

Name: _____

I ESCAPED THE DONNER PARTY by Ellie Crowe and Scott Peters
COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS



Chapter 1:

How old is Zeke?

Chapter 2:

Why is Zeke happy to be traveling to California in the Reed family wagon?

Chapter 3:

Were the pioneers afraid of the Indians?

Chapter 4:

Why did Zeke hesitate before telling Virginia and Ed about his premonition or flash?

Chapter 5:

What was the Hastings Cut-off?

Chapter 6:

Do you think Reed was responsible for the pioneers' problems?

Chapter 7

Why did the cattle bolt?

Chapter 8:

Why did the travelers need the oxen?

Chapter 9

Why did Zeke give his horse to the Indian braves?

Chapter 10

Why did the pioneers abandon their wagons?

Chapter 11

Why did the pioneers dread the snow?

Chapter 12

What did the pioneers build for shelter at Truckee Lake?

Chapter 13

What did Zeke fear Keseberg?

Chapter 14

What did Mary Ann name the snowshoe group?

Chapter 15

Was it easy to walk on snowshoes?

Chapter 16

What did Foster think the pioneers should do in order to stay alive?

Chapter 17

Why did Zeke follow the Miwok Indians?

Chapter 18

Who saved Zeke from the bear?

Chapter 19

What did the First Relief members plan to do?

Chapter 20

Which two children had to go back to Truckee Lake?

Chapter 21

Why did Zeke think he could now stand up to his brother?

Chapter 22

Why did Virginia think it was a bad idea to take a cut-off?

Name: _____

I ESCAPED THE DONNER PARTY by Ellie Crowe and Scott Peters
STUDY GUIDE



CAUSE AND EFFECT

Cause: The pioneers started the expedition later than most travelers going west.

Effect: _____

Cause: The pioneers took the Hastings Cut-off, an unknown new route west.

Effect: _____

Cause: _____

Effect. The animals died of thirst or ran away to be claimed by Indians.

Cause: _____

Effect: The pioneers were forced to spend the winter at Truckee Lake.

VISUALIZATION

Draw a picture of a Sioux Indian

Draw a picture of a pioneer

Draw a picture of the Sierra Nevada Mountains

Draw a log cabin at Truckee Lake

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

It's 1846, and your family is traveling west across America in a wagon to start a new life. You are only allowed to bring four things. What would you bring?

It's 2020, and your family is driving across the USA to start a new life. You can bring only four things. What would you bring?

You are asked to join the Forlorn Hope and attempt to cross the Sierra Nevada to get help. Would you go or stay? Why?

You are a Miwok Indian brave. You learn that a large group of starving pioneers is stranded at Truckee Lake. The relief party asks you to guide them over the Sierra Nevada. Would you agree?

MAKING INFERENCES

Red war paint streaked their sharp cheekbones. Tomahawks gleamed in their fists. Shrunken scalps dangled from their leather-strip necklaces.

Q: Why did the Indian braves paint their faces with war paint and wear shrunken scalps?

Star Boy looked at Zeke with trusting, brown eyes.

“I should never have brought you on this crazy journey, Star Boy,” he whispered.

Q: What did Zeke feel when he whispered this?

Then, swallowing hard, Zeke handed Star Boy’s reins to the closest brave.

The brave looked confused.

“Please take care of my horse,” Zeke said. “His name is Star Boy.” Then, choking up and unable to talk, he simply pointed to his heart and then to Star Boy.

Q: Why was Zeke choking up?

All night, the wild wind howled and screeched—a triumphant banshee. A small voice urged Zeke to walk onward alone. I can get over the mountains, he thought. If I leave right now, I could be in California tomorrow.

Do it, he told himself.

Just get up and go.

Snow fell, mixed with pelting hailstones.

Four-year-old Tommy Reed began to cry, plaintive sobs calling for his papa. Five-year-old Jimmy, shivering and damp, buried his head on Zeke’s leg.

Zeke longed to go.

But how could he?

Q: What does this say about Zeke's character?

Zeke steeled himself and peered inside. The place smelled rank. Bloody. The teamster's body lay twisted in the corner. There was a long gash across his chest. Zeke reeled back. Had Keseberg killed Elliot?

Keseberg crouched at a fire pit, stirring a big, bubbling pot. He gave his carnivorous grin. "Want to join me?"

"He was one of us," Zeke said.

Keseberg shrugged. "You do what you got to do. Or else you die."

"There's got to be another way."

"You let me know when you find it. I'm not going to sit here, starving to death."

Q: What did Zeke feel about Keseberg?

"I think Foster's checking us out, and I think if we stay we're dead meat," Zeke whispered.

"Don't forget he has the rifle," Mary Ann said.

"I'm not forgetting that," Zeke muttered. "I'm thinking of it every two minutes. We've got to get it from him."

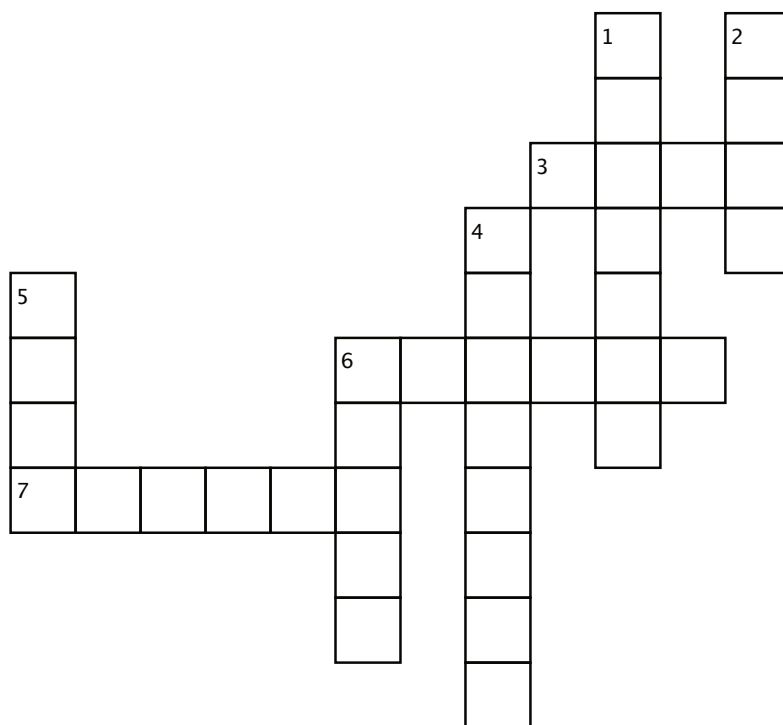
Q: What does this say about Zeke's character?

His face shining with joy, Reed hugged them. Then he looked around. "Where's Patty? And my little Tommy?"

Mrs. Reed began to sob. "They had to go back to Truckee Lake, James. They couldn't make it up the mountain."

Q: How did Reed feel when he heard this?

Could You Escape the Donner Party?

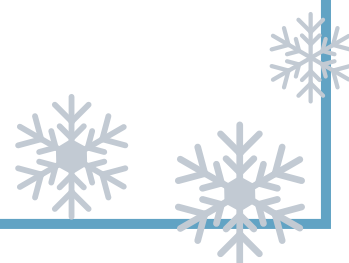


Down:

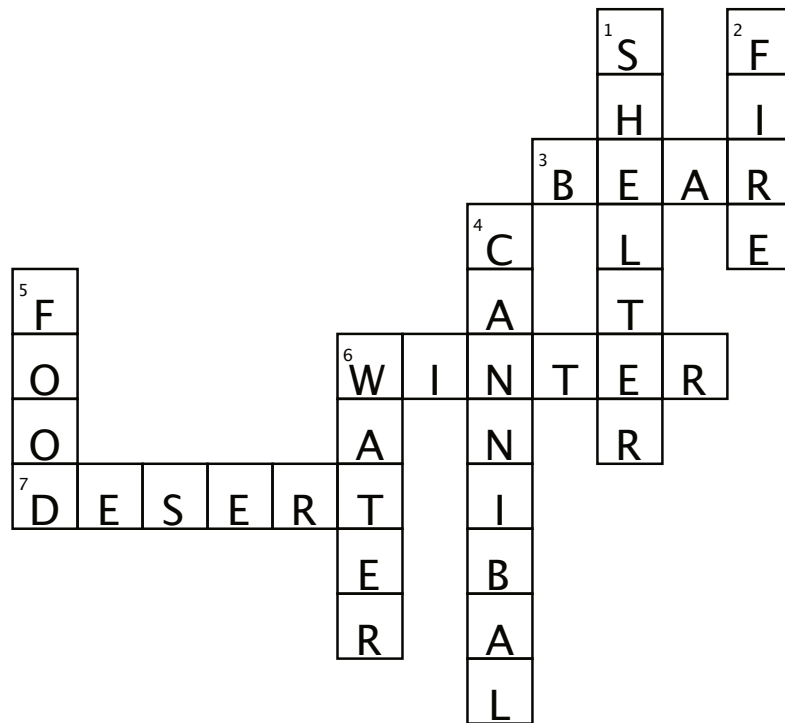
1. Build this to keep warm and dry.
2. You need this to cook and keep warm,
4. Beware of this person he may eat you.
5. Take enough of this with you -you'll starve without it.
6. Oxen, cattle and people need this to live.

Across:

3. Avoid this, it's big and hairy with claws
6. Don't cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains in this season.
7. Don't hike here without lots of water.



Could You Escape the Donner Party?

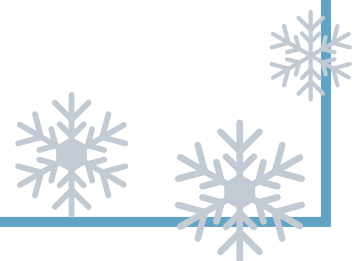


Down:

1. Build this to keep warm and dry.
2. You need this to cook and keep warm,
4. Beware of this person he may eat you.
5. Take enough of this with you -you'll starve without it.
6. Oxen, cattle and people need this to live.

Across:

3. Avoid this, it's big and hairy with claws
6. Don't cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains in this season.
7. Don't hike here without lots of water.



I ESCAPED THE DONNER PARTY

By Ellie Crowe and Scott Peters

ANSWER KEY

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Chapter 1:

How old is Zeke? **Fifteen**

Chapter 2:

Why is Zeke happy to be traveling to California in the Reed family wagon? **He likes Mr. Reed and is glad not to be traveling with his father and brother.**

Chapter 3:

Were the pioneers afraid of the Indians? **Yes**

Chapter 4:

Why didn't Zeke want to tell Virginia and Ed about the premonition or flash? **He doesn't want her to think that he is weird.**

Chapter 5:

What was the Hastings Cut-off? **A shortcut discovered by Hastings.**

Chapter 6:

Do you think Reed was responsible for the pioneers' problems? **He was responsible for some of the problems.**

Chapter 7

Why did the cattle bolt? **They smelled water.**

Chapter 8:

Why did they need the oxen? **They needed them to pull the wagons.**

Chapter 9

Why did Zeke give his horse to the Indian braves? **He wanted his horse to be fed and to stay alive.**

Chapter 10

Why did the pioneers abandon their wagons? **They had no way of pulling them.**

Chapter 11

Why did the pioneers dread the snow? **The snow blocked the mountain pass.**

Chapter 12

What did the pioneers build for shelter at Truckee Lake? **They built log huts and canvas shelters.**

Chapter 13

What did Zeke fear Keseberg? **He suspected Keseberg was a cannibal.**

Chapter 14

What did Mary Ann name the snowshoe group? **The Forlorn Hope.**

Chapter 15

Was it easy to walk on snowshoes? **No.**

Chapter 16

What did Foster think the pioneers should do in order to stay alive? **He thought they should eat whatever they could including bodies.**

Chapter 17

Why did Zeke follow the Miwok Indians? **He hoped they would lead him to the pass.**

Chapter 18

Who saved Zeke from the bear? **The Indians.**

Chapter 19

What did the First Relief plan to do? **They planned to find and rescue the Donner Party.**

Chapter 20

Which two children had to go back to Truckee Lake? **Reed's two children.**

Chapter 21

Why did Zeke think he could now beat his brother? **He had become tougher and more confident.**

Chapter 22

Why did Virginia think it was a bad idea to take a cut-off? **She had experienced being lost in the mountains while taking a cut-off**

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Cause: The Pioneers started on the expedition later than most travelers going west.

Effect: **They were caught in the snow**

Cause: The pioneers took the Hastings Cut-off, an unknown new route west.

Effect: **The pioneers got lost.**

Cause: **They had no water**

Effect. The animals died of thirst or ran away and were taken by Indians

Cause: **The snow blocked the pass**

Effect: The pioneers were forced to spend the winter at Truckee Lake.

MAKING INFERENCES

Red war paint streaked their sharp cheekbones. Tomahawks gleamed in their fists. Shrunken scalps dangled from their leather-strip necklaces.

Why did the Indian braves paint their faces with war paint and wear shrunken scalps?

They wanted to look scary and frighten their enemies

Star Boy looked at Zeke with trusting, brown eyes.

“I should never have brought you on this crazy journey, Star Boy,” he whispered.

What did Zeke feel when he whispered this?

Zeke felt sorry and guilty that he had brought his horse.

Zeke swallowed hard and handed Star Boy's reins to the closest brave. "Please take care of my horse," he said. "His name is Star Boy."

Then, because he was choking up and couldn't talk anymore, he pointed to his heart and pointed to Star Boy.

Why was Zeke choking up?

He loved his horse and didn't want to leave it.

All night, the wild wind howled. Screeched. Roared. A triumphant banshee. Storm clouds rolled across the sky. Zeke longed to just walk off. I can get over the mountains, he thought. If I leave right now, I could be in the Sacramento Valley tomorrow night.

Do it, he told himself.

Just get up and go.

His blanket grew heavy as snow fell faster and faster in large and larger flakes. Two-year-old Tommy Reed began to cry, plaintive sobs, calling for his papa. Five-year-old Jimmy, shivering and damp, buried his head on Zeke's leg.

Zeke longed to go.

But, how could he?

Why does this say about Zeke's character?

It shows he is a responsible person and cares about others.

Zeke steeled himself. He had a horrible feeling he knew what he would find. He peered inside. The place smelled rank. Bloody. The teamster's body lay in the corner. There was a long gash in his chest where his heart would be.

Keseberg crouched at a fire pit, stirring a big, bubbling pot. He gave his carnivorous grin. "Want to join me?"

"He was one of us," Zeke said.

Keseberg shrugged, "You do what you got to do. Or else you die."

"There's got to be another way."

"You let me know when you find it, I'm not going to sit here starving to death."

What did Zeke feel about Keseberg?

He was afraid of him.

"I think Foster's checking us out, and I think if we stay we're dead meat," Zeke whispered.

"Don't forget he has the rifle," Mary Ann said.

"I'm not forgetting that," Zeke muttered. "I'm thinking of it every two minutes. We've got to get it from him."

What does this say about Zeke's character?

He is brave.

Reed hugged them all. "Where's Patty?" he asked. "And Tommy?"

Margaret Reed began to sob. "They had to go back to Truckee Lake, James. They just couldn't make it up the mountain."

How did Reed feel when he heard this?

He was horrified and feared for his children.
