

Wilderness Lessons

Alejandro looked at the camping gear spread on the floor. “I have to carry all this stuff on my back?” he asked.

“You bet,” said Santiago. “This is a ten-day trek. I sent all the trip information pamphlets to you, right?” It was true. Santiago had mailed him a stack of information about this hike in the Colorado Rockies. “Let me guess. You didn’t even read it, right?”

Alejandro shrugged and grinned. Santiago sighed, “Well, at least you got some good boots,” he said.

Alejandro held up a foot, admired his new hiking boots, and said “Yes, these boots are going to take me places.”

“Well you still have to hike there—with all that gear on your back,” Santiago joked.

The next morning, Santiago and Alejandro gathered with the rest of the group at a trailhead high on a remote mountain road. Santiago was a group leader, along with a college student named Sonia, who had been making this trek for years.

“Short day today,” said Sonia, shouldering her pack. “We’ll hike seven miles and set up camp at Sweet Meadow.” Alejandro headed up the trail feeling confident and excited. After all, he was an accomplished athlete; he played soccer and tennis. Things went fine for the first mile, but then the hikers came to a stretch of trail that ascended narrow switchbacks over a ridge. About halfway up, Alejandro was completely out of breath and leaned against a rock wall, panting.

Santiago stopped. “How’s it going?” he asked.

“Whew! We haven’t gone far. Why is it so hard to climb?” Alejandro asked, huffing.

“Elevation,” said Santiago. “We are eight thousand feet above sea level, and the air gets thinner the higher you go. It was all in the information pamphlets...”

“Okay, okay, I guess I should have looked them over.” Alejandro heaved himself upright again.

When Alejandro finally reached Sweet Meadow with some other struggling hikers, the group had set up camp.

“That first day is a real challenge,” said Sonia. “You think you’re in shape until you try hauling fifty pounds of gear at this elevation. It takes some getting used to.”

“Oh, I am feeling fine,” Alejandro claimed. He did not want to seem weak. The group ate a quick dinner and got ready for bed.

“Twelve miles tomorrow, everyone,” said Santiago.

The next morning, Alejandro’s legs were so stiff he could barely hobble out of the tent. He could not believe how much his knees and calves ached and throbbed. For the first time he doubted he had the tenacity to complete this trek.

Santiago saw his friend shuffle slowly to the campfire. “Don’t worry too much, Alejandro. You’ll feel better when we get going.

Miles one and two went by fairly well, but before he knew it, Alejandro was gasping in the thin air. He had to stop and rest three times in half an hour. Alejandro’s spirits sank as he again recalled that no sport had ever challenged him like this did. What if he could not make it on this trip? The rest of the day did not get any easier—in fact, it was brutal. Every time Alejandro had to stop and rest, a voice in his head would tell him to quit, but then another voice would pipe in and make him keep moving. Finally, after twelve long miles, Alejandro limped into camp, heaved off his pack, and joined the group by the campfire.

“Way to go, Alejandro,” said Sonia. “I’m impressed you’re sticking with it.”

Later, Santiago helped Alejandro dress the blisters on his feet for the next day. “Even great boots need to be broken in when they’re new,” he said.

The next day the group covered ten miles. Alejandro still felt sore and short of breath, but maybe not quite as much. He even glanced around the picturesque surroundings. “Wow, this really is extraordinary,” he thought as he watched a herd of elk move through the valley below. Every day Alejandro felt a little better. He could hike faster, and he did not have to contemplate every step he was taking. On day six the group planned to scale Storm King, a fourteen-thousand-foot peak.

“Ready for this, Alejandro?” Santiago asked.

“I think so,” said Alejandro. “I went through the checklist a few times, but ultimately I’m just going to pace myself.”

“That’s the only way to do it, friend,” said Santiago. “You have to respect the wilderness. It’s a place where you can learn some things about yourself.”

“I definitely feel like I’ve been through some wilderness lessons,” said Alejandro. “Now let’s see what Storm King has to teach us.”

A Very Proper Hero

Born in the mid-1800s, young Mary Kingsley was considered a very “proper” English girl. Throughout her childhood, she did what most girls like her did. Schools were only for boys, so she learned to read at home. When her mother fell sick, Kingsley stayed home and took care of her.

When she was thirty, both her parents died. She moved in with her brother to take care of his household. But one day her “proper” life changed completely. Kingsley’s brother left for a long visit to China. She was free to do what she wanted. She headed straight for Africa.

As a girl, Kingsley had read dozens of books on natural history. She loved learning about plants and animals. And she longed to visit places English people knew little about. So in 1892 she set off for Africa.

Though raised in ease and comfort, Kingsley chose the rugged life. She traveled by steamship to the African coast and then went up rivers by steamboat and canoe. And she always traveled alone—a feat considered very daring for a woman of her time. To pay for the trip, she became a trader. She brought along pieces of cloth, which she exchanged for rubber. Rubber was rare in England, so she could sell it at a good price.

While in Africa, Kingsley met many of the local people and also other traders. Soon she knew much about life there. Africans became used to seeing this slender young woman in a prim black dress, never without her umbrella.

Kingsley enjoyed her time in Africa, but she did have some hair-raising adventures. One day, while walking through the jungle, she tumbled into a deep pit that was a trap set for animals. The bottom was lined with sharp spikes to stab the falling animal. Kingsley always wore several layers of skirts, as was the fashion in England. Luckily, the spikes could not get through them.

On another occasion, she was paddling a canoe along a stream when a hippo suddenly rose out of the water. Hippos do not like boats and can easily bite them in half. Kingsley could have attempted to flee, but she decided to make friends with the creature instead. As she wrote later, “I scratched him behind the ear with my umbrella, and we parted on good terms.”

When Kingsley returned to London, she brought a little of Africa with her. A tiny pet monkey perched on her shoulder wherever she went.

In 1894 Kingsley made a second African trip. This time the British Museum hired her to bring back plants, animals, shells, and other things of interest. She collected hundreds of items. Three kinds of fish she found had never before been seen by Europeans. Scientists named the fish for her.

Nothing seemed to hold Kingsley back. One day she decided to climb Mount Cameroon, one of the highest volcanoes in Africa. She was the first European woman to do so. After reaching the top, she was caught in a tornado and nearly died. Not long after that, she came face-to-face with a gorilla. Few non-Africans had ever seen one before. In fact, many thought they were made-up creatures of legend. She also had some close calls with crocodiles, snakes, and other wild animals.

At the conclusion of this journey, Kingsley wrote a book titled *Travels in West Africa*. It was a huge best seller. She became a highly popular speaker as well. People flocked to her speeches to listen and to see Africa through a woman's eyes.

In 1899 Kingsley began a third trip. This time she went to South Africa. She had planned to collect more fish for the British Museum, but there was a war going on. England was fighting a group of settlers called the Boers for control of an area where gold had been found.

Kingsley immediately went to the army and offered to serve as a nurse in one of its hospitals. Instead, the army sent her to care for Boer soldiers in a prison camp. Conditions there were terrible. The air was full of deadly germs, and before long Kingsley caught typhoid fever. She died on June 3, 1900, at the age of thirty-seven.

In her short life, this “proper” young woman had accomplished things no other person—female or male—of her time could have done. An explorer, naturalist, humanitarian, author, and faithful daughter and sister, Kingsley was a hero many times over.

Vocabulary

FOCUS Review the selection vocabulary words from the next chapter of “Hatchet.”

banked
convulse
dormant
dusk
freshwater
handle

interior
intervals
leathery
regulate
swarmed
weathered

PRACTICE Complete each sentence with a selection vocabulary word. Each vocabulary word should be used once.

1. We like to fish in the _____ lake outside of town.
2. The _____ covering of the chair was smooth to the touch.
3. Before starting the campfire for cooking, we _____ the wood in the center of the ring.
4. Just thinking about sucking on a lemon makes my body _____.
5. The _____ old fence needs to be painted this summer.
6. The outside of the house looked plain, but the _____ was beautiful.

7. These insects are _____ over the winter, and they become active in the spring.
8. The bats come out at _____ to eat the insects that come alive at night.
9. I do not know how I will _____ moving to a new school.
10. For exercise, I jump rope for _____ of two minutes.
11. It is easy to _____ the temperature with the new thermostat.
12. The fans _____ the players on the field after the big win.

APPLY Read each sentence. Use your knowledge of the vocabulary word's definition to answer each question.

13. You are eating outside at dusk with your family. What time of day is it?

14. The grass is dormant over the winter. What does that mean?

15. You are in the interior room of the museum. Where are you?

16. You go through intervals of growing. What is happening?

17. You regulate the noise level on the speaker. What are you doing?

18. You can handle the responsibility of caring for a puppy. What does that mean?

A Summer Concert

Last summer, I saw my favorite singer at my first outdoor concert ever. I went with my family, and we arrived early to find our seats and get settled. At fifteen minute intervals, someone would come out and ask, “Are you ready?” to which we all responded, “Yeah!” and screamed. The concert was scheduled to start after dusk, so we still had an hour or so to wait.

This concert took place in a beautiful outdoor area, surrounded by tall trees that seemed to hug the weathered stage. In the distance, I watched the sun set over a large freshwater lake as the sky turned orange and pink and purple before night settled over us. The audience seemed calm, almost as if they were dormant, despite the underlying energy of expectation.

The people arrived little by little, filling in the seats, and soon almost every seat had a person waiting to see the great singer. Some people stood, while others sat looking around at the crowd and the scenery. I scoured the stage for signs of the singer, but I only found microphones, a drum set, a couple guitars, and two large screens to each side of the stage. Suddenly, the stage went completely dark.

I blinked my eyes and saw a bright light shining on the center of the stage while my favorite singer appeared in a black leather jacket, black pants, and a white T-shirt. He greeted the audience, asking, “How are you tonight?” Of course, we all answered with cheers and applause, which the band followed with a strong drum beat. The singer clapped his hands together, beating a regular interval with the band, urging us to do the same. Then, he started singing softly at first and gradually increasing the volume.

As the singer walked close to the front of the stage, fans were swarming around the edge and reaching out to him. I wondered how he would handle all those people crowding the stage as he sang. After running by with his hand outstretched, he would move to the back of the stage, and the crowd would settle back and pump their fists in the air to the music. Soon everyone at the concert swayed, danced, and convulsed to the beat of the music together, following the lead of the drummer and singing along with the music.

Before the last song, the singer reached into an interior pocket of his jacket and pulled out a folded letter. He addressed the audience, “Right here I have a special letter sent to me from a fan.” The crowd cheered and clapped, whooped and hollered. He motioned for the crowd to quiet down, then continued, “and I want you to know how much the love and support of you all means to me. I keep this one close to my heart, and I read it before every performance. And, now I dedicate this next song to all my fans out there.” The crowd went wild. I sang the last part with the whole crowd as loud as I could:

This song is for you, my tried and true! This song is for you, my tried and true!

We slowly made our way back to the car after the concert. I fell into the leathery interior of the car, not realizing how tired I was. I hummed the tunes to myself until I fell asleep, which did not take long.

We purchased the music from the concert to listen to at home. I think I sang those lines from the song all summer long. I am surprised my family did not regulate my musical selections after the concert. They had to be tired of hearing me repeat the same songs over and over, as I relived that warm, summer concert in my mind. I often wondered about the fan letter the singer mentioned. *What made the letter so memorable? Did the singer ever meet the person who wrote it? What did the letter say? How many letters does he read? Would he read a letter I wrote?*

In late summer, our family gathers around the fire pit in our backyard on Friday nights. My dad will bank the fire so it will last long into the night. Our neighbors often join us, and we gather around the fire to talk about our favorite memories. I shared my favorite memory of singing along with a whole crowd of people at the outdoor concert of my favorite singer. I could not imagine a better night, other than these nights when I can relive it with my family and friends.

Main Idea and Details

FOCUS Authors organize their writing into a main idea supported by details.

- A main idea should be clear and focused.
- A main idea should have supporting details. Details provide additional information about the main idea.

PRACTICE Read the paragraph below. Identify the main idea of each paragraph and write it on the line. Then, write two details from the paragraph that support the main idea.

As a young boy, Jonah wanted to help the children he saw who looked hungry. So, he made them sandwiches and shared them with the children. Later, he saw they needed new socks and shoes. So, he asked people to donate new socks and shoes. In school, he noticed some children needed new book bags, so he asked people to help again. Soon his classmates had backpacks and supplies for school. He started a charity to keep the donations coming to help other children in his community. Helping others is a way of life for Jonah.

Main Idea:

1. _____

Details:

2. _____

3. _____

APPLY Write a main idea sentence for each set of details.

4. The sun is shining. The birds are singing. The flowers are blooming. Children are outside playing.

5. You can read a book. You can play a game. You can write poetry. You can write a letter to a friend.

6. First, we saw the zebras in a large field exhibit. Next, we looked for the lions and tigers. Then, we found the large elephants. Finally, we saw a giraffe and her baby.

Write details for each main idea sentence.

7. This is going to be a busy week.

8. The library is full of information.

Suffixes *-ant/-ent* and *-al/-ial*

FOCUS

The suffix *-ant/-ent* means “one who” or “characterized by.” The suffix *-ant/-ent* forms an adjective or noun. For example, the verb *serve* becomes a noun, *servant*, meaning “one who serves.” The verb *excel* becomes an adjective, *excellent*, which means “characterized by excelling.”

The suffix *-al/-ial* means “having characteristics of.” The suffix *-al/-ial* usually forms an adjective or noun. For example, the noun *president* becomes an adjective, *presidential*, meaning “having characteristics of a president.” The verb *refuse* becomes a noun, *refusal*, meaning “having characteristics of refusing.”

PRACTICE Complete each sentence below using the boldfaced word and the suffix *-ant/-ent*.

1. Someone who **assists** is a(n) _____.
2. Something with the quality of **depending** is _____.
3. Someone who **occupies** a room is a(n) _____.
4. Something with the quality of **fluency** is _____.

Complete each sentence below using the boldface word and the suffix *-al/-ial*.

5. Something with the characteristics of **agriculture** is _____.
6. Something with the characteristics of **emotions** is _____.
7. Something with the characteristics of an **office** is _____.
8. Something with the characteristics of **industry** is _____.