

# Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Compare and Contrast

Read the short story and answer each question.

## Through the Ice Tunnel

Nia had never walked across a frozen lake before, and she wasn't planning to start now. But her cousin Eli was already halfway across, chasing his dropped backpack as the wind rolled it like a tumbleweed. "Come on, Nia!" he called. She stared at the glassy surface. Cracks spiderwebbed beneath her boots like frozen lightning. The lake groaned, low and deep. "I'll wait here!" she shouted. But then she saw Eli slip. The backpack slid toward a narrow opening in the ice. Eli crawled. Nia's legs moved before she could think. Step. Slide. Balance. She dropped to her knees and reached out. The backpack teetered at the edge of the crack, and she grabbed it just before it dropped through. "Got it," she said, heart thudding like a drum. Back on the shore, Eli looked at her with wide eyes. "You were brave." She shook her head. "I was scared the whole time." He smiled. "Still counts."



## The Signal Fire

Tomas and Lila were stranded after their hiking trail vanished in a landslide. The sun was low. The map was gone. "We have to do something," Lila said. Tomas nodded, gripping the water bottle like it might help him think. Then he spotted a ridge—clear and high. "If we get up there," he said, "maybe someone will see us." The climb was rough. Loose dirt slid under their boots. Lila slipped and scraped her hand. "This was a bad idea," she muttered. But Tomas didn't stop. He remembered his dad's advice: "*Courage doesn't mean you feel ready. It means you go anyway.*" At the top, Tomas built a signal fire from branches and dry grass. He lit it with a spark from his camping flint. Smoke rose like a gray ribbon into the sky. They waited. And waited. Then—far off—a chopper blade whirred through the wind. "We did it," Lila whispered. Tomas smiled, but his legs were still shaking.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Through the Ice Tunnel & The Signal Fire

1. How are the main characters in *Through the Ice Tunnel* and *The Signal Fire* similar?

- A. They both show courage by taking action even when they're scared.
- B. They both avoid danger and wait for someone else to solve the problem.
- C. They both use maps to find their way back to safety.
- D. They both get lost in a snowstorm and never find help.

2. How do the two stories approach the theme of courage differently?

- A. Nia faces a split-second decision to help her cousin, while Tomas plans and follows through on a rescue idea over time.
- B. Both stories focus only on weather changes, not bravery.
- C. Only Tomas is brave; Nia lets her cousin handle everything.
- D. Both characters have no fear and easily escape danger.

3. Fill in the blank:

In *Through the Ice Tunnel*, Nia shows courage even though she feels \_\_\_\_\_.

4. How does the wide illustration of the frozen lake help show the fear and urgency in Nia's story?

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5. Which story's approach to courage feels more familiar to you, and why?

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# Parent and Teacher Guide

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**Guide Reading Level:** S

**Lexile Level:** 850L-1000L

**Grade Level:** 5th Grade, Beginning of the Year

**Genre:** Adventure (Both Stories)

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## Introducing the Text

“In these two short adventure stories, characters are placed in dangerous or uncertain situations and must show courage to help themselves or others. As students read, they will analyze how the theme of courage is explored differently through each character’s choices and actions. A wordless illustration for *Through the Ice Tunnel* helps highlight tone and emotion.”

**Vocabulary:** cracked, scramble, courage, signal, flint

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## Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you expect from a story in the adventure genre?
  2. What kinds of situations might require a character to show courage?
  3. Have you ever had to act even when you felt unsure?
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## During Reading Discussion Questions

1. How does Nia’s decision differ from Tomas’s approach to helping others?
  2. What motivates each character to act, and how is fear described in both?
  3. How do the settings create tension in each story?
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## After Reading Discussion Questions

1. What similarities do both characters share in how they deal with fear?
  2. Which story shows a more immediate kind of bravery, and which one shows thoughtful bravery?
  3. How does the wide illustration enhance your understanding of the fear and bravery in *Through the Ice Tunnel*?
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## Activity Idea

Have students create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the two stories’ approaches to courage. Then, write a paragraph explaining how different situations can bring out different types of bravery, using evidence from both stories and the illustration.

