

Survival!

When Aiden asked me to accompany him on a camping trip to the mountains, I envisioned a log cabin with a crackling fireplace, hot cocoa, and bunk beds. Imagine how my rustic, yet comfortable image of camping became a nightmare when Aiden and his older brother, Lebron, showed up with a truck filled with camping supplies—tents, rolled-up sleeping bags, and canteens! I did pack a backpack, as instructed, but I had no idea we were going on survival training!

Lebron, ever so efficient, had a schedule to keep, and he hurried me to get in so we could leave the city hustle and bustle behind us. Ahead, the mountains loomed bigger than I had remembered them; the trees were larger, and the environment was much more dangerous. At least the weather was amazing— cotton-candy clouds dotted the deep blue sky.

At the trailhead, Lebron strapped a sleeping bag onto my pack and lectured Aiden and me about hiking etiquette.

The first part of the trail looked more like a wooded road that led up the mountains than a hiking path. Soon, the path became narrower and steeper, forcing me to focus on the task at hand and to talk less. As we gained elevation, we moved above the tree line, and I could see the trail zigzagging up the mountain.

“It looks closer than it is,” Lebron said, reading my facial cues. “This is the most difficult part . . . watch the trail, not the view. Loose rocks and tree roots make the trail dangerous, and we have no shade.”

Finally, we reached the summit. My legs aching, I dropped my pack and groaned.

“No time to rest,” Lebron said, looking up at the sky. The weather had been warm all day, and it felt good to relax in the cool breeze.

“The weather up here changes quickly, and that cool air means a storm is brewing. We need to set up camp.”

I thought he was kidding, but Lebron was quite serious. He and Aiden worked expertly, while I stood around and pretended to help, thunder rumbling in the distance.

We set up near a boulder outcropping, but the wind, thunder, and lightning were relentless. As the storm rolled in with a vengeance, we took cover inside.

Lebron, sensing that I was scared, reached in his backpack for some crackers and peanut butter. Slowly, but methodically, he spread the peanut butter and told stories about his camping adventures. Each time lightning lit up the tent and the thunder echoed, I cringed.

“This is just a typical summer storm—they’re short lived, but intense,” Lebron stated. “The campsite might get a bit muddy, but what’s the fun in camping if you can’t get dirty! At least the rain will keep the bears away,” he said with a smile.

And just as quickly as the storm came rushing in, it subsided, allowing us to exit the tent. The view was stunning—I could see for miles, and the rain left a fresh scent of pine and an earthy smell of soil. As darkness set in, I marveled at the multitude of stars in the night sky.

I won’t lie—I was yearning for a hot shower and a soft bed, but as I gazed upward at the Milky Way, I knew this was an adventure I would never forget.

Questions

1. What is the biggest challenge the speaker faces?
2. What kind of person is Lebron? Use details to support your answer.
3. Explain how the setting advances the plot.
4. How does the speaker's view of camping change throughout the story? Use details from the story to support your answer.

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. accompany
2. envisioned
3. rustic
4. loomed
5. summit
6. cropping
7. vengeance
8. cringed
9. subsided
10. yearning

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) "When Aiden asked me to **accompany** him"

- a. sponsor; finance b. play music with c. go with; attend with d. stand in; substitute

2) "I **envisioned** a log cabin with a crackling fireplace"

- a. anticipated or visualized b. rented or booked c. requested; wanted d. searched; hunted

3) "Imagine how my **rustic**, yet comfortable image of camping became a nightmare"

- a. happy; joyful b. primitive or simple c. elegant or classic d. original; first

4) "the mountains **loomed** bigger than I had remembered"

- a. grew; expanded b. sounded; echoed c. sloped; inclined d. appeared or soared

5) "Finally, we reached the **summit**"

- a. campsite b. valley or gorge c. cabin; chalet d. peak; top

6) "We set up near a boulder **cropping**"

- a. visitors' center b. mountain stream c. uncovered bedrock; outthrust d. debris field

7) "the storm rolled in with a **vengeance**"

- a. great energy; force b. gentle rain; drizzle c. whisper; murmur d. cumulus cloud

8) "Each time lightning lit up the tent and the thunder echoed, I **cringed**"

- a. screamed or yelled b. flinched or trembled c. laughed; chuckled d. wept openly

9) "as quickly as the storm came rushing in, it **subsided**"

- a. flooded; deluged b. changed directions c. decreased; declined d. increased; intensified

10) "I was **yearning** for a hot shower and a soft bed"

- a. asking; requesting b. wanting; desiring c. thankful; grateful d. heading; moving to