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Literary Text

Focus Lesson

When you take a test, you might be asked to read a story and answer questions about it. Sometimes what you read is **nonfiction**—a story that is true. Other times, it is **fiction**—a made-up story. A literary story is one kind of made-up story. It has characters in it who speak to each other. It has a beginning, middle, and end.

There are many different kinds of literary stories. **Realistic fiction** is a made-up story that could happen in real life. **Historical fiction** also can be realistic, but the story takes place in a different time period than the present. **Science fiction** and **fantasies** are stories that take place in unreal settings or that feature unreal events. Usually some element of science forms the background in a science fiction story. A fantasy may feature imaginary worlds like ours filled with magic, humans with extraordinary powers, or fantastic creatures such as vampires or unicorns. **Mysteries** are stories about situations that are puzzling. The characters, and the reader, look for clues that help explain what has happened. **Myths** are stories that come from many cultures. Some of the best-known myths are those of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The main purpose of a myth is usually to try to explain how the world began, why things happen, or the customs of the people. **Fables**, such as “The Tortoise and the Hare,” are short stories that often have animals that act like humans. They usually teach a lesson about how people behave. **Fairy tales** have elements of magic. They often include creatures like giants, wicked witches, and elves. **Folktales** are stories about ordinary people that teach a lesson about how people behave. **Tall tales** wildly exaggerate the skills or strengths of the hero. The hero is usually a character from America’s past like Paul Bunyan, a giant lumberjack.

Characters, plot, and setting all make up a good story. The **characters** are the people in the story, and the way they think, feel, and act help move along the plot. The **plot** is the order of events in a story. It is the **conflict**, or problem, that makes the story exciting. The **setting** is when and where the story takes place. It helps shape the characters and determines what they do. A story may be realistic fiction, a fairy tale, folktale, or even told as a poem, but it will always include characters, plot, and setting.



Read this story and answer the questions that follow.

Dialogue is what characters say to each other. It is placed in quotation marks so you can tell who is speaking.

What is an example of dialogue in this story?

The Man, His Son, and Their Donkey

1 A man and his son were on their way to market. As they expected to bring back many goods, they were leading a donkey to carry them home. On the way, a neighbor passed them, riding on his own donkey. "You're a couple of fools!" he called. "What good is a donkey except to ride on?"

2 So the man put his son on the donkey, and they continued on their way. Soon they passed a family walking in the road. "That boy is as lazy as a cat!" they heard a woman say. "Shame on him! He rides while his father walks!"

3 So the man told his son to get off so that he could ride. A little farther on, they passed two women driving a cow to market. "What kind of a man is that?" one of them said in a loud voice. "He makes his boy walk while he takes it easy!"

4 Irritably, the man ordered his son to get up in front of him on the donkey's back. By this time they were getting near the town, and the road was thick with traffic. The man noticed a group of men pointing at them and whispering behind their hands. "You've got something to tell me, say it to my face!" snarled the man.



5 "You've got that donkey carrying a mountain on his back!" one of the men jeered. "You treat him like the Count treats us poor folk, as if he were worthless!"

6 So the man ordered his son to get off. Glumly, they sat by the side of the road, thinking, while the donkey grazed happily. At last the man cut a stout, straight branch from a tree. He trimmed it with his knife. With much grunting, the man and boy tied the donkey's hooves to the pole and raised it to their shoulders. They carried it along, earning the laughter of all who saw them.

7 As they were crossing the bridge at the edge of town, the donkey kicked one hind foot loose. This caused the boy to drop his end of the pole. His father lost control, and the donkey tumbled over the bridge. It was swept down the river and far away.

A **narrator** is the person telling the story. The narrator may be a character or a person outside the story. A **first-person narrator** tells the story from his or her point of view using the words *I* and *we*. A **third-person narrator** uses characters' names or *he*, *she*, or *they*.

What type of narrator does this story have?

The **theme** of a story is its message. Characters, setting, dialogue, and plot help you figure out a story's theme.

What is this story's theme?



1 Part A

What genre is this passage?

Reread the passage. Look for clues that tell you what type of passage you are reading. This passage is a story. It is a folktale.

Part B

What about the passage helps you understand what genre it is?

Reread the passage. What clues in the passage help you know what you are reading? Think about the setting and the characters. The passage is a story, not a play or poem. It has a realistic setting with ordinary people. However, the story is obviously set "once upon a time" and it involves people in a traditional way of life. The story also teaches a lesson about how to behave. This story is a folktale.

 **Guided Practice**

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

Grey Cub

from *White Fang*

by Jack London

See page 6
Focus Lesson:
Literary Text

1 He was different from his brothers and sisters. Their hair already betrayed the reddish hue inherited from their mother, the she-wolf; while he alone, in this particular, took after his father. He was the one little grey cub of the litter. He had bred true to the straight wolf-stock—in fact, he had bred true to old One Eye himself, physically. The single exception was that he had two eyes to his father's one.

2 The grey cub's eyes had not been open long, yet already he could see with steady clearness. And while his eyes were still closed, he had felt, tasted, and smelled. He knew his two brothers and his two sisters very well. He had begun to romp with them in a feeble, awkward way, and even to squabble, his little throat vibrating with a strange rasping noise (the forerunner of the growl), as he worked himself into a passion. And long before his eyes had opened he had learned by touch, taste, and smell to know his mother—a source of warmth and food and tenderness. She possessed a gentle, caressing tongue that soothed him when it passed over his soft little body. He snuggled close against her to doze off to sleep.

3 Most of the first month of his life had been passed thus in sleeping, but now he could see quite well, and he stayed awake for longer periods of time, and he was coming to learn his world quite well. His world was gloomy; but he did not know that, for he knew no other world. It was dim-lighted; but his eyes had never had to adjust themselves to any other light. His world was very small. Its limits were the walls of the cave; but as he had no knowledge of the wide world outside, he was never worried about the narrow confines of existence.

4 But he had early discovered that one wall of his world was different from the rest—this was the mouth of the cave and the source of light. He had discovered that it was different from the other walls long before he had any thoughts of his own. It had been an irresistible attraction before ever his eyes opened and





Guided Practice: LITERARY TEXT

1 Part A

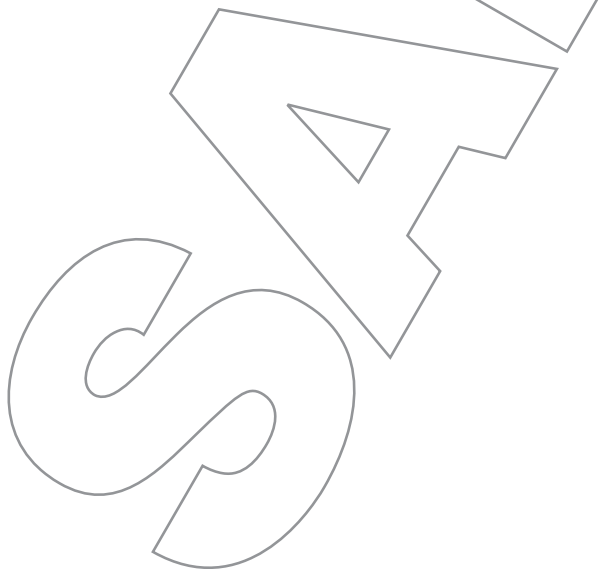
Why does the author compare the cubs to “the tendrils of a vine” in paragraph 5?

Read paragraph 5 again. What comparison is the author making in this simile?

Part B

How does the mother wolf react to the behavior in the answer to Part A?

Read paragraph 6 again. What does the mother do?





Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

My Advent on Mars

Adapted from *A Princess of Mars*

by Edgar Rice Burroughs

- 1 I opened my eyes upon a strange and weird landscape. I knew that I was on Mars; not once did I question either my sanity or my wakefulness. I was not asleep, no need for pinching here; my inner mind told me as plainly that I was upon Mars as your mind tells you that you are upon Earth. You do not question the fact; neither did I.
- 2 I found myself lying prone upon a bed of yellowish, mosslike vegetation which stretched around me in all directions for many miles. I seemed to be lying in a deep, circular basin, along the outer edge of which I could distinguish some low hills.
- 3 It was midday, the sun was shining full upon me and the heat of it was rather intense upon my body, yet no greater than would have been true under similar conditions on an Arizona desert. Here and there were slight outcroppings of rock which glistened in the sunlight. A little to my left, perhaps a 100 yards, appeared a low, walled enclosure about four feet in height. No water, and no other vegetation than the moss was in evidence, and as I was somewhat thirsty I determined to do a little exploring.
- 4 Springing to my feet I received my first Martian surprise, for the effort, which on Earth would have brought me standing upright, carried me into the Martian air to the height of about three yards. I landed softly upon the ground, however, without a shock or jar. To my surprise, I found that I must learn to walk all over again, as the efforts that had carried me easily and safely upon Earth played strange antics with me upon Mars.
- 5 Instead of progressing in a sane and dignified manner, my attempts to walk resulted in a variety of hops which took me clear of the ground a couple of feet at each step and landed me sprawling upon my face or back at the end of each second or third hop. My muscles, accustomed to the force of gravity on Earth, played mischief with me in attempting to cope with the lesser gravitation and lower air pressure on Mars.
- 6 I was determined, however, to explore the low structure which was the only evidence of habitation in sight. Frustrated with my lack of progress, I hit upon the unique plan of crawling. I did fairly well at this and in a few moments had reached the low wall of the enclosure. There appeared to be no doors or windows upon the side nearest me, but as the wall was but about four feet high, I cautiously stood and looked over the top. There I saw the strangest sight that had ever been given me to see.



Part B

How are the narrators of the two stories similar?

- A** Both begin to look for shelter.
- B** Both land in unfamiliar worlds.
- C** Both fear the creatures they meet.
- D** Both master the science of time travel.

2 Part A

Why does the author most likely use the word *monsters* in paragraph 9?

- A** to suggest that the Martians are clever
- B** to suggest that the Martians are dangerous
- C** to suggest that the Martians are gigantic
- D** to suggest that the Martians are mysterious

Part B

Which sentence from the passage best supports the answer to Part A?

- A** "They seemed mostly head, with little scrawny bodies and long necks."
- B** "They had two legs and two arms, with an extra pair of limbs in the middle which could be used at will either as arms or legs."
- C** "I was given but little time to speculate on the wonders of my new discovery."
- D** "It was the rattling of the tools of war which warned me."