Character Analysis

Name: _____

Date: _____

Fill in the table about the characters: their relationship to the others and their role in the story; choose the descriptions that fit; and give evidence from the story for each one.

Choose from: unsentimental · kind · accepting · passive · brave (a description may fit more than one character).

Name	Relationship to other characters	Role in the story	Character description(s)	Evidence from the story
KOSKOOSH				
THE CHIEF OF THE TRIBE				
SIT-CUM-TO-HA				

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Matching exercise

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Match each phrase from the story with an image. Draw a line to join them.

1	*Camp must be broken. The long trail waited while the short day refused to linger. Life called her, and the duties of life, not death.*	A	
2	*Hear them whine! How they hated the work and the trail! They were off! Sled after sled churned slowly away into the silence.*	B	
3	*One by one they would go to feed the fire, and just so, step by step, death would creep upon him.*	C	
4	*"An old one," Zing-ha, who was quicker at reading the sign, said – "an old one who cannot keep up with the herd. The wolves have cut him out from his brothers, and they will never leave him."*	D	
5	*One wolf had been caught in a wild lunge of the maddened victim and trampled to death. A few bones, well picked, bore witness.*	E	
6	*The picture, like all of youth's impressions, was still strong with him, and his dim eyes watched the end played out as vividly as in that far-off time.*	F	
7	*A cold muzzle thrust against his cheek, and at its touch his soul leaped back to the present.*	G	
8	*He waved his brand wildly, and sniffs turned to snarls; but the panting brutes refused to scatter.*	H	

Glossary

Name: _____

Date: _____

Abode: (v) past tense of 'abide' (to live or dwell)

Anathematizing: (v) cursing or condemning

Palsied: (adj) affected with tremors or paralysis

Compass: (n) the enclosing limits of an area

Stalwart: (adj) loyal, reliable and hardworking

Chiding: (v) scolding or rebuking

Shaman: (n) a spiritual leader

Gutturals: (n) harsh sounds produced in the throat

Tundra: (n) a vast, flat treeless Arctic region

Thong: (n) a narrow strip of leather

Moccasin: (n) a soft leather shoe

Fagot: (n) a bundle of sticks used for fuel

Perpetuate: (v) to carry on

Caribou: (n) reindeer

Slovenly: (adj) careless, slow

Spruce: (n) a coniferous tree

Void: (n) a completely empty space

For the nonce: (phrase) for the moment

BEFORE YOU READ

What do we owe to the oldest members of our families and communities? How should a society care for them?

Is it ever right to accept something hard because it is part of life? Think of an example.

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Quiz

Name: _____

Date: _____

Please choose the best option for each of the following questions.

1. What is Sit-cum-to-ha doing at the beginning of the story?

(a) Extinguishing the fires and breaking down camp

(b) Harnessing the dogs up ready for the trail ahead

(c) Cooking a hearty breakfast for her grandfather

(d) Practising to fight with a gnarled club

2. What thought makes Koskoosh panicky for a moment?

(a) That his tribe may leave without him

(b) That he is close to death

(c) That camp may not be broken quickly enough to make the most of the short day ahead

(d) That he may have lost his favourite fur

3. Who is Koskoosh? Select all that apply.

[a] An old blind man

[b] Chief of the tribe

[c] Father of the chief of his tribe

[d] Grandfather of Sit-cum-to-ha

[e] A skilled hunter

[f] A deaf man

4. Who approaches Koskoosh as the rest of the tribe travel away?

(a) The chief of the tribe

(b) Sit-cum-to-ha

(c) The shaman

(d) His favourite dog

5. What simile does Koskoosh use to describe himself?

(a) As a last year's leaf, clinging lightly to the stem

(b) Like a snowflake, drifting to another existence

(c) A ghost trapped in human form

(d) As a bird with wings broken

6. Why is the wood the only thing standing between Koskoosh and the eternity that yawned in upon him?

(a) Because he will have to use it to defend himself from wolves

(b) Because once there is no wood to burn, he will freeze to death

(c) Because he needs it to cook his meals, or he will starve

(d) Because he must use it to build himself a shelter

7. What does Koskoosh think nature is interested in?

(a) The concrete thing called the individual

(b) The species

(c) Nothing but eternity

(d) All things equally

8. What is the task of life set down by nature?

(a) To perpetuate

(b) Death

(c) To kill

(d) To climb trees

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Quiz

Name: _____

Date: _____

9. What is the law of life set down by nature?

(a) Death
(b) To perpetuate
(c) That everything is connected
(d) That you must never steal

10. What metaphor does Koskoosh compare the members of the tribe to?

(a) Episodes
(b) A last year's leaf
(c) Slaves of nature
(d) Lambs to the slaughter

11. Where did Koskoosh abandon his own father?

(a) In a valley gripped by unforgiving frost
(b) In the very same spot where he himself now sat
(c) On the bank of the Kaskawulsh glacier
(d) On an upper reach of the Klondike

12. What happened to Koskoosh during the Great Famine?

(a) He was gravely injured by a caribou
(b) He lost his mother
(c) He met his wife
(d) He was born

13. How many members of the tribe survived the Great Famine?

(a) Less than one in ten
(b) Only 15
(c) None survived
(d) All of them

14. How did Zing-ha die?

(a) He was killed by a pack of wolves
(b) He grew to an old age and was left behind
(c) He fell through an air-hole on the Yukon
(d) He was killed by the Pellys

15. What does Zing-ha say is strange about the moose and the wolves?

(a) For wolves to chase such a large animal
(b) For a moose to free itself once taken down
(c) For a moose to be alone and separated from the herd
(d) For wolves to die during a hunt

16. What makes a chill pass over Koskoosh's body?

(a) His last piece of wood extinguishing upon the fire
(b) The sound of his son returning with the dogs
(c) A long-drawn howl, coming from close by
(d) The sound of the wind echoing around the void

17. What makes the wolf initially retreat?

(a) His hereditary fear of man
(b) A call from his brothers
(c) Koskoosh sets him on fire with a burning fagot
(d) Koskoosh doesn't know

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Quiz

Name: _____

Date: _____

18. What happens at the end of the story?

(a) Koskoosh fights the pack of wolves off and sits back down by the fire

(b) Koskoosh drops the stick in the snow and accepts his fate

(c) The ghost of the old moose appears and spirits Koskoosh away

(d) Koskoosh's son returns and fights off the wolves

If you read it in the iClassics app

Answer these extra questions about what you discover as you read:

1. What happens when you tap the silhouettes of Koskoosh's tribe on the hill?

_____

2. What happens if you don't read quickly enough while Koskoosh sits alone by his fire?

_____

3. What animals can you see in the sky behind young Koskoosh and Zing-ha as they examine the tracks?

_____

4. How many wolves surround Koskoosh?

_____

Think like a detective

Name: _____

Date: _____

Answer in full sentences. Support your ideas with evidence from the text.

1. Koskoosh calls the tribe “episodes” and nature’s law “death”. How does this idea help him accept what is happening? Do you find it comforting or cold?

2. The tribe leaves Koskoosh by the fire, yet nobody is shown as cruel. Why not? What does the story say about duty, survival and kindness?

3. Koskoosh remembers leaving his own father. How does this memory shape the ending, and what does it say about the cycle of life?

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Writing

Name: _____

Date: _____

For each scenario, explain what you think each of the characters would do and why, based on the descriptions and evidence from your character table.

a. The tribe finds a hidden ice cave full of gold and jewels. They divide the treasure, and some members decide to give up their nomadic life and go off to discover what the world has to offer.

b. The tribe stumbles across a strange device that erupts in a green flash. They find they have been teleported to the future, the time in which you are living now.

Extension: choose one scenario and write it as a short story with a beginning, a middle and an end, imitating London's style.



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