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**ELA**

***Grade 5  
Item Sampler  
2015–16***



QA116025



**DIRECTIONS: Read the passage and then answer the questions that follow.**

## Excerpt from *Ice Drift*

by Theodore Taylor

*Alika, a fourteen-year-old Inuit boy, his younger brother Sulu, and their lead dog Jamka have been trapped for four months on an ice floe that unexpectedly broke loose from their island.*

- 1 It was early February. Alika and Sulu watched as the aurora borealis streamers, in twilight, moved from west to east, forming a curtain of yellow and white. That was the general color except in the northwest, where the sky was deep red.
- 2 Sulu said, "I'm still afraid of those lights."
- 3 "They haven't harmed us, have they?" Alika pointed out. More icebergs were in view, a threatening fleet of them. "I'm more worried about the bergs than the sky."
- 4 The next day, twilight lasted from dawn until late afternoon, another good sign that light was returning. But then a heavy snowfall and high winds began in the early evening. The three of them again stayed inside. It was typical High Arctic weather in late winter. No two days or nights alike. It could change on the hour.
- 5 For almost four months, Alika had been trying to guide the conversation away from home, but Sulu persisted almost every day and night, often asking the very same questions. Alika always tried to answer them without repeating himself.
- 6 "You think that Papa and Mama have forgotten us?"
- 7 "No, they have not." But Alika knew that they might, by now, have some doubts that their sons were still alive.
- 8 "How about the dogs? Have they forgotten us?"
- 9 "Not at all. They'll jump all over us once we come home," Alika said.
- 10 "How about Inu?"
- 11 "No. He'd never forget us. Shamans never forget anything."
- 12 Alika's mind was more on the snowhouse than on Sulu's questions. He'd built the original *iglus*<sup>1</sup> not far from the west edge of the floe, and already there were signs of crumbling the

farther south it sailed. The sun would warm the water. Melting was inevitable. Or those miserable crosscurrents could suddenly cause a split exactly underneath their house. It might happen in the middle of the night, leaving them a narrow wedge of ice on which to scramble. There'd likely be no warning. Alika decided to build another snowhouse nearer the middle of the floe the next day.

13 "What is Mama making for dinner tonight?" Sulu asked.

14 Without thinking, Alika said, "Oh, maybe caribou stew with those dried blackberries," and then regretted it. He also longed for the warmth and protection of their home, and meals his mama prepared. He also longed for safety. That might be a matter of luck.

15 Sulu asked, "Will we ever see them again?"

16 "Of course we will. Now go to sleep."

17 When they went outside in the morning, they saw fresh *nanuk*<sup>2</sup> tracks in the new white snow cover.

18 Jamka sniffed them and Sulu said, "Another bear swam out."

19 "Looks that way," Alika said in a calm voice. "Don't wander around." He had already reloaded the *Maynard*<sup>3</sup>.

20 They built the new snowhouse that morning and moved their meager possessions. It was near the middle of the floe, where the ice was thickest. It would be the last section to peel off. Alika moved what was left of the sledge. It was now a matter of waiting.

<sup>1</sup>**iglus:** igloos

<sup>2</sup>**nanuk:** polar bear

<sup>3</sup>**Maynard:** rifle



Theodore Taylor, *Ice Drift*. Harcourt, Inc., 2005.

1. The following question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

**Part A**

How is Alika different from Sulu?

- Ⓐ Alika knows they will soon return home.
- Ⓑ Alika wants to protect Sulu from his own fears.
- Ⓒ Alika worries that his parents think they ran away.
- Ⓓ Alika wants Sulu to grow up and start acting like a man.

**Part B**

Which detail from the passage **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ "Sulu said, 'I'm still afraid of those lights.' 'They haven't harmed us, have they?' Alika pointed out." (paragraphs 2 and 3)
- Ⓑ "'You think that Papa and Mama have forgotten us?' 'No, they have not.' But Alika knew that they might, by now, have some doubts that their sons were still alive." (paragraphs 6 and 7)
- Ⓒ "'How about Inu?' 'No. He'd never forget us. Shamans never forget anything.'" (paragraphs 10 and 11)
- Ⓓ "Jamka sniffed them and Sulu said, 'Another bear swam out.' 'Looks that way,' Alika said in a calm voice." (paragraphs 18 and 19)

2. Which of the following **best** describes a theme of this passage?

- Ⓐ Hardship tests a person.
- Ⓑ Everybody goes through hard times.
- Ⓒ Most problems have solutions.
- Ⓓ Nobody knows the future.

3. Choose a phrase for each blank to complete the sentences about the structure of the story.

The first part of this excerpt about Alika and Sulu describes

the	<input type="radio"/> foods they eat	and the environment they are in.
	<input type="radio"/> sights they see	
	<input type="radio"/> dangers they face	

The ending of the excerpt focuses on steps Alika takes

to	<input type="radio"/> find their way home	.
	<input type="radio"/> protect himself and his brother	
	<input type="radio"/> catch a polar bear for food	

4. Which two actions show that Alika understands the dangers he and Sulu face?

- Ⓐ Alika tries to steer conversation away from home.
- Ⓑ Alika built the original iglu near the edge of the floe.
- Ⓒ Alika reloads the rifle.
- Ⓓ Alika decides to build a new iglu.
- Ⓔ Alika points out that shamans never forget anything.

5. Choose a phrase for each blank to complete the sentence.

At the end of the passage, the boys see fresh polar bear tracks. This event helps the boys understand that

- |  |
|--|
| <input type="radio"/> the snow will get deeper     |
| <input type="radio"/> their situation is dangerous |
| <input type="radio"/> the bears are getting closer |

by recognizing that the

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="radio"/> ice floe is melting |
| <input type="radio"/> light is returning  |
| <input type="radio"/> weather is changing |

6. What is the **best** summary of this passage?
- Ⓐ Alike and Sulu are stuck on an ice floe. Alike tries to make his younger brother Sulu feel better about their terrible situation. Even so, he slips up when he describes a home-cooked dinner.
  - Ⓑ Alike and Sulu are stuck on an ice floe that is moving farther and farther away from their home. One morning they notice polar bear tracks near their shelter.
  - Ⓒ Alike and Sulu are stuck on an ice floe that is melting as it moves south into warmer waters. Alike decides to build a new snowhouse near the middle of the floe.
  - Ⓓ Alike and Sulu are stuck on an ice floe that has been drifting away from their home. They face many dangers but Alike, the older brother, reassures Sulu that they will get home.

7. The following question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

**Part A**

In paragraph 14, when Sulu asked Alika what Mama was making for dinner, Alika answered, “caribou stew with those dried blackberries.” Why did he regret his answer?

- Ⓐ He knew Sulu would not want to eat the food.
- Ⓑ He longed to eat his mother’s food, just as Sulu did.
- Ⓒ He knew his answer would make Sulu more homesick.
- Ⓓ He wanted to keep himself focused on their own survival.

**Part B**

Which detail from the passage **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ “‘They haven’t harmed us, have they?’ Alika pointed out. More icebergs were in view, a threatening fleet of them.” (paragraph 3)
- Ⓑ “For almost four months, Alika had been trying to guide the conversation away from home, but Sulu persisted almost every day and night, often asking the very same questions.” (paragraph 5)
- Ⓒ “It might happen in the middle of the night, leaving them a narrow wedge of ice on which to scramble. There’d likely be no warning.” (paragraph 12)
- Ⓓ “He also longed for the warmth and protection of their home, and meals his mama prepared. He also longed for safety.” (paragraph 14)

8. How does the beginning of the excerpt contrast with the end of the excerpt?
- Ⓐ The beginning focuses on the sky, while the ending focuses on the sea.
  - Ⓑ The light at the beginning is hopeful, while the dark ending is hopeless.
  - Ⓒ The beauty at the beginning contrasts with the brothers' harsh situation.
  - Ⓓ The beginning centers on Sulu, while the ending emphasizes only Alika.

9. Read the sentence from paragraph 3.

**More icebergs were in view, a threatening fleet of them.**

What does the word threatening suggest about the icebergs?

- Ⓐ They move quickly.
- Ⓑ They are very large.
- Ⓒ They seem to be floating.
- Ⓓ They appear to be dangerous.

10. The following question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

**Part A**

What does persisted mean as it is used in paragraph 5?

- Ⓐ sobbed loudly
- Ⓑ stated in a firm manner
- Ⓒ remembered fondly
- Ⓓ continued in a demanding way

**Part B**

Which phrase from the paragraph **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ "away from home"
- Ⓑ "almost every day and night"
- Ⓒ "always tried to answer them"
- Ⓓ "without repeating himself"

11. Read the sentences from paragraph 12.

**The sun would warm the water. Melting was inevitable.**

What does the word inevitable mean as it is used in the sentence?

- Ⓐ easy to recognize
- Ⓑ hard to see
- Ⓒ impossible to avoid
- Ⓓ doubtful to occur

**DIRECTIONS: Read the passage and then answer the questions that follow.**

## **The Compost Heap**

by June Walker

- 1 Composting is a natural way of changing food scraps and garden waste into crumbly humus for adding to your garden soil.
- 2 The first thing you find when you lift the lid to a compost heap is a swarm of insects that buzzes up into your face. There will also be a community of small creatures—slugs, snails, ants, spiders, beetles, and earthworms—scurrying around on top of the rubbish or burrowing through it.
- 3 All these animals are helping to break down the scraps. They dig through the heap, mixing it up and letting air in. They chew the scraps and they digest them and excrete them.
- 4 By themselves, however, these animals do not really change the waste. They just break it up into small pieces so that the real workers can get started.
- 5 The real workers are the bacteria—tiny organisms too small to see individually. Sometimes, though, they form colonies of several million members, and then you may see them as a small feathery shape.
- 6 We usually think of germs when we think of bacteria. There are certainly harmful bacteria, or germs, which can cause disease, but there are many helpful ones, too. Most of the useful bacteria—the ones that rot food—are aerobic (meaning they need air).
- 7 The aerobic bacteria eat the tiny fragments left by the beetles and worms. But the bacteria don't just eat the scraps—they change the whole nature of the waste. They break it down into simple chemicals that plants need. Bacteria make plant food.
- 8 Bacteria are found by the millions in a compost heap. Some are brought there by the earthworms and insects. Some bacteria come on the wind. Some come in on the food scraps. Others are already there in the soil.
- 9 When one bacterium lands on a tiny scrap of food, it starts its work. It eats into the scrap, breaking down the tough fibers, making it into useful plant food.

- 10 If it has plenty to eat and plenty of warmth and oxygen, it will start to grow. In about twenty minutes, it will divide into two. Each of these two bacteria will eat and eat. In another twenty minutes, these two will split again. After a few days, the scrap will be covered with bacteria. The rotting down, or decomposition, will get faster and faster as more and more bacteria go to work.
- 11 Although bacteria are the main workers, there are some materials that bacteria cannot digest—tough materials like wood and paper. Fortunately, fungi like to eat wood and paper. Fungi are the vacuum cleaners of the compost heap. They eat the bits the bacteria leave behind. They attack the toughest materials and also feed on bacteria.
- 12 The fungi appear four to six days after the compost heap is started.
- 13 The compost heap is a miniworld, bursting with animals and bacteria and fungi. The end product is a brown, crumbly soil, full of plant food. Another reason that compost is good for gardens is that it still has all these bacteria in it. Some of them make antibiotics that plants suck up through their roots. These antibiotics protect the plants from disease. Compost also improves the structure of our soil. It makes it crumbly with lots of air spaces that hold water and oxygen.

### **Making a Compost Heap**

- 14 A compost heap makes food for the garden. If you work compost into garden soil, you will get healthier plants, bigger vegetables, and faster-growing shrubs.

### **Some Easily Made Compost Bins**

- 15 Any bottomless box or container will do for a compost bin.
- 16 You can make one out of concrete blocks. Leave gaps between the blocks because compost bacteria need air. It's best if the container is about a cubic yard or more in size. Cover it with an old garbage can lid or plastic garbage bags held down with bricks or boards.
- 17 A wooden box or crate with the bottom knocked out makes a good compost bin, too. Ask an adult to help you drill holes in the sides. You'll need a lid to keep animals out and to stop the heap from getting wet and soggy.

## **Contributions for the Compost Heap**

- 18 You can add anything that has once lived, but don't use sawdust because it takes about two years to rot properly.
- 19 The compost should be ready in about a month. (If the compost gets smelly, it has probably become soggy and packed down so that air isn't getting through. Mix in some loose, dry material, like straw. It's all right to disturb the layers at this point.) Good compost is not unhealthy, but it's best to wash after handling it.
- 20 Work the finished compost into the soil before you plant your garden. You can also spread it two to three inches deep around plants that are already growing.



June Walker, "The Compost Heap" *Cricket Magazine* 22, (May 1995).

**12.** What are two main ideas of the first part of “The Compost Heap” (paragraphs 1–13)?

- Ⓐ Bacteria enter a compost heap by many means.
- Ⓑ Small creatures and insects help change food scraps into humus.
- Ⓒ Composting is a way of making food for plants.
- Ⓓ Harmful bacteria are disease-causing germs.
- Ⓔ Some kinds of bacteria turn garden wastes and scraps into plant food.

**13.** Column A lists three types of living things mentioned in the text. Column B tells what these living things do in a compost heap. For each living thing in Column A, choose what it does in Column B.

Column A: Living Things	Column B: What They Do		
fungi	<input type="radio"/> cause chemical changes in waste	<input type="radio"/> break up scraps	<input type="radio"/> eat wood and paper
earthworms and slugs	<input type="radio"/> cause chemical changes in waste	<input type="radio"/> break up scraps	<input type="radio"/> eat wood and paper
aerobic bacteria	<input type="radio"/> cause chemical changes in waste	<input type="radio"/> break up scraps	<input type="radio"/> eat wood and paper

- 14.** Select the words that correctly complete the sentences about the structure of the text.

The passage has two main parts. In the first part, the author presents

information mainly by

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="radio"/> describing the sequence of events   |
| <input type="radio"/> comparing and contrasting           |
| <input type="radio"/> asking questions and giving answers |

The author presents information mainly through

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="radio"/> problem and solution    |
| <input type="radio"/> comparison and contrast |
| <input type="radio"/> steps in a process      |

- 15.** Select two sentences from paragraph 13 that explain how compost helps a garden.

- Ⓐ "The end product is a brown, crumbly soil, full of plant food."
- Ⓑ "Another reason that compost is good for gardens is that it still has all these bacteria in it."
- Ⓒ "Some of them make antibiotics that plants suck up through their roots."
- Ⓓ "These antibiotics protect the plants from disease."
- Ⓔ "Compost also improves the structure of our soil."

- 16.** The author says, “The real workers are the bacteria.” Select two sentences from paragraphs 6–7 that support this idea.
- Ⓐ “We usually think of germs when we think of bacteria.”
  - Ⓑ “There are certainly harmful bacteria, or germs, which can cause disease, but there are many helpful ones, too.”
  - Ⓒ “Most of the useful bacteria—the ones that rot food—are aerobic (meaning they need air).”
  - Ⓓ “But the bacteria don’t just eat the scraps—they change the whole nature of the waste.”
  - Ⓔ “They break it down into simple chemicals that plants need.”
- 17.** Select two sentences from paragraphs 11–12 that the author uses to explain how fungi differ from bacteria.
- Ⓐ “Although bacteria are the main workers, there are some materials that bacteria cannot digest—tough materials like wood and paper.”
  - Ⓑ “Fortunately, fungi like to eat wood and paper.”
  - Ⓒ “Fungi are the vacuum cleaners of the compost heap.”
  - Ⓓ “They eat the bits the bacteria leave behind.”
  - Ⓔ “They attack the toughest materials and also feed on bacteria.”
  - Ⓕ “The fungi appear four to six days after the compost heap is started.”

- 18.** Column A lists three results of composting. For each result in Column A, choose a description of how it helps the garden in Column B.

Column A	Column B		
decomposition	<input type="radio"/> create nutrients for plants	<input type="radio"/> provide protection from disease	<input type="radio"/> change waste to useful chemicals
antibiotics	<input type="radio"/> create nutrients for plants	<input type="radio"/> provide protection from disease	<input type="radio"/> change waste to useful chemicals
bacteria	<input type="radio"/> create nutrients for plants	<input type="radio"/> provide protection from disease	<input type="radio"/> change waste to useful chemicals

- 19.** Which sentence from the text supports the idea that composting is helpful for most kinds of gardening?
- Ⓐ "The compost heap is a miniworld, bursting with animals and bacteria and fungi." (paragraph 13)
  - Ⓑ "If you work compost into garden soil, you will get healthier plants, bigger vegetables, and faster-growing shrubs." (paragraph 14)
  - Ⓒ "It's best if the container is about a cubic yard or more in size." (paragraph 16)
  - Ⓓ "A wooden box or crate with the bottom knocked out makes a good compost bin, too." (paragraph 17)

**20.** Which is the **best** summary of the text?

- Ⓐ Aerobic bacteria are useful bacteria that break down scraps and plant wastes. Before long, there may be millions of these bacteria at work in a compost heap.
- Ⓑ There are three main kinds of organisms at work in a compost heap. These include small garden creatures, bacteria, and fungi. Each type of organism has a different job, and each job is important.
- Ⓒ In a compost heap, small creatures, bacteria, and fungi change food scraps and garden waste into useful food for plants. The result is humus that feeds plants and builds healthy gardens.
- Ⓓ Setting up a compost bin is not difficult. Many kinds of containers will work, such as a wooden crate or blocks of concrete. When you have your bin, fill it with food scraps and garden waste.

**21.** Select the two main ideas of the text.

Sawdust takes a long time to break down in a compost heap.	<input type="radio"/>
Composting is a natural way of making garden food.	<input type="radio"/>
Humus is great for soil, gardens, and plants.	<input type="radio"/>
A compost heap can be made from simple materials.	<input type="radio"/>
Aerobic bacteria are useful for gardens.	<input type="radio"/>

**22.** Which two words could replace rubbish as it is used in the second paragraph?

- Ⓐ waste
- Ⓑ food
- Ⓒ garbage
- Ⓓ resource
- Ⓔ germs

**23.** Read the sentence from paragraph 5.

**The real workers are the bacteria—tiny organisms too small to see individually.**

What does the word organisms mean?

- Ⓐ employees
- Ⓑ fast eaters
- Ⓒ groups
- Ⓓ living things

- 24.** The following question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

**Part A**

Read the sentence from paragraph 7.

**The aerobic bacteria eat the tiny fragments left by the beetles and worms.**

What does fragments mean in this sentence?

- Ⓐ plants
- Ⓑ piles
- Ⓒ bits
- Ⓓ tracks

**Part B**

Which phrase from the paragraph helps you understand the meaning of fragments?

- Ⓐ "don't just eat the scraps"
- Ⓑ "change the whole nature"
- Ⓒ "chemicals that plants need"
- Ⓓ "make plant food"

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