

Sample Lesson #2

Never Travel Alone*

For land travel or seafaring the world over, a companion is usually considered desirable. In the Klondike, as Tom Vincent found out, such a companion is absolutely essential. But he found it out, not by precept, but through bitter experience.

Never travel alone, is a precept of the North. He had heard it many times and laughed; for he was a strapping young fellow, big-boned and big-muscled, with faith in himself and in the strength of his head and hands.

It was on a bleak January day when the experience came that taught him respect for the frost and for the wisdom of the men who had battled with it.

Tom had left Calumet Camp on the Yukon with a light pack on his back to go up Paul Creek to the divide between it and Cherry Creek where his party was prospecting and hunting moose.

The frost was sixty-degrees below zero, and he had thirty miles of lonely trail to cover, but he did not mind. In fact, he enjoyed it, swinging along through the silence, his blood pounding warmly through his veins, and his mind carefree and happy. For he and his comrades were certain they had struck “pay” up there on the Cherry Creek Divide, and further, he was returning to them from Dawson with cheery home letters from the States.

At seven o'clock, when he turned the heels of his moccasins toward Calumet Camp, it was still black night. And when day broke at half past nine, he had made the four-mile cut-off across the flats and was six miles up Paul Creek. The trail, which had seen little travel, followed the bed of the creek, and there was no possibility of his getting lost. He had gone to Dawson by way of Cherry Creek and Indian River, so Paul Creek was new and strange. By half past eleven he was at the forks, which had been described to him, and he knew he had covered fifteen miles, half the distance. He knew that in the nature of things the trail was bound to grow worse from there on, and considering the good time he had made, he merited lunch. Casting off his pack and taking a seat on a fallen tree, he unmittened his right hand, reached inside his shirt next to the skin, and fished out a couple of biscuits sandwiched with sliced bacon and wrapped in a handkerchief—the only way they could be carried without freezing solid.

*London, Jack. First published as "To Build a Fire" in *Youth's Companion*, v. 76, May 29, 1902



- RL.8.3 1. The story is set in a bitterly cold environment. How does the author show this? Underline words in the text.
- RL.8.6 2. What is Tom Vincent's attitude as he begins his journey?
- A) Tom is concerned about how he will find his way to Cherry Creek.
 - B) Tom is resentful that he must journey alone in the cold and dark.
 - C) Tom is worried about how to find food in the wilderness.
 - D) Tom is carefree, happy, and enjoying the silence of the outdoors.
- RL.8.6 3. Which of the narrator's words provide a sharp contrast to Tom's attitude?
- A) his blood pounding warmly through his veins and his mind carefree and happy
 - B) the experience came that taught him respect for the frost, and for the wisdom of the men who had battled with it
 - C) considering the good time he had made, he merited lunch
 - D) his party was prospecting and hunting moose
- RL.8.4 4. Match each term with its clue.
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| _____ essential | A) deserve |
| _____ precept | B) big, strong, muscular |
| _____ strapping | C) associate; buddy |
| _____ comrade | D) necessary |
| _____ moccasins | E) general rule |
| _____ merit | F) shoe or boot made of leather |
- RL.8.1 5. Tom has laughed at times when he's heard the "precept of the North." Why?
- A) He doesn't believe anyone could get lost while traveling along the riverbed.
 - B) His friends have struck "pay" up North.
 - C) A companion is not essential when traveling in the North.
 - D) He knows he is a strong young man and he has faith in himself.
- RL.8.3 6. Which words help to build suspense in this part of the story?
- A) he was returning . . . with cheery home letters from the States
 - B) he found it out, not by precept, but through bitter experience
 - C) the trail, . . . followed the bed of the creek
 - D) he enjoyed it, swinging along through the silence