

Nonfiction for Honors (Second Edition)

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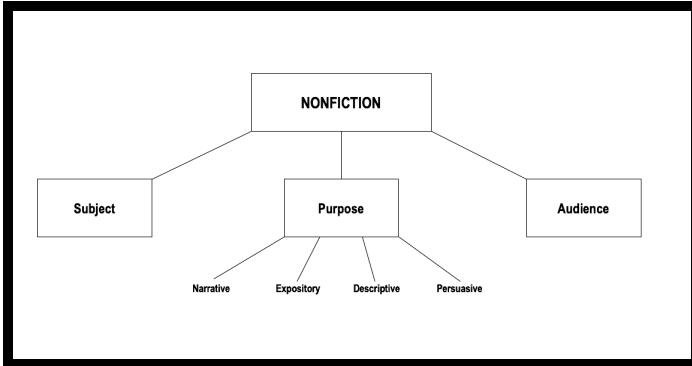
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What Is Nonfiction?

There are two main categories of prose¹ writing: fiction and nonfiction. Fiction is writing that is not true—it is made up. Fairy tales, short stories, and novels are examples of fiction.



Nonfiction is all prose writing that is not "made up" or imaginary. There are many different genres of nonfiction writing. A few of the more common genres are biography, news articles, history, essays, and speeches.

Writers of nonfiction write for a variety of purposes. They write to give information, to explain, or to express an opinion or argument. However, all nonfiction writers are guided by three things as they write: their subject, their purpose, and their audience. The subject is the specific topic about which the author is writing. The purpose might be, for example, to entertain, inform, or persuade. The audience is the type of reader for whom the work is intended. Many nonfiction works are written for experts, while others are meant for casual readers. Authors select information and write in a way that will suit their subjects, achieve their purposes, and be understood by their audiences.

The four most common reasons for writing nonfiction are narrative, expository, descriptive, and persuasive. Narration tells true stories. Description creates a picture of its subject in words. Exposition presents facts or explains ideas. And persuasion tries to convince readers to accept an opinion or take action.

¹ written or spoken language in its ordinary form, without metrical structure; in other words, writing that isn't poetry

At its best, a truly literary work of nonfiction creates a total effect that enlightens, entertains, and inspires. As you read the selections in this textbook, decide how effectively each piece is able to achieve these lofty goals.

Literary Focus: Strategies for Reading Nonfiction

There are a number of things you can do to increase your enjoyment and comprehension of nonfiction.

1. Preview the selection. Look at the title, pictures, diagrams, subtitles, and any words or terms in boldfaced or italic type. All of these will give you an idea of what the selection is about.
2. Figure out the organization – If the work is a biography or autobiography, the organization is probably chronological (in the order in which things happen). Other selections might be organized differently, such as by topic.
3. Separate facts and opinions.
4. Question as you read. Ask yourself, “Why did things happen the way they did? How did the people in the selection feel? What is the writer’s opinion? Do I share the writer’s opinion, or do I have different ideas on the subject?” Some questions are provided in the “Study Questions” section after each selection.
5. During your reading, stop now and then and try to predict what will come next.
6. As you read, build on your understanding. Add new information to what you have already learned and see if your ideas and opinions change.
7. Continually evaluate what you read. Evaluation should be an ongoing process. Remember that evaluation means more than saying a selection is good or bad. Form opinions about people, events, and ideas that are presented. Decide whether or not you like the way the information is presented.
8. Determine if the writer is showing any bias (prejudice in favor of or against the subject, usually in a way considered to be unfair). Decide if the writer can be trusted to provide you with reliable information.
9. Determine the author’s purpose in writing the selection. What is his or her overall aim or objective? What is his or her thesis statement?

Danger! Rabid Animals!

by Henry and Melissa Billings



Rabies is a deadly virus spread to people from the saliva of infected animals. The rabies virus is usually transmitted through a bite. Animals most likely to transmit rabies in the United States include bats, coyotes, foxes, raccoons and skunks. In developing countries of Africa and Southeast Asia, stray dogs are the most likely to

spread rabies to people. Once a person begins showing signs and symptoms of rabies, the disease nearly always causes death. This article takes a closer look at this deadly disease. (First published 1996)

Kelly Ahrendt did not feel well. She told her mother that her knuckles hurt and her left arm and shoulder ached. So on July 8, 1993, Margaret Ahrendt took her eleven-year-old daughter to see a doctor. The doctor found a slight ear infection and a possible strep throat. But it was nothing serious. The doctor also thought Kelly might have pulled a muscle. She was an athletic girl. She often did cartwheels outdoors on the family farm in New York. "It was no big deal," said Margaret. "[The doctor] said it was OK to go on vacation."

Everyone thought that Kelly would soon be her old self again. The next day the family set out on a camping trip in upstate New York, near Lake George. But Kelly didn't improve. In fact, she began to get sicker. She grew feverish. Her pains intensified. Then Kelly began having strange visions. "First she was crying, and then the crying stopped and she just started talking crazy," said her mother. "[Kelly screamed], 'The flies, get the flies off me!' And then she said she saw worms on her."

Margaret and her husband Richard were desperate. They took Kelly to three hospital emergency rooms. But doctors could do nothing to stop her severe pain. Her muscles twitched violently. And her horrible visions grew worse. She was disgusted at the thought of her own hair. She even drew back whenever her parents came near. "I'm sorry," she told them. "I know I shouldn't be afraid of you, but I can't help it."

On July 11, Kelly Ahrendt died.

What caused this young girl's death? At first, the doctors had no idea. It was only later that the hard truth became clear. Laboratory tests showed that Kelly had died from rabies. She was the first person in New York to die from the disease since 1954.

Rabies is a deadly disease. Caused by a virus, it can strike most mammals—including humans. An animal with rabies passes it on to others by biting or scratching. Pets such as dogs and cats can have rabies. In fact, dogs are the greatest rabies threat in much of the world. Still, it is rare for dogs in the United States to have rabies. Here, most dogs and cats are vaccinated against the disease. So the real threat comes from wild animals. Raccoons, foxes, skunks, and other creatures can all catch the disease.

An animal with rabies—called a rabid animal—is not always easy to identify. It may look tame or just a bit sick. It might have trouble walking. You might see it do something odd. For instance, a night animal like a raccoon might be walking down the street in the middle of the day. If you ever run across such a creature, beware. It might be suffering from the most common strain of rabies, called the dumb strain. Victims of this strain often act slow witted. Although your first impulse may be to help such an animal, don't do it. You can't save a rabid animal and you'll only put yourself at risk.

The other form of rabies is much easier to recognize. It is the furious strain. A dog with this type of rabies will foam at the mouth. It will howl constantly. It may wander for long distances. And it will attack for no reason at all. Any dog with furious rabies is as angry as an animal can get. That's where the expression mad dog comes from.

Rabies in humans is difficult to diagnose. That's because the virus doesn't travel through the blood stream. If it did, it would show up in a blood test. Instead, rabies spreads through the nerve cells. The virus slowly works its way up to the brain. While this is happening, the victim shows no signs of the disease. This period can last anywhere from ten days to seven months. The time frame depends on where the virus entered the body.

When rabies finally reaches the brain, symptoms appear. These include crazy fears, foaming at the mouth, and muscle spasms. By this time, it's too late for treatment. The disease at this point is always fatal. So even if the doctors had figured out what was wrong with Kelly Ahrendt, they couldn't have saved her. Once symptoms

appear, death follows quickly. Most victims, like Kelly, die within a week.

The Ahrendts had known all about the threat of rabies. They knew that rabid raccoons had recently appeared in New York. Margaret had even read an article about a rabid cat to her seven children. She warned the children not to touch raccoons or other wild animals. "Kelly knew - all the kids knew - about the animals," Margaret said. "If they saw a raccoon, they'd usually all come screaming into the house."

So how did Kelly get the disease? At first, it was a total mystery. The Ahrendts had some animals on their farm. They had two cats, a dog, two horses, three rabbits, and some ducks and chickens. But none of these animals were rabid. If one had been, it would have died before Kelly did. And, given her mother's firm warning, it was not likely that Kelly got close enough to be bitten by a rabid raccoon.

In late August, doctors finally solved the mystery. More lab tests showed that Kelly had gotten rabies from a bat. It turned out that bats lived in the attic of the family home. But no one knew exactly how Kelly had come into contact with the bats. Did one of them bite or scratch her? Maybe not. A bite or a scratch isn't always necessary. It is possible for bats with rabies to send the virus through the air. Two people are known to have picked up rabies this way. They got it just by breathing the air in caves filled with rabid bats.

People infected with rabies don't have to die. But steps must be taken before the symptoms start. So if you ever suspect you've been exposed to rabies, see a doctor-quick! There is a cure. It was developed by Louis Pasteur in 1885. For a long time, this cure involved a grim treatment. Victims had to have a series of fourteen to twenty one injections in the stomach. Today, the cure is more bearable. It consists of five shots in the arm. That still may sound pretty painful. But when you think of the alternative, it's not hard to roll up your sleeve and face the needle.

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of this selection?
2. What were some of the signs of Kelly Ahrendt's sickness?
3. What are some of the traits of animals with rabies?
4. How does an animal with rabies pass it on?

5. Why do pet dogs in the U.S. rarely pass rabies on to human beings?
6. What is the so-called *dumb* strain of rabies? What is the *furiosus* strain?
7. Why is rabies in humans difficult to diagnose?
8. What happens to a person once he or she shows symptoms of rabies?
9. How did Kelly Ahrendt acquire rabies?
10. Does rabies have a cure? Explain.

Literary Focus: Subject

In nonfiction, the **subject** is the specific topic about which the author is writing. Nonfiction writers may take an **objective** approach to their subjects, limiting their writing to a creative arrangement and presentation of the facts. Often, however, they take a **subjective** approach, giving us more than just the facts. They choose, organize, and interpret these facts in a certain way, and thus they frequently reveal their own opinions about their subjects. Sometimes they also reveal their own personalities and ways of looking at the world.

Two pieces of nonfiction about the same subject will be different because each writer has selected, organized, and interpreted the facts in a unique way. For example, two writers describing the same baseball game may write very different pieces of nonfiction. One writer may write a serious, detailed study of the game for people who know a great deal about baseball, while the other may write a humorous account to be read by people who know nothing about the game. These accounts of the same subject will differ largely because each author writes for a different purpose and audience, two concepts that will be explored in later chapters of this textbook.

Question: What is the subject of the selection? Why might the writer have selected this particular subject? Did the writer take an objective or subjective approach to his subject? How might the writer's approach to the subject differ from another author's?

My Sixth Christmas

by Floyd Dell

The experience Floyd Dell describes in this selection took place in Chicago at the end of the nineteenth century, but the story has a very modern flavor. See if you agree that it could mostly take place today, even in your own town. As you read, notice when you begin to realize something that the young narrator does not know. How does this knowledge make you feel? (First published 1933)

That fall, before it was discovered that the soles of both my shoes were worn clear through, I still went to Sunday school. And one time the Sunday-school superintendent made a speech to all the classes. He said that these were hard times, and that many poor children weren't getting enough to eat. It was the first time that I had heard about it. He asked everybody to bring some food for the poor children next Sunday. I felt very sorry for the poor children.

Also, little envelopes were distributed to all the classes. Each little boy and girl was to bring money for the poor, next Sunday. The pretty Sunday-school teacher explained that we were to write our names, or have our parents write them, up in the left-hand corner of the little envelopes. ... I told my mother all about it when I came home. And my mother gave me, the next Sunday, a small bag of potatoes to carry to Sunday school. I supposed the poor children's mothers would make potato soup out of them. ... Potato soup was good. My father, who was quite a joker, would always say, as if he were surprised, "Ah! I see we have some nourishing potato soup today!" It was so good that we had it every day. My father was at home all day long and every day, now; and I liked that. I had my parents all to myself, too; the others were away. My oldest brother was in Quincy, and memory does not reveal where the others were: perhaps with relatives in the country.

Taking my small bag of potatoes to Sunday school, I looked around for the poor children; I was disappointed not to see them. I had heard about poor children in stories. But I was told just to put my contribution with the others on the big table in the side room.

I had brought with me the little yellow envelope, with some money in it for the poor children. My mother had put the money in it and sealed it up. She wouldn't tell

me how much money she had put in it, but it felt like several dimes. Only she wouldn't let me write my name on the envelope. I had learned to write my name, and I was proud of being able to do it. But my mother said firmly, no, I must not write my name on the envelope; she didn't tell me why. On the way to Sunday school I had pressed the envelope against the coins until I could tell what they were; they weren't dimes but pennies.

When I handed in my envelope, my Sunday school teacher noticed that my name wasn't on it, and she gave me a pencil; I could write my own name, she said. So I did. But I was confused because my mother had said not to; and when I came home, I confessed what I had done. She looked distressed. "I told you not to!" she said. But she didn't explain why...

I didn't go back to school that fall. My mother said it was because I was sick. I did have a cold the week that school opened; I had been playing in the gutters and had got my feet wet, because there were holes in my shoes. My father cut insoles out of cardboard, and I wore those in my shoes. As long as I had to stay in the house anyway, they were all right.

I stayed cooped up in the house, without any companionship. We didn't take a Sunday paper any more, and though I did not read small print, I could see the Santa Clauses and holly wreaths in the advertisements.

There was a calendar in the kitchen. The red days were Sundays and holidays; and that red was Christmas. I knew just when Christmas was going to be.

But there was something queer! My father and mother didn't say a word about Christmas. And once when I spoke of it, there was a strange, embarrassed silence; so I didn't say anything more about it. But I wondered, and was troubled. Why didn't they say anything about it? Was what I had said I wanted too expensive?

I wasn't arrogant and talkative now. I was silent and frightened. What was the matter? Why didn't my father and mother say anything about Christmas? As the day approached, my chest grew tighter with anxiety.

Now it was the day before Christmas. I couldn't be mistaken. But not a word about it from my father and mother. I waited in painful bewilderment all day. I had supper with them, and was allowed to sit up for an hour. I was waiting for them to say something. "It's time for you to go to bed," my mother said gently. I had to say something.

"This is Christmas Eve, isn't it?" I asked, as if I didn't know.

My father and mother looked at one another. Then my mother looked away. Her face was pale and stony. My father cleared his throat, and his face took on a joking look. He pretended he hadn't known it was Christmas Eve, because he hadn't been reading the papers. He said he would go downtown and find out.

My mother got up and walked out of the room. I didn't want my father to have to keep on being funny about it, so I got up and went to bed. I went by myself without having a light. I undressed in the dark and crawled into bed.

I was numb. As if I had been hit by something. It was hard to breathe. I ached all through. I was stunned — with finding out the truth.

My body knew before my mind quite did. In a minute, when I could think, my mind would know. And as the pain in my body ebbed, the pain in my mind began. I knew. I couldn't put it into words yet. But I knew why I had taken only a little bag of potatoes to Sunday school that fall. I knew why there had been only pennies in my little yellow envelope. I knew why I hadn't gone to school that fall — why I hadn't any new shoes — why we had been living on potato soup all winter. All these things, and others, many others fitted themselves together in my mind, and meant something.

Then the words came into my mind and I whispered them into the darkness.

"We're poor!"

That was it. I was one of those poor children I had been sorry for, when I heard about them in Sunday school. My mother hadn't told me. My father was out of work, and we hadn't any money. That was why there wasn't going to be any Christmas at our house.

"We're poor." There in bed in the dark, I whispered it over and over to myself. I was making myself get used to it.

It wasn't so bad, now that I knew, I just hadn't known! I had thought all sorts of foolish things: that I was going to Ann Arbor² — going to be a lawyer — going to make speeches in the Square, going to be President. Now I know better.

I had wanted (something) for Christmas, I didn't want it, now. I didn't want anything.

I lay there in the dark, feeling the cold emotion of renunciation³. (The tendrils of desire unfold their clasp on the outer world of objects, withdraw, shrivel up. Wishes shrivel up, turn black, die. It is like that.)

It hurt. But nothing would ever hurt again. I would never let myself want anything again.

I lay there stretched out straight and stiff in the dark, my fists clenched hard upon Nothing...

In the morning it had been like a nightmare that is not clearly remembered — that one wishes to forget. Though I hadn't hung up any stocking there was one hanging at the foot of my bed. A bag of popcorn, and a lead pencil, for me. They had done the best they could, now they realized that I knew about Christmas. But they needn't have thought they had to. I didn't want anything.

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. Find two details that suggest the narrator is five or six years old when this incident takes place.
3. What does the boy bring to Sunday school?
4. What painful discovery does the boy finally make? How does he first feel?
5. What changes does the boy know are going to take place in his dreams?
6. What does the narrator get in his Christmas stocking? How does he react to the gifts?
7. Why doesn't the boy want anything anymore?
8. When did you discover the truth that the narrator discovers toward the end of the story? List three clues earlier in the story that hint at this truth.
9. Why do you think his parents didn't talk about Christmas?

Literary Focus: Purpose

An author's **purpose** is his or her aim for writing the selection. It might be, for example, to entertain, inform, persuade, or present an idea to the reader. It can often be articulated in a selection's **thesis statement**, although not every work of nonfiction contains a single sentence that so clearly states the writer's purpose or the selection's main idea. Often the writer's intent must be inferred by the reader.

² Location of the University of Michigan

³ Giving something up

Question: What is the authors' purpose in writing this account? Is there a thesis statement that states the authors' purpose? If not, how do you know?

No Level of Alcohol Is Safe

by Sarah Boseley

Drinking is as harmful as smoking and governments should consider advising people to abstain entirely, say the authors of an important study. As you read the following essay, consider the evidence that is presented and decide how convincing you think it is. If you find it convincing, what makes it so? If not, why not? (First published 2018)

Drinking will shorten your life, according to a major new study that suggests every glass of wine or beer over the daily recommended limit will cut half an hour from the expected lifespan of a 40 year old.

Even the occasional drink is harmful to health, according to the largest and most detailed research carried out on the effects of alcohol, which suggests governments should think of advising people to abstain⁴ completely.

The uncompromising message comes from the authors of the Global Burden of Diseases study, a rolling project based at the University of Washington, in Seattle, which produces the most comprehensive data on the causes of illness and death in the world.

Alcohol, says their report published in the *Lancet* medical journal, led to 2.8 million deaths in 2016. It was the leading risk factor for premature mortality and disability in the 15 to 49 age group, accounting for 20% of deaths.

Current alcohol drinking habits pose “dire ramifications⁵ for future population health in the absence of policy action today,” says the paper. “Alcohol use contributes to health loss from many causes and exacts its toll across the lifespan, particularly among men.”

Many people believe there are health benefits to one or two glasses of wine or beer a day, they say. “Our results show that the safest level of drinking is none.”

The study was carried out by researchers at the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), who investigated levels of alcohol consumption and health effects in 195 countries between 1990 to 2016. They used data from 694 studies to work out how common drinking was and from 592 studies including 28 million people worldwide to work out the health risks.

Moderate drinking has been condoned for years on the assumption that there are some health benefits. A glass of red wine a day has long been said to be good for the heart. But although the researchers did find low levels of drinking offered some protection from heart disease, and possibly from diabetes and stroke, the benefits were far outweighed by alcohol’s harmful effects, they said.

Drinking alcohol was a big cause of cancer in the over-50s, particularly in women. Previous research has shown that one in 13 breast cancers in the UK were alcohol-related. The study found that globally, 27.1% of cancer deaths in women and 18.9% in men over 50 were linked to their drinking habits.

In younger people globally the biggest causes of death linked to alcohol were tuberculosis (1.4% of deaths), road injuries (1.2%), and self-harm (1.1%).

In the United Kingdom, the chief medical officer Sally Davies has said there is no safe level of drinking, but the guidance suggests that drinkers consume no more than 14 units a week to keep the risks low. Half a pint of average-strength lager contains one unit and a 125ml glass of wine contains around 1.5 units.

While the study shows that the increased risk of alcohol-related harm in younger people who have one drink a day is small (0.5%), it goes up incrementally with heavier drinking: to 7% among those who have two drinks a day (in line with UK guidance) and 37% for those who have five.

One in three, or 2.4 billion people around the world, drink alcohol, the study shows. A quarter of women and 39% of men drink. Denmark has the most drinkers (95.3% of women, and 97.1% of men). Pakistan has the fewest male drinkers (0.8%) and Bangladesh the fewest women (0.3%). Men in Romania and women in Ukraine drink the most (8.2 and 4.2 drinks a day respectively), while women in the UK take the eighth highest place in the female drinking league, with an average of three drinks a day.

“Alcohol poses dire ramifications for future population health in the absence of policy action today. Our results indicate that alcohol use and its harmful effects on health could become a growing challenge as countries become more developed, and enacting or maintaining strong alcohol control policies will be vital,” said the report’s senior author, Prof Emmanuela Gakidou.

“Worldwide we need to revisit alcohol control policies and health programs, and to consider

⁴ choose not to do or have something

⁵ consequences

recommendations for abstaining from alcohol. These include excise taxes on alcohol, controlling the physical availability of alcohol and the hours of sale, and controlling alcohol advertising. Any of these policy actions would contribute to reductions in population-level consumption, a vital step toward decreasing the health loss associated with alcohol use.”

Dr. Robyn Burton, of King’s College London, said in a commentary in the *Lancet* that the conclusions of the study were clear and unambiguous⁶. “Alcohol is a colossal global health issue and small reductions in health-related harms at low levels of alcohol intake are outweighed by the increased risk of other health-related harms, including cancer,” she wrote.

“There is strong support here for the guideline published by the Chief Medical Officer of the UK who found that there is ‘no safe level of alcohol consumption’.

“Public health policy should be to prioritize measures to reduce the numbers who drink through price increases, taxation, or setting the price according to the strength of the drink (minimum unit pricing), followed by curbs on marketing and restricting the places where people can buy alcohol.

“These approaches should come as no surprise because these are also the most effective measures for curbing tobacco-related harms, another commercially mediated disease, with an increasing body of evidence showing that controlling obesity will require the same measures,” she wrote.

Ben Butler, a Drinkaware spokesperson, said: “This new study supports existing evidence about the harms associated with alcohol. Our research shows that over a quarter of UK adults typically exceed the low risk drinking guidelines and are running the risk of serious long term illnesses.”

In a commentary in the *Lancet*, Professors Jason Connor and Wayne Hall from the University of Queensland Centre for Youth Substance Abuse Research in Australia, anticipated that the suggestion of lowering recommended drinking limits will come up against opposition.

“The drinking levels recommended in this study will no doubt be described as implausible and impracticable by the alcohol industry and other opponents of public health warnings on alcohol. Nonetheless, the

findings ought to be widely disseminated and they should provoke informed public and professional debate.”

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. Who performed the study that appeared in the *Lancet* medical journal? Would you consider them a reliable source? How does this impact the persuasiveness of their conclusions?
3. According to the study, what is the safest level of alcohol?
4. According to the study, are there any health benefits to moderate drinking? If so, what are they? Would it be judicious, according to the article, to drink moderately to enjoy the health benefits? If no, why not?
5. What does the study suggest is the greatest health risk caused by alcohol?
6. Identify three measures recommended by the study’s senior author to help encourage alcohol abstinence.
7. What do professors Jason Connor and Wayne Hall say should happen with the study’s findings?
8. Did this article change your perspective on drinking in any way? If so, how?

Literary Focus: Audience

A writer’s **audience** is the type of reader for whom the work is intended. Many nonfiction works are written for experts, while others are meant for more casual readers. If a writer’s audience are people who already have an interest in the work’s subject, he or she might assume that the readers already possess some basic background knowledge about the subject. If writing for a general (broad) audience, however, it is necessary for a writer to provide all the most essential information so that readers will be able to understand what the author has written.

Question: Who do you think is the audience for this selection? Is it a general audience or an audience that would already possess critical background knowledge about the subject?

⁶ unmistakable

Beneath the Crags of Malpelo Island

by Harry Rieseberg

Harry Earl Rieseberg (born 1892) studied journalism and business and then entered government service. He eventually worked within the United States Bureau of Navigation. Rieseberg often appeared on television to speak about underwater exploration, and he has written numerous articles about his own diving experiences. In the following selection Rieseberg tells of a challenge that he found too exciting to turn down. In light of what happens to him, do you think his decision to take on the challenge was wise or foolhardy? (First published 1957)

With a smother of foam and bubbles the green water closed over me. When I was not too far down, I signaled the crew above to stop. Since they were new at this business, I wanted to see whether they would answer satisfactorily. When they promptly did so, I adjusted the air pressure in my diving dress and resumed my slow descent.

As I went I thought of the treasure supposedly lying in the wreck below. I thought, too, of the dangers lurking there and of the seven divers who had gone down to the wreck and never returned. Had I known the terror that awaited me, I might have stopped my descent then and there and gone back to the surface and safety.

The whole strange adventure had begun two weeks before in the little seaport town of Buenaventura, Colombia. I had just returned from six months of salvage work⁷ on several so-called treasure wrecks in the Gulf⁸ waters. I had decided to return to the States for a long-needed rest.

But that was before I met Charlie Boyer in the office of the dock superintendent. Once a diver himself, he was quite interested in my recent experiences. When I mentioned that there were few unrecovered treasure wrecks left on the sea floor along the West Coast, he looked at me sharply and then stared ahead in silence.

I asked him, "What's the strangest thing you've ever heard of in these waters, Boyer?"

For a brief moment he did not reply, then he said, "I think the salvage job off Malpelo Island, to the west of here, is the strangest, Lieutenant. But it's a long, long story."

I settled myself down comfortably to listen.

Many years ago, Boyer said, an unidentified Spanish schooner had hit the rocks off the end of Malpelo Island during a violent storm. The vessel had gone down immediately, with only one man surviving. Rescued from the deserted island, the man revealed that the sunken schooner had carried in its hold a vast sum in gold and silver bars, together with some other valuable cargo. That was all that was ever learned about the ship and its treasure; a few days later the survivor died from exposure.

Seven attempts had been made to recover the mysterious treasure cargo. In each case the diver never came up. All the air and life lines were snapped, and there was no sign of what had caused the series of tragedies.

The story chilled me. But there was a challenge in it.

"Boyer," I said, "if you're willing to take a chance with me on making the eighth attempt, I'll do the diving."

With a broad grin he jumped to his feet. "You mean that, Lieutenant? You aren't superstitious?"

My answer was a flat no.

The next two weeks were busy ones. We secured the best equipment we could in Buenaventura and hired a double crew of husky Colombians. It wasn't long before we were anchored off Malpelo Island⁹ and I was going down to the wreck of the ill-fated Spanish schooner.

As I caught the faint outline of the hulk beneath me, I fingered Shark knife nervously. About a hundred feet down, I landed on a rocky ledge that jutted out from the main rock ridge. Among these sharp crags I had to be mighty careful with my lines. A hard rub on one of their jagged edges might put me in a bad spot. I was glad of one thing: there were no signs whatever of sharks as yet. In fact, not a large fish of any kind appeared among the long streamers of queer stuff that hung in the water around the old hulk.

In a few minutes I had landed on the slime-coated deck of the sunken schooner. The white superstructure¹⁰ shone clean and fresh as though it had recently been painted. In the faint light that penetrated from above, the wreck looked weird and sinister. It lay there, white and ghostly, with the high black walls of rock around it--much like a gigantic coffin lowered into a watery tomb.

⁷ retrieving sunken cargo

⁸ Golfo Tortugas, off the west coast of Colombia

⁹ Island in the Pacific Ocean off the western coast of Colombia in South America

¹⁰ part of a ship above the main deck

The after-hatch¹¹ was open, its cover partly off; just forward appeared the companionway¹². Making certain that neither of my lines was fouled¹³, I loosened my shark knife and strode forward. Climbing down the sand-covered steps to the heavy door of the chamber below, I moved ever more cautiously.

Then I saw it—and stood there, almost paralyzed, for a moment. Beside the half-open door appeared a large round object. *It was a copper diving helmet!*

Quickly I dug it out of the debris and sand. Stooping, I peered closer. In the light of my torch¹⁴ I could see inside that helmet. I gazed down upon a skull—the white jaws wide apart in a set and uncanny grin!

Here was the first of the seven divers who had perished.

As I straightened up, the soft purr of the incoming air stopped abruptly. Then air started to whistle past my ears as it began to leave my suit. I suddenly realized that my air hose was cut. I knew that the great pressure of water at that depth would empty my suit in a few seconds and I should be badly crushed.

Shutting off the intake valve, I felt enough air within my suit to last about five minutes. But for normal decompression¹⁵ I needed more time than that to go up. Now I was in a tough spot. There seemed slight chance for my survival.

Stumbling up the companionway steps, I jerked out my shark knife. But on the deck nothing was in sight, nothing but those ghostly white planks and sharp black limestone rocks.

Now my suit was deflating fast. I pulled my signal cord quickly, and soon I was being slowly hauled upward. Of course I knew the terrible danger of being hauled up from deep water too fast. Often it causes caisson disease, or the “bends.”¹⁶ In fact, it can put a man out for good. At the halfway stage, I signaled for a stop. For a minute or two I hung at that level to lessen the shock.

When, at my signal, the crew started hauling up again, my eyes seemed to be bursting from their sockets.

¹¹ entrance to a ship's lower deck, toward the ship's rear

¹² stairs leading from a ship's deck to the area below

¹³ tangled

¹⁴ flashlight

¹⁵ gradual return to normal atmospheric pressure, which is much less than the pressure in the ocean's depths.

¹⁶ chest tightness, joint pains, and violent muscle spasms caused by nitrogen bubbles that form in the body when deep sea divers return to the surface too quickly

My body felt as if it had been gripped by some giant's hand that was crushing the remaining life from it.

They pulled me on deck, and the crew boys got my headpiece unscrewed just in time. I lay there helpless, almost unconscious. After undergoing decompression in our makeshift chamber¹⁷, I rested for two whole days.

On the third day the sea was calm and the day clear. We had rigged up a new air hose; the old one had been cut almost in two. What cut it I didn't know—perhaps some sharp edge on the old hulk or a pointed rock outcrop. Again I climbed over the side of the little salvage craft and sank slowly down past the wall of gloomy rocks.

I circled the entire deck, carefully watching my lines. Everything appeared the same as before—the water seemed as lifeless as ever. I climbed down the companionway toward the chamber below. The grim helmet with its grinning white skull lay where I had left it. This time, without hesitating, I began to dig away the sand that blocked the doorway. Soon I had the opening cleared. I peered in, then cautiously entered.

Inside was a space about fifteen feet wide. It was partly filled with crates and boxes of different sizes. One of the boxes had the top pried off. Excited, I quickly scraped away the thick sand and flashed my torch on the uncovered contents. It revealed several metal bars. Yes, here was the treasure. How much I had no idea, but if it was to be raised, I should have to arrange for steel slings to be dropped down to me. Then, counting the boxes and crates, I prepared to ascend.

Turning to retrace my steps, I noticed that the boxes were piled higher at the opposite end of the chamber, away from the doorway. To the right of these was a huge object heavily wrapped in a large tarpaulin. Striding clumsily across the room, I tore away the length of covering.

There before me was a great bronze statue. It had large eyes, probably made of precious stones. They were of different shades and seemed to be looking at me sorrowfully. At the base of the statue were a number of small bones, whitened and half buried the sand. Among them two skulls grinned at me eerily. Close by lay a lead-soled boot, with remnants of a diver's suit still clinging to it.

¹⁷ Area in which the air pressure can be adjusted in order to bring a diver gradually back to normal atmospheric pressure

I stood there trembling in the dark, eerie tomb. Then in the light of my torch something snakelike floated into my view. My scalp tightened, and I thought another diver was scheduled to “go out.” Then, to my relief, I saw that it was only a long piece of rotted tarpaulin. By now my nerves were pretty raw, and I couldn't help thinking of the seven divers who had come down here—to stay.

In the midst of these thoughts I had a weird, uncanny feeling that somebody or something was watching me. So strong was this strange sense of a presence in the lonely, silent tomb that I turned and threw my torchlight about the chamber. It moved over the boxes and crates, played on the wall, and returned finally to the statue. As it shone past the bronze figure, I became faint with terror. For there, from behind the dim outlines of the boxes and crates, a huge shape was rising before my eyes. My heart pounded wildly, for the thing bulked across the doorway—and barring my exit—was a quivering, warty body rocking from side to side. The huge monster was fully fifteen feet across, with a ball of a body at least four to five feet in width. The creature's long, slimy arms, or tentacles, were lined with many great saucer-like cups. And its ghoulish eyes watched my every movement.

Now I knew the fate of the seven lost divers, and I realized that I, too, was trapped in this watery grave. For there was only one way out of the chamber, and that was blocked by the swaying, writhing giant octopus!

Its long tentacles swayed and quivered continuously, almost rhythmically. They caressed the water, wrapping themselves about the crates and boxes. Then the creature crawled slowly along the floor in the sand toward me. I gazed at it in horror and edged backward out of its grasping reach. In spite of its great bulk and spreading arms it moved quickly.

As I watched, I could see the color of the huge, bloated body change from brown to dirty yellow, then to tan, and then to gray and white. And all the while those terrible eyes watched me.

I thought of the statue behind me. As I backed slowly and cautiously toward it, the octopus seemed to realize what my intent was, for it lunged with one of its tentacles directly at me. The powerful arm stirred the sand into a great cloud, the movement was so swift. Then, suddenly, a wild plan occurred to me. It was a slim chance, but a man facing death will clutch at almost any straw.

Backing as far as I could into the corner of the chamber, I drew my shark knife from its sheath and waited.

The fourteen inch blade didn't seem to be an adequate weapon against such a monster, but I was used to the knife. With half a chance, I could let the terrible creature know that he had been in a fight.

Now it was enraged, changing from one color to another very quickly, its tentacles reaching always closer. I stood waiting. Desperately, the huge beast sought to clasp its suction-cupped arms about me. Hooking the torch to my belt, I waited just beyond reach. Suddenly an arm shot directly at me.

With a quick side swipe, I sliced through it, almost without knowing that my knife had made contact with flesh. Then another tentacle was severed from the sickening, wart-covered body. As still another arm was thrust at me, I sliced downward at it, lopping it off. Now I saw closely the monster's devilish eyes watching me fixedly with blank, goggling hatred.

A stream of blue-black fluid poured forth from the creature's ink sac¹⁸, spreading slowly upward and clouding the water all around me. Now I began to wonder whether my plan would succeed. I was desperate, cornered like a rat in a hole.

Another writhing tentacle shot forward. I managed to turn it aside with my knife, but failed to cut it off. But in the next instant, a back-handed blow from the tentacle smashed against my helmet. It hurled me backward against the wooden wall with a force that left me dazed, almost unconscious. Slowly I managed to stagger to my feet. I wasn't a second too soon, for the creature clamped onto my helmet and shook me violently. With a yell that sounded hideous in my own ears, I drove my knife upward at the quivering arm wrapped about my helmet. The blade sliced deep through the boneless arm, its grip relaxing as the sinuous tentacle parted in two.

Now the octopus became wild with rage. Another huge arm groped for me. It flashed out as if to grip my helmet again, but dropped quickly and seized my left leg instead, throwing me off my feet. Again I slashed at it. And, with fiendish cunning, the creature changed its hold to my left arm, pulling me a little nearer to the doorway. I drove my knife upward once more, but luck was against me. The keen blade glanced wildly, and a second later it was wrenched from my hand!

¹⁸ when in danger, an octopus or squid releases an inky fluid to cloud the water and hide itself

Now I was completely helpless. In desperation I tried to brace myself, but there was nothing to brace against. I could not signal to the salvage ship above for help, because the huge monster's tentacles, those which remained, were staked across my lines. Inch by inch, the huge arm dragged me across the sand-covered floor of that watery tomb. As I came nearer, I could see the terrible eyes watching me through the clouded water. *The eighth victim that would never return to the surface.*

Suddenly a faint light shone on something that lay on the sand at my feet. The shark knife! I saw one last, crazy chance. I must take it or be torn to pieces by the nightmare that clutched me. Quickly I grabbed the steel knife. The tentacle on my left arm tightened, gave a quick jerk. Now I was within arm's reach of the terrible creature's body. I had to act quickly. Again I felt the grip tighten. Swiftly I raised the knife and drove the long blade full into the fearful monster's body at what I was certain was a vital spot...

At the very same moment something tore at my belt, and I felt a savage jerk as a stream of air bubbles shot out from the front of my diving suit. It was punctured.

Then the very air seemed to tear apart. There was a blinding flash and a dull roar as I felt myself being whirled through space. Then came darkness.

Later I opened my eyes with a start, a sort of nervous twitch. Surely I must be dreaming, I thought, and closed my eyes for a few seconds. I opened them again and lay blinking, not knowing whether I was in this world or the next. My head cleared gradually and I caught the soft hiss of an air valve and saw that I was in a decompression lock. There were pressure gauges on the wall and a lone figure stood before them, adjusting the valves. Gingerly I rubbed the lump the size of an egg over my right ear and moved in the narrow bunk. The man at the valves turned to look at me. It was Boyer.

He eyed me a moment in silence, then quietly said, "Well, Lieutenant," with a look of concern on his face, "you did come back."

I was stiff and sore and numb—symptoms that tell a diver that he has been under the water too long. But I was fortunate to be alive at all! I wondered how I had managed to get back on the sloop, and Boyer explained:

"When we didn't hear from you for so long. I ordered two of the native divers to go down to see what was the matter. They found you with lines fouled and three

tentacles of an octopus about you on the underdeck of the wreck. The creature was dead. They closed the air-pressure valves in your torn suit, cut away the lines and tentacles, and got you clear just in time. The suit was leaking fast, but they were able to get you on board before all the air was gone."

"Thank God, thank God!" I said.

For a moment or two we were silent, thinking of the narrow escape from a terrible death. I stood up, feeling quite groggy, but a lot better than I had expected. On deck I turned to Boyer and remarked, "Boyer, there are two things in this wide world I never want to meet again."

He smiled broadly. "What are they, Lieutenant?" he asked.

"Giant octopi¹⁹ and more octopi!" I answered with a grin.

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. What does Boyer tell Rieseberg about the sunken Spanish ship and the divers who searched for it?
3. Why does Rieseberg cut short his first dive?
4. What besides treasure does Rieseberg find?
5. Describe Rieseberg's struggle in the ship and his rescue.
6. Why do you think Rieseberg decides to look for the sunken treasure?
7. In retelling his experience the author wanted to create a feeling of suspense, or rising interest, in the outcome of the narrative. Do you think he succeeded? At which points was your interest strongest?

Literary Focus: Narration

An author can write for any number of purposes. Four of the most common purposes are to narrate, describe, persuade, or inform. **Narration** is a type of writing that tells a story. A narrative work can be either fictional or nonfictional, depending on whether the story it tells actually happened. Biographies, narrative essays, short stories, and novels are all kinds of narrative writing.

Most narratives are told in **chronological order**, the order in which events naturally occur. Effective narratives usually follow a pattern similar to the plot of a short story. That is, a **conflict**, or problem, of some kind

¹⁹ plural of *octopus*

sets in motion a chain of events. These events build to a **climax**, or peak of interest--the point at which we realize how the conflict or problem will be solved.

Events in a narrative are also often related by **cause and effect**. That is, certain events lead logically to certain other events.

Question: Is this selection an example of narration? Is it written in chronological order? Are the events related by cause and effect? Does the selection have a conflict or climax? If so, identify them.

Survive the Savage Sea

By Dougal Robertson

*The passages that follow are taken from a sea journal which was later made into a book called Survive the Savage Sea. On June 15, 1972, the sailing ship *Lucette* was attacked by killer whales in the Pacific Ocean. The boat sank in sixty seconds. The *Lucette* was sailed by Dougal Robertson, an ex-farmer, and his family: his wife Lyn, their eighteen-year-old son Douglas, their twelve-year-old twin sons Neil and Sandy, and a young family friend, Robin. Set adrift with a rubber raft and a fiberglass dinghy, Robertson and his crew begin their struggle to survive. They are without maps, compass, or instruments of any kind. They have emergency rations of food and water for only three days. Steering their course by the sun and stars, they make for the coast of Costa Rica, a thousand miles away. The narrator is Robertson himself. He wrote his journal on bits of paper from the instruction booklet and on pieces of sail. As you read, see if you can't help wondering whether you could have survived this conflict against the savage sea. (First published 1973)*

First Day

We sat on the salvaged pieces of flotsam²⁰ lying on the raft floor, our faces a pale bilious color under the bright yellow canopy, and stared at each other, the shock of the last few minutes gradually seeping through to our consciousness. Neil, his teddy bears gone, sobbed in accompaniment to Sandy's hiccup cry, while Lyn repeated the Lord's Prayer; then, comforting them, sang the hymn "For Those in Peril on the Sea." Douglas and Robin watched at the doors of the canopy to retrieve any useful pieces of debris which might float within reach and gazed with dumb longing at the distant five-gallon water container, bobbing its polystyrene lightness ever further away from us in the steady trade wind. The dinghy²¹ Ednamair wallowed, swamped, nearby with a line attached to it from the raft, and our eyes traveled over and beyond to the heaving undulations of the horizon, already searching for a rescue ship even while knowing there would not be one. Our eyes traveled fruitlessly across the limitless waste of sea and sky, then once more ranged over the scattering debris. Of the killer whales which had so recently shattered

our very existence, there was no sign. Lyn's sewing basket floated close and it was brought aboard followed by a couple of empty boxes, the canvas raft cover, and a plastic cup.

I leaned across to Neil and put my arm round him, "It's all right now, son, we're safe and the whales have gone." He looked at me reproachfully. "We're not crying cos we're frightened," he sobbed, "we're crying cos Lucy's gone." Lyn gazed at me over their heads, her eyes filling with tears. "Me too," she said, and after a moment added, "I suppose we'd better find out how we stand. . ."

We cleared a space on the floor and opened the survival kit, which was part of the raft's equipment, and was contained in a three-foot-long polyethylene cylinder; slowly we took stock:

Vitamin fortified bread and glucose²² for ten men for two days.

Eighteen pints of water, eight flares (two parachute, six hand).

One bailer, two large fishhooks, two small, one spinner and trace, and a twenty-five-pound break-in strain fishing line.

A patent knife which would not puncture the raft (or anything else for that matter), a signal mirror, torch, first aid box, two sea anchors, instruction book, bellows, and three paddles.

In addition to this there was the bag of a dozen onions which I had given to Sandy, to which Lyn had added a one-pound tin of biscuits and a bottle containing about half a pound of glucose sweets, ten oranges, and six lemons. How long would this have to last us? As I looked around our meager stores my heart sank and it must have shown on my face for Lyn put her hand on mine; "We must get these boys to land," she said quietly. "If we do nothing else with our lives, we must get them to land!" I looked at her and nodded, "Of course; we'll make it!" The answer came from my heart but my head was telling me a different story. . . .

In the next twelve days, the family survives on a small amount of water collected from rain showers, on the meager food supplies found on the raft, and on the few fish they catch. They battle seasickness and skin boils, which develop from over-exposure to the seawater. They catch

²⁰ Wreckage of a ship and its cargo

²¹ Small boat carried on a larger boat, often as a lifeboat.

²² Kind of sugar providing quick energy

sight of one ship a few miles from the raft, but they cannot catch its attention.

Fourteenth Day

The beautiful starlit night shone sparkles of stars on the quiet swells of the now distant trade winds, and seemed to mock our feeble struggle for existence in the raft; to become one with the night would be so easy. We blew, and bailed the forward section continually, and when Sandy found the hole which leaked into the after section, surrounded by transparently thin fabric, I felt that this was the beginning of the end of the raft. I knew that it was unlikely that I would be able to plug this one, and yet if I left it, it would certainly split open in the next heavy sea. I made a plug and inserted it into the hole, tape ready to bind it if it held. The hole split across and water flooded into the after compartment; I rammed the plug home in disgust and stopped enough of the water to bail the compartment dry but the raft would now need constant bailing at both ends. Apart from discomfort, my only real opposition to abandoning the raft was because it would mean abandoning the shelter afforded by the canopy, so I decided to think of a way of fastening the canopy on the dinghy to give us continuing shelter from the sun if we had to abandon.

We had a sip of water for breakfast with no dried food to detract from its value, after which I crossed to the dinghy to try for a dorado²³. The heat of the sun's rays beat on my head like a club and my mouth, dry like lizard skin, felt full of my tongue; the slightest exertion left me breathless. I picked up the spear; the dorado were all deep down as if they knew I was looking for them. A bump at the stern of the raft attracted Sandy's attention. "Turtle!" he yelled. This one was much smaller than the first, and with great care it was caught and passed through the raft—with Douglas guarding its beak, and the others its claws, from damaging the fabric—to me on the dinghy where I lifted it aboard without much trouble. I wrapped a piece of tape around the broken knife blade and made the incision into its throat. "Catch the blood," Lyn called from the raft. "It should be all right to drink a little." I held the plastic cup under the copious flow of blood, the cup filled quickly and I stuck another under as soon as it was full, then raising the full cup to my lips, tested it cautiously. It wasn't salty at all! I tilted the cup and drained it. "Good stuff!" I shouted. I

felt as if I had just consumed the elixir of life²⁴. "Here, take this," and I passed the bailer full of blood, about a pint, into the raft for the others to drink. Lyn said afterward she had imagined that she would have to force it down us and the sight of me, draining the cup, my mustache dripping blood, was quite revolting. I don't know what I looked like, but it certainly tasted good, and as the others followed my example it seemed they thought so too. I passed another pint across and though some of this coagulated before it could be drunk, the jelly was cut up and the released serum collected and used as a gravy with the dried turtle and fish.

I set to cutting my way into the turtle much refreshed, and even with the broken knife, made faster work of it than the first one, both because it was smaller, and being younger the shell was not so tough; the fact that I now knew my way around inside a turtle helped a lot too.

The sky was serenely blue that afternoon and with our position worked out at 5° 00' north, 250 miles west of Espinosa, we had arrived at the official limits of the Doldrums²⁵. Was this, then, Doldrums weather? Was "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"²⁶ right with its "Nor any drop to drink?" We had four tins of water left, one of them half sea water, and if any of the other three contained short measure, well, there might come another turtle. I looked around the raft at the remains of Robin and the Robertson family, water-wrinkled skin covered with salt-water boils and raw red patches of rash, lying in the bottom of the raft unmoving except to bail occasionally, and then only halfheartedly, for the water was cooling in the heat of the day. Our bones showed clearly through our scanty flesh; we had become much thinner these last few days and our condition was deteriorating fast. The raft was killing us with its demands on our energy. Douglas looked across at me, "Do you think it'll rain tonight, Dad?" I looked at him and shrugged, looked at the sky, not a cloud. "I suppose it could do," I said. "Do you think it will?" he insisted. "For heaven's sake, Douglas, I'm not a prophet," I said testily. "We'll just have to wait it out." His eyes looked hopeless at

²⁴ Elixir of life: mythical substance said to allow a person to live forever

²⁵ Ocean regions near the equator, noted for dead calms and light changing winds

²⁶ "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner": long poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The poem is about a mariner, or sailor, punished by God for killing an albatross (a kind of bird). At one point the Mariner, stopped without wind in the middle of the ocean, laments, "Water, water everywhere,/Nor any drop to drink."

²³ Brightly colored fish

the blue of the sea from the deep cavities under his brow; how could I comfort him when he knew as well as I that it might not rain for a week and that we'd be dead by then. I said, "Fresh turtle for tea, we can suck something out of that." We could live on turtles, maybe.

We took no water that evening, only a little for the twins. We talked of the dishes we'd like to eat in the gathering twilight and I chose fresh fruit salad and ice cream; Lyn, a tin of apricots; Robin, strawberries and ice cream with milk; Douglas, the same as me; Neil, chocolate chip ice cream; Sandy, fresh fruit, ice cream, and milk—gallons of ice-cool milk. Later that night as I took the watch over from Douglas, he described in detail the dish he had dreamed up during his watch. "You take a honeydew melon," he said. "Cut the top off and take out the seeds; that's the dish. Chill it and drop a knob of ice cream in, then pile in strawberries, raspberries, pieces of apple, pear, orange, peach, and grapefruit, the sweet sort, then cherries and grapes, until the melon is full; pour a lemon syrup over it and decorate it with chips of chocolate and nuts. Then," he said with a dreamy expression on his face, "you eat it!" "I'll have one too," I said, taking the bailer from his boil-covered hand. I looked at the sky; to the northeast a faint film of cirrostratus cloud dimmed the stars; "You know, I think it might rain by morning." I could feel him relax in the darkness; his voice came slowly, "I'll be all right if it doesn't, Dad." he said.

I started to bail mechanically. We would have to abandon the raft, soon, I thought, and that meant ditching all the unnecessary stuff over-board; in the dinghy there was only room for food, water, flares, and us. We'd start to sort things out in the morning.

Fifteenth Day

I watched the cloud develop slowly and drift across the night sky, blotting out the stars one by one. Was it another occluded front²⁷? I watched the fish surge out from under the raft, touched one as I tried to grab it; then, the memory of the shark strong in my mind, drew back. I bailed and blew until Lyn took over; I pointed to the thickening cloud: "Maybe we'll get something to drink out of that."

It rained at dawn, beautiful, gorgeous rain. We saved three and a half gallons and drank our fill besides;

²⁷ Occluded front: shift in air masses that can result in rain or snow.

the wind, from the south, freshened a little and as the weather cleared we lay back and enjoyed the sensation of being without thirst, bailing and blowing unheeded for the moment. We talked of the ship that didn't see us, for that had happened after the last rain, and argued whether it would have seen us better if it had been night time. The twins were talking when Douglas, on watch, his voice desperate with dismay, called, "Dad, the dinghy's gone!" I was across the raft in an instant. I looked at the broken end of wire trailing in the water, the broken line beside it. The dinghy was sixty yards away, sailing still and our lives were sailing away with it. I was the fastest swimmer, no time for goodbyes, to the devil with sharks; the thoughts ran through my head as I was diving through the door, my arms flailing into a racing crawl even as I hit the water. I heard Lyn cry out but there was no time for talk. Could I swim faster than the dinghy could sail, that was the point. I glanced at it as I lifted my head to breathe, the sail had collapsed as the dinghy yawed, I moved my arms faster, kicked harder, would the sharks let me, that was another point. My belly crawled as I thought of the sharks, my arms moved faster still; I glanced again, only thirty yards to go but she was sailing again, I felt no fatigue, no cramped muscles, my body felt like a machine as I thrashed my way through the sea only one thought now in mind, the dinghy or us. Then I was there; with a quick heave I flipped over the stern of the dinghy to safety, reached up and tore down the sail before my knees buckled and I lay across the thwart trembling and gasping for breath, my heart pounding like a hammer. I lifted my arm and waved to the raft, now two hundred yards away, then slowly I untied the pad-dle from the sail and paddled back to the raft; it took nearly half an hour. The long shapes of two sharks circled curiously twenty feet down; they must have had breakfast. . .

Sixteenth Day

The rain continued all night long, and as we bailed the warm sea water out of the raft we were glad not to be spending this night in the dinghy at least. I went over to the dinghy twice in the night to bail out, for the rain was filling her quite quickly, and I shivered at the low temperature of the rain water. The raft canopy offered grateful warmth when I returned, and the puddles of salt water in the bottom of the raft seemed less hostile after the chill of the dinghy. We all huddled together on top of the flotation chambers, our legs and bottoms in the water, and although we did not sleep, we rested, for the work of blowing and bailing now

went on around the clock, the bailer passing back and forth between the two compartments. Our sores stung as we knocked them against the raft and each other, our eyes were suppurating²⁸, our limbs permanently wrinkled and lumpy with boils. My backside was badly blistered from sunburn acquired on my turtle-dressing expeditions, which made it necessary for me to lie on my stomach all the time, a painful piece of carelessness.

The rain continued to beat on the calm sea till midmorning, when after a few desultory bursts of sunshine, the weather closed in again and it drizzled for the rest of the day. I had decided to postpone the evacuation of the raft until the weather improved a little and I detected a feeling of relief among the others. (It wasn't until much later that I learned that my propaganda about trim had been so effective that they were frightened to go into the dinghy at all!) We had enough problems without adding cold to them so we ate our dried turtle and fish, drinking plenty of water with it and feeling much better for it.

We had made no progress in the windless weather so I entered our noon position the same as the day before and during the afternoon we talked at length about what we should have to do when the time came to get into the dinghy, which pieces of the raft we would cut out and which pieces of essential equipment we would take, and where they would be stowed. As evening closed in the drizzle eased a little and the air became much warmer. We bailed and blew in the darkness until Douglas suddenly said, "Quiet!" We listened, holding our breath. "Engines," he whispered. I could hear the faint beat of what might have been a propeller blade; it grew louder. I climbed into the dinghy with a torch²⁹ but could neither see nor hear anything from there. I flashed SOS around the horizon in all directions for a couple of minutes but there was no answering light, and after a further round of flashes returned to the raft. We speculated on the possibility of its being a submarine bound for the atomic testing grounds at Tahiti where a test was shortly to take place, and then took it a little further and wondered what spy submarine would pick up survivors and if it did, what then?

The twins talked quietly in a corner about the sort of cat they were going to have when we returned to England, where they could keep it and what they would feed it on, and how they would house train it. Neil loved

furry animals and could talk for hours on the subject. Douglas was back on roast rabbit and Robin was in rhapsodies over oatmeal porridge and milk. Lyn and I thanked our destinies for water; it was so good!

That night will live in our memories as one of utter misery. Our mouths were raw with the rough surface of the bellows tube; our lungs and cheeks ached with the effort of keeping the raft inflated. Because of the sea water on the floor of the raft we tried to lie with our bodies on top of the flotation chambers, and because we lay on the flotation chambers we squeezed the air out of them more quickly. Lyn was terrified in case one of the twins should fall asleep face downward in the after compartment and drown, for we now bailed only in the forward section, and even then we could not bail quickly enough to keep it dry; the after section was flooded to a depth of three inches. I estimated that we could probably keep the raft afloat for a few days more, but the effort involved was depriving us of all bodily stamina; our limbs, almost hourly, suffered extensions of boil-infested areas, and we were pouring our lives away in this struggle to keep afloat. Our evacuation to the dinghy had to come, and soon. Death in the dinghy would come as a result of an error of judgment, a capsizing perhaps, or through being swamped in heavy weather; either of these in my estimate was preferable to the deterioration of our physical and mental state, through sheer exhaustion, into sub-mission and death...

The next day, the family is forced to move into the dinghy. They sing and tell stories to keep up their spirits. But even so, arguments and flare-ups of temper reveal the strain they are under. Once, they come close to death as they battle a fierce twelve-hour thunder and lightning storm. How-ever, after surviving thirty-seven days at sea, they feel that they will be able to survive until they reach land—which the narrator estimates is fifteen days away.

Thirty-Eighth Day

Lyn bathed the twins that afternoon and after their daily exercises and a half-hour apiece on the center thwart to move around a bit, they retreated under the canopy again as a heavy shower threat-ened. The dorado, caught in the morning, now hung in wet strips from the forestay while the drying turtle meat festooned the stays and cross lines which had been rigged to carry the extra load of meat from two turtles. We worked a little on the thole pins, binding canvas on them to save wear on the rope, then realizing that

²⁸ Discharging pus

²⁹ Here, a flashlight

we were neglecting the most important job of making a flotation piece, took the unused piece of sleeve and started to bind one end with fishing line. The clouds grew thicker as the afternoon advanced; it was going to be a wet night again and perhaps we would be able to fill the water sleeve. Seven gallons of water seemed like wealth beyond measure in our altered sense of values.

I chopped up some dried turtle meat for tea, and Lyn put it with a little wet fish to soak in meat juice. She spread the dry sheets for the twins under the canopy, then prepared their "little supper" as we started to talk of Dougal's Kitchen and if it should have a wine license. As we pondered the delights of Gaelic coffee, my eye, looking past the sail, caught sight of something that wasn't sea. I stopped talking and started; the others all looked at me. "A ship," I said. "There's a ship and it's coming toward us!" I could hardly believe it but it seemed solid enough. "Keep still now!" In the sudden surge of excitement, everyone wanted to see. "Trim her! We mustn't capsize now!" All sank back to their places.

I felt my voice tremble as I told them that I was going to stand on the thwart and hold a flare above the sail. They trimmed the dinghy as I stood on the thwart. "Right, hand me a flare, and remember what happened with the last ship we saw!" They suddenly fell silent in memory of that terrible despondency when our signals had been unnoticed. "O God!" prayed Lyn, "please let them see us." I could see the ship quite clearly now, a Japanese tuna fisher. Her gray and white paint stood out clearly against the dark cross swell. "Like a great white bird," Lyn said to the twins, and she would pass within about a mile of us at her nearest approach. I relayed the information as they listened excitedly, the tension of not knowing, or imminent rescue, building like a tangible, touchable, unbearable unreality around me. My eye caught the outlines of two sharks, a hundred yards to star-board. "Watch the trim," I warned. "We have two man-eating sharks waiting if we capsize!" Then, "I'm going to light the flare now, have the torch ready in case it doesn't work."

I ripped the caps off, pulled out the striker and struck the primer. The flare smoked then sparked into life, the red glare illuminating Ednamair and the sea around us in the twilight. I could feel my index finger roasting under the heat of the flare and waved it to and fro to escape the searing heat radiating outward in the calm air; then unable to bear the heat any longer, I dropped my arm, nearly scorching Lyn's face, and threw the flare high in the air. It

curved in a brilliant arc and dropped into the sea. "Hand me another, I think she's altered course!" My voice was hoarse with pain and excitement and I felt sick with apprehension that it might only be the ship cork-screwing in the swell, for she had made no signal that she had seen us. The second flare didn't work. I cursed it in frustrated anguish as the priming substance chipped off instead of lighting. "The torch!" I shouted, but it wasn't needed, she had seen us, and was coming toward us.

I flopped down on the thwart. "Our ordeal is over," I said quietly. Lyn and the twins were crying with happiness; Douglas with tears of joy in his eyes, hugged his mother. Robin laughed and cried at the same time, slapped me on the back and shouted "Wonderful! We've done it. Oh! Wonderful!" I put my arms about Lyn feeling the tears stinging my own eyes: "We'll get these boys to land after all." As we shared our happiness and watched the fishing boat close with us, death could have taken me quite easily just then, for I knew that I would never experience another such pinnacle of contentment.

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. When the Robertsons' ship sinks, they are left with a limited supply of food and other bare necessities for survival. List the items they are able to salvage from their sinking boat.
3. What does the family eat and drink to stay alive for thirty-eight days?
4. The inflatable raft is leaking, yet the family is reluctant to abandon it until the last possible moment. Why don't they want to transfer to the dinghy?
5. One way the family members keep up their spirits is by thinking and talking about some of the pleasures they will enjoy when they are back on land. What are some of these pleasures?
6. Describe how, on the thirty-eighth day of their ordeal, the family is rescued.
7. The main conflict, or struggle, in this story is the most basic conflict of all—between people and nature. Explain what animals and natural forces present dangers. Describe the physical needs and discomforts that also threaten the Robertsons.
8. Even though the odds are against them, the family wins its struggle at sea. Their survival is partly due to Mr. Robertson's exceptional personal qualities.

For example, his comments to his son and his wife just after the shipwreck show cheerfulness in the face of disaster. Describe some other personal qualities Mr. Robertson displays during the struggle.

Literary Focus: Description

Description is the type of writing that creates a clear picture of something--a person, animal, object, or place, for example. All works of literature, both fiction and nonfiction, contain description.

Good descriptive writing should create a strong **overall impression** of the subject. This overall impression is made up of many concrete **details**: specific images, pictures, colors, shapes, sounds, sometimes smells, tastes, textures, and even emotions.

Question: Is this selection an example of descriptive writing? Does it create an overall impression of its subject? Identify three concrete details that help describe its subject.

Is Marijuana as Safe as We Think?

by Malcolm Gladwell

Cannabis, also known as marijuana or pot among other names, is a psychoactive drug from the Cannabis plant. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the main psychoactive component of cannabis, which is one of the 483 known compounds in the plant. Cannabis has various mental and physical effects, which include euphoria, altered states of mind and sense of time, difficulty concentrating, impaired short-term memory and body movement, relaxation, and an increase in appetite. The effects last for two to six hours, depending on the amount used. Although it remains illegal at the federal level, there have been many recent attempts to legalize it for recreational purposes based on the supposition that it is largely safe for consumption. This assumption, however, continues to come under scientific scrutiny as explained in the following article from The New Yorker magazine. (First published 2019)

A few years ago, the National Academy of Medicine convened a panel of sixteen leading medical experts to analyze the scientific literature on cannabis. The report they prepared, which came out in January of 2017, runs to four hundred and sixty-eight pages. It contains no bombshells or surprises, which perhaps explains why it went largely unnoticed. It simply stated, over and over again, that a drug North Americans have become enthusiastic about remains a mystery.

For example, smoking pot is widely supposed to diminish the nausea associated with chemotherapy. But, the panel pointed out, “there are no good-quality randomized trials investigating this option.” We have evidence for marijuana as a treatment for pain, but “very little is known about the efficacy, dose, routes of administration, or side effects of commonly used and commercially available cannabis products in the United States.” The caveats³⁰ continue. Is it good for epilepsy? “Insufficient evidence.” Tourette’s syndrome³¹? Limited evidence. A.L.S., Huntington’s, and Parkinson’s³²? Insufficient evidence.

³⁰ warnings

³¹ a disorder that involves repetitive movements or unwanted sounds (tics) that can’t be easily controlled.

³² these are neurodegenerative diseases--incurable and debilitating conditions that result in progressive degeneration and/or death of nerve cells, which can cause problems with movement or mental functioning

Irritable-bowel syndrome? Insufficient evidence. Dementia and glaucoma? Probably not. Depression? Probably not.

Then come Chapters 5 through 13, the heart of the report, which concern marijuana’s potential risks. The haze of uncertainty continues. Does the use of cannabis increase the likelihood of fatal car accidents? Yes. By how much? Unclear. Does it affect motivation and cognition? Hard to say, but probably. Does it affect employment prospects? Probably. Will it impair academic achievement? Limited evidence. This goes on for pages.

We need proper studies, the panel concluded, on the health effects of cannabis on children and teen-agers and pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers and “older populations” and “heavy cannabis users.” The panel also called for investigation into “the pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic properties of cannabis, modes of delivery, different concentrations, in various populations, including the dose-response relationships of cannabis and THC or other cannabinoids.”

Figuring out the “dose-response relationship” of a new compound is something a pharmaceutical company does from the start of trials in human subjects, as it prepares a new drug application for the F.D.A. Too little of a powerful drug means that it won’t work. Too much means that it might do more harm than good. The amount of active ingredient in a pill and the metabolic path that the ingredient takes after it enters your body—these are things that drugmakers will have painstakingly mapped out before the product comes on the market, with a tractor-trailer full of supporting documentation.

With marijuana, apparently, we’re still waiting for this information. It’s hard to study a substance that until very recently has been almost universally illegal. And the few studies we do have were done mostly in the nineteen-eighties and nineties, when cannabis was not nearly as potent as it is now. Because of recent developments in plant breeding and growing techniques, the typical concentration of THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, has gone from the low single digits to more than twenty percent.

Are users smoking less, to compensate for the drug’s new potency? Or simply getting more stoned, more quickly? Is high-potency cannabis more of a problem for younger users or for older ones? For some drugs, the dose-response curve is linear: twice the dose creates twice the effect. For other drugs, it’s nonlinear: twice the dose can increase the effect tenfold, or hardly at all. Which is

true for cannabis? It also matters, of course, how cannabis is consumed. It can be smoked, vaped, eaten, or applied to the skin. How are absorption patterns affected?

Last May, not long before Canada legalized the recreational use of marijuana, Beau Kilmer, a drug-policy expert with the RAND Corporation, testified before the Canadian Parliament. He warned that the fastest-growing segment of the legal market in Washington State was extracts for inhalation, and that the mean THC concentration for those products was more than sixty-five per cent. “We know little about the health consequences—risks and benefits—of many of the cannabis products likely to be sold in nonmedical markets,” he said. Nor did we know how higher-potency products would affect THC consumption.

When it comes to cannabis, the best-case scenario is that we will muddle through, learning more about its true effects as we go along and adapting as needed—the way, say, the once extraordinarily lethal innovation of the automobile has been gradually tamed in the course of its history. For those curious about the worst-case scenario, Alex Berenson has written a short manifesto, “Tell Your Children: The Truth About Marijuana, Mental Illness, and Violence.”

Berenson begins his book with an account of a conversation he had with his wife, a psychiatrist who specializes in treating mentally ill criminals. They were discussing one of the many grim cases that cross her desk—“the usual horror story, somebody who’d cut up his grandmother or set fire to his apartment.” Then his wife said something like, “Of course, he was high, been smoking pot his whole life.”

Of course? I said.

Yeah, they all smoke.

Well . . . other things too, right?

Sometimes. But they all smoke.

Berenson used to be an investigative reporter for the *New York Times*, where he covered, among other things, health care and the pharmaceutical industry. Then he left the paper to write a popular series of thrillers. At the time of his conversation with his wife, he had the typical layman’s³³ view of cannabis, which is that it is largely benign³⁴. His wife’s remark alarmed him, and he set out to educate himself. Berenson is constrained by the same

problem the National Academy of Medicine faced—that, when it comes to marijuana, we really don’t know very much. But he has a reporter’s tenacity³⁵, a novelist’s imagination, and an outsider’s knack for asking intemperate³⁶ questions. The result is disturbing.

The first of Berenson’s questions concerns what has long been the most worrisome point about cannabis: its association with mental illness. Many people with serious psychiatric illness smoke lots of pot. The marijuana lobby typically responds to this fact by saying that pot-smoking is a response to mental illness, not the cause of it—that people with psychiatric issues use marijuana to self-medicate. That is only partly true. In some cases, heavy cannabis use does seem to cause mental illness. As the National Academy panel declared, in one of its few unequivocal conclusions, “Cannabis use is likely to increase the risk of developing schizophrenia³⁷ and other psychoses³⁸; the higher the use, the greater the risk.”

Berenson thinks that we are far too sanguine³⁹ about this link. He wonders how large the risk is, and what might be behind it. In one of the most fascinating sections of “Tell Your Children,” he sits down with Erik Messamore, a psychiatrist who specializes in neuropharmacology⁴⁰ and in the treatment of schizophrenia. Messamore reports that, following the recent rise in marijuana use in the U.S. (it has almost doubled in the past two decades, not necessarily as the result of legal reforms), he has begun to see a new kind of patient: older, and not from the marginalized communities that his patients usually come from. These are otherwise stable middle-class professionals. Berenson writes, “A surprising number of them seemed to have used only cannabis and no other drugs before their breaks. The disease they’d developed looked like schizophrenia, but it had developed later—and their prognosis seemed to be

³⁵ persistence

³⁶ here, difficult and unwanted

³⁷ a serious mental disorder in which people interpret reality abnormally. Schizophrenia may result in some combination of hallucinations, delusions, and extremely disordered thinking and behavior that impairs daily functioning, and can be disabling.

³⁸ conditions that affect the way your brain processes information. They cause you to lose touch with reality.

³⁹ optimistic

⁴⁰ the study of how drugs affect the nervous system

³³ ordinary person’s; non-expert’s

³⁴ harmless

worse. Their delusions and paranoia hardly responded to antipsychotics⁴¹.”

Messamore theorizes that THC may interfere with the brain’s anti-inflammatory mechanisms, resulting in damage to nerve cells and blood vessels. Is this the reason, Berenson wonders, for the rising incidence of schizophrenia in the developed world, where cannabis use has also increased? In the northern parts of Finland, incidence of the disease has nearly doubled since 1993. In Denmark, cases have risen twenty-five per cent since 2000. In the United States, hospital emergency rooms have seen a fifty-percent increase in schizophrenia admissions since 2006. If you include cases where schizophrenia was a secondary diagnosis, annual admissions in the past decade have increased from 1.26 million to 2.1 million.

Berenson’s second question derives from the first. The delusions and paranoia that often accompany psychoses can sometimes trigger violent behavior. If cannabis is implicated in a rise in psychoses, should we expect the increased use of marijuana to be accompanied by a rise in violent crime, as Berenson’s wife suggested? Once again, there is no definitive answer, so Berenson has collected bits and pieces of evidence. For example, in a 2013 paper in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, researchers looked at the results of a survey of more than twelve thousand American high-school students. The authors assumed that alcohol use among students would be a predictor of violent behavior, and that marijuana use would predict the opposite. In fact, those who used only marijuana were three times more likely to be physically aggressive than abstainers were; those who used only alcohol were 2.7 times more likely to be aggressive. Observational studies like these don’t establish causation. But they invite the sort of research that could.

Berenson looks, too, at the early results from the state of Washington, which, in 2014, became the first U.S. jurisdiction to legalize recreational marijuana. Between 2013 and 2017, the state’s aggravated-assault rate rose seventeen per cent, which was nearly twice the increase seen nationwide, and the murder rate rose forty-four per cent, which was more than twice the increase nationwide. We don’t know that an increase in cannabis use was responsible for that surge in violence. Berenson, though, finds it strange that, at a time when Washington may have exposed its population to higher levels of what is widely

assumed to be a calming substance, its citizens began turning on one another with increased aggression.

His third question is whether cannabis serves as a gateway drug. There are two possibilities. The first is that marijuana activates certain behavioral and neurological pathways that ease the onset of more serious addictions. The second possibility is that marijuana offers a safer alternative to other drugs: that if you start smoking pot to deal with chronic pain you never graduate to opioids⁴².

Which is it? This is a very hard question to answer. We’re only a decade or so into the widespread recreational use of high-potency marijuana. Maybe cannabis opens the door to other drugs, but only after prolonged use. Or maybe the low-potency marijuana of years past wasn’t a gateway, but today’s high-potency marijuana is. Methodologically, Berenson points out, the issue is complicated by the fact that the first wave of marijuana legalization took place on the West Coast, while the first serious wave of opioid addiction took place in the middle of the country. So, if all you do is eyeball the numbers, it looks as if opioid overdoses are lowest in cannabis states and highest in non-cannabis states.

Not surprisingly, the data we have are messy. Berenson, in his role as devil’s advocate, emphasizes the research that sees cannabis as opening the door to opioid use. For example, two studies of identical twins—in the Netherlands and in Australia—show that, in cases where one twin used cannabis before the age of seventeen and the other didn’t, the cannabis user was several times more likely to develop an addiction to opioids. Berenson also enlists a statistician at N.Y.U. to help him sort through state-level overdose data, and what he finds is not encouraging: “States where more people used cannabis tended to have more overdoses.”

The National Academy panel is more judicious. Its conclusion is that we simply don’t know enough, because there haven’t been any “systematic” studies. But the panel’s uncertainty is scarcely more reassuring than Berenson’s alarmism. Seventy-two thousand Americans died in 2017 of drug overdoses. Should you embark on a pro-cannabis crusade without knowing whether it will add to or subtract from that number?

⁴² Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, morphine, and many others.

⁴¹ medicines that help people deal with psychoses

Drug policy is always clearest at the fringes. Illegal opioids are at one end. They are dangerous. Manufacturers and distributors belong in prison, and users belong in drug-treatment programs. The cannabis industry would have us believe that its product, like coffee, belongs at the other end of the continuum. “Flow Kana partners with independent multi-generational farmers who cultivate under full sun, sustainably, and in small batches,” the promotional literature for one California cannabis brand reads. “Using only organic methods, these stewards of the land have spent their lives balancing a unique and harmonious relationship between the farm, the genetics and the environment.” But cannabis is not coffee. The experience of many users is relatively benign and predictable; the experience of a few, at the margins, is not. Products or behaviors that have that kind of muddled risk profile are confusing, because it is very difficult for those in the middle to appreciate the experiences of those at the statistical tails. Low-frequency risks also take longer and are far harder to quantify, and the lesson of “Tell Your Children” and the National Academy report is that we aren’t yet in a position to do so. For the moment, cannabis probably belongs in the category of substances that society permits but simultaneously discourages. Cigarettes are heavily taxed, and smoking is prohibited in most workplaces and public spaces. Alcohol can’t be sold without a license and is kept out of the hands of children. Prescription drugs have rules about dosages, labels that describe their risks, and policies that govern their availability. “Start low and go slow” is probably good advice for society as a whole, at least until we better understand what we are dealing with.

Late last year, the commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, Scott Gottlieb, announced a federal crackdown on e-cigarettes. He had seen the data on soaring use among teen-agers, and, he said, “it shocked my conscience.” He announced that the F.D.A. would ban many kinds of flavored e-cigarettes, which are especially popular with teens, and would restrict the retail outlets where e-cigarettes were available.

In the dozen years since e-cigarettes were introduced into the marketplace, they have attracted an enormous amount of attention. There are scores of studies and papers on the subject in the medical and legal literature, grappling with the questions raised by the new technology. Vaping is clearly popular among kids. Is it a gateway to traditional tobacco use? Some public-health

experts worry that we’re grooming a younger generation for a lifetime of dangerous addiction. Yet other people see e-cigarettes as a much safer alternative for adult smokers looking to satisfy their nicotine addiction. That’s the British perspective. Last year, a Parliamentary committee recommended cutting taxes on e-cigarettes and allowing vaping in areas where it had previously been banned. Since e-cigarettes are as much as ninety-five per cent less harmful than regular cigarettes, the committee argued, why not promote them? Gottlieb said that he was splitting the difference between the two positions—giving adults “opportunities to transition to non-combustible products,” while upholding the F.D.A.’s “solemn mandate to make nicotine products less accessible and less appealing to children.” He was immediately criticized.

“Somehow, we have completely lost all sense of public-health perspective,” Michael Siegel, a public-health researcher at Boston University, wrote after the F.D.A. announcement:

Every argument that the F.D.A. is making in justifying a ban on the sale of electronic cigarettes in convenience stores and gas stations applies even more strongly for real tobacco cigarettes: you know, the ones that kill hundreds of thousands of Americans each year. Something is terribly wrong with our sense of perspective when we take the e-cigarettes off the shelf but allow the old-fashioned ones to remain.

Among members of the public-health community, it is impossible to spend five minutes on the e-cigarette question without getting into an argument. And this is nicotine they are arguing about, a drug that has been exhaustively studied by generations of scientists. We don’t worry that e-cigarettes increase the number of fatal car accidents, diminish motivation and cognition, or impair academic achievement. The drugs through the gateway that we worry about with e-cigarettes are Marlboros, not opioids. There are no enormous scientific question marks over nicotine’s dosing and bio-availability. Yet we still proceed cautiously and carefully with nicotine, because it is a powerful drug, and when powerful drugs are consumed by lots of people in new and untested ways we have an obligation to try to figure out what will happen.

A week after Gottlieb announced his crackdown on e-cigarettes, on the ground that they are too enticing to children, Siegel visited the first recreational-marijuana facility in Massachusetts. Here is what he found on the

menu, each offering laced with large amounts of a drug, THC, that no one knows much about:

Strawberry-flavored chewy bites
 Large, citrus gummy bears
 Delectable Belgian dark chocolate bars
 Assorted fruit-flavored chews
 Assorted fruit-flavored cubes
 Raspberry flavored confection
 Raspberry flavored lozenges
 Chewy, cocoa caramel bite-sized treats
 Raspberry & watermelon flavored lozenges
 Chocolate-chip brownies.

He concludes, “This is public health in 2018?”

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. What is the “dose-response” relationship?
3. Identify three specific questions about cannabis that we still don’t have conclusive answers for.
4. Who is Alex Berenson? What caused him to start investigating the effects of cannabis on humans?
5. What conclusions did Berenson draw about marijuana use based on his studies?
6. What did the 2013 study from the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* show?
7. What might be inferred from studying assault rates in Washington from 2013-2017? Why?
8. What can be learned from studies of twins in Australia and the Netherlands?
9. What point is being made in the discussion of e-cigarettes and nicotine use?
10. What is the significance of Siegel’s question at the end of the article?

Literary Focus: Persuasion

Persuasion attempts to convince people to accept an opinion or to take action of some kind. Persuasion is used in such different types of expression as editorials, advertisements, and speeches.

Persuasive writers should appeal to the intellects of their audience by presenting **evidence**, **examples**, and **logical arguments** in favor of their opinions. In addition, a persuasive work should present arguments that are logically connected in a clear, simple structure that readers can easily follow.

Persuasion can also try to convince its readers by touching the audience’s emotions. Effective writers understand that if their readers can be moved to feel compassion, pride, anger, or determination, then they are also more likely to agree with the speaker’s opinions.

Question: What did the writer intend for readers to think, do, or believe in response to the article? What techniques did the writer use to try to persuade his audience?

Literary Focus: Ethos, Logos, Pathos

For speakers and writers to be persuasive, they must be both tactical and tactful. They have to find the method that works for their specific audience.

Aristotle argued that there are three primary ways to make a persuasive appeal. He called these logos, ethos, and pathos. These three rhetorical appeals are at the heart of communication.

Ethos is the **appeal to the authority and reputation of the speaker or writer**. Let’s say you want to know more about what it’s like to be a female CEO in corporate America. Would you more likely trust a man or woman to tell you? Or let’s say you want to read a compelling argument against the death penalty. Would you read an essay written by a murderer on death row?

We want an author or speaker to have credibility. One way writers establish their ethos is to draw attention directly to their credentials. Their book might have a bio on the dustjacket. They might also describe your experience in relation to the subject matter, by saying something like, “Having been forced to wear a school uniform myself, I can tell you ...”

A more subtle way writers can establish ethos is to let their writing style draw a portrait of their personality and character. Their writing style can make them seem fair-minded, thoughtful—cool even. It can also make them seem arrogant, selfish, or obsessive. A persuasive writer must inspire trust.

Pathos is the **appeal to the emotions and feelings**. Anytime writing has an emotional impact, we are dealing with pathos. Consider the following two statements:

“I think we need to provide more mental health instruction.”

“I lost my daughter to suicide.”

Which statement pulls at your heartstrings? The second one of course.

Writers can appeal to people's emotions in many ways. They can make readers cry, they can make jokes, and they can show outrage. Even the most seemingly objective writing styles will contain some element of pathos. A science textbook, for instance, may instill feelings of awe and amazement at the beauty and complexity of the universe.

Logos is the **appeal to logic**. Anytime a writer builds a case by presenting logical reasons (for example, by showing cause and effect, showcasing scientific studies, drawing reasonable conclusions from data, etc.), he or she is using logos.

Here are two examples of logos in action:

"The rise in violent crime that lasted from the 1960s to the 1990s can be explained by higher levels of lead in the atmosphere. Since leaded gasoline has been phased out, crime levels have plummeted."

"Cats should not be allowed to roam the neighborhood. A study conducted in Lemmington, Michigan, showed that when cats were kept on a leash or indoors, the songbird population rose by 23%."

Not every attempt at logic will persuade. Sometimes the writer may be guilty of a logical fallacy. In other cases, the logic may be sound, but the reader may not trust the source (ethos) or may find the reasoning cold and heartless (a lack of pathos).

It's always best to think of all three rhetorical appeals as different pieces of the puzzle. When they are present in such a way that they appeal to readers and listeners, the effect is a powerful, persuasive, and convincing argument.

Question: Rank each technique (ethos, pathos, logos) according to how effectively it was used in the selection.

Introspection

by David McRaney

Most people labor under the misconception that they know why they like the things they like and feel the way they feel. As David McRaney explains in the following essay, however, the truth is that the origin of certain emotional states is unavailable to us, and when pressed to explain them, people tend to just make something up. As you read, see if you agree with McRaney's conclusions. (First published 2011)

Imagine a painting the world considers beautiful, something like *Starry Night* by Van Gogh. Now imagine you have to write an essay on why it is popular. Go ahead, think of a reasonable explanation. No, don't keep reading. Give it a shot. Explain why Van Gogh's work is great.

Is there a certain song you love, or a photograph? Perhaps there is a movie you keep returning to over the years, or a book. Go ahead and imagine one of those favorite things. Now, in one sentence, try to explain why you like it. Chances are, you will find it difficult to put into words, but if pressed you will probably be able to come up with something.

The problem is, according to research, your explanation is probably going to be total bunk. Tim Wilson at the University of Virginia demonstrated this in 1990 with the Poster Test. He brought a group of students into a room and showed them a series of posters. The students were told they could take any one they wanted as a gift and keep it. He then brought in another group and told them the same thing, but this time they had to explain why they wanted the poster they each picked. Wilson then waited six months and asked the two groups what they thought of their choices. The first group, the ones who just got to grab a poster and leave, all loved their choice. The second group, the ones who had to write out why they were choosing one over the others, hated theirs. The first group, the grab-and-go people, usually picked a nice, fancy painting. The second group, the ones who had to explain their choice, usually picked an inspirational poster with a cat clinging to a rope.

According to Wilson, when you are faced with a decision in which you are forced to think about your rationale, you start to turn the volume in your emotional brain down and the volume in your logical brain up. You start creating a mental list of pros and cons that would

never have been conjured up if you had gone with your gut. As Wilson noted in his research, "Forming preferences is akin to riding a bicycle; we can do it easily but cannot easily explain how."

Before Wilson's work, the general consensus was to see careful deliberation as good, but he showed how the act of introspection⁴³ can sometimes lead you to make decisions that look good on virtual paper but leave you emotionally lacking. Wilson knew previous research at Kent State had shown that ruminations⁴⁴ about your own depression tend to make you more depressed, but distraction leads to an improved mood. Sometimes, introspection is simply counter productive. Research into introspection calls into question the entire industry of critical analysis of art, video games, music, film, poetry, literature — all of it. It also makes things like focus groups and market analysis seem less about the intrinsic⁴⁵ quality of the things being judged and more about what the people judging find to be plausible explanations of their own. When you ask people why they do or do not like things, they then translate something from a deep, emotional, primal part of their psyche⁴⁶ into the language of the higher, logical, rational world of words and sentences and paragraphs. The problem here is those deeper recesses of the mind are perhaps inaccessible and unconscious. The things that are available to consciousness might not have much to do with your preferences. Later, when you attempt to justify your decisions or emotional attachments, you start worrying about what your explanation says about you as a person, further tainting the validity of your inner narrative.

In the Poster Test, most people truly preferred the nice painting to the inspirational cat, but they couldn't conjure up a rational explanation of why, at least not in a way that would make logical sense on paper. On the other hand, you can write all sorts of blabber about a motivational poster. It has a stated and tangible⁴⁷ purpose.

Wilson conducted another experiment in which people were shown two small photos of two different people and were asked which one was more attractive. They were then handed what they were told was a larger

⁴³ the examination or observation of one's own mental and emotional processes

⁴⁴ ponderings

⁴⁵ belonging naturally to

⁴⁶ the human soul, mind, or spirit

⁴⁷ perceptible

version of the photo they'd picked, but it was actually a picture of a completely different person. They were then asked why they'd chosen it. Each time, the person dutifully spun a yarn explaining his or her choice. The person had never seen the photo before, but that didn't make the task of explaining why he or she had preferred it in an imaginary past any more difficult.

Another of Wilson's experiments had subjects rate the quality of jam. He placed before them five varieties of jam which had previously been ranked by *Consumer Reports* as the first, eleventh, twenty-fourth, thirty-second, and forty-fourth best jams on the market. One group tasted and ranked how good they thought the jams were. The other group had to write out what they did and did not like about each one as they tasted it. As with the posters, the people who didn't have to explain themselves gravitated toward the same ones *Consumer Reports* said were best. The people forced to introspect rated the jams inconsistently and had varying preferences based on their explanations. Taste is difficult to quantify and put into words, so the explainers focused on other aspects like texture or color or viscosity⁴⁸. None of which in the end made much difference to the non-explainers.

Believing you understand your motivations and desires, your likes and dislikes, is called the introspection illusion. You believe you know yourself and why you are the way you are. You believe this knowledge tells you how you will act in all future situations. Research shows otherwise. Time after time, experiments show introspection is not the act of tapping into your innermost mental constructs but is instead a fabrication. You look at what you did, or how you felt, and you make up some sort of explanation that you can reasonably believe. If you have to tell others, you make up an explanation they can believe too. When it comes to explaining why you like the things you like, you are not so smart, and the very act of having to explain yourself can change your attitudes.

In this new era of Twitter and Facebook and blogs, just about everyone is broadcasting his or her love or hate of art. Just look at all the vitriol⁴⁹ and praise being lobbed back and forth over movies like *Avatar*. When *Titanic* earned its Oscars, some people were saying it might just be the greatest film ever made. Now it's considered good but

schmaltzy, a well-made film but decidedly melodramatic. What will people think in a hundred years?

It would be wise to remember that many of the works we now consider classics were in their time critically panned. For instance, this is how one reviewer described *Moby Dick* in 1851:

This is an ill-compounded mixture of romance and matter-of-fact. The idea of a connected and collected story has obviously visited and abandoned its writer again and again in the course of composition. The style of his tale is in places disfigured by mad (rather than bad) English; and its catastrophe is hastily, weakly, and obscurely managed. We have little more to say in reprobation or in recommendation of this absurd book. Mr. Melville has to thank himself only if his horrors and his heroics are hung aside by the general reader, as so much trash belonging to the worst school of Bedlam literature—since he seems not so much unable to learn as disdainful of learning the craft of an artist.

--HENRY F. CHORLEY, in *London Athenaeum*

This book is now considered one of a handful of great American novels and is held up as an example of the best pieces of literature ever written. Chances are, though, no one can truly explain why.

Study Questions

1. What is the essay's main idea?
2. Explain the Poster Test. What did it show?
3. How does introspection affect depression, according to the writer?
4. How does the writer explain people's selections in the Poster Test?
5. Explain Wilson's experiment of the two photographs.
6. Explain the experiment of the jams. What do the results show?
7. What is the "introspection illusion"?
8. How does Chorley's critique of *Moby-Dick* help demonstrate the writer's purpose?

Literary Focus: Exposition

Exposition (or **expository writing**) is the type of writing that presents facts or explains an idea. It is the

⁴⁸ a sticky or glutinous consistency

⁴⁹ cruel and bitter criticism

language of learning and understanding the world around us. If you've ever read an encyclopedia entry, a how-to article on a website, or a chapter in a textbook, then you've encountered examples of expository writing.

Question: Why is this selection an example of expository writing?

A Boy of Unusual Vision

by Alice Steinbach

Alice Steinbach was an American journalist and author who won the 1985 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing for her article in The Baltimore Sun titled “A Boy of Unusual Vision.” In the selection, Steinbach writes about Calvin Stanley, a fourth-grader at Cross Country Elementary School. He rides a bike, watches TV, plays video games and does just about everything other 10-year-old boys do. Except see. (First published 1984).

First, the eyes: They are large and blue, a light, opaque blue, the color of a robin’s egg. And if, on a sunny spring day, you look straight into these eyes—eyes that cannot look back at you—the sharp, April light turns them pale, like the thin blue of a high, cloudless sky.

Ten-year-old Calvin Stanley, the owner of these eyes and a boy who has been blind since birth, likes this description and asks to hear it twice. He listens as only he can listen, then: “Orange used to be my favorite color but now it’s blue,” he announces. Pause. The eyes flutter between the short, thick lashes, “I know there’s light blue and there’s dark blue, but what does sky-blue look like?” he wants to know. And if you watch his face as he listens to your description, you get a sense of a picture being clicked firmly into place behind the pale eyes.

He is a boy who has a lot of pictures stored in his head, retrievable images which have been fashioned for him by the people who love him—by family and friends and teachers who have painstakingly and patiently gone about creating a special world for Calvin’s inner eye to inhabit.

Picture of a rainbow: “It’s a lot of beautiful colors, one next to the other. Shaped like a bow. In the sky. Right across.”

Picture of lightning, which frightens Calvin: “My mother says lightning looks like a Christmas tree—the way it blinks on and off across the sky,” he says, offering a comforting description that would make a poet proud.

“Child,” his mother once told him, “one day I won’t be here and I won’t be around to pick you up when you fall—nobody will be around all the time to pick you up—so you have to try to be something on your own. You have to learn how to deal with this. And to do that, you have to learn how to think.”

There was never a moment when Ethel Stanley said to herself, “My son is blind and this is how I’m going to handle it.”

Calvin’s mother: “When Calvin was little, he was so inquisitive. He wanted to see everything, he wanted to touch everything. I had to show him every little thing there is. A spoon, a fork. I let him play with them. The pots, the pans. Everything. I showed him the sharp edges of the table. ‘You cannot touch this; it will hurt you.’ And I showed him what would hurt. He still bumped into it anyway, but he knew what he wasn’t supposed to do and what he could do. And he knew that nothing in his room—nothing—could hurt him.

“And when he started walking and we went out together—I guess he was about 2—I never said anything to him about what to do. When we got to the curbs. Calvin knew that when I stopped again, he should step up. I never said anything, that’s just the way we did it. And it became a pattern.”

Calvin remembers when he began to realize that something about him was “different”: “I just figured it out myself. I think I was about 4. I would pick things up and I couldn’t see them. Other people would say they could see things and I couldn’t.”

And his mother remembers the day her son asked her why he was blind and other people weren’t.

“He must have been about 4 or 5. I explained to him what happened, that he was born that way and that it was nobody’s fault and he didn’t have to blame himself. He asked, ‘Why me?’ And I said, ‘I don’t know why, Calvin. Maybe there’s a special plan for you in your life and there’s a reason for this. But this is the way you’re going to be and you can deal with it.’”

Then she sat her son down and told him this: “You’re seeing, Calvin. You’re just using your hands instead of your eyes. But you’re seeing. And, remember, there is nothing you can’t do.”

It’s spring vacation and Calvin is out in the alley behind his house riding his bike, a serious-looking, black and silver two-wheeler. “Stay behind me,” he shouts to his friend Kellie Bass, who’s furiously pedaling her bike down the one-block stretch of alley where Calvin is allowed to bicycle.

Now: Try to imagine riding a bike without being able to see where you’re going. Without even knowing

what an “alley” looks like. Try to imagine how you navigate a space that has no visual boundaries, that exists only in your head. And then try to imagine what Calvin is feeling as he pedals his bike in that space, whooping for joy as the air rushes past him on either side.

And although Calvin can’t see the signs of spring sprouting all around him in the neighboring backyards—the porch furniture and barbecue equipment being brought out of storage, the grass growing emerald green from April rain, the forsythia exploding yellow over the fences—still, there are signs of another sort which guide him along his route.

Past the German shepherd who always barks at him, telling Calvin that he’s three houses away from his home; then past the purple hyacinths, five gardens away, throwing out their fragrance (later it will be the scent of the lilacs which guide him); past the large diagonal crack which lifts the front wheel of his bike up and then down, telling him he’s reached his boundary and should turn back—past all these familiar signs Calvin rides his bike on a warm spring day.

Ethel Stanley: “At 6, one of his cousins got a new bike and Calvin said, ‘I want to learn how to ride a two-wheeler bike.’ So we got him one. His father let him help put it together. You know, whatever Calvin gets he’s going to go all over it with those hands and he knows every part of that bike and what it’s called. He learned to ride it the first day, but I couldn’t watch. His father stayed outside with him.”

Calvin: “I just got mad. I got tired of riding a little bike. At first I used to zig-zag, go all over. My cousin would hold on to the bike and then let me go. I fell a lot in the beginning. But a lot of people fall when they first start.”

There’s a baseball game about to start in Calvin’s backyard and Mrs. Stanley is pitching to her son. Nine-year-old Kellie, on first base, has taken off her fake fur coat so she can get a little more steam into her game and the other team member, Monet Clark, 6, is catching. It is also Monet’s job to alert Calvin, who’s at bat, when to swing. “Hit it, Calvin,” she yells. “Swing!”

He does and the sound of the ball making solid contact with the bat sends Calvin running off to first base, his hands groping in front of his body. His mother walks over to stand next to him at first base and unconsciously her hands go to his head, stroking his hair in a soft, protective movement.

“Remember,” the mother had said to her son six years earlier, “there’s nothing you can’t do.”

Calvin’s father, 37-year-old Calvin Stanley, Jr., a Baltimore city policeman, has taught his son how to ride a bike and how to shift gears in the family’s Volkswagen and how to put toys together. They go to the movies together and they tell each other they’re handsome.

The father: “You know, there’s nothing much I’ve missed with him. Because he does everything. Except see. He goes swimming out in the pool in the backyard. Some of the other kids are afraid of the water but he jumps right in, puts his head under. If it were me I wouldn’t go anywhere. If it were me I’d probably stay in this house most of the time. But he’s always ready to go, always on the telephone, ready to do something.

“But he gets sad, too: You can just look at him sometimes and tell he’s real sad.”

The son: “You know what makes me sad? Charlotte’s Web. It’s my favorite story. I listen to the record at night. I like Charlotte, the spider. The way she talks. And, you know, she really loved Wilbur, the pig. He was her best friend.” Calvin’s voice is full of warmth and wonder as he talks about E.B. White’s tale of the spider who befriended a pig and later sacrificed herself for him.

“It’s a story about friendship. It’s telling us how good friends are supposed to be. Like Charlotte and Wilbur,” he says, turning away from you suddenly to wipe his eyes. “And when Charlotte dies, it makes me real sad. I always feel like I’ve lost a friend. That’s why I try not to listen to that part. I just move the needle forward.”

Something else makes Calvin sad: “I’d like to see what my mother looks like,” he says, looking up quickly and swallowing hard. “What does she look like? People tell me she’s pretty.”

The mother: “One day Calvin wanted me to tell him how I looked. He was about 6. They were doing something in school for Mother’s Day and the kids were drawing pictures of their mothers. He wanted to know what I looked like and that upset me because I didn’t know how to tell him. I thought, ‘How am I going to explain this to him so that he will really know what I look like?’ So I tried to explain to him about facial features, noses and I just used touch. I took his hand and I tried to explain about skin, let him touch his, and then mine.

“And I think that was the moment when Calvin really knew he was blind, because he said, ‘I won’t ever be

able to see your face...or Daddy's face," she says softly, covering her eyes with her hands, but not in time to stop the tears. "That's the only time I've ever let it bother me that much."

But Mrs. Stanley knew what to tell her only child: "I said, 'Calvin, you can see my face. You can see it with your hands and by listening to my voice and you can tell more about me that way than somebody who can use his eyes.'"

Provident Hospital, November 15, 1973: That's where Calvin Stanley III was born, and his father remembers it this way: "I saw him in the hospital before my wife did, and I knew immediately that something was wrong with his eyes. But I didn't know what."

The mother remembers it this way: "When I woke up after the caesarian⁵⁰, I had a temperature and couldn't see Calvin except through the window of the nursery. The next day a doctor came around to see me and said that he had cataracts and asked me if I had a pediatrician. From what I knew, cataracts could be removed so I thought, 'Well, he'll be fine.' I wasn't too worried. When his pediatrician came and examined him, he told me he thought it was congenital glaucoma⁵¹."

Only once did Mrs. Stanley give in to despair. "When they knew for certain it was glaucoma and told me that the cure rate was very poor because they so seldom have infants born with glaucoma, I felt awful. I blamed myself. I knew I must have done something wrong when I was pregnant. Then I blamed my husband," she says, looking up from her hands which are folded in her lap, "but I never told him that." Pause. "And he probably blamed me."

No, says her husband. "I never really blamed her. I blamed myself. I felt it was a payback. That if you do something wrong to somebody else in some way you get paid back for it. I figured maybe I did something wrong, but I couldn't figure out what I did that was that bad and why Calvin had to pay for it."

Mrs. Stanley remembers that the doctors explained to them that the glaucoma was not because of anything

either of them had done before or during the pregnancy and "that 'congenital' simply means 'at birth.'"

There was another moment, years ago, when Calvin's mother and father knew that their son was probably never going to see. "Well," said the father, trying to comfort the mother, "we'll do what we have to and Calvin will be fine." He is. And so are they.

They took Calvin to a New York surgeon who specialized in congenital glaucoma. There were seven operations and the doctors held out some hope for some vision, but by age 3 there was no improvement and the Stanleys were told that everything that could be done for Calvin had been done.

"You know, in the back of my mind, I think I always knew he would never see," Mrs. Stanley says, "and that I had to reach out to him in different ways. The toys I bought him were always toys that made noise, had sound, something that Calvin could enjoy. But it didn't dawn on me until after he was in school that I had been doing that—buying him toys that would stimulate him."

Thirty-three year old Ethel Stanley, a handsome, strong-looking woman with a radiant smile, is the oldest of seven children and grew up looking after her younger brothers and sisters while her mother worked. "She was a wonderful mother," Mrs. Stanley recalls. "Yes, she had to work, but when she was there, she was with you every minute and those minutes were worth a whole day. She always had time to listen to you."

Somewhere—perhaps from her own childhood experiences—Mrs. Stanley, who has not worked since Calvin was born, acquired the ability to nurture and teach and poured her mothering love into Calvin. And it shows. He moves in the sighted world with trust and faith and the unshakable confidence of a child whose mother has always been there for him. "If you don't understand something, ask," she tells Calvin again and again, in her open, forthright way. "Just ask."

"When he was little he wanted to be Stevie Wonder," says Calvin's father, laughing. "He started playing the piano and he got pretty good at it. Now he wants to be a computer programmer and design programs for the blind."

Calvin's neatly ordered bedroom is outfitted with all the comforts you would find in the room of many 10-year-old, middle-class boys: a television set (black and white, he tells you), an Atari game with a box of cartridges

⁵⁰ Cesarean delivery (C-section), a surgical procedure used to deliver a baby through incisions in the abdomen and uterus

⁵¹ a condition of increased pressure within the eyeball, causing loss of sight

(his favorite is “Phoenix”), a braille Monopoly set, records, tapes and programmed talking robots. “I watch wrestling on TV every Saturday,” he says. “I wrestle with my friends. It’s fun.”

He moves around his room confidently and easily. “I know this house like a book.” Still, some things are hard for him to remember since, in his case, much of what he remembers has to be imagined visually first. Like the size and color of his room. “I think it’s kind of big,” he says of the small room. “And it’s green,” he says of the deep rose-colored walls.

And while Calvin doesn’t need to turn the light on in his room, he does like to have some kind of sound going constantly. Loud sound.

“It’s 3 o’clock,” he says, as the theme music from a TV show blares out into his room.

“Turn that TV down,” says his mother, evenly. “You’re not deaf, you know.”

From the beginning, Ethel and Calvin Stanley were determined their blind son would go to public school. “We were living in Baltimore county when it was time for Calvin to start school and they told me I would have to pay a tuition for him to go to public school, and that really upset me,” Mrs. Stanley says. “I had words with some of the big honchos out there. I knew they had programs in schools for children with vision problems and I thought public education should be free.

“We decided we would move to Baltimore city if we had to, and I got hold of a woman in the mayor’s office. And that woman was the one who opened all the doors for us. She was getting ready to retire but she said she wasn’t going to retire until she got this straight for Calvin. I don’t know how she did it. But she did.”

Now in the fourth grade, Calvin has been attending the Cross Country Elementary School since kindergarten. He is one of six blind students in Baltimore city who are fully mainstreamed which, in this context, means they attend public school with sighted students in a regular classroom. Four of these students are at Cross Country Elementary School. If Calvin stays in public school through the 12th grade, he will be the first blind student to be completely educated within the regular public school system.

Two p.m. Vivian Jackson’s class, Room 207.

What Calvin can’t see: He can’t see the small, pretty girl sitting opposite him, the one who is wearing little rows of red, yellow and blue barrettes shaped like airplanes in her braided hair. He can’t see the line of small, green plants growing in yellow pots all along the sunny window sill. And he can’t see Mrs. Jackson in her rose-pink suit and pink enameled earrings shaped like little swans.

(“Were they really shaped like little swans?” he will ask later.)

But Calvin can feel the warm spring breeze—invisible to everyone’s eyes, not just his—blowing through the window and he can hear the tapping of a young oak tree’s branches against the window. He can hear Mrs. Jackson’s pleasant, musical voice and, later, if you ask him what she looks like, he will say, “She’s nice.”

But best of all, Calvin can read and spell and do fractions and follow the classroom work in his specially prepared braille books. He is smart and he can do everything the rest of his class can do. Except see.

“What’s the next word, Calvin?” Mrs. Jackson asks.

“Eleven,” he says, reading from his braille textbook.

“Now tell us how to spell it—without looking back at the book!” she says quickly, causing Calvin’s fingers to fly away from the forbidden word.

“E-l-e-v-e-n,” he spells out easily.

It all seems so simple, the ease with which Calvin follows along, the manner in which his blindness has been accommodated. But it’s deceptively simple. The amount of work that has gone into getting Calvin to this point—the number of teachers, vision specialists and mobility instructors, and the array of special equipment is staggering.

Patience and empathy from his teachers have played a large role, too.

For instance, there’s Dorothy Lloyd, the specialist who is teaching Calvin the slow, very difficult method of using an Optacon, a device which allows a blind person to read a printed page by touch by converting printed letters into a tactile representation.

And there’s Charleye Dyer, who’s teaching Calvin things like “mobility” and “independent travel skills,” which includes such tasks as using a cane and getting on and off buses. Of course, what Miss Dyer is really teaching

Calvin is freedom; the ability to move about independently and without fear in the larger world.

There's also Lois Sivits who, among other things, teaches Calvin braille and is his favorite teacher. And, to add to a list which is endless, there's the music teacher who comes in 30 minutes early each Tuesday to give him a piano lesson, and his home room teacher, Mrs. Jackson, who is as finely tuned to Calvin's cues as a player in a musical duet would be to her partner.

An important part of Calvin's school experience has been his contact with sighted children.

"When he first started school," his mother recalls, "some of the kids would tease him about his eyes. 'Oh, they're so big and you can't see.' But I just told him, 'Not any time in your life will everybody around you like you—whether you can see or not. They're just children and they don't know they're being cruel. And I'm sure it's not the last time someone will be cruel to you. But it's all up to you because you have to go to school and you'll have to deal with it.'"

Calvin's teachers say he's well liked, and watching him on the playground and in class you get the impression that the only thing that singles him out from the other kids is that someone in his class is always there to take his hand if he needs help.

"I'd say he's really well accepted," says his mobility teacher, Miss Dyer, "and that he's got a couple of very special friends."

Eight-year-old Brian Butler is one of these special friends. "My best friend," says Calvin proudly, introducing you to a studious-looking boy whose eyes are alert and serious behind his glasses. The two boys are not in the same class, but they ride home together on the bus every day.

Here's Brian explaining why he likes Calvin so much: "He's funny and he makes me laugh. And I like him because he always makes me feel better when I don't feel good." And, he says, his friendship with Calvin is no different from any other good friendship. Except for one thing: "If Calvin's going to bump into a wall or something, I tell him, 'Look out,'" says Brian, sounding as though it were the most natural thing in the world to do when walking with a friend.

"Charlotte would have done it for Wilbur," is the way Calvin sizes up Brian's help, evoking once more the story about "how friendship ought to be."

A certain moment:

Calvin is working one-on-one with Lois Sivits, a teacher who is responsible for the braille skills which the four blind children at Cross Country must have in order to do all the work necessary in their regular classes. He is very relaxed with Miss Sivits, who is gentle, patient, smart and, like Calvin, blind. Unlike Calvin, she was not able to go to public school but was sent away at age 6, after many operations on her eyes, to a residential school—the Western Pennsylvania School for the Blind.

And although it was 48 years ago that Lois Sivits was sent away from her family to attend the school for the blind, she remembers—as though it were 48 minutes ago—how that blind 6-year-old girl felt about the experience: "Oh, I was so very homesick. I had a very hard time being separated from my family. It took me three years before I began getting used to it. But I knew I had to stay there. I would have given anything to be able to stay at home and go to a public school like Calvin," says the small, kind-looking woman with very small hands.

Now, the moment: Calvin is standing in front of the window, the light pouring in from behind him. He is listening to a talking clock which tells him, "It's 11:52 a.m." Miss Sivits stands about three feet away from him, also in front of the window holding a huge braille dictionary in her hands, fingers flying across the page as she silently reads from it. And for a few moments, there they are as if frozen in a tableau, the two of them standing in darkness against the light, each lost for a moment in a private world that is composed only of sound and touch.

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. Describe Ethel Stanley's attitude toward her son's disability. How is she raising him to manage it?
3. When did Calvin realize he was "different"? How did he know?
4. What did Calvin's mother say when he asked her why he was blind and others weren't?
5. Describe how Calvin is able to navigate on his bicycle.
6. According to Calvin's mother, what can't he do?
7. What, according to Calvin, makes him sad?
8. What is the cause of Calvin's blindness? What attempts were made to correct the problem?
9. What does Calvin want to do when he grows up?

10. Describe what school is like for Calvin.
11. Who is Calvin's best friend? Why does he like Calvin? How does he help Calvin?
12. Who is Lois Sivits? How does she help Calvin?

Literary Focus: Biography and Autobiography

A **biography** is the story of a person's life written by someone other than that person. A good biography both relates the facts about its subject's life and presents the writer's attitude toward the subject. The skilled biographer uses details, incidents, examples, and quotations to help us understand the subject's personality. In particular, a good biographer includes **anecdotes**, brief accounts of true events, to add depth and color to a biography. Anecdotes help us see the subject's personality in action. For example, in the preceding biography, the author tells us that Tubman teased Josiah Bailey for refusing to look at Niagara Falls on his way to freedom. This anecdote gives us a vivid picture of Tubman's personality--her earthiness, her sense of humor, and, most important, her fearlessness.

An **autobiography** is the story of a person's life written by that person. Like any other author of nonfiction, the autobiography writes for a particular purpose. Authors write autobiographies, for example, in order to inform us about their own successes and failures or persuade us to appreciate their actions or to entertain us with stories from their past. An autobiographer may combine some of these purposes or may write for an entirely different purpose.

Question: Is this selection a biography or autobiography? How do you know?

Private Wojtek's Right to Bear Arms

by Erika Nesvold

One of Poland's most beloved and honored World War II veterans was not Polish at all: he was a 500-pound brown bear named Wojtek. In this essay by Erika Nesvold, the story of this amazing mammal is revealed. (First published 2019)

During World War II, tens of thousands of Polish soldiers fought to defend and recover their war-ravaged homeland. Their sacrifices are still remembered in Poland, especially the contributions of one particularly hirsute⁵² soldier.

The fearless and loyal Private Wojtek traveled with the Polish Army from the mountains of Iran to the battlegrounds of Europe, helping his brothers-in-arms achieve a costly but vital Allied victory in Italy. He never set foot on Polish soil during his lifetime, yet statues honoring Wojtek stand in Poland today, despite the fact that the warrior they honor was neither Polish, nor human: Private Wojtek was a 500-pound brown bear.

In the spring of 1942, a group of weary Polish soldiers and civilians were making their way across the mountains of Persia, in what is now Iran. The previous few years had not been easy on them: First, the Soviets had invaded and annexed the eastern half of their country, while Hitler's Germany gobbled up the west. Hundreds of thousands of Polish nationals—including entire families of men, women, and children—had been rounded up and shipped off to labor camps in Siberia. But when the tides of war turned against the USSR, the Polish government-in-exile negotiated the formation of a Polish army on Soviet soil under the command of Polish General Władysław Anders. But the Soviets could barely feed their own troops, let alone Anders' Army and tens of thousands of Polish civilian deportees.

In the summer of 1941, the joint British and Soviet invasion of Iran provided a solution: the Polish soldiers would be transferred to Iran and placed under British command. The Polish civilians would travel with them—by boat and by rail, but mostly on foot. Many died from the cold weather or exhaustion.

By early April 1942, the Polish travelers had crossed the Caspian Sea, but were still over a hundred miles from their destination, a civilian camp near Tehran.

They stopped for a much-needed rest near the ancient city of Hamadan, where a group of Persian boys caught the eye of a young Polish civilian, 18-year-old Irena Bokiewicz.

Irena noticed that the boys were playing with something in a sack—something small, brown, and furry. It was a tiny bear cub that one of the boys had rescued in the mountains after a hunter killed its mother. The animal, only a few months old, was scrawny and underfed, much like the boys themselves. A nearby Polish officer, Lieutenant Anaoł Tarnowiecki, noticed Irena's interest in the cub. Swayed perhaps by the adorable bear, or perhaps by the young woman, he offered the boys a few tins of food, a chocolate bar, and a Swiss army knife in exchange for their pet.

Irena brought the cub to the civilian camp near Tehran. The young bear was tiny and struggled to swallow or eat on his own, so Irena and her fellow travellers fed him diluted, condensed milk from an empty vodka bottle. He soon began to grow, as bear cubs tend to do, and eventually Irena realized that she and the other civilians in the camp could no longer care for him. She offered him to the soldiers of Anders' Army, and the little bear was taken in by the army's 2nd Transport Company, which later became the 22nd Artillery Supply Company. The soldiers dubbed him Wojtek, the diminutive form of the name Wojciech, a common Polish moniker meaning "joyful warrior."

Sergeant Peter Prendys was appointed as Wojtek's principal guardian. The quiet 46-year-old sergeant, soon dubbed "Mother Bear" by his soldiers, truly became the cub's surrogate mother, wrapping the bear in his army coat on chilly evenings and cuddling him to sleep in their shared tent. Soon, Wojtek graduated from condensed milk to fruit, marmalade, honey, and syrup. But his favorite treat was cigarettes, which he preferred to eat rather than smoke.

As Anders' Army headed toward Palestine to meet up with British forces, Wojtek grew up playing with Prendys and his other human friends, who taught him to wrestle and salute. He enjoyed lingering in the camp's kitchen area, where he would happily eat or drink anything the cooks offered him. When he had been a very good bear, the men would give him a bottle of beer or wine, which he would gulp down before staring mournfully into the empty bottle until one of the soldiers took the hint and tossed him another.

⁵² hairy

Eventually, Anders' Army reached Palestine and began preparing for a large-scale deployment⁵³ while they awaited their next assignment. Wojtek was given a large wooden crate to sleep in and allowed free range of the camp, with one exception: the shower tent. The thick-furred bear, born in a temperate mountain climate, was miserable in the heat of the desert, and quickly figured out how to operate the camp's communal showers to cool himself. All of the water in the camp had to be shipped in, so Wojtek was locked out of the shower tent to keep him from exhausting this precious commodity. One lucky day, during his early morning patrol of the camp, Wojtek discovered the shower tent unlocked and ambled in to enjoy a quick drenching. Inside, he stumbled upon an Arab spy intent on hiding out until he could break into the camp's ammunition compound. It's unclear who was more surprised, but in the commotion that followed, the would-be thief was arrested, and Wojtek's position in the camp climbed from "favorite pet" to "beloved hero."

By 1943, Anders' Army had traveled through Iran, Iraq, and Palestine under the command of British Middle East Command. Many of these Polish soldiers, and one 2-year-old Persian brown bear, joined the newly created Polish 2nd Corps, which headed west toward Egypt and later to Italy as an independent part of the British Eighth Army. As the Polish Army continued to move across the Middle East and North Africa, Wojtek stayed with his company, first riding in the cab of a truck and later, as his size increased, in the back of one of the recovery trucks, where he could stretch out or, to entertain himself, climb around on the crane.

But in Egypt in early 1944, when it came time for the Polish 2nd Corps to cross the Mediterranean into Europe, trouble reared its head in the form of military bureaucracy⁵⁴. British High Command did not permit animals to accompany units into combat, and they were certainly not allowed to board troop transport ships. Wojtek's company tackled the problem head-on and in triplicate, by enlisting Wojtek as a private in the Polish Army. Armed with a new serial number and a paybook, Private Wojciech "Wojtek" Perski (the surname referring to

his Persian origins) boarded the transport ship with his company and sailed for Italy.

The Polish Army's 22nd Artillery Supply Company, including their newest private, joined the Allied efforts in Italy to break through the Axis defenses to reach Rome. In 1944, the Allies' push forward collided with the German defensive line in the Italian town of Cassino. The focal point of this conflict was a 1,400-year-old Benedictine abbey, Monte Cassino, situated on a hilltop near the town. While the Germans had initially avoided taking up defensive positions in the abbey in an effort to preserve the historical site, Allied leaders became convinced that the Germans were using it as an observation post, and sent in American bombers, flattening the abbey. The Germans had no qualms about occupying the rubble, which provided excellent defensive cover.

For four months, the Allies assaulted the German lines in a series of bloody attacks that ultimately left 55,000 Allied and 20,000 German soldiers dead, in addition to civilian casualties. The Polish 2nd Corps, including Wojtek's company, arrived a few weeks before the fourth and final Allied assault. It began 11 May 1944, with a massive artillery bombardment from more than 1,600 guns.

The 22nd Artillery Supply Company was assigned to help supply this artillery with ammunition. This was no easy supply run; the men had to drive their trucks, laden with heavy munitions and supply boxes, up narrow mountain roads with numerous steep, hairpin turns. German artillery was focused on this route, so the drivers had to work at night without headlights, following a soldier who scouted the road on foot ahead of the trucks, wearing a white towel around his shoulders to be seen in the near-pitch black. At the artillery positions, the men of the 22nd Artillery Supply Company unloaded their crates as quickly as possible, then headed down the mountain to start all over again. Several drivers were killed when their trucks slipped off the treacherous path and plunged into the gorges below.

Private Wojtek was understandably nervous during his first days at Monte Cassino. Startled by the noise of the constant gunfire and artillery barrages, he hid under cover and clung to his human friends. Soon, however, his curiosity won out, and he climbed a nearby tree in the camp to get a better view of the distant flashes from the enemy lines. Observing his comrades as they moved boxes of ammunition to the trucks, he joined in, standing upright

⁵³ movement of troops to a place or position for military action

⁵⁴ a system of government in which most of the important decisions are made by state officials rather than by elected representatives

on his hind legs and holding out his front paws. Each box of shells weighed more than 300 pounds and required four men to lift, but Wojtek effortlessly hand-carried box after box to the loading area, even stacking them to make the job easier for the men lifting the boxes onto the trucks. Occasionally, the bear lost interest in this game and wandered off for a nap, but a quick snack slipped to him from one of his friends would soon have him back on his feet. Polish veterans of the Battle of Monte Cassino later proudly reported that Private Wojtek never dropped a single shell. With Wojtek's help, the 22nd Artillery Supply Company supplied more than 17,000 tons of ammunition to the Allied guns during the battle.

For nearly a week, Allied troops threw themselves against the German defenses. At one point, Polish infantry units cut off from their supply line ran out of ammunition. Unwilling to give up the fight, they threw rocks at the Germans instead. When they reached the hilltop, they overwhelmed the Germans in brutal hand-to-hand combat until their enemy finally raised the flag of surrender. Despite suffering enormous losses, the Allied troops succeeded in capturing Monte Cassino on 18 May 1944. Soldiers from the Polish 12th Podolian Cavalry Regiment planted the Polish flag in the ruins, and a cemetery holding the graves of more than 1,000 Polish soldiers can still be seen from the rebuilt Monte Cassino monastery today.

After the battle, Wojtek was promoted to corporal due to his valiant service, and the 22nd Artillery Supply Company honored him by adopting a depiction of a bear holding an artillery shell as their official emblem, wearing it proudly on their uniforms, banners, and trucks. As the end of the war drew near, Wojtek was sent with the rest of his company to Scotland to begin the process of demobilization. In October 1946, Wojtek found himself in the Winfield Camp for Displaced Persons on Sunwick Farm with other members of the Polish 2nd Corps. Once again, he made himself useful lifting logs and fencing materials for the men working the fields. Most importantly, he lifted the spirits of his fellow Polish refugees, many of whom hadn't seen Poland since it was divided up by the Germans and the Soviets in 1939. He quickly became a celebrity among the local Scots, who would offer eggs, honey, cigarettes, and the occasional piece of candy to the new arrival. He was even made an honorary life member of the Scottish-Polish Society, an event he celebrated with a bottle of beer.

Wojtek spent just over a year in Winfield Camp with his Polish comrades, but as 1947 drew to a close, the men began to make decisions about their future. Some returned to Poland, a country ravaged by war and now controlled by the Soviet Union. Others moved elsewhere in Europe or participated in resettlement programs offered by the British government. Wojtek's brothers-in-arms knew that postwar Poland was no place for their friend, so they arranged a British resettlement of his very own, to the Edinburgh Zoo.

Peter Prendys, Wojtek's original guardian in the 22nd Artillery Supply Company, had survived the war and lived with Wojtek in Winfield Camp for their last year together. He rode with his friend for the two-hour journey to Edinburgh in a truck loaned by a local member of the Scottish-Polish Society. Peter led the trusting bear into his new home without incident, his heart breaking at the idea of saying goodbye, but confident that it was the best choice for his surrogate cub.

Wojtek lived for 16 years in Edinburgh. He was most happy when his former comrades would visit, but he also enjoyed interacting with the Scottish crowd, who would throw him cigarettes and call to him in clumsy Polish. He died in 1963 at the age of 22, roughly the average lifespan for his species. Peter Prendys died five years later in London, having been reunited with his wife and one of their children who had survived the occupation of Poland.

Wojtek's legacy lives on in books, films, memorials, monuments, and the hearts of the Polish and Scottish people. Private donors funded a statue of Wojtek in Krakow, Poland in 2014. A year and a half later, another statue of the war hero was unveiled in Edinburgh, this one funded by the Wojtek Memorial Trust. It features a bronze bear beside a Polish soldier, both standing atop a platform of granite excavated from Poland—a country that Wojtek never saw, but whose citizens never forgot his invaluable service to their cause.

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. Why was General Anders' Polish army transferred from Soviet command to British command?
3. Where did the cub come from? Describe its condition.

4. How did Polish Lt. Tarnowiecki notice the cub? How did he gain possession of it? Why might he have wanted it?
5. How did Irena feed the cub? How did the cub become part of the 2nd Transport Company?
6. What does the name Wojtek mean?
7. What did Wojtek eat? What was his favorite treat?
8. Why wasn't Wojtek allowed in the shower tent?
9. How did Wojtek earn the position of "beloved hero"? How did he earn the position of Private?
10. What was the 22nd Artillery Supply Company's task in the battle at Cassino? Describe how their task worked and why it was so dangerous. How did Wojtek help in the task?
11. Describe how the Allies finally captured Monte Cassino in May of 1944.
12. After the battle, how was Wojtek honored?
13. What did Wojtek do in the Winfield Camp?
14. What happened to Wojtek after the war?
15. In what way is it ironic that Wojtek is honored as a Polish hero?

Literary Focus: The Total Effect

The most effective way to approach nonfiction is to read it actively and attentively. Keep in mind that a work of nonfiction, while factual, represents only one author's version of the truth, written for a particular purpose and audience. When you actively look for clues about the author's intentions, you will increase your ability to understand and judge what the author is saying. You will also find more pleasure in reading nonfiction if you notice the facts, details, and language that the author uses to accomplish his or her purpose. When you think about the various elements of nonfiction as you read and contemplate what you have read, you will experience the **total effect** of the work.

Reminders for Active Reading of Nonfiction

1. The **title** often announces the author's purpose.
2. The nonfiction writer uses various elements and techniques, including the following:
 - a. a **thesis statement** or clearly implied main idea
 - b. **facts, incidents, evidence, and examples** supporting this idea
 - c. **topic sentences** to alert the reader to the main idea in each paragraph

- d. **chronological order, cause-and-effect order**, or some other clear organization
 - e. **anecdotes** to reveal character
 - f. **logos, pathos, and ethos** to persuade
 - g. **concrete details** to create vivid pictures
3. The writer of any piece of nonfiction has a **purpose** in mind. The reader should uncover that purpose.

Question: How would you evaluate the total effect of this selection?