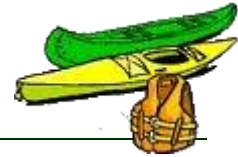


## “Canopy of Nature”

### Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

*Directions: Read the story. Then answer the questions below.*



Dad decided last Sunday that we should all go on a camping trip.

He read an article in the Sunday paper about camping and how it “brings families together under the canopy of nature.”

“Overrated,” I joked. “What about the canopy of television or the canopy of restaurant food?”

“This will be good for us,” Dad said, sliding the magazine across the coffee table. “Let’s go next weekend.”

I shot a quick look over at my little brother, Paul. He gave me a slow eyebrow raise which meant, “This will probably not go off completely as planned.”

My smile back said, “But it will surely be fun.”

I started to think back. Once Dad decided we should all learn how to canoe. We borrowed two canoes from our friends, hoisted them on the van and drove for three hours to a **secluded** lake in Virginia. Alone in the middle of nowhere, we discovered that we had forgotten the paddles.

Paul and I got in a canoe with Dad and our two younger sisters got in a canoe with Mom. We floated aimlessly around the lake for hours. Then we all jumped in with our life jackets on. We pushed the canoes back to shore. It was a fantastic trip.

Another time, Dad decided we should all learn how to ski. All of us hate the cold so we spent the weekend huddled by the fire, drinking hot cocoa in the ski lodge and playing board games. It was great. We had a blast.

When I stopped daydreaming, Mom was saying, “Sweetheart, we don’t have a tent.”

“We don’t need one!” Dad said happily. “We’ll take all the seats out the van when we get to the campsite and put in an air mattress.”

I don’t know what the punch line will be on this **excursion**, but I am sure with Mom, Dad and the four of us kids scrunched in a van at some national park, we are bound to have a good time.

---

## Questions:

- 1) Which alternate title fits this passage best?
- A. "No Paddles"
  - B. "Never as Planned"
  - C. "Hot Cocoa by the Fire"
  - D. "Van Camping for Beginners"
- 2) As used at the end of the story, which is the best synonym for **excursion**?
- A. evolution
  - B. exodus
  - C. expedition
  - D. hiatus
- 3) What literary term best describes the narrator's daydreams?
- A. foreshadowing, meaning the use of hints to suggest what is to come
  - B. irony, meaning a contrast between what is stated and what is really meant
  - C. flashback, meaning a scene that interrupts the action to show what happened at an earlier time
  - D. metaphor, meaning the direct comparison of two unlike things
- 4) As used in the middle of the story, which of the following could accurately be described as **secluded**?
- I. a hiking trail known only to a few
  - II. a crowded movie theater
  - III. a popular beach on the California coast
- A. I only
  - B. I and II
  - C. II and III
  - D. I, II, and III
- 5) What lesson does the narrator's family seem to live by?
- A. Camping is sure to be an adventure.
  - B. Danger is only in the imagination.
  - C. Things don't need to go as planned to have fun.
  - A. Reading the newspaper is a recipe for trouble.

---

Questions (continued):

---

6) *"Then we all jumped in with our life jackets on. We pushed the canoes back to shore."*

Which of the following is the best way to combine the above sentences while keeping their original meaning as used in the story?

- A. We all jumped in with our life jackets on as we pushed the canoes back to shore.
- B. Then we all jumped in with our life jackets on, while pushing the canoes back to shore.
- C. We pushed the canoes back to shore while we all jumped in with our life jackets on.
- D. After we all jumped in with our life jackets on, we pushed the canoes back to shore.

7) Which best describes the narrator's tone?

- A. condescending
- B. sarcastic
- C. jovial
- D. annoyed

8) The narrator probably says the camping trip will have a punch line because he or she feels it will

- A. be expensive
- B. have difficulties
- C. have a funny ending
- D. involve fighting and turmoil

Do you like to go on excursions? Explain.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Answers and Explanations

1) **B**

The story begins with the narrator's dad telling the family that they are going camping the next weekend. This makes the narrator remember other family outings. On every outing, things do not go as planned, but the family has a great time anyway. The story ends with the narrator wondering "what the punch line will be" on the camping trip. Since the story is about how the narrator's family trips never go as planned, the title *Never as Planned* fits this passage well. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

The narrator remembers a family vacation when they packed up canoes and drove hours to a lake only to find that they forgot the paddles, but this is just one of a couple of funny vacation memories the narrator recalls in the story. Since the title *No Paddles* refers to just one specific part of the story, **(A)** is incorrect. *Hot Cocoa by the Fire* also refers to one of the narrator's family vacation memories. Since it is just another specific part of the story, it does not sum up the story. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. At the end of the story, the narrator's dad says that the family does not need a tent to go camping because they can just sleep in the van. However, the story is about more than just the family's van camping trip. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

2) **C**

**excursion** (*noun*): a short trip, usually for pleasure.

At the end of the story, the family is discussing their plans for the camping trip. The narrator says, "I don't know what the punch line will be on this excursion, but I am sure with Mom, Dad and the four of us kids scrunched in a van at some national park, we are bound to have a good time." An *expedition* is a group journey that has a specific purpose. The *excursion* the narrator talks about is a family camping trip to experience nature. That makes expedition a good synonym for excursion here. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

*Evolution* is the change that something has made over time. The narrator is talking about a trip, not about change over time. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. An *exodus* is many people leaving. The family is taking a trip, but they are not really leaving because they will return home afterwards. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. A *hiatus* is a short break between two things. Since the focus is on the trip, and not on the trip being a break from something, **(D)** is incorrect.

3) **C**

The story begins with the narrator's dad talking about an upcoming camping trip. Then, in the middle of the story, the narrator says, "I started to think back," and the narrator daydreams about two previous family trips. After the narrator finishes remembering the trips, the story returns to the present. Since the narrator has stopped in the middle of the story to remember trips that happened in the past, the narrator has interrupted the action to show what happened at an earlier time, or to flash back. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Although the memories of the previous trips make the narrator wonder what the upcoming camping trip will be like, the action in the daydreams does not suggest what comes next in the story here. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. There is no contrast between what the narrator says and what is really meant in the daydreams. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The narrator describes two previous family trips, but does not directly compare two unlike things. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

- 4) **A**  
**secluded** (*adjective*): kept separate from others.

In paragraph 7, the narrator says, “We borrowed two canoes from our friends, hoisted them on the van and drove for three hours to a secluded lake in Virginia. Alone in the middle of nowhere, we discovered that we had forgotten the paddles.” We can understand from this information that the lake was *secluded* because there weren’t other people around. Since a hiking trail known only to a few doesn’t have many people around, it is secluded. This supports **option (I)**. A crowded movie theater is full of people, so it is not secluded. This eliminates **option (II)**. If something is popular, it means that a lot of people like to use it, so it is not secluded. This eliminates **option (III)**. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

- 5) **C**  
In this story, the narrator describes two different trips that both went totally differently than planned. Still, the family had a great time. At the end of the story, the narrator is not sure what will happen on the upcoming trip, but is sure that the family is “bound to have a good time.” We can understand from this information that the narrator’s family always has fun even when things don’t go as planned. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Although camping may well be an adventure for the family, the story is about more than just the camping trip. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. The family trips don’t involve much danger. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The narrator’s dad decided to go camping after reading the newspaper, but the story does not suggest that all of the family trips begin this way. Therefore, **(D)** is incorrect.

- 6) **D**  
In these two sentences, the family first jumps into the lake with their life jackets on and then they push the canoes back to the shore. The sentence, *After we all jumped in with our life jackets on, we pushed the canoes back to shore*, properly describes the action as stated in the story. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

All of the rest of the answer choices have the family jumping in and pushing the canoes at the same time. Since this is both inaccurate and impossible, **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(C)** are incorrect.

7) **C**

Near the beginning of the story, the narrator cracks jokes when the narrator's dad suggests the family go camping. Then, in the middle of the story, the narrator's brother gave the narrator "a slow eyebrow raise which meant, 'This will probably not go off completely as planned.'" The narrator smiled back to say, "But it will surely be fun." In the middle of the story, the narrator says how great the past family trips were. At the end of the story, the narrator says that the family is "bound to have a good time" on the next trip. All of this information portrays the narrator as positive, fun and even silly. *Jovial* means cheerful and good-humored. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

To be *condescending* is to act as if other people are not as good as you are. The narrator is good-humored and seems to enjoy other people, so the narrator is not condescending. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. To be *sarcastic* is to have a critical attitude. The narrator seems to see the bright side of everything, so his attitude is the opposite of critical. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. To be *annoyed* means to be bothered. The narrator never gets bothered, even when things go wrong. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

8) **C**

In the middle of the story, the narrator describes two previous family trips that ended humorously. Near the end of the story, the narrator says, "I don't know what the punch line will be on this excursion, but I am sure with Mom, Dad and the four of us kids scrunched in a van at some national park, we are bound to have a good time." The term *punch line* means the funny part of a joke. Since the other family vacations ended humorously, the narrator wonders what the funny ending of the upcoming camping trip will be. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Since the punch line is the funny end of a joke, this line does not have anything to do with expense. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. If the camping trip is anything like the family's other trips, it is sure to have difficulties. However, the narrator wonders what the punch line will be because the narrator thinks that the trip will end in a funny way like the others. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The family trips never seem to involve fighting and turmoil. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.