

Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Story Structure

Read the short story and answer each question.



The Snow Cave

Scene 1 - The Blizzard Begins

In 1912, Ella and her older brother Jakob were crossing the snowy trails of Montana with their sled when the wind roared like a wild animal. "That storm's moving faster than us," Jakob warned.

Scene 2 - Lost in White

Snow whipped around them, hiding the trail. Trees became ghostly shadows. "We can't see five feet ahead," Ella shouted. Jakob nodded. "We need shelter."

Scene 3 - Building the Cave

Jakob scraped at a snowbank with his gloved hands. "Dig in, like the old trappers taught me." Ella helped, carving a hollow space. Their breath turned to fog. "We'll be okay," Jakob said. But his voice sounded paper-thin.

Scene 4 - Waiting in Silence

Inside the snow cave, the world was still. Ella curled up next to Jakob, clutching the family compass. "Mama always says storms pass," she whispered. Outside, the wind howled like wolves in mourning.

Scene 5 - Morning Light

When Ella opened her eyes, pale sunlight filtered through the icy wall. Jakob stirred beside her. "We made it."

They crawled out to a quiet, glittering world. The storm had passed, and the compass needle pointed home.



Name: _____

The Snow Cave

1. What is the role of Scene 3 in the structure of the story?

- A. It shows how Jakob and Ella worked together to survive by using knowledge from the past.
- B. It describes how the blizzard began and ruined their supplies.
- C. It shows that the siblings gave up and waited to be rescued.
- D. It tells the backstory of how the compass was made.

2. Why is Scene 5 important to the structure of the story?

- A. It begins the storm and introduces the problem.
- B. It provides the climax of the story when they run into wolves.
- C. It wraps up the story by showing the storm has passed and offers hope.
- D. It introduces a new character who finds them in the snow.

3. Fill in the blank:

Ella and Jakob dug a _____ to survive the blizzard.

4. Choose two scenes and explain how one builds on the other to increase tension or move the story forward.

5. How does the structure of the story (from storm to survival) help the reader understand Ella and Jakob's experience?



Parent and Teacher Guide

Guide Reading Level: U

Lexile Level: 925L-1075L

Grade Level: 5th Grade, Middle of the Year

Genre: Historical Fiction / Survival Adventure

Introducing the Text

“Today’s story takes place during a blizzard in 1912 and follows two siblings trying to survive in the wilderness. Pay attention to how each scene builds on the one before it to create tension and show the characters’ problem-solving. Notice how the story’s structure moves from danger to resolution.”

Vocabulary: blizzard, shelter, compass, fog, hollow

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you already know about how people used to travel in harsh weather without modern tools?
 2. Have you ever read a survival story? What makes it exciting or suspenseful?
 3. What does a story’s structure do to help you understand the events clearly?
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During Reading Discussion Questions

1. What choices do Jakob and Ella make to survive the storm?
 2. How do the characters respond differently to the danger?
 3. What clues in the text show how cold and dangerous the storm was?
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After Reading Discussion Questions

1. How did the author use each scene to build toward a moment of relief and hope?
 2. What might have happened if the story skipped one of the middle scenes?
 3. What does the story’s structure teach you about patience, teamwork, or survival?
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Activity Idea

Ask students to storyboard their own five-part survival tale using the same structure. They can illustrate or describe each “scene” and explain how one part builds to the next, showing problem, tension, and resolution.

