

5th Grade Integrated Language Arts

Blizzard Bag #1



In the Line of Fire

One day Alfred Rascon saw some soldiers near his California home. They were practicing jumping out of planes with parachutes. The seven-year-old boy wanted to be like them. So he made his own parachute out of a sheet. He climbed onto the roof of his house and jumped. Of course, his "chute" didn't work. The fall broke his wrist. But it did not kill his spirit.

Rascon was born in Mexico. When he was a young boy, his family moved to the United States. His parents worked on farms near Los Angeles. Although Rascon was not a citizen, he fell in love with his new country. He had no money for college. So after high school Rascon hoped to join the Army. He was only 17 years old. That meant he needed his parents' permission. He begged them to let him go. At last they said yes. Rascon was later asked why he was so eager to fight for the United States. After all, he was still not a citizen. "I was always an American in my heart," he answered.

In the Army Rascon became a medic. A medic is not a doctor. But in war, he or she is often the closest thing

there is. A medic treats wounded soldiers. He or she tries to keep them alive until they get to a hospital.

By the time he was 20 years old, Rascon was in the war in Vietnam. On March 16, 1966, he was in the jungle with his unit. Suddenly the enemy opened fire. Bullets ripped through the air. Grenades burst all around. One soldier said it was "ten minutes of pure hell. It looked like it was snowing fire."

A man with a machine gun was hit first. He cried out, "Medic! Medic!"

But Rascon was told to stay where he was. It was too dangerous to go to the wounded man just yet. Rascon was supposed to wait until his unit could fight back. That way Rascon would be protected. But Rascon knew the man needed help right away. So he didn't wait. Instead, he dashed through the storm of enemy bullets. He managed to reach the wounded gunman. Then Rascon placed his body between the man and the enemy fire. Soon a bullet hit Rascon in the hip. It went through his body and out his shoulder blade.

Despite his wounds, Rascon dragged the gunman out of danger. Sadly, the man soon died. Rascon then remembered the machine gun. It was still out where the gunman had fallen. Fearing the enemy might grab it, Rascon crawled back to get it. As he made his way along, a grenade exploded right next to him. Pieces of

Alfred Rascon receives the Medal of Honor from President Clinton in Washington, D.C., in 2000.

metal flew into his stomach and face. "Oh my god," he thought for a moment, "my face is gone."

⁹ At last Rascon reached the machine gun. He dragged it back to his unit. Saving the gun saved lives. One soldier said that without the gun the front of the unit would have been attacked by the enemy.

¹⁰ Rascon was not done yet. He saw another soldier who had been shot. Worse, Rascon saw a grenade land right near this man. Rascon threw himself on the wounded man just before the grenade blew up. In doing so, Rascon saved the man's life. But he himself suffered more wounds. By now he bled from his ears and nose. He had also lost his hearing. Yet he found the strength to do it all again. He dove on another man to protect him from another grenade.


¹¹ At last, the enemy backed off. Even then Rascon didn't think of himself. He went on treating wounded men. "I had to take care of my friends," he said later. "That's what it was all about. And it wasn't a question of being afraid because I already was afraid."

¹² Men from his unit finally forced Rascon to stop working. They put him on a helicopter. They sent him off to an Army hospital. By this time, Rascon was nearly dead. A chaplain gave him last rites, that is, the

special prayers for the dying. But Rascon did not die. In time his wounds healed. The next year Rascon became a citizen of the United States.

¹³ After the battle, the men in Rascon's unit entered his name to win the Medal of Honor. This is the highest honor the U.S. government gives to a soldier. But for some reason Rascon did not win it. Many years later his old Army friends learned of this. They were outraged. They had always believed he had won that medal. They got the Army to hear Rascon's case again. The Army agreed with the men. In 2000, Alfred Rascon was given the Medal of Honor.

¹⁴ At a special program, President Bill Clinton gave Rascon his medal. Clinton also had good words for him. "Thank you for looking out for people when no one else could be there for them," he said. "You have taught us once again that being American has nothing to do with place of birth."

¹⁵ Neil Haffy was there to see Rascon get his medal. Haffy was one of the men Rascon had saved. With tears in his eyes, Haffy said, "I have a beautiful wife. I have four children and four grandchildren. I wouldn't have any of that without him. I was dead." 

A Finding the Main Idea

One statement below tells the main idea of the article. One statement is too general, or too broad. The other statement explains only part of the article; it is too narrow. Label the statements using the following key:

M—Main Idea B—Too Broad N—Too Narrow

____ 1. Although not a U.S. citizen, Alfred Rascon joined the Army. He was in Vietnam in 1966 as a medic. He risked his life over and over to save others and was badly wounded. Later he became a U.S. citizen. He received the Medal of Honor in 2000.

____ 2. From the time he was a child, Alfred Rascon wanted to do exciting things. His chance came when he was serving in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. In 2000 he received the Medal of Honor for his actions at that time.

____ 3. Alfred Rascon was 17 years old when he joined the U.S. Army. Three years later, when he was in Vietnam as a medic, a soldier with a machine gun called for help. Rascon ran to the gunner and tried to save his life, but the man died.

for teacher

Score 4 points for each correct answer.

_____ Total Score: Finding the Main Idea

B Recalling Facts

How well do you remember the facts in the article? Put an X in the box next to the answer that correctly completes each statement.

1. In 1966, Alfred Rascon was

- a. seven years old.
 b. 17 years old.
 c. 20 years old.

2. When a soldier firing a machine gun was wounded, Rascon

- a. was wounded helping the man.
 b. took over the machine gun himself.
 c. first dragged the gun to safety.

3. When a grenade landed near a wounded man, Rascon

- a. ran for cover.
 b. threw himself on the grenade.
 c. threw himself on the wounded man.

4. Rascon received the Medal of Honor

- a. when he was sent home because of his wounds.
 b. at the end of the war in Vietnam.
 c. from President Clinton.

for teacher

Score 4 points for each correct answer.

_____ Total Score: Recalling Facts

C Making Inferences

When you draw a conclusion that is not directly stated in the text, you are making an inference. Put an X in the box next to the statement that is a correct inference.

1.
 - a. Except for Alfred Rascon, nobody who fought in the Vietnam War won the Medal of Honor.
 - b. Most soldiers who won the Medal of Honor for actions in Vietnam War received it before 2000.
 - c. Only soldiers who are U.S. citizens from birth may receive the Medal of Honor.
2.
 - a. If Rascon's friends had not argued with the Army, he would not have received the Medal of Honor.
 - b. Rascon and the other men in his unit stayed close after the war, talking to each other at least weekly.
 - c. Rascon became a citizen only so he could have a better chance of winning a medal.

Score 4 points for each correct answer.	for teacher
_____ Total Score: Making Inferences	

D Using Words

Put an X in the box next to the definition below that is closest in meaning to the underlined word.

1. The soldier jumped from the plane and pulled a cord. His parachute flapped open, filled with air, and carried him gently to the earth.
 - a. a short, simple story about an everyday event which teaches a lesson
 - b. a large cloth that is carried folded up but opens like an umbrella to slow the fall of a person or thing dropping from an airplane
 - c. a very light machine with wings but no engine that glides through the air, usually holding no more than one person
2. Someone born outside the United States may become a citizen of this country after passing a special test.
 - a. a member of a nation who has full rights, such as the right to vote
 - b. a person who takes part in a particular action, such as teaching, for pay
 - c. a person who asks others to vote for him or her for a city, state, or national office, such as president
3. My brother's unit finishes its training next week.
 - a. a number
 - b. all the soldiers in an army
 - c. a group of soldiers who train and work together

Name _____

E Author's Approach

Put an X in the box next to the correct answer.

4. A grenade landed near a tree. In the blast a moment later, branches flew away from the torn-up stump.
- a. a small bomb thrown by hand or fired from a gun
 - b. a small helicopter that is used for rescues
 - c. a small tank that holds one person
5. Their chaplain led the soldiers in a short prayer.
- a. a singer
 - b. a doctor
 - c. a minister
6. The customer was so outraged by the poor service at the store that she demanded to see the manager.
- a. left behind
 - b. angered
 - c. puzzled
1. The author uses the first sentence of the article to
- a. name the main person in the story.
 - b. describe the qualities of California homes.
 - c. compare soldiers to other people.
2. Choose the statement below that best describes the author's opinion in paragraph 10.
- a. Rascon did what any well-trained soldier would do.
 - b. Rascon showed extraordinary concern for his fellow soldiers.
 - c. Rascon was foolish to put himself in danger so often, especially after he was wounded.
3. The author tells this story mainly by
- a. asking and answering questions.
 - b. retelling Rascon's experiences.
 - c. using his or her own imagination.

for teacher

Score 4 points for each correct answer.

_____ Total Score: Using Words

for teacher

Score 4 points for each correct answer.

_____ Total Score: Author's Approach

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Standards and Directions

W. 5.1a-d, W5.9, L 5.1a

Use the following two passages and prompt to write a Response to Literature. Use your own notebook paper. You must have a four square organizer completed with your writing. See "Classroom" if you forget how to organize a four square for this assignment.

Prompt: Analyze how Sinbad and Odysseus were able to escape the situations they were in.

- Explain each character's situation and how each escaped
- Describe each character's traits, comparing and contrasting Sinbad and Odysseus
- Explain how each character's thoughts, words, and actions help you understand his motivations
- Include details from each story to support your ideas

2 COACHED EXAMPLE

Read the passage.

a retelling of

The Second Voyage of Sinbad the Sailor

from The Arabian Nights

After months of sailing stormy seas, I was home, and I planned to stay for a long time, living off gold from my first voyage. My last trip had been dangerous enough.

But I soon grew bored and longed for adventure. I set sail with a brave, trustworthy crew, and for months we traveled the ocean. Our last stop was an island of tall trees, their branches heavy with fruit. We hiked all day, exploring. Tired, I stopped for a nap, as my crew went on to gather fruit. I don't know how long I slept, but when I awoke, my ship and crew were gone. I cried out in despair, sure I was stranded forever.

But no challenge was unsolvable, and despair would do no good. I climbed a nearby tree, but saw only sky and water. Then a shadow fell over me; above was an enormous bird. I had heard tales of this creature, but had never seen it.

In its wings, I saw an opportunity. When it landed, I used my scarf to tie myself to its foot. We rose into the air—what a thrill it was to fly through the sky! We soon landed on another island. I untied myself and fell to the ground. Through blurry eyes, I saw the bird devouring a giant serpent. As it flew away, I looked around, realizing with dismay that I was still stranded, just on a different island.

I lay between mountains, in a valley of sparkling diamonds. There were hundreds, the largest I've ever seen, and I was so distracted by their beauty that I didn't notice nightfall. Then I heard a loud, hissing sound; all around, serpents slithered. I ran to a cave, blocking its entrance with a boulder. Serpents hissed outside all night. In the morning, they disappeared to hide from the bird, and I cautiously emerged.

I was examining the diamonds, no serpents in sight, when a curious thing happened: chunks of meat began falling from the sky. I suddenly remembered a story I'd heard about merchants who used meat to attract the giant bird. When it takes the meat, it also picks up the diamonds and brings them to its nest. There the merchants wait. They scare away the bird, taking the diamonds.

Again, I saw an opportunity for escape. I stuffed my pack with diamonds and tied myself to a piece of meat. Soon, the giant bird picked me up and took me on another thrilling ride to its nest. The merchants were astonished to see me there, but then they accused me of stealing their diamonds!

"Not so fast," I said, "I've gathered more diamonds than you ever could, and I have more than any of us will ever need. I'll share them in exchange for my rescue."

After that, we all sailed together, gathering riches. During the long days of our journey home, I told myself that this time I should stay. But every night, I dreamed of flying.

Use the Reading Guide to help you understand the passage.

Odysseus and the Cyclops

adapted from The Odyssey
by Homer

Reading Guide

What do you think Odysseus means when he says "life had other plans for my army and me"?

What do Odysseus's men want to do with the animals?

What do you learn about Odysseus's character when he insists that his men ask the cave owner for permission to take some food?

After we defeated the city of Troy, I thought our adventures were over. But life had other plans for my army and me. We had sailed for days, and decided to rest on an island. We tied our ship well and went off in search of food. Fruits and vegetables were scarce on the island, so we ventured farther into the forest, finally stumbling upon a cave. We found it filled with goats and sheep. Cheese and milk were stored against the cool cave walls.

It was clear that these animals had not arrived by accident. This cave had an owner, someone who raised sheep and goats.

My hungry army cried, "Let's take the animals and sail away now."

"No," I insisted, "We must ask the cave's owner for permission."

But I allowed that since we were starving, we could eat some of the cheese. I was sure that once we explained ourselves, whoever owned the cave would understand. I could never have imagined what would happen next.

We heard the cave's owner before we saw him. Each of his steps was like an earthquake. Before us was a Cyclops, a huge one-eyed monster named Polyphemus. He was holding a pile of tree trunks as if they were small sticks.

"Who dares enter my cave?" he roared. He picked up two of my men as if they were bugs, and dashed them to the floor. Rage burned in his giant eye as he lit a fire and threw the men upon it for his dinner. Before the rest of us could run, he blocked the cave's entrance with a large rock.

Reading Guide

What happens because of Odysseus's decision not to leave the cave before the owner arrives?

Notice how the author does not reveal all of Odysseus's plan at once. How does this encourage readers to read on?

What does Odysseus say when Polyphemus asks his name?

Even after Polyphemus went to sleep, there was nothing we could do. The rock was too big for us to move. We needed Polyphemus to do it. The next morning, he left the cave with two more men, locking us in again. If I didn't come up with a plan, we would all become dinner.

My men cried, "When he comes back, we'll attack him with our knives and swords!"

"No," I said, "Our tiny weapons would hurt him no more than a bee's sting."

I searched my mind, unsure of a solution, when I suddenly thought of the tree trunks Polyphemus had brought to the cave. I ordered my men to use their weapons to sharpen a tree trunk to a point. We hid the trunk in the back of the cave.

Now we needed a way to distract Polyphemus. I had in my pack a flower known to make people sleep. I heated some milk over the fire, and sprinkled the flowers in with some honey. When Polyphemus returned, I offered it to him.

"Before you enjoy another meaty dinner," I said, pretending to joke, "Please accept this sweet drink."

Polyphemus snatched the bowl and drank hungrily. "Tell me the name of the man who offers me this sweet, delicious nectar."

"My name is Noman," I said.

"Give me another bowl, Noman," Polyphemus roared. "Then it's time for the main course."

But before long, Polyphemus began to yawn. His giant eyelid drooped, and he fell asleep. Quickly, my men and I grabbed the tree trunk and thrust it into the fire until it was red hot. Then we drove it through the eye of Polyphemus, who woke bellowing with pain. Blinded, he swung his arms as my men and I hid in the corners of the cave. Then he called to the other Cyclops who lived outside the cave.

Reading Guide

Why does Odysseus tell Polyphemus that his name is Noman?

How do Odysseus and his men get out of the cave?

What happens as a result of Odysseus's taunts?

"Noman is hurting me!" he shrieked, "Noman is in my cave!"

The other Cyclops ignored him, saying, "If no man is hurting you, then nothing is wrong."

They moved on, leaving Polyphemus to roll away the rock blocking the cave. Seeing a way out, some of my men began to run.

"Stop," I hissed, "This is surely a trap. Polyphemus knows we'll run. He's waiting for us."

Instead, I looked to the woolly sheep in the cave. I showed my men how to roll underneath them and hold tight to the wool of their bellies. Unable to see, Polyphemus patted the backs of the sheep as they left one by one, but he did not know that we hung underneath.

We hiked silently to the shore and untied our ship. Only when we had set sail did I cry, "My name is not Noman. My name is Odysseus. Odysseus has outsmarted you!"

Enraged, Polyphemus called upon his father, Poseidon, god of the sea. He begged his father to punish us for blinding and taunting him.

To our misfortune, Poseidon sent great storms to disrupt our voyage. And so, even though we escaped, we could not go home as we planned. Instead, I spent ten long years at sea, thankful for my life, but sorry for my pride.