read the paragraph from the text.

If we continue our environmentally irresponsible practices, the consequences will be great. We must act now to reduce our carbon dioxide output and reduce the dangers we face, both now and in the future. Taking action now will give us a chance to save the planet we all call home.

What is the meaning of consequences?

- |  |
|--|
| <input type="radio"/> (A) problems that can be avoided |
| <input type="radio"/> (B) conditions right now         |
| <input type="radio"/> (C) results of an action         |
| <input type="radio"/> (D) positive effects             |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer these questions about “Trapped Underground.”

- 15 The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A:** Which statement **best** summarizes the lesson the narrator learns over the course of events described in the text “Trapped Underground”?

- (A) Those who hold onto hope find luck.
- (B) Treat others the way you want to be treated.
- (C) Every man must work to save himself.
- (D) Fear is the enemy of success.

**Part B:** What sentence from the text **best** supports your answer in part A?

- (A) “It’s a sound no copper miner ever wants to hear—a solid, swift *whomp*, and then no sound at all.”
- (B) “A horrifying burn spread through my guts, though as my body rebelled, I found the will to scream, ‘I’m still alive!’”
- (C) “Though our situation was dire, we tried to feel lucky; we had been spared, while our buddies were buried behind us.”
- (D) “We found an underwater spring, which wasn’t much more than a dribble, but it kept us alive.”

- 16 What do the narrator’s descriptions and word choices reveal about his state of mind? Support your answer using details from the text.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**17** “Why Even Argue Climate Change?” is an opinion essay, whereas “Trapped Underground” is a personal narrative. Explain each author’s purpose. In what ways are their purposes similar? In what ways are they different? Support your answer using details from **both** texts.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



## Narrative Performance Task

### Task

Your class is learning about ancient Egypt. You and your peers are currently at the library researching Egyptian pyramids. Your teacher has asked you to write a suspense story about Egyptian pyramids using information from your research. You have found two sources related to Egyptian pyramids in your research.

After you have reviewed these sources, you will answer some questions about them. Briefly scan the sources and the three questions that follow. Then, go back and read the sources carefully to gain the information you will need to answer the questions and write a story. Take notes while you read.

In Part 2, you will write a story on a topic related to the sources.

### Directions for Part 1

You will now read two sources. You can re-examine both as often as you like.

### Research Questions

After reading the research sources, use the remaining time in Part 1 to answer three questions about them. Your answers to these questions will be scored. Also, your answers will help you think about the research sources you have read, which should help you write your story.

You may refer to the narratives when you think it would be helpful. You may also refer to your notes.

## Source #1: Ancient Egypt

by George Rawlinson

*The following is an excerpt from a book about Egyptian pyramids published in 1886.*

There are from sixty to seventy pyramids in Egypt, chiefly in the neighbourhood of Memphis. Some of them are nearly perfect, some more or less in ruins, but most of them still preserving their ancient shape, when seen from afar. Two of them greatly exceed all the others in their dimensions, and are appropriately designated as "the Great Pyramid" and "the Second Pyramid." . . .

The "Great Pyramid" presents . . . many other marvels besides its size. First, there is the massiveness of the blocks of which it is composed. The basement stones are in many cases thirty feet long by five feet high, and four or five wide: they must contain from six hundred to seven hundred and fifty cubic feet each, and weigh from forty-six to fifty-seven tons. The granite blocks which roof over the upper sepulchral<sup>1</sup> chamber are nearly nineteen feet long . . . . Generally the external blocks are of a size with which modern builders scarcely ever venture to deal, though the massiveness diminishes as the pyramid is ascended. The bulk of the interior is, however, of comparatively small stones; but even these are carefully hewn<sup>2</sup> and squared, so as to fit together compactly.

Further, there are the passages, the long gallery, the ventilation shafts, and the sepulchral chambers all of them remarkable, and some of them simply astonishing. The "Great Pyramid" guards three chambers. One lies deep in the rock, about a hundred and twenty feet beneath the natural surface of the ground . . . . The access to it is by a long and narrow passage which commences in the north side of the pyramid . . . . The two other chambers are reached by an ascending passage . . . . A low horizontal gallery, a hundred and ten feet long, leads to a chamber which has been called "the Queen's" . . . . Another longer and much loftier gallery continues on for a hundred and fifty feet in the line of the ascending passage, and is then connected by a short horizontal passage with the upper-most or "King's Chamber." Here was found a sarcophagus<sup>3</sup> believed to be that of King Khufu, since the name of Khufu was scrawled in more than one place on the chamber walls.

The construction of this chamber—the very kernel of the whole building—is exceedingly remarkable. It is a room . . . composed wholly of granite blocks of great size, beautifully polished, and fitted together with great care. The construction of the roof is particularly admirable. First, the chamber is covered in with nine huge blocks, each nearly nineteen feet long and four feet wide, which are laid side by side upon the walls so as to form a complete ceiling. Then above these blocks is a low chamber similarly covered in, and this is repeated four times; after which there is a fifth opening, triangular, and roofed in by a set of huge sloping blocks, which meet at the apex and support each other. The object is to relieve the chamber from any superincumbent<sup>4</sup> weight, and prevent it from being crushed in by the mass of material above it; and this object has been so completely attained that still, at the expiration of above forty centuries, the entire chamber, with its elaborate roof, remains intact, without crack or settlement of any kind . . . .

The Great Gallery is also of curious construction . . . . The side walls are formed of seven layers of stone, each projecting a few inches over that below it. The gallery thus gradually contracts towards the top, which has a width of four feet only, and is covered in with stones that reach across it, and rest on the walls at either side. The exact object of so lofty a gallery has not been ascertained; but it must have helped to keep the air of the interior pure and sweet, by increasing the space through which it had to circulate . . . .

The architectural effect of the two greatest of the pyramids is certainly magnificent. They do not greatly impress the beholder at first sight, for a pyramid, by the very law of its formation, never looks as large as it is . . . . But as the spectator gazes, as he prolongs his examination and inspection, the pyramids gain upon him, their impressiveness increases . . . . In all ages travellers have felt and expressed the warmest admiration for them . . . . They furnished Napoleon with the telling phrase, “Soldiers, forty centuries look down upon you from the top of the pyramids.” Greece and Rome reckoned them among the Seven Wonders of the world. Moderns have doubted whether they could really be the work of human hands. If they possess only one of the elements of architectural excellence, they possess that element to so great an extent that in respect of it they are unsurpassed, and probably unsurpassable . . . .



Among the marvels of Egypt perhaps the Sphinx is second to none. The mysterious being with the head of a man and the body of a lion is not at all uncommon in Egyptian architectural adornment, but the one placed before the Second Pyramid (the Pyramid of Shafra), and supposed to be contemporary with it, astonishes the observer by its gigantic proportions. It is known to the Arabs as Abul-hôl, the father of terror . . . .

A small temple behind the great Sphinx, probably also built by Shafra, is formed of great blocks of the hardest red granite, brought from the neighbourhood of Syene and fitted to each other with a nicety astonishing to modern architects, who are unable to imagine what tools could have proved equal to the difficult achievement. Mysterious passages pierce the great Sphinx and connect it with the Second Pyramid, three hundred feet west of it. In the face of this mystery all questions are vain, and yet every visitor adds new queries to those that others have asked before him.

<sup>1</sup>**sepulchral:** of or relating to a tomb

<sup>2</sup>**hewn:** chopped or cut

<sup>3</sup>**sarcophagus:** a stone coffin

<sup>4</sup>**superincumbent:** exerted from above



## Source #2: Armchair Archaeology

Recently, archaeologist Sarah Parcak pinpointed 17 lost pyramids, thousands of tombs, and more than 3,000 ancient settlements in Egypt. Perhaps more amazing than the finds themselves is the way Parcak detected them: on her computer.

Parcak is most famous for her work as one of the first “armchair archaeologists.” These scientists use satellite imaging analysis to find buried ruins. Satellite images are taken from space, and archaeologists have free access to these images. They can zoom in anywhere around the globe—from the comfort of their own offices.

Using satellite imagery is a huge time-saver. Archaeologist Scott Madry spent 25 years looking for buried Roman villages in France. Then came the new technology. Madry says, “I found more sites on the first day . . . than in those years of using the other techniques.”

According to Parcak, someone walking over an Egyptian floodplain will see only a brown, grainy surface. Pictures taken from satellites at about 435 miles above Earth tell a different story. “All of a sudden,” says Parcak, “these features jump out at you.”

Experts need to know how to analyze the satellite images because satellites use cameras that see what humans cannot. We see only a small fraction of the electromagnetic spectrum, known as visible light. Satellite cameras provide wider views. Ultraviolet images show color differences humans cannot see. Infrared cameras can capture thermal images, too. These show objects or places based on how much heat they emit.

As they study the pictures, experienced armchair archaeologists are looking for “tells.” These clues signal that something is probably buried beneath the surface. *Crop marks* are differences in the color of vegetation, which can signal buried relics. Buried walls can choke off plants’ roots and water supply, which makes them look thin and dull. Brighter plants can also be a tell. *Soil marks* are tiny variations in ground temperature that show up on infrared images because buried structures absorb and emit different amounts of heat. Suppose a given area contains more stone, water, or wood than exists elsewhere in the region. This will show up on infrared images. These tells helped Sarah Parcak detect some sites in Egypt.

Studying satellite images provides two main advantages. One is more detailed information. Now, scientists can make better decisions about where to dig. Archaeologists don't want to waste valuable time and money digging if they don't have a good indication that they will find something. The second advantage is speed, as months are cut down to mere weeks.

For Sarah Parcak, speed is important because she believes that she is in a race against time for these reasons:

- Only one percent of all possible sites in Egypt have been discovered.
- Increased urban development in the area has destroyed many sites.
- More than 23 percent of ancient sites in the East Delta region have disappeared in the past 30 years.

Parcak believes that if this rate of destruction continues, all archaeological sites here could be erased. If this happens, we will lose more than the chance to see ruins and relics. The goal of archaeology is not simply finding sites. It is studying these finds to understand how people lived, which in turn helps us better understand ourselves.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**18** What does the information in Source #1 suggest about the author's point of view? Select **all** that apply.

- ☐ **A** The author thinks that sometimes it is better to simply appreciate the pyramids rather than try to understand how they were created.
- ☐ **B** The author believes the pyramids will start to have a strong influence on future architectural projects throughout the world.
- ☐ **C** The author does not believe humans could have built such giant structures given the tools available at the time.
- ☐ **D** The author cannot understand how it is possible that the pyramids are still standing after so many centuries.
- ☐ **E** The author thinks that the architectural design elements of the pyramids are some of the best in the world.
- ☐ **F** The author is fascinated by the size and construction quality of the pyramids.

**19** Explain **one** idea that is shared by the sources. Support your explanation using **one** piece of evidence from **each** source. Be sure to identify the source of each piece of information by title or number.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- 20** How is the author's purpose in Source #2 different from the author's purpose in Source #1? Support your answer using specific details from **each** source. Be sure to identify the source of each piece of information by title or number.

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**Directions for Part 2**

You will now review your sources, take notes, and plan, draft, revise, and edit your suspense story. You may use your notes and refer to the sources. Now read your assignment and the information about how your story will be scored; then begin your work.

**Your Assignment**

It is now time to write the story that you will share with your classmates. Imagine that you are an archaeologist who works with Sarah Parcak's team. You and some other archaeologists are sent to Egypt to help dig up a site that Parcak's team discovered. During your dig, something surprising happens. Write a suspense story about what you find at the site and what feelings are going through your head as you make the discovery. The story should be several paragraphs long.

Writers often do research to add realistic details to the setting, characters, and plot in their stories. When writing your story, find ways to use information and details about armchair archaeology and Egyptian pyramids to improve your story and help you develop your characters, the setting, and the plot. Use details, dialogue, and description where appropriate.

**Narrative Scoring**

Your story will be scored using the following:

- 1. Organization/Purpose:** How effective was your plot, and did you maintain a logical sequence of events from beginning to end? How well did you establish and develop a setting, story, characters, and point of view? How well did you use a variety of transitions? How effective was your opening and closing for your audience and purpose?
- 2. Development/Elaboration:** How well did you develop your story using description, details, dialogue? How well did you incorporate sensory and figurative language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose? How well did you use relevant material from the sources in your story?
- 3. Conventions:** How well did you follow the rules of grammar usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling?

**Now begin work on your narrative.** Manage your time carefully so that you can plan, write, revise, and edit the final draft of your story. Write your response on a separate piece of paper.

