

# THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

# LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

SHEILA BURNFORD

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

GUIDE WRITTEN BY RONALD GOODRICH AND MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

## SYNOPSIS

When Professor Jim Hunter has the opportunity to go to England for nine months as a visiting professor, he takes his family with him but leaves the family's three pets with his old friend, John Longridge. After eight months Longridge reflects upon how fond he has become of the pets—

*the old dog* (a bull terrier named Bodger, belonging to eleven-year-old Peter Hunter)

*the cat* (a Siamese named Tao, who is nine-year-old Elizabeth's pet)

*the young dog* (a Labrador retriever named Luath, who is Jim Hunter's hunting companion)

Longridge realizes that he will miss the three animals when they return to their home in a few weeks.

On the eve of a hunting trip, John Longridge writes a note for his housekeeper, Mrs. Oakes, with instructions on caring for the animals. During the night the cat accidentally dislodges the paperweight which is holding down the note. The crucial second page of the note falls into the fireplace and burns. The next morning Longridge says goodbye to the animals and leaves them outside, secure in the knowledge that they have never wandered off and that Mrs. Oakes will be arriving shortly. Longridge is touched when the young dog offers him his paw to shake, a gesture that the Labrador has never made before. The man does not realize until weeks later that the gesture signifies the young dog's decision to lead his companions home, a journey that will take them across two hundred and fifty miles of the roughest terrain in Ontario, Canada.

As soon as Jim Longridge leaves, the young dog sets off in the direction of home—due west. The old dog and the cat, who have been comrades for years, hesitate briefly and then follow. When Mrs. Oakes arrives, she is disappointed to discover the animals missing but, after reading the partial note, assumes that they have accompanied Longridge on his trip. Consequently, no one really misses the pets until Longridge returns nearly four weeks later.

Because he is out of condition, the old dog suffers greatly on the first day of the journey. He is both hungry and exhausted when the three travelers take shelter in a hollow made by the roots of a giant fallen spruce. The next day he valiantly tries to keep up with the young dog and the cat, but by late afternoon he collapses in a rut half filled with muddy water. Although obviously disturbed by the old

dog's collapse, the young dog and the cat go off briefly to explore and hunt. While they are gone a she-bear and her cub stumble upon the old dog. The large, curious cub begins to maul the dog, who is too weak and exhausted to defend himself. Suddenly the cat appears carrying a partridge that he has killed. Seeing the plight of his comrade, the cat becomes a raging fiend and hurls himself at the bear cub, landing on the cub's back and raking him across the eyes with his claws. The huge she-bear swings at the cat but the cat leaps away and the blow sends the cub flying. The bear approaches the semi-conscious old dog. The cat, screaming the banshee cry of an enraged Siamese, once more intervenes and confuses the bear, who does not know how to respond to this strange fierce creature that has the audacity to threaten her in spite of her huge size. When the snarling young dog joins the cat in defying the bear, mother and cub back down and retreat hurriedly into the brush. Now the young dog and the cat turn their attention to the old dog. The young dog licks the old dog's wounds, and the cat offers him the partridge that he has killed. From this point on in their journey the cat, who is an able hunter, shares all his kills with the old dog. The young dog, bred and trained as a retriever, is not so lucky. He is a poor hunter and barely catches enough food to stay alive.

After three days the old dog is sufficiently healed and well fed to travel. In fact, as the journey continues, the physical exertion and the fresh game provided by the cat make him more fit and trim than he has been in a long time. Instinctively wary of human contact, the young dog avoids settlements, but, when the old dog smells the cooking fires of an Ojibway camp, he cannot be restrained. The comfort-loving old dog, who has implicit faith in the goodness of human beings, enters the Indian camp. The Indians are amused by his antics and reward him with food. They are amazed when the cat enters the camp and nonchalantly takes a piece of meat from the dog. An old woman is convinced that the dog must be the White Dog of the Ojibways, an omen of good fortune. As she explains to the other Indians, "What *mortal* dog would suffer a cat to rob him of his meat?" She feeds him more meat and tends his wounds. While the old dog and the cat rest at the Indian's fire, the more cautious young dog circles the camp. Finally, he barks commandingly, and his two companions obediently respond by leaving the comfort of the campfire, never realizing that they have now become a part of Ojibway folklore.

The three adventurers travel on for several days without incident until they come to a river. Water is a

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natural element for the young Labrador, but the old dog and the cat are reluctant to swim across. After the young dog demonstrates by swimming the river himself, the old dog, whose finest attributes are his courage and fighting spirit, leaps into the water and bravely but ineptly swims to the opposite bank. The young dog swims back to the other side to encourage the cat, who finally responds to the young dog's urgings and jumps into the water. The cat, accompanied by the young dog, is swimming well when disaster strikes. A beaver dam, located a short distance upstream, suddenly breaks. The two animals are caught in the swirling waters and debris of the dam. A floating log strikes the cat in the head and the swift current carries him downstream. The young dog struggles valiantly to save the cat, but the current defeats him. The old dog, who has sensed the disaster, wades chest-deep into the water, which knocks him down and compels him to retreat. The young dog continues swimming downstream until a rocky gorge forces him to seek the shore. The dogs meet on the bank, and that night the old dog howls his grief over the loss of his comrade. The next day they resume their sad journey.

Unknown to the dogs, the cat, although nearly drowned, has survived. Helvi Nurmi, the ten-year-old daughter of a frugal Finnish farmer and his wife, discovers the motionless body of the cat floating on some debris at the riverbank. Her father revives the cat, and the whole family is fascinated by the exotic nature and appearance of the Siamese. Helvi is overjoyed to have a pet for the first time in her life. The cat has been deafened by his ordeal in the river and remains with the Nurmis only until his hearing returns. When fully recovered from his near drowning, the cat resumes the journey, easily following the trail of the dogs.

In the meantime the starving dogs raid a farmer's chicken coop. As they are feeding on a chicken, they hear an angry shout and see the figure of a man in the distance. The farmer's collie, who has raced ahead, attacks the young dog. The Labrador is a hopeless fighter, lacking the jaws and instincts of a fighting dog. The old dog, however, is a bull terrier, the "white cavalier," regarded by many dog fanciers as the finest fighting dog ever bred. His heritage and fighting instincts aroused, the old dog intervenes and makes short work of the collie, whom he renders bloody and whimpering by the time the farmer arrives on the scene and ineffectually throws a stick at the backs of the retreating young dog and the victorious old dog. That night the dogs sleep in a shallow cave belonging to a porcupine. After a night of foraging, the porcupine returns to his cave. The young dog foolishly springs on the porcupine and acquires a cheek full of painful quills instead of the meal he has anticipated.

The cat, traveling much faster than the dogs, is not far behind them when he has a nearly fatal encounter with a lynx, a wanton killer, who pursues him into a rabbit burrow when a boy out hunting with his father comes upon the scene. The lynx turns on the boy, and the boy fires a clean shot through the lynx's heart. After the humans leave, the cat emerges from his hole and continues on the trail of the

dogs. Two days later he catches up with them, and there is a joyful reunion.

The trio has now covered two hundred miles of rugged wilderness, but the condition of the young dog is pitiful. His jaw, infected by the porcupine quills, has become so painful that he can hardly open his mouth. The cat and the old dog allow him first access to anything that the cat kills, but all he can manage to do is lick the blood from the carcasses. Becoming aware that a timber wolf is trailing the trio, the young dog leads them through a human settlement. At this point the old dog mutinies and scratches at the door of one of the houses. He is offended when a man drives him off with a bucket of water. The old dog is luckier at another house where an elderly couple, James Mackenzie and his wife Nell, invite him in. The young dog and the cat do not reveal themselves. The Mackenzies wonder about the old dog and agree to keep him if they do not find his real owner.

The next morning Mackenzie goes duck hunting, unaware that the young dog is trailing him. As a flock of mallards take off from the reeds, Mackenzie fires and drops one. The shot and the falling bird trigger the Labrador's instincts and training. He jumps into the water, retrieves the duck, and brings it to the amazed Mackenzie. Taking the Labrador home, Mackenzie carefully removes the porcupine quills embedded in the dog's cheek. The infection begins to drain immediately, and the young dog is able to take nourishment. The behavior of the old dog makes it clear that the two dogs are traveling together. Mackenzie tells his wife that they must have a goal and probably cannot be prevented from pursuing it. To keep the dogs from running off while he attempts to find out about them in town Mackenzie puts them in his stable and latches the door. However, he does not know about the cat, who is adept at opening any kind of latch. The cat releases the dogs, and Mackenzie is surprised to find them sunning in the yard. At night he puts them in the stable again, making certain the latch is secure. Again, the cat releases the dogs, and the three adventurers set out on the last leg of their journey—fifty miles across Ironmouth Range, the most wild and rugged country in Ontario.

At about this time Longridge returns from his hunting trip to discover that the animals are missing. He remembers the Labrador's parting gesture and correctly guesses that the young dog is trying to lead his companions home. He telephones the Hunters who have just arrived from England, and breaks the sad news. Except for nine-year-old Elizabeth, all of them are convinced that the three pets could not survive the rigors of the Canadian wilderness. Nevertheless, they send out inquiries. After a series of telephone calls, they learn a few facts about the trio from the Nurmis, the farmer whose chicken coop was raided, and the Mackenzies. Realizing that, when the dogs were last sighted, they still had to cross the Ironmouth Range, neither Peter nor his father have any hope for their survival. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is absolutely certain that her Tao will come home even though he has not been seen since his brief stay with the Nurmis. Elizabeth's faith is vindicated at the Hunters'

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cottage on Lake Windigo. John Longridge is visiting the family, and they are all on a walk through the northland bush when Elizabeth insists that she hears a dog barking. The others are dubious, but soon the cat comes hurtling through the bushes and leaps joyously into Elizabeth's arms. In moments the emaciated young dog is also happily reunited with his master. But the joy of the occasion is dampened by Peter's sorrow. The old dog has not come home. Feeling deeply sympathetic toward the boy, Longridge accompanies Peter to Lookout Point a short distance away. They take some photographs and are about to return to the cottage when the miracle occurs. Bodger, the white cavalier—the comical, comfort-loving old warrior—emerges out of the darkness of the bush. The old dog and the boy become an indistinguishable tangle. The incredible journey is over.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sheila Every Burnford (1918-1984), a native of Scotland, was privately educated in England, France, and Germany. A resident of Pass Lake, Ontario, Canada, she produced a modest list of works, beginning with *The Incredible Journey* (1961) and continuing with *The Fields of Noon*, 1964, a series of autobiographical essays; *Without Reserve* (1969); *One Woman's Arctic* (1973); *Mr. Noah and the Second Flood* (1973); and *Bel Ria* (1978), a children's story that compares favorably to *The Incredible Journey*. In addition, she contributed to *Punch*, *Canadian Poetry*, and the *Glasgow Herald*.

Among the subjects that Sheila Burnford featured in her books were the Canadian woods, Cree and Ojibwa reservations, Eskimos, conservation, and animals. Also, she drew upon her considerable knowledge of hunting, mushrooms, and astronomy to give a sense of verisimilitude to outdoor scenes.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

Ironically, critics are divided on the success of *The Incredible Journey*, some praising its objectivity and lack of sentimentality, and others faulting it for anthropomorphizing the central characters to make them seem more compatible to human instincts and motivation.

The novel has been translated into sixteen languages. It was filmed in 1963. The book earned Burnford two prestigious awards—the Canadian Book of the Year for Children medal in 1963 and the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award in 1971.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To trace the plot of a short novel
2. To analyze the characterization of animals in literature
3. To determine the relationship between animals and humans as this relationship is revealed in literature
4. To recognize the significance of setting in a short novel

5. To find and evaluate examples of courage, determination, and devotion as these qualities are revealed in literature
6. To compare a variety of animal stories

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To trace the plot of *The Incredible Journey*, noting how the journey functions as a framework for the story
2. To analyze the characterization of the old dog, the young dog, and the cat, determining which traits are clearly animal and which suggest human qualities
3. To determine how the old dog, the young dog, and the cat are affected by the other animals that they encounter on their journey
4. To describe how the three Hunter pets relate to or are affected by the humans in the novel
5. To recognize the importance of the setting of *The Incredible Journey*, noting in particular how the young dog, the old dog, and the cat adapt or fail to adapt to the Canadian wilderness
6. To find examples of courage, determination, and devotion demonstrated by any or all of the three Hunter pets
7. To compare *The Incredible Journey* with other animal stories that you have read

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter numbers are provided so that you can re-read the passage from which the item is taken.

1. —Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, "Song of Myself," 32. (Preface)  
(By way of preface to her novel, Sheila Burnford quotes American poet Walt Whitman, whose first edition of *Leaves of Grass* was published anonymously in 1855 and who issued eight subsequent editions until 1892. A visionary who revealed a harmonious union of past, present, and future, Whitman celebrated the universality and equality of all creatures in nature.)
2. This journey took place in a part of Canada which lies in the northwestern part of the great sprawling province of Ontario. (1)  
(Ontario, the most populous and second largest province in Canada, touches on Hudson Bay, James Bay, and the Great Lakes. Bounded by Quebec and Manitoba provinces and extending roughly 1,000 by 1,050 miles, Ontario's surface is over 1/6 water. Because of its lush wilds, the province is home to a variety of wild animals,

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*including moose, caribou, deer, bear, beaver, muskrat, rabbits, squirrels, wolves, lynxes, bobcats, and a variety of fish and birds.)*

3. He addressed him with the proper degree of ferocity, telling him that he was a scoundrelly opportunist, a sybaritic barbarian, and a disgrace to his upbringing and his ancestors, "AND"—and he paused in weighty emphasis—"a very . . . bad . . . dog!"

*(Because Bodger has defied authority and crept into the upholstered armchair, Longridge labels him a "sybaritic barbarian," referring to the Greek residents of Sybaris on the Gulf of Tarentum in Italy, who were notorious for luxury and self-indulgence.)*

4. So the old dog, who was a natural clown, slithered half off the chair and stood, with his hindquarters resting on the cushions, waving his tail and nudging the cat, who sat like an Egyptian statue, eyes half closed, head erect, then gave a throaty growl and patted at the pink and black bull-terrier nose. (1)

*(The reference to an Egyptian statue points out Tao's stately appearance. Egyptian cats, which were sacred to the goddess Isis, are usually depicted sitting erect on their haunches. This cat accentuates his regal post with half-closed eyes and an ominous growl, meant to subdue his lowly subjects.)*

5. The shadows lengthened across the deserted track, and the evening wind sighed down it to sweep a flurry of whispering leaves across the rut, their brown brittleness light as a benison as they drifted across the unheeding white form. (3) [Note: *Benison* is misspelled as *bension* in the text.]

*(Sheila Burnford is depicting nature as gentle, almost affectionate. The wind sighs, the leaves whisper, and the brush of their fall is like a blessing on the old dog. Such treatment of nature in literature is called the pathetic fallacy, meaning that dispassionate natural events are made to seem human by their subjective involvement.)*

6. The cat uttered another banshee scream and stepped forward with a stiff-legged, sideways movement, his squinting, terrible eyes fixed on his enormous adversary. (3)

*(A banshee is an Irish or Highland fairy woman who wails in warning of the approaching death of a family member. The sound, mentioned frequently in literature, suggests a spine-tingling and woeful shriek.)*

7. When the animals looked down from a hill, tantalized and hungry, they saw six or seven fires in the clearing below—their flames lighting up a semi-circle of tents and conical birch-bark shelters against a dark background of trees; flickering over the canoes drawn up on the edge of a wild rice marsh and dying redly in

the black waters beyond; and throwing into ruddy relief the high, flat planes of brown Ojibway faces gathered around the centers of warmth and brightness. (4)

*(The Ojibwa or Ojibway, named for the puckered seam of their moccasins, eventually were named Chippewa in the Algonquin language. Originally located near Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, Ojibways settled north of Lake Superior and followed a nomadic existence. Their domed shelters, which their women framed with saplings and covered with birch bark, were known as wigwams. Their canoes were built of similar materials.*

*The staple foods of the Ojibway—maple syrup, rice, fish, and game—formed the cycle of their annual migrations, as tribes moved from place to place in search of plentiful harvests. Believers in supernatural gods that protected them from starvation, the Ojibway created a varied mythology, which was collected and translated by American ethnologist Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1792-1864). From these rich stories Henry Wadsworth Longfellow fashioned his "Song of Hiawatha" in 1855.)*

8. In the middle of the night the old dog sat up, trembling all over with cold. He threw his head back and howled his requiem of grief and loneliness to the heavy, weeping sky; until at last the young dog rose wearily and led him away from the river long before dawn broke, and over the hills to the west. (5)

*(Burnford elevates the old dog's grief to tragic proportions by referring to his howl as a requiem, a dirge asking God to grant peaceful repose to the dead. The poetic image of the "heavy, weeping sky," another example of the pathetic fallacy [cf. #5 above], shows the heavens grieving in sympathy.)*

9. Through a blur of tears, she watched him go, stealing like a wraith in the night towards the river that had brought him. (6)

*(Tao withdraws from Helvi like the spirit of the living dead. Wraiths, also referred to as astral projections, specters, or phantasms, prefigure the death of living persons by duplicating human forms so perfectly that the wraiths supplant them on earth.)*

10. Like all his kind, however, the young dog hated and feared the wolf with some deep primeval instinct which must have had its origin in those mists of time when they shared a common ancestor. (9)

*(The dog's inborn hatred and fear results from the period before dogs were domesticated. Perhaps in the dim past, very remote ancestors of the Labrador and the wolf were part of the same litter. One chose to be a friend of human beings and one chose to be an enemy. [For a more thorough examination of this topic, refer to Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*.])*

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### THE COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

1. Which pet becomes the leader of the animals?

*(Luath the young dog. The young dog starts out and waits for the others to follow. Reread the end of Chapter Two pp. 25-26. The young dog has the drive and the will to return home.)*

2. Which animal suffers the most in the early days of the journey?

*(Bodger, the old dog. Pages 32-33 describe the old dog's collapse.)*

3. Which animal shows the greatest ability for getting along in the wild?

*(Tao, the cat, adapts almost immediately. He makes a kill when he is hungry. [Page 29] Throughout the journey he does not physically suffer as do the two dogs.)*

4. The only hope for the animals to survive in the wilderness is for them to cooperate with each other. Find three examples of this for each of the three animals.

*(There are many such examples of cooperation among the animals. Listed below are a few:*

*The cat and the young dog defy the bears to protect the fallen old dog [pages 36-37.]*

*The cat brings a kill to the old dog [page 38]*

*The old dog shares the Ojibway's food with the cat [page 47]*

*The young dog asserts leadership [page 48]*

*The young dog coaxes the other two to make the river crossing [pages 62-65]*

*The old dog defends the young dog in a fight with a collie [pages 84-85]*

*The old dog and the cat allow the young dog first access to any newly killed animal [page 103]*

*The cat opens the latch to free the dogs from the Mackenzies' barn [page 119])*

5. Each animal comes close to death at least twice during the story. Give two examples of this for each of the three animals.

*(Luath—fight with the collie, infected jaw following an encounter with a porcupine.*

*Bodger—exhaustion and hunger, mauling by a bear.*

*Tao—river crossing, encounter with a lynx.*

*There are other examples and any answer which may be substantiated from the story should be accepted.)*

6. The animals meet several people on their journey. Name four people or groups of people who help the animals survive.

Name four who do not help them.

*(Four people who help them survive.*

*the Ojibways*

*the Nurmi family*

*the boy who killed the lynx and unwittingly saved cat*

*the Mackenzies*

*Four people who did not help them survive.*

*the senile old man*

*the human who shot at the dogs*

*the man who threw a bucket of water*

*the man who threw a stick at Bodger.)*

7. The ancient Ojibway woman believed that Bodger was the White Dog of the Ojibways. A. Explain the last paragraph in Chapter 4, p. 49. B. Why do you think the author has included this paragraph?

*(It is stated that the animals became immortal. Their presence together in the wilderness is so incredible as to be regarded as supernatural by the Indians. This heightens the incredibility of the journey and provides an impression of the fantastic without departing from reality.)*

8. A. What void does the Siamese cat fill in the lives of the Nurmi family? B. Do you think the cat has any affection for Helvi Nurmi? C. Is the cat grateful?

*(The Siamese is an exotic guest who brings some color and excitement into their lives. Because of his deafness he needs the Nurmis, but there is no evidence of affection. As soon as his hearing returns, he leaves them to trail his companions. Gratitude may exist, but the cat's chief loyalty is to the two dogs and his real home.)*

9. Chapter 9 ends with the last, but most rugged fifty miles still ahead for the three pets, and their leader was already weak and unfit. In the last two chapters the scene shifts to John Longridge and the Hunter family. Why has the author abandoned the animals' story at this point?

*(The author needs to show the humans and their deep sense of loss. [Note pages 137-142.] The odds are so great against their survival that all except Elizabeth have given up hope. The reader is also kept in suspense. Because the Hunters are deeply grieved over their lost pets, the reunion in the last five pages is even more emotional and joyful. Until the very end the reader is left in suspense about Bodger. Peter, convinced that the old dog is dead, bravely hides his grief. His joy is then intensified when Bodger finishes his incredible journey.)*

10. A. Sheila Burnford wants the reader to admire or like which animal the most? B. Does she want the animals to receive absolute admiration and affection, or does she have a favorite? Choose one point of view and defend it with evidence from the book.

*(Everyone who reads The Incredible Journey will probably choose his own favorite. This reader suspects that Sheila Burnford had the greatest affection for old Bodger, but her admiration seems to extend to all equally. Students should be*

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*evaluated on the basis of how well they present their evidence. A teacher must exercise caution not to impose personal bias.)*

11. If you were writing this book what other adventures could have been included? Create at least one adventure for the three animals not given in the book.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Create a bulletin board display using one or more of the following approaches:

Each of the eleven chapters in *The Incredible Journey* is preceded by a black and white illustration by Carl Burger, depicting a dramatic incident in the chapter. Artists in the class could draw enlarged versions of these illustrations, perhaps in color. Other students should print captions to go below each illustration. The captions can be taken directly from the novel. Creative artists could try drawing original illustrations depicting other dramatic scenes in the novel. These also should have captions printed below.

Using a large map of Ontario, Canada, mark the place names mentioned in the novel. The reader is told in the first chapter that the entire journey takes place in the northwestern part of the province. Also mentioned is the Ironmouth Range, which the animals must cross in the last fifty miles of their two-hundred-and-fifty mile trek home. Their journey ends at the Hunters' cottage on Lake Windigo, which is due east of the Hunter home and due west of the animals' starting point, John Longridge's home. With these clues in mind, trace on the map the incredible journey of the young dog, the old dog, and the cat.

If available, secure and post photographs of the wilderness country of northwestern Ontario.

2. Select a dramatic incident from the novel. Retell or rewrite that incident from the point of view of the young dog, the old dog, or the cat. Assume that the animal you choose is capable of expressing himself in human language.
3. Read orally Walt Whitman's poem, "The Beasts." Discuss the central idea of the poem and apply this idea to *The Incredible Journey*.

### ALTERNATIVES FOR STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

1. Research and prepare a report on—  
the Labrador retriever  
the bull terrier  
the Siamese cat  
Include in your report the history and characteristics of each breed.

2. Topics for Discussion or Composition  
Animal Loyalty and Devotion  
The Responsibilities of Owning a Pet  
The Usefulness of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Choose a particular species of domestic animal—such as dogs, cats, or horses)
3. Write a character sketch on a pet that you have had or have known.
4. Compare *The Incredible Journey* with other animal stories that you have read. A good possibility for comparison is Jack London's *Call of the Wild*.

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### VOCABULARY TEST

Fill in this passage with words from the list that follows. You will have answers left over when you finish.

When the old dog woke shivering with cold he was alone. The cat was some distance away, belly to ground and tail (1) \_\_\_\_\_ excitedly, (2) \_\_\_\_\_ his breakfast. (3) \_\_\_\_\_ through the morning air came a familiar smell of smoke and something cooking – beckoning (4) \_\_\_\_\_.

The mists were rolling back from the valley, and a pale sun was lighting the sky when the old dog came through the (5) \_\_\_\_\_ of tall Norway pines and down outside the farmhouse door. His memory was short; already human beings were back on their rightful (6) \_\_\_\_\_, (7) \_\_\_\_\_ of dog food in their hands. He whined (8) \_\_\_\_\_. At a second, louder whine, several cats appeared from the barn nearby and glared at him with tiger-eyed (9) \_\_\_\_\_. At any other time, he would have put them to instant flight; now he had more (10) \_\_\_\_\_ business and chose to ignore them. The door swung open, a wondrous smell of bacon and eggs surged out, and the terrier drew up all the heavy (11) \_\_\_\_\_ of his charm: with an (12) \_\_\_\_\_ wag of his tail he glued his ears back, and wrinkled his nose in preparation for his disastrous winning (13) \_\_\_\_\_. There was an astonished silence, broken by the deep, amused voice of a man. "Well!" said the owner of the voice, (14) \_\_\_\_\_ his odd visitor, whose eyes were now rolled so far back that they had almost disappeared into his head. He called into the house, and was answered by the pleasant, warm voice of a woman. There was a sound of footsteps. The tail increased its (15) \_\_\_\_\_.

The woman stood for a moment in the doorway, looking down in silent (16) \_\_\_\_\_ at the white (17) \_\_\_\_\_ on the step, and when he saw her face break into a smile that past master in the art of scrounging (18) \_\_\_\_\_ a (19) \_\_\_\_\_ paw. She bent down and shook it, laughing helplessly, then invited him to follow her into the house.

Dignified, the old dog walked in, and gazed at the stove with (20) \_\_\_\_\_ confidence.

astonishment  
artillery  
benison  
bland  
civil  
contrition  
cornucopias

crestfallen  
enigma  
facile  
frugal  
gargoyle  
ingratiating  
irresistibly

leer  
pandemonium  
pedestals  
plaintively  
pressing  
proffered  
reciprocal

resentment  
stalking  
stealing  
surveying  
tempo  
twitching  
windbreak

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**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)**

Identify which character is speaking and who is being addressed.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1A. I want to get to Heron Lake before nightfall . . . But  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1B. there's no need for you to be here at that time . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2A. Is a drowned *cat* worth trying to save?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2B.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3A. I've never seen anything quite so homely—he looks as though he had been  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3B. squeezed into the wrong coat, somehow.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4A. You're imagining things . . . Or perhaps it was a fox. Come along, we must start  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4B. back.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5A. **AND** . . . a very . . . *bad* . . . *dog!*  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5B.

**Part II: True or False (20 points)**

In the space provided write **T** if the statement is completely true or write **F** if any part of the statement is false.

- \_\_\_ 1. John Longridge will regret having to part with Luath, Bodger, and Tao when the Hunters return from England.
- \_\_\_ 2. Mrs. Oakes carelessly allows the two dogs and the cat to wander off and get lost.
- \_\_\_ 3. Because he is a fighting dog, the bull terrier is able to defend himself against the bear cub.
- \_\_\_ 4. When the old dog comes into the Ojibway camp begging for food, the Indians drive him off.
- \_\_\_ 5. The cat nearly drowns in the river because he is a poor swimmer.
- \_\_\_ 6. Reino Nurmi is a cruel father because he has never allowed his daughter Helvi to have a pet.
- \_\_\_ 7. A good fight is meat and drink to the old dog.
- \_\_\_ 8. The cat darts into a rabbit burrow to escape a lynx.
- \_\_\_ 9. During the journey the young dog is generally wary of human beings.
- \_\_\_ 10. All three animals finish their two-hundred-and-fifty-mile journey in good physical condition.



## THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Complete each of the following statements with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- \_\_\_ 1. *The Incredible Journey* is set in (a) the northwestern United States (b) northwestern Canada (c) the northwestern section of Ontario (d) the northwestern section of Quebec.
- \_\_\_ 2. Longridge's housekeeper, Mrs. Oakes, does not report that the three animals are missing because she (a) is afraid that Longridge will fire her (b) believes that Longridge has taken the animals with him on his hunting trip (c) assumes that the Hunters have returned from England and taken the animals home (d) is glad that the animals are no longer making extra work for her.
- \_\_\_ 3. The most able hunter of the trio is (a) the old dog (b) the young dog (c) the cat (d) the cat and the old dog hunting as a team.
- \_\_\_ 4. The pet who suffers the most during the first days of the journey is (a) the young dog (b) the old dog (c) the cat (d) all of them because they all suffer equally.
- \_\_\_ 5. The old Ojibway woman believes that Bodger is (a) a comical old clown (b) the lost pet of a family of tourists (c) an evil devil sent by the enemies of the tribe (d) an omen sent by the Spirits to test the tribe's hospitality.
- \_\_\_ 6. A descriptive phrase or label that does NOT fit the old dog is (a) "a strange if not downright ugly dog" (b) "a sybaritic barbarian" (c) "an image of an Egyptian statue" (d) "a natural clown."
- \_\_\_ 7. The Nurmis are most fascinated and impressed by the cat's (a) exotic appearance (b) unaccountable deafness (c) courage and determination (d) display of love and affection.
- \_\_\_ 8. James Mackenzie (a) removes the quills from the young dog's cheek (b) treats the old dog's wounds (c) locks up both dogs in the hope of getting a reward from their owners (d) is determined to keep both dogs because he knows that they are valuable.
- \_\_\_ 9. The young dog and the old dog escape from Mackenzie's stable after (a) they chew through the stable door (b) Mackenzie accidentally leaves the stable door open (c) they find a loose board at the back of the stable and crawl out (d) the cat opens the latch of the stable door and lets them out
- \_\_\_ 10. When Peter Hunter learns that the pets are missing, he is completely convinced that (a) Tao will come home (b) Luath will lead the other two animals home safely (c) Bodger will never survive the wilderness (d) all of the animals are dead but refuses to accept their deaths on an emotional level.

### Part IV: Sequence (20 points)

In the space provided number the following events in the order in which they occur in the story.

- \_\_\_\_\_ A lynx stalks and nearly kills the cat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The young dog lifts his paw and places it in Longridge's hand in a gesture of farewell.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The cat is swept downstream after a beaver dam breaks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The old dog enters an Indian camp.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Labrador retrieves a duck for James Mackenzie.

## THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

### Part V: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. How do three pampered pets like Bodger, Tao, and Luath manage to survive their wilderness trek? Support your answer with specific evidence from the novel.
  
2. Describe the distinct character traits of the young dog, the old dog, and the cat.

**THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY**

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Short Answer (20 points)**

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each question below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. From whom does John Longridge get his "odd and lovable trio?"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. In what province of Canada does the story begin?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. To whom does a "White Dog of Omen" prove fortunate?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Who finds a cat near the beaver dam?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Whose formal name is "Ch. Boroughcastle Brigadier of Doune"?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What breed does James Mackenzie think the stray is?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who knocks John Longridge's note off the desk?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What baby animal straddles Bodger's body and nibbles the end of his tail?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What animal does Luath bring James Mackenzie?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Who gives up hope that the animals can cross the Ironmouth Range and escape "bears and wolves and all manner of things"?

**Part II: True or False (10 points)**

In the space provided write T if the statement is completely true or write F if any part of the statement is false.

- \_\_\_ 1. The young dog decides to take his two companions home when John Longridge leaves on a hunting trip.
- \_\_\_ 2. Mrs. Oakes believes that Longridge has taken the two dogs and the cat with him on vacation.
- \_\_\_ 3. Because of his breeding and training, the Labrador is the best hunter of the three animals.
- \_\_\_ 4. An old Indian woman believes that the old dog has been sent by the Spirits to test tribal hospitality.
- \_\_\_ 5. The young dog hates and fears water, but he swims across a river because it is the only way to get home.
- \_\_\_ 6. The cat stays with the Nurmis only until his hearing returns.
- \_\_\_ 7. Because of his youth and stamina, the young dog is able to defend himself against the collie that attacks him.
- \_\_\_ 8. The old dog has absolute faith in the goodness of human beings.
- \_\_\_ 9. The Mackenzies shut the dogs in the stable to hide them from their real owners.
- \_\_\_ 10. Peter is convinced that his dog is dead, but Elizabeth has absolute faith that her cat will come home.

## THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Complete each of the following statements with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- \_\_\_ 1. The leader of the trio of pets who set out for home is (a) the young dog (b) the old dog (c) the cat (d) none of them because there is no real leader.
- \_\_\_ 2. The young dog nearly starves to death because (a) his training prevents him from eating any wild game (b) his determination to get home is so great that he will not stop to hunt or eat (c) the cat and the dog share none of their kills with him (d) his jaw is so infected by the porcupine quills that he cannot eat.
- \_\_\_ 3. The old dog survives in better condition than one might expect because (a) his natural hunting instincts develop (b) the cat shares his kills with him (c) he becomes an expert chicken thief (d) he fights other animals for their prey.
- \_\_\_ 4. The total distance covered by the three animals in their incredible journey is about (a) a hundred miles (b) two hundred and fifty miles (c) five hundred miles (d) a thousand miles.
- \_\_\_ 5. When the old dog is threatened by the mother of the bear cub, (a) he is able to defend himself (b) the cat alone defies the bear and drives her off (c) the cat and the young dog defy the bear and drive her off (d) the old dog, the cat, and the young dog co-operate to drive off the bear.
- \_\_\_ 6. The most important factor that enables all three pets to survive in the wilderness is (a) the cat's hunting prowess (b) the young dog's leadership (c) the old dog's fighting ability (d) their co-operation.
- \_\_\_ 7. When the farmer's collie attacks the young dog, (a) the young dog drives him off (b) the old dog fights him and chews him up badly (c) the cat and the old dog come to the young dog's rescue and drive him off (d) all three animals flee to avoid fighting him.
- \_\_\_ 8. The cat is stalked and nearly killed by (a) the bear (b) a boy out hunting with his father (c) a lynx (d) a timberwolf.
- \_\_\_ 9. During the journey, (a) the young dog usually tries to avoid human contact (b) the cat totally avoids human contact (c) the old dog neither seeks nor tries to avoid human contact (d) all three animals are very careful to avoid human contact.
- \_\_\_ 10. When does the point of view of the novel shift from the animals and their adventures to the humans and their concern for them? (a) when the cat leaves the Nurmis (b) after the disastrous river crossing (c) after all three animals set out across the Ironmouth Range (d) when the cat, after a brief separation, catches up to the two dogs.

### Part IV: Sequence (10 points)

In the space provided number the following events in the order in which they occur in the story.

- \_\_\_\_\_ The young dog and the old dog have a violent encounter with a farmer's collie.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The three animals have a violent encounter with a bear and her cub.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helvi is delighted to have a cat for her first pet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The old dog and the cat leave the Indian camp after the young dog barks commandingly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Mackenzies feed the two dogs and put them in their stable.

## THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

### Part V: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. How do the young dog, the old dog and the cat respond to the humans that they encounter during their long journey home? Be specific.
2. What purpose do you think Sheila Burnford had in mind when she wrote *The Incredible Journey*?

## THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

### ANSWER KEY

#### VOCABULARY TEST

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. twitching    | 11. artillery    |
| 2. stalking     | 12. ingratiating |
| 3. stealing     | 13. leer         |
| 4. irresistibly | 14. surveying    |
| 5. windbreak    | 15. tempo        |
| 6. pedestals    | 16. astonishment |
| 7. cornucopias  | 17. gargoyle     |
| 8. plaintively  | 18. proffered    |
| 9. resentment   | 19. civil        |
| 10. pressing    | 20. bland        |

#### COMPREHENSION TEST A

##### Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- 1A. John Longridge  
1B. Mrs. Oakes  
2A. Mr. Nurmi  
2B. Mrs. Nurmi and Helvi  
3A. Nell Mackenzie  
3B. James Mackenzie  
4A. Mrs. Longridge  
4B. Elizabeth  
5A. John Longridge  
5B. Bodger

##### Part II: True or False (10 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F  |
| 2. F | 7. T  |
| 3. F | 8. T  |
| 4. F | 9. T  |
| 5. F | 10. F |

##### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. c  |
| 2. b | 7. a  |
| 3. c | 8. a  |
| 4. b | 9. d  |
| 5. d | 10. c |

##### Part IV: Sequence (10 points)

1. 4  
2. 1  
3. 3  
4. 2  
5. 5

##### Part V: Essay Questions (40 points)

Answers will vary.

#### COMPREHENSION TEST B

##### Part I: Short Answer (20 points)

- |                         |                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Professor Jim Hunter | 6. English Bull |
| 2. Ontario              | 7. Tao          |
| 3. Ojibways             | 8. bear cub     |
| 4. Helvi Nurmi          | 9. duck         |
| 5. Bodger               | 10. Mrs. Oakes  |

##### Part II: True or False (10 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T  |
| 2. T | 7. F  |
| 3. F | 8. T  |
| 4. T | 9. F  |
| 5. F | 10. T |

##### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. a | 6. d  |
| 2. d | 7. b  |
| 3. b | 8. c  |
| 4. b | 9. a  |
| 5. c | 10. c |

##### Part IV: Sequence (10 points)

1. 4  
2. 1  
3. 3  
4. 2  
5. 5

##### Part V: Essay Questions (40 points)

Answers will vary.

**THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY**

**TEACHERS NOTES**



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