



STEPPING STONE  
SCHOOL (HIGH)

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Class 10

Subject-English language.

Date-10.6.20

Topic comprehension

Worksheet-16

Timing-40mins

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Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

From the edge of a steep ridge, I peered down into the Redstone valley. Like many summer days in the north west Alaska, the morning had begun bright and wind swept but now a dark cloud was drifting in from the east. I decided to move on. The camp was still three kilometers down the hill

It had been eighteen years since I had first come to this vast untamed wilderness. Still there was a lure of the place- the chance to live, move and breathe. Settled in Ambler, a small village in the Kobuk valley, I had found life among the Inupiat Eskimos as rich and textured as the Arctic landscape around us. However, even a bright summer day could mean trouble.

As I slung my pack onto my shoulders, a big Arctic mosquito thudded against my cheek. There had been a few of them through out the day but it was early in the season. The ice had melted just two weeks before and I had scarcely noticed the mosquitoes. But now as I wound down the ridge, the last breeze faded, and they were on me. Rising in clouds from the soggy Tundra, they pelted against my face. I looked for the repellent in my pack, but in vain.

I was flailing away nailing five or six at a whack, but there were thousands mobbing me now. They were diving in nose first, piercing me right through my clothes, dozens at a time. Four hands would not be enough. Years of Alaskan experience had taught me what to do in such a situation like this. I turned to my collar, cinched my pack straps tight and sprinted.

When I saw my tent, I was still going strong. So were the mosquitoes. They trailed me in a whim whining veil. Each time I slowed down, the attack resumed. Pausing just long enough to unzip the screen door, I dived through to safety. It took me fifteen minutes to hunt down the hundred or so that entered the tent with me.

After I had cornered the last one, I took stock and tried to relax. My hands and legs were smeared with blood, and every centimetre of the exposed skin was punctured. Outside, the insistent wail was nearly deafening. Mosquitoes settled over the tent, making strange patterns over the nylon mesh. Not until later that night, when a cold rain swept in and scattered the mob, did I stick my own itching nose outside again. Local Legend has it that an animal or human being for that matter, caught in one of these mosquito attacks, can be sucked dry.

Blood thirsty though they are, the big Arctic mosquitoes are frail creatures. These infamous Alaska state birds, averaging a little over half a centimetre in length, can not even with stand a substantial breeze. They would wither under bright sunlight. Too hot or too cold, too much or too little rain, they run for cover. They spend most of their brief lives hiding under leaves, waiting for the right feeding condition. A still, humid, cloudy evening is perfect.

The upper Kobuk Eskimos know how to handle mosquitoes. As soon as the river is cleared of ice, many Ambler people load up their boats and head for the chilly, wind swept coast to spend the summer. Of course, they also fish and hunt seals but it is no coincidence that this annual side steps the worst mosquito season.

a) Give the meaning of each word as used in the passage:

1) peered 2) lure 3) soggy 4) smeared 5) legend.

b) Answer the following questions briefly in your own words:

1) Why did the author feel that he should move on?

2) Where did the author come from? Why did he come to this particular place?

3) Why did the author consider the Arctic mosquitoes 'frail creatures'?

4) According to the author:

a) Why was a still, humid, cloudy evening perfect and for whom?

b) In which season was the mosquitoes menace at its peak?

5) Why did the Ambler people head for the chill wind-swept coast?

c) In not more than fifty words describe how the mosquitoes came upon the author and how he managed to escape from them.