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SYNOPSIS

Part One: Klondike or Bust

One It is 1897. Fifteen-year-old Jason Hawthorn, a New York City newsboy, sells newspapers that trumpet the news of a gold strike in the Alaska Klondike. Within moments, the rush is on.

Two Within hours, Jason is rushing west from New York City, suffering from a bad case of "Klondike Fever." Jason shares a boxcar with other eager prospectors. He has no idea of the difficulties of terrain, weather, and starvation that lie ahead.

Three Jason was orphaned at age 11. His beloved older brothers Abraham and Ethan worked in a sawmill while Jason worked in a cannery. When Jason arrives in Seattle, the landlady explains that he has just missed his brothers: they have set off for the Klondike! In a letter, Jason's brothers explain that they took Jason's \$500, his legacy from his father, to augment their stake.

Four Jason stows away on the *Yakima*, headed for the Klondike. He meets Frank "Kid" Barker, a teenage con man.

Five Jason meets the rest of the gang: "Captain" Jefferson Randolph Smith, "Reverend" Charles Bowers, "Old Man" Tripp, and "Slim Jim" Foster. Unlike the other wretched travelers, the gang travels in sumptuous comfort. They are eager to recruit Jason, but he refuses to become a thief.

Six When the gang turns Jason in, the crew takes his money, beats him, and throws him off the boat. Jason meets Jack London and Jack's friends, who treat him to a good meal and invite him to join them. Jason eagerly accepts a place in their canoes.

Seven The eleven Indian canoes travel through the crush of prospectors in the freezing rain. It is a hellish scene.

Eight Jason leaves London to try White Pass. He earns money wrangling horses and joins the river of humanity marching over the corpses of horses and people. Jason meets a maddened prospector killing his Husky dogs. Jason rescues one of the dogs.

Nine Jason learns that the con men he had encountered on the *Yakima* are indeed fleecing people along the trail. He eats a rancid meal, gets violently ill, and is nursed by strangers.

Ten The strangers are beautiful 14-year-old Jamie Dunavant and her father, the poet Homer. The Canadian father and daughter, wise to the ways of the wild, continue their journey north.

Eleven After the Dunavants leave, Jason and the Husky, whom he has named "King," resume their journey, reaching Canada. About a month has passed. Once again, Jason has just missed his brothers.

Twelve Jason and London meet up again, and Jack gen-

erously gives Jason all he needs for his journey.

Thirteen By September 8, Jason and King reach Lake Lindeman, racing to the Klondike before the winter freeze makes travel impossible. Jack obtains a canoe.

Part Two: Down the Yukon

Fourteen Jason battles his way down Lake Bennett. He kills a caribou for food. On September 23, he starts north, planning to rendezvous with his brothers in two weeks.

Fifteen At the treacherous falls, Jason once again meets London, who shoots the falls rather than portage overland.

Sixteen Desperately trying to outrace the winter, Jason presses ahead. King becomes essential to the boy's survival. Jason stops to gather rose hips to prevent scurvy and is brutally attacked by a moose. He is nearly dead.

Seventeen Robert Henderson, a bitter prospector, rescues Jason and saves his life when he leaves the boy in a cabin with food and kindling. Winter overtakes Jason 250 miles short of his destination, but he is too injured to go on.

Eighteen A group of men arrive at the cabin, bearing an injured boy. They amputate his gangrenous leg and leave him for dead in their lust to reach the gold fields.

Nineteen Jason nurses the boy, Charlie Maguire, who eventually recovers. Charlie reveals that the gold fields are like bedlam, with total lawlessness and people dying of starvation.

Twenty Jason and Charlie are in danger of starving, but Jason cannot find game. Jason restores Charlie's will to live.

Twenty-One Desperate for food, Jason travels twenty miles to an Indian village but it is deserted. He finds a log cabin with two prospectors, frozen solid - but no food.

Twenty-Two On New Year's Eve, Jason decides to find the bear that Henderson had told them about.

Twenty-Three Jason flushes the bear out of its den, but two other bears emerge as well and King, the beloved husky, is killed.

Part Three: The Golden City

Twenty-Four At the end of May, Jason and Charlie leave the cabin and resume their trip to Dawson. They arrive and find the "Hawthorn Brothers Sawmill" — Jason's brothers!

Twenty-Five Reunited with his brothers, Jason settles in happily. Charlie returns home to his mother. Jamie is the "Princess of Dawson," reciting her father's poems on stage to great acclaim.

Twenty-Six Jason meets Jack again. As with most of the other prospectors, Jack has not struck gold. Jack has decided to become a writer. Jason is reunited with Jamie, too, who is leaving on a tour.

Twenty-Seven Jamie gives a triumphant final show. Jason revels in the successful completion of his journey and his happy life with his brothers, working in the family sawmill.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Will Hobbs was born in Pittsburgh, PA, in 1947 and educated at Stanford University, earning his B.A. in 1969 and his M.A. in 1971. From 1973 to 1989, Hobbs taught junior and senior high reading and English in the Colorado public schools. In 1990, he left teaching to become a full-time writer. Hobbs writes for six hours a day, as he explained in an interview for *Authors and Artists for Young Adults*. When he's not writing, Hobbs enjoys hiking in the mountains and canyons, white water rafting, archeology, and natural history.

Hobbs' father was an engineer in the Air Force, so the family moved often. Will was only six months old when the family moved to the Panama Canal Zone. After that, the family lived in Virginia, Alaska, California, and Texas. The five children were all involved in scouting, and Hobbs developed a love for nature and the outdoors at an early age. Hobbs recounted, "While we were living in Alaska, I fell in love with mountains, rivers, fishing, baseball, and books."

On his website, Hobbs notes: "Jason's feeling for the North comes from my own. In my childhood years in Alaska I was spellbound by the vastness and wildness: the rivers, the glaciers, the mountains, the salmon runs, the moose and the bears. I imprinted on the northern lights and the winter darkness, the gold rush history. A lifetime of packing—carrying heavy loads over mountain passes—helped me to describe Jason's struggles on the Chilkoot Pass. My canoeing and rafting experiences, including those in Canada's Yukon and Northwest Territories, came in handy as I described Jason's journey by canoe down the upper Yukon River. My winter camping experiences at twenty below at high altitude also helped me to write the winter scenes."

CRITIC'S CORNER

As with many of Will Hobbs' books, *Jason's Gold* has won numerous prestigious literary awards, including Best Books for Young Adults, American Library Association (ALA); American Booksellers Association Pick of the Lists; Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies (NCSS/CBC); Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers; and an ALA Junior Library Guild Selection Books for the Teen Age, New York Public Library.

Writing in *The Horn Book*, critic Michael Cart noted: "Rich in period detail, *Jason's Gold* is clearly the product of prodigious research. This strength becomes a weakness, however, when the research shows up as extended passages of exposition that slow the narrative pace and occasionally make both characters and dramatic incidents seem contrived. For most readers, these problems will be redeemed by Jason's heroic efforts to survive when winter overtakes him 250 miles short of his destination. Here exposition turns into epic as Hobbs reveals the immense challenges and hardships of surviving in the vast emptiness of the Yukon winter."

OTHER BOOKS BY WILL HOBBS

Beardance (1993)
Beardream (1997)
Bearstone (1989)
The Big Wander (1992)
Changes in Latitudes (1988)
Downriver (1991)
Far North (1996)
Ghost Canoe (1997)
Howling Hill (1998)

Kokopelli's Flute (1995)
Maze
River Thunder (1997)
Wild Man Island (2002)

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Colorado Reading Council Journal, spring, 1993, pp. 7-9.
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Horn Book, May-June, 1988, p. 358; January-February, 1993, p. 91; March-April, 1996; November-December, 1996, p. 745.
Journal of Youth Services in Libraries, spring, 1995.
Kirkus Reviews, March 15, 1997, p. 462.
Publishers Weekly, Feb. 12, 1988, p. 88; Feb. 1, 1991, pp. 80-81; Nov. 2, 1992, p. 72.
School Library Journal, March, 1988, pp. 212, 214; September 1989, p. 272; March 1991, p. 212; November 1992, p. 92; December 1993, p. 134; October 1995, p. 134; April 1997; September 1997, p. 217; October 1998, p. 136.
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GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the Klondike gold rush
2. To evaluate how love and friendship can change a person's life
3. To recognize the themes of loyalty and acceptance
4. To analyze why some people stray from the law
5. To understand the novel's title
6. To explore the ways dangerous situations can get out of hand
7. To probe the importance of common humanity
8. To appreciate the novel's suspense
9. To analyze the interweaving of fact and fantasy
10. To predict what the future holds for Jason

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explore why people rushed off to the Klondike gold fields
2. To analyze the relationship between Jason and his brothers and the relationship between Jason and Jamie
3. To understand Jason's character
4. To see why Jason nurses Charlie back to health and why Jack London repeatedly helps Jason
5. To appreciate Jason's bravery and self-reliance
6. To analyze the importance of King, the husky dog, to Jason's survival
7. To understand the brutality of Alaskan winters
8. To grasp the importance of common sense to survival
9. To distinguish between fictional characters such as

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Jason and real characters such as Jack London
10. To identify the novel's structure, especially its climax

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Will Hobbs' style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

setting: the time and place where the events take place. Setting is a crucial element in *Jason's Gold*, functioning almost as a character. For example, Hobbs notes that on the way to the Klondike it is "unspeakably cold," more than forty degrees below zero. Thousands of prospectors fall prey to famine, disease, and madness; the two prospectors sheltered in a hut freeze to death.

allusion: a reference to a well-known place, event, person, work of art, or other work of literature. In *Jason's Gold*, Will Hobbs alludes to the myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece to reinforce the theme of quest and adventure. Like his mythical counterpart, young Jason Hawthorn sets off to pursue wealth.

suspense: the feeling of tension or anticipation an author creates in a work. Hobbs builds suspense by having Jason experience a series of setbacks on his journey to the Klondike. These include encounters with criminals, conflicts with nature, battles with fierce creatures such as the moose and bear, and hairbreadth escapes.

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

For more information about *Jason's Gold*, Will Hobbs' novels, and the topics and themes expressed in this novel, consult the following sources.

Fiction

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Jeanette Ingold, *Pictures*

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Sherry Shahan, *Frozen Stiff*

Shelley Sykes, *For Mike*

Zilpha Keatley Snyder, *And Condors Danced*

Frances Wilbur, *The Dog with Golden Eyes*

Nonfiction

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Pierre Berton, *Klondike: The Last Great Gold Rush, 1896-1899 and The Klondike Quest: A Photographic Essay, 1897-1899*

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Michael Cooper, *Klondike Fever*

Charlotte Foltz Jones, *Yukon Gold: The Story of the Klondike Gold Rush*

Richard J. Friesen, *The Chilkoot Pass and the Great Gold Rush of 1898*

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Ian MacDonald, *The Klondike's "Dear Little Nugget"*

Melanie J. Mayer, *Klondike Women: True Tales of the 1897-98 Gold Rush*

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Margaret Poynter, *Gold Rush!: The Yukon Stampede of 1898*

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Gold Rush! (1998)

The Gold Rush (2000)

THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in Will Hobbs' *Jason's Gold* should include these aspects:

Themes

- adventure
- the importance of family
- being orphaned
- friendship
- greed
- grief and loss
- loyalty
- maturity
- murder
- wild creatures

Motifs

- dealing with physical danger
- the difficulty of being on your own
- the lust for gold and material success
- the powerful effect of friendship
- the importance of helping others, even when you have little material possessions yourself
- criminals and cruelty
- the indifferent violence of nature
- how animals can play a crucial role in our lives as both a source of food and a source of invaluable friendship
- coping with setbacks and personal problems
- the importance of perseverance

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. At six o'clock this morning a steamship sailed into Seattle harbor from Alaska with two tons of gold aboard. Five thousand people streamed from the streets of Seattle into Schwabacher's Dock to meet the gold ship, the *Portland*. (Chap. 1, p. 2)
(The 1890s in America were desperate times. Economic depression caused bank and business failures and forced millions from their jobs. On August 17, 1896, gold was discovered in the Klondike River. In July 1897, reporters from around the world gathered at Seattle's port as a steamship carrying passengers from Canada's

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- frozen wasteland arrived. Word spread that many aboard had struck it rich and were carrying home sacks of gold. Stories about the prospectors set off an epidemic of gold fever that would bring more than 100,000 people through some of the most grueling physical labor and extreme weather conditions in an effort to "get rich quick." In 1900, the year of peak production, more than \$22 million worth of gold was recovered from the region.)
- "Don't be sorry! I don't give a hang—for I have seen the elephant!" (Chap. ap. 2, p. 10)
(An old-timer tells Jason about a farmer who waits his whole life to see an elephant. When the circus comes to town, the farmer loads his cart with produce to sell at the market. He meets the circus parade, led by the elephant. The farmer's horses buck and the produce is trampled. Nonetheless, the farmer is glad because he has seen the elephant. The story convinces Jason to follow his dream to the gold fields. At the end of the novel, Jason meets the old-timer again and tells him that he has met the elephant - fulfilled his yearning - and it was worth it, even though he did not find gold.)
 - "I'm going to let you in on a little secret. The real money in this gold rush is going to be made in Skagway, by businessmen, not in the Klondike by fools digging holes in the ground." (Chap. 5, pp. 27-28)
(Even though he is talking about swindling and thievery, Kid Barker is far more correct than he realizes: most people who "struck it rich" in the Klondike did so by opening businesses such as restaurants, stables, and hotels. Jason does indeed become affluent through a business—his family's sawmill—rather than through prospecting.)
 - "What's your last name so I can ask after you?" "London." (Chap. 7, p. 47)
(Hobbs interweaves fact and fiction to tell his story about the Klondike gold rush. Jason Hawthorn is fictional, but Jack London was real. London (1876-1916) was an American writer whose work combined naturalism, realism, and socialism. Armed only with a grammar school education, London took off for the Alaska gold rush. After returning to San Francisco, he wrote about his experiences. London was one of the most influential figures of his day. During his brief, dramatic life, London wrote more than 50 books, including *The Call of the Wild* (1903), *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), and *Martin Eden* (1909).
 - He'd never known what cold was before, not really. Here in the North it seemed an element all its own, a pervasive and lethal liquid pouring down out of the sky. (Chap. 18, p. 136)
(The prospectors endured 60-mile-an-hour winds in 65-degree-below-zero weather. "I shall never forget that first night," wrote Luella Day, a physician from Chicago and one of the few women to embark on the trek alone. "It was 28 degrees below zero. I slept on a board floor in a log cabin with only my fox robe wrapped around me.")
 - "Now, move aside or I'll shoot you where you stand. Put him out in the cold if you must!" (Chap. 18, p. 141)
(A group of prospectors break into Jason's cabin with a young boy, Charlie Maguire, whose leg has rotted from gangrene. The boy's uncle amputates Charlie's leg and leaves him to die. This passage shows how gold fever drives otherwise sane people mad with greed. They become little more than heartless brutes.)
 - With a sudden, powerful jolt, the rifle was knocked from his freezing hands, and it fell inside the den. (Chap. 23, p. 183)
(Jason's battle with the bears is filled with suspense and excitement. It shows Hobbs' writing at its best.)
 - King had only moments to live. (Chap. 23, p. 185)
(The dog King becomes more than Jason's best friend: the animal is his protector and his workhorse. Without King, Jason could not have survived his trek north, either its grueling labor or its terrifying loneliness. The animal's death is a very real loss on a business as well as a personal level.)
 - Just then, around the side of the mountain of logs, here they came - Ethan with his full beard and burly logger's physique, and straight-as-a-pine Abe, trailing with his slight limp. (Chap. 25, p. 195)
(The novel has a happy ending, as Jason is reunited with his brothers. Further, their gamble has paid off and they have built a flourishing sawmill. Jason is set for life, financially secure and surrounded by family love.)

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.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

- When and where does the story take place?
(The novel opens in 1897, when news of the gold strike in the Klondike River arrives in New York. From there, the action moves to Seattle and up through the Yukon. The novel concludes in Dawson's Creek in Canada's Yukon Territory, in 1899.)
- Why does Jason want to go to the Klondike?
(Jason wants to make his fortune in the gold fields. As with millions of others at that time, Jason is driven by dreams of untold wealth. Although he is only 15 years old, Jason has been toughened by years on his own, working in a cannery.)
- How does Jason lose his \$500?
(His older brothers, Ethan and Abraham, use Jason's money to stake their own trek to the gold fields. Their motivation is not malicious; rather, since they have not seen or heard from Jason in some time, they believe that he will support their attempts to become rich.)
- Why was it so hard to strike it rich in the Klondike?
(Gold mining was the hardest work in the world due to the brutally cold weather, starvation, and despair. The prospectors pulled sleds loaded with up to 600 pounds over ice up a steep grade, strewn with boulders and logs, then crossed over river beds on log bridges. It took 40 trips to get a ton of supplies up the mountain. Some prospectors worked through 40 or 50 feet of frozen ground to sink a shaft with no guarantee of finding an ounce of gold. Few succeeded.)
- Who is King and what happens to him?
(King is the dog that Jason rescues from a mad prospector. The dog becomes Jason's best friend and protector. He is mauled to death while trying to protect Jason from

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a bear attack.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. Who is Kid Barker? What does he represent?
(Kid Barker is a con man, a swindler. He comes to represent all the con men in Dawson. In one week's time, the town's population exploded from just 500 to 12,000, and by the end of the summer of 1898 there were 30,000 people jamming the streets. As a result, Dawson was ripe for swindlers.)
7. Why does the author interweave fact and fiction?
(By mixing real characters such as Jack London and Soapy Smith with fictional creations such as Jason Hawthorn, Hobbs gives his novel a realistic veneer. In addition, this intermix of fact and fantasy allows the author to take many "artistic liberties" with a real story and a real historical period.)
8. Compare and contrast Jason and Jack London. How are they the same and different?
(Both men are adventurous, brave, honest, and kind. London equips Jason for his trek north; Jason shelters Charlie and saves his life. However, London is far more devil-may-care and experienced than Jason.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. What meaning does the myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece have in the novel?
(In Greek mythology, Jason was the son of Aeson, a Greek king whose throne was stolen. Jason courageously set off to obtain the Golden Fleece, his condition for regaining his throne. With great hardship and help from the gods, Jason fulfilled his mission. Similarly, Jason Hawthorn set off to obtain the gold from the Klondike. He had help from people he encountered on the way. Even though he did not get any gold, Jason did live happily ever after—unlike his mythological counterpart.)
10. What purpose does the Author's Note serve? Do you think it should have been included? Why or why not?
(The Author's Note provides background and information about the topics raised in the novel. It also explains the author's fascination with the Klondike and the gold rush. Most readers will agree that it serves as a fitting coda to the novel.)

Questions 11-13 (Creative Level)

11. Working with a small group of classmates, discuss some ways that you might have coped with Jason's situation had you been in his place.
12. Explain how Jason functions as the novel's hero.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art and Music

1. Design a poster for a movie version of *Jason's Gold*.
2. Divide a piece of paper in half lengthwise. On the left side, draw Jason's life before he travels to the Klondike. On the right side, draw his life after the journey.
3. Choose a dramatic scene and select background music. Play the music for the class as you read the scene.
4. Draw or sketch the main characters as you envision them.

Drama

1. Role-play a scene between Jason and Jack London, in which Jason thanks Jack for all he has done for him.
2. Create a scene in which the Mounties interrogate the con men and discover all their scams.
3. Dramatize the reunion of Jason and his brothers. Perform several versions in which events turn out differently for Jason.
4. Working with a partner, put on one of Jamie's shows by reading poetry about love, loss, and the northwest. If you wish, write your own poems to share with your audience.

Geography and History

1. Locate the Klondike on the map and explain its climate, history, and topography.
2. Read some real letters, journals, and diaries from prospectors. Compare and contrast them to the facts in the novel.
3. Report on Abraham Lincoln, the president for whom Abe Hawthorn was named.
4. Learn more about the history of the Alaskan gold rush.
5. Report on the Native American tribes in Alaska today.

Science and Health

1. Jason picks rose hips to avoid scurvy. Find out more about this medical condition, especially its causes and cures.
2. Are huskies as useful and affectionate as King appears to be? Prepare a report describing the breed and their habits.
3. Find out more about foraging for food, such as wild berries. You may wish to share your information in the form of a report.
4. Create a handbook to help people protect themselves from the cold and the dangers it can present.
5. Jason's father died from scarlet fever. Learn more about this disease. How are people protected from this illness today?

Language Arts

1. Imagine that you had written this novel. Write a dedication for someone you know whom you think would appreciate this novel and the themes it expresses.
2. Write a eulogy that Jason might deliver over King's body.
3. Create the front page of the newspaper Jason sells in Chapter One.
4. Read *The Seven Seas* or any other novel by Rudyard Kipling.
5. Read the Greek myth "Jason and the Golden Fleece." Explain how the myth does or does not fit Jason Hawthorn's character.
6. Read a novel by Jack London and summarize it for the class.

Math

1. Create a chart showing the value of gold against the dollar today. Share your findings with the class.
2. Find out how much food (and what kind) someone your age would need to survive for six months in the Alaskan wilderness. Calculate the cost in today's dollars.

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STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Explain the novel's allusions to Charon and Charybdis.
2. Analyze Will Hobbs' writing style in this novel, focusing on his word choice, sentence structure, figures of speech, and images.
3. Create a chart distinguishing between the real and fictional characters in the novel.
4. Using scenes from the novel, create a mural that shows its main themes.
5. Read another book by Will Hobbs. Compare and contrast it to *Jason's Gold*.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Explain why so many people came down with "Klondike Fever" and joined the gold rush.
2. Stage a dramatic reading of "The Cremation of Sam McGee."
3. Retell the events in this novel from Jason's point of view.
4. Hobbs wrote a sequel to *Jason's Gold*. Outline its contents.
5. Write a critical review of the novel for publication in the school newspaper.

TEACHER'S NOTES

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VOCABULARY TEST

Match each word on the left with its synonym on the right. Write the letter of your answer in the space provided.

- | | | |
|-------|----------------|--------------------------|
| _____ | 1. lax | A. widespread starvation |
| _____ | 2. caboose | B. large group |
| _____ | 3. abhorred | C. handkerchief, scarf |
| _____ | 4. lethal | D. dead |
| _____ | 5. famine | E. carelessly |
| _____ | 6. bedlam | F. jumble |
| _____ | 7. devour | G. fierce |
| _____ | 8. throng | H. hated |
| _____ | 9. satchel | I. wild |
| _____ | 10. bandanna | J. promise |
| _____ | 11. effusive | K. arrogance |
| _____ | 12. deceased | L. coax |
| _____ | 13. entice | M. talkative |
| _____ | 14. haphazard | N. rear car in a train |
| _____ | 15. hodgepodge | O. deadly |
| _____ | 16. vow | P. morally loose |
| _____ | 17. ferocious | Q. suitcase |
| _____ | 18. frenzied | R. gobble up |
| _____ | 19. swagger | S. madhouse |
| _____ | 20. din | T. racket, loud noise |

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blanks provided.

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| A. Jason Hawthorn | E. Frank "Kid" Barker | H. Robert Henderson |
| B. Jack London | F. Jamie Dunavant | I. "Reverend" Charles Bowers |
| C. Abraham Hawthorn | G. Homer Dunavant | J. King |
| D. Charlie | | |

- ___ 1. Jason's older brother, as honest as the president after whom he was named
- ___ 2. the seventeen-year-old swindler Jason meets on the *Yakima*
- ___ 3. an elderly con man
- ___ 4. a Canadian poet and gambler
- ___ 5. the main character, a 15-year-old orphan
- ___ 6. Jason's beloved Husky dog
- ___ 7. the bitter prospector who rescues Jason after he is mauled by a moose
- ___ 8. the "Princess of Dawson," the young lady Jason loves
- ___ 9. a young boy who is left for dead after his leg is amputated
- ___ 10. the adventurer who wears bright red long-johns and generously gives Jason the equipment he needs to prospect in the Klondike

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements T if they are true or F if they are false.

- ___ 1. The novel opens in 1897 in New York City.
- ___ 2. Immediately after hearing that gold has been discovered, Jason sets off to Canada with his brothers to get their share of the wealth.
- ___ 3. As with the other prospectors, Jason and his brothers are all well aware of the difficulties of terrain, weather, and chronically short rations that lie ahead.
- ___ 4. Jason was orphaned at age eleven when his father died of scarlet fever.
- ___ 5. For \$500, Jason books passages on the *Yakima*, a ship headed for Seattle.
- ___ 6. Jason briefly joins a gang of thieves because he needs the money to survive.
- ___ 7. Jack London treats Jason to a good meal and invites him to come along with his friends.
- ___ 8. Jack eats a rancid meal, gets violently ill, and is nursed by Jamie and Homer Dunavant.
- ___ 9. The gold fields are like bedlam, with total lawlessness and people dying of starvation.
- ___ 10. At Dawson, Jason is reunited with his brothers, who are happy and successful.

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Part III: Motivation (20 points)

Complete each line below with a reason or explanation.

1. When the novel opens, Jason heads to Seattle to
2. Jason had worked in a cannery because
3. Jason does not have the money to spend to equip himself for the journey because
4. He is kicked off the boat because
5. Jason wants to have King because
6. Jason stops to gather rose hips to
7. While living in the cabin with Charlie, Jason travels twenty miles to an Indian village because
8. Even though it is tremendously dangerous, Jason flushes the bear out of its den because
9. King is killed because
10. Jamie has become famous for

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain what purpose Jack London serves in the novel.
2. Compare and contrast Jason and Charlie.
3. Describe the novel's setting.
4. Explain what you learned about the Yukon and the gold rush from this novel.

JASON'S GOLD

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Underline a word or phrase to complete each of the following statements.

1. The novel opens in the year (1897, 1997).
2. Jason Hawthorn, (25, 15) years old, learns about the unbelievable gold strike up north.
3. Vast amounts of gold have been found in (Dawson, Klondike), Alaska.
4. Jason figures that he needs (\$500, \$2,000) so he can become a prospector.
5. His two beloved older brothers worked in a sawmill while Jason got work in a (paper mill, fish cannery).
6. Jason stows away on the (*Princess of Dawson, Yakima*), a ship headed for the gold fields.
7. "Kid" Barker is a (thief, poet) whom Jason meets on his journey.
8. Jason is nearly killed when he is brutally attacked by a (prospector, moose).
9. Winter overtakes Jason (10, 250) miles short of his destination, but he is too injured to go on.
10. At the end of May, Jason and Charlie arrive in Dawson, where Jason's brothers are working at their successful (tavern, sawmill).

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Match the following descriptions with names of characters from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. the novel's hero, a young orphan | A. Robert Henderson |
| _____ 2. Jason's beloved brothers. | B. Jamie Dunavant |
| _____ 3. the amputee whose life Jason saves | C. Jason Hawthorn |
| _____ 4. the poet who likes to gamble | D. Jack London |
| _____ 5. the young con man who befriends Jason | E. Ethan and Abe |
| _____ 6. the young woman Jason loves | F. Merrit Sloper and Captain Shepard |
| _____ 7. Jack London's traveling companions | G. Frank "Kid" Barker |
| _____ 8. the bitter prospector who was cheated | H. Soapy Smith and "Slim Jim" Foster |
| _____ 9. older swindlers, arrested in Dawson | I. Homer Dunavant |
| _____ 10. the real-life prospector-writer | J. Charlie Maguire |

JASON'S GOLD

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the novel.

1. King
2. Jack London
3. the Klondike's bitter weather
4. the myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece
5. gold

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. In what ways is Jason heroic? Describe at least two ways.
2. Trace the novel's plot. Include the rising action, climax, and denouement
3. Is Jack London a good friend to Jason? Why or why not?
4. Describe how the author mixes fact and fiction in the novel. Give at least two examples.

JASON'S GOLD

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. P | 6. S | 11. M | 16. J |
| 2. N | 7. R | 12. D | 17. G |
| 3. H | 8. B | 13. L | 18. I |
| 4. O | 9. Q | 14. E | 19. K |
| 5. A | 10. C | 15. F | 20. T |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. J |
| 2. E | 7. H |
| 3. I | 8. F |
| 4. G | 9. D |
| 5. A | 10. B |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

- book passage on a ship to take him to the Klondike, where he wants to prospect for gold.
- he was an orphan and had to earn his own way in the world
- his brothers have used the money for their own trip to the Klondike
- "Kid" Barker reveals to the crew that he is a stowaway
- he needs help hauling his goods and he needs the companionship a dog can provide
- prevent scurvy
- he and Charlie are desperate for food and he hopes to find some there
- he and Charlie need the food to survive
- he was attacked by a bear while trying to defend Jason
- performing her father's poems on stage

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. 1897 | 6. <i>Yakima</i> |
| 2. 15 | 7. thief |
| 3. Klondike | 8. moose |
| 4. \$500 | 9. 250 |
| 5. fish cannery | 10. sawmill |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. B |
| 2. E | 7. F |
| 3. J | 8. A |
| 4. I | 9. H |
| 5. G | 10. D |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

- King is the Husky dog Jason rescued from a crazed prospector. Jason loved King and cherished his companionship. King gave Jason invaluable help carrying supplies, warning of danger, and defending him.
- Jack London is the real-life prospector-turned-writer who befriends Jason. London is Hobbs' most noteworthy inclusion of real people in a fictional book.
- The Klondike's bitter weather shows the terrible hardships the prospectors faced. Virtually none of the "greenhorns" was prepared for the bitter cold, wild animals, and physical dangers they would encounter.
- The myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece symbolizes Jason Hawthorn's quest for his own "golden fleece," gold from the Klondike. The myth also echoes Jason Hawthorn's bravery, determination, and resourcefulness.
- Gold drives the novel's plot, as it drove the real-life prospectors who inspired the novel.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

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