

## Practice Cold-Read Task

Read the excerpt from Chapter 5 of *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London. Then answer the questions.

### Excerpt from "The Toil of Trace and Trail"

1 Thirty days from the time it left Dawson, the Salt Water Mail, with Buck and his mates at the fore, arrived at Skaguay.<sup>1</sup> They were in a wretched state, worn out and worn down. Buck's one hundred and forty pounds had dwindled to one hundred and fifteen. The rest of his mates, though lighter dogs, had relatively lost more weight than he. Pike, the malingerer, who, in his lifetime of deceit, had often successfully feigned a hurt leg, was now limping in earnest. Sol-leks was limping, and Dub was suffering from a wrenched shoulder blade.

2 They were all terribly footsore. No spring or rebound was left in them. Their feet fell heavily on the trail, jarring their bodies and doubling the fatigue of a day's travel. There was nothing the matter with them except that they were dead tired. It was not the dead tiredness that comes through brief and excessive effort, from which recovery is a matter of hours; but it was the dead tiredness that comes through the slow and prolonged strength drainage of months of toil. There was no power of recuperation left, no reserve strength to call upon. It had been all used, the last least bit of it. Every muscle, every fiber, every cell, was tired, dead tired. And there was reason for it. In less than five months they had traveled twenty-five hundred miles, during the last eighteen hundred of which they had but five days' rest. When they arrived at Skaguay, they were apparently on their last legs. They could barely keep the traces taut, and on the downgrades just managed to keep out of the way of the sled.

3 "Mush on, poor sore feets," the driver encouraged them as they tottered down the main street of Skaguay. "Dis is de last. Den we get one long rest. Eh? For sure. One bully long rest."

4 The drivers confidently expected a long stopover. Themselves, they had covered twelve hundred miles with two days' rest, and in the nature of reason and common justice they deserved an interval of loafing.<sup>2</sup> But so many were the men who had rushed into the Klondike, and so many were the sweethearts, wives, and kin that had not rushed in, that the congested mail was taking on Alpine proportions; also, there were official orders. Fresh batches of Hudson Bay dogs were to take the places of those worthless for the trail. The worthless ones were to be got rid of, and, since dogs count for little against dollars, they were to be sold.

5 Three days passed, by which time Buck and his mates found how really tired and weak they were. Then, on the morning of the fourth day, two men from the States came along and bought them, harness and all, for a song. The men addressed each other as "Hal" and "Charles." Charles was a middle-aged, lightish colored man, with weak and watery eyes and a mustache that twisted fiercely and vigorously up, giving the lie to the limply drooping lip it concealed. Hal was a youngster of

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<sup>1</sup>Skaguay (Skagway): A city in Alaska and a common stop for travelers during the Klondike Gold Rush of the late 1890s.

<sup>2</sup>loafing: lounging around and doing nothing useful; laziness

nineteen or twenty, with a big Colt's revolver and a hunting knife strapped about him on a belt that fairly bristled with cartridges. This belt was the most salient<sup>3</sup> thing about him. It advertised his callowness--a callowness sheer and unutterable. Both men were manifestly out of place, and why such as they should adventure the North is part of the mystery of things that passes understanding.

6 Buck saw the money pass between the man and the Government agent and knew that the Scotch half-breed and the mail-train drivers were passing out of his life on the heels of Perrault and Francois and the others who had gone before. When driven with his mates to the new owners' camp, Buck saw a slipshod and slovenly affair,<sup>4</sup> tent half-stretched, dishes unwashed, everything in disorder; also, he saw a woman. "Mercedes" the men called her. She was Charles's wife and Hal's sister--a nice family party.

7 Buck watched them apprehensively as they proceeded to take down the tent and load the sled. There was a great deal of effort about their manner, but no businesslike method. The tent was rolled into an awkward bundle three times as large as it should have been. The tin dishes were packed away unwashed. Mercedes<sup>5</sup> continually fluttered in the way of her men and kept up an unbroken chattering of remonstrance and advice. When they put a clothes-sack on the front of the sled, she suggested it should go on the back; and when they had it put on the back, and covered it over with a couple of the bundles, she discovered overlooked articles which could abide nowhere else but in that very sack, and they unloaded again.

8 Three men from a neighboring tent came out and looked on, grinning and winking at one another.

9 "You've got a right smart load as it is," said one of them; "and it's not me should tell you your business, but I wouldn't tote that tent along if I was you."

10 "Undreamed of!" cried Mercedes, throwing up her hands in dainty dismay. "However in the world could I manage without a tent?"

11 "It's springtime, and you won't get any more cold weather," the man replied.

12 She shook her head decidedly, and Charles and Hal put the last odds and ends on top the mountainous load.

13 "Think it'll ride?" one of the men asked.

14 "Why shouldn't it?" Charles demanded rather shortly.

15 "Oh, that's all right, that's all right," the man hastened meekly to say. "I was just a wondering, that is all. It seemed a mite top-heavy."

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<sup>3</sup> salient: important and noticeable

<sup>4</sup> slipshod and slovenly affair: a messy situation

<sup>5</sup> remonstrance: objection

16 Charles turned his back and drew the lashings down as well as he could, which was not in the least well. [. . .]

17 The dogs threw themselves against the breastbands, dug their feet into the packed snow, got down low to it, and put forth all their strength. The sled held as though it were an anchor. After two efforts, they stood still, panting. Mercedes dropped on her knees before Buck, with tears in her eyes, and put her arms around his neck.

18 "You poor, poor dears," she cried sympathetically, "why don't you pull hard? Then you wouldn't be whipped." Buck did not like her, but he was feeling too miserable to resist her, taking it as a part of the day's miserable work.

19 One of the onlookers, who had been clenching his teeth to suppress hot speech, now spoke up:

20 "It's not that I care a whoop what becomes of you, but for the dogs' sakes I just want to tell you, you can help them a mighty lot by breaking out that sled. The runners are froze fast. Throw your weight against the gee-pole, right and left, and break it out."

21 A third time the attempt was made, but this time, following the advice, Hal broke out the runners which had been frozen to the snow. The overloaded and unwieldy sled forged ahead, Buck and his mates struggling frantically under the rain of blows. A hundred yards ahead the path turned and sloped steeply into the main street. It would have required an experienced man to keep the top-heavy sled upright, and Hal was not such a man. As they swung on the turn the sled went over, spilling half its load through the loose lashings. The dogs never stopped. The lightened sled bounded on its side behind them. They were angry because of the ill treatment they had received and the unjust load. Buck was raging. He broke into a run, the team following his lead. Hal cried, "Whoa! Whoa!" But they gave no heed. He tripped and was pulled off his feet. The capsized sled ground over him, and the dogs dashed on up the street, adding to the gaiety of Skaguay as they scattered the remainder of the outfit along its chief thoroughfare.

22 Kind-hearted citizens caught the dogs and gathered up the scattered belongings. Also, they gave advice. Half the load and twice the dogs, if they ever expected to reach Dawson, was what was said. Hal and his sister and brother-in-law listened unwillingly, pitched tent, and overhauled the outfit. Canned goods were turned out that made men laugh, for canned goods on the Long Trail is a thing to dream about. "Blankets for a hotel," quoth one of the men who laughed and helped. "Half as many is too much; get rid of them. Throw away that tent, and all those dishes--who's going to wash them, anyway? Good Lord, do you think you're traveling on a Pullman<sup>6</sup>?"

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<sup>6</sup>Pullman: a train car

23 And so it went, the inexorable<sup>7</sup> elimination of the superfluous. Mercedes cried when her clothes-bags were dumped on the ground and article after article was thrown out. She cried in general, and she cried in particular over each discarded thing. She clasped hands about knees, rocking back and forth broken-heartedly. She appealed to everybody and to everything, finally wiping her eyes and proceeding to cast out even articles of apparel that were imperative<sup>8</sup> necessities. And in her zeal,<sup>9</sup> when she had finished with her own, she attacked the belongings of her men and went through them like a tornado.

24 This accomplished, the outfit, though cut in half, was still a formidable<sup>10</sup> bulk. Charles and Hal went out in the evening and bought six Outside dogs. They, added to the six of the original team, and Teek and Kona, the huskies obtained at the Rink Rapids on the record trip, brought the team up to fourteen. But the Outside dogs, though practically broken in since their landing, did not amount to much. Three were short-haired pointers, one was a Newfoundland, and the other two were mongrels of indeterminate breed. They did not seem to know anything, these newcomers. Buck and his comrades looked upon them with disgust, and though he speedily taught them their places and what not to do, he could not teach them what to do. They did not take kindly to trace and trail. With the exception of the two mongrels, they were bewildered and spirit-broken by the strange savage environment in which they found themselves and by the ill treatment they had received. The two mongrels were without spirit at all; bones were the only things breakable about them.

25 With the newcomers hopeless and forlorn, and the old team worn out by twenty-five hundred miles of continuous trail, the outlook was anything but bright. The two men, however, were quite cheerful. And they were proud, too. They were doing the thing in style, with fourteen dogs. They had seen other sleds depart over the Pass for Dawson, or come in from Dawson, but never had they seen a sled with so many as fourteen dogs. In the nature of Arctic travel there was a reason why fourteen dogs should not drag one sled, and that was that one sled could not carry the food for fourteen dogs. But Charles and Hal did not know this. They had worked the trip out with a pencil, so much to a dog, so many dogs, and so many days. Mercedes looked over their shoulders and nodded comprehensively, it was all so very simple. [. . .]

26 Buck felt vaguely that there was no depending upon these two men and the woman. They did not know how to do anything, and as the days went by it became apparent that they could not learn. They were slack in all things, without order or discipline. It took them half the night to pitch a slovenly camp, and half the morning to break that camp and get the sled loaded in fashion so slovenly that for the rest of the day they were occupied in stopping and rearranging the load. Some days they did not make ten miles. On other days they were unable to get started at all. And on no day did they succeed in making more than half the distance used by the men as a basis in their dog-food computation.

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<sup>7</sup>the inexorable elimination of the superfluous: the merciless removal of all that was not necessary

<sup>8</sup>imperative: important or essential

<sup>9</sup>zeal: excitement to accomplish something

<sup>10</sup>formidable: terrifying

27 It was inevitable that they should go short on dog food. But they hastened it by <sup>11</sup>overfeeding, bringing the day nearer when underfeeding would commence. And to cap it all, when Mercedes, with tears in her pretty eyes and a quaver in her throat, could not cajole Hal <sup>12</sup>into giving the dogs still more, she stole from the fish-sacks and fed them slyly.

28 Then came the underfeeding. Hal awoke one day to the fact that his dog food was half-gone and the distance only quarter covered; further, that for love or money no additional dog food was to be obtained. So he cut down even the orthodox ration and tried to increase the day's travel. His sister and brother-in-law seconded him; but they were frustrated by their heavy outfit and their own incompetence. It was a simple matter to give the dogs less food; but it was impossible to make the dogs travel faster, while their own inability to get under way earlier in the morning prevented them from traveling longer hours. Not only did they not know how to work dogs, but they did not know how to work themselves.

29 The first to go was Dub. Poor blundering thief that he was, always getting caught and punished, he had none the less been a faithful worker. His wrenched shoulder-blade, untreated and unrested, went from bad to worse, till finally Hal shot him with the big Colt's revolver. It is a saying of the country that an Outside dog starves to death on the ration of the husky, so the six Outside dogs under Buck could do no less than die on half the ration of the husky. The Newfoundland went first, followed by the three short-haired pointers, the two mongrels hanging more grittily on to life, but going in the end.

30 By this time all the amenities and gentleness of the Southland had fallen away from the three people. Shorn of its glamour and romance, Arctic travel became to them a reality too harsh for their manhood and womanhood. Mercedes ceased weeping over the dogs, being too occupied with weeping over herself and with quarreling with her husband and brother. To quarrel was the one thing they were never too weary to do. Their irritability arose out of their misery, increased with it, doubled upon it, out-distanced it. The wonderful patience of the trail which comes to men who toil hard and suffer sore, and remain sweet of speech and kindly, did not come to these two men and the woman. They had no inkling of such a patience. They were stiff and in pain; their muscles ached, their bones ached, their very hearts ached; and because of this they became sharp of speech, and hard words were first on their lips in the morning and last at night.

31 Charles and Hal wrangled whenever Mercedes gave them a chance. It was the cherished belief of each that he did more than his share of the work. Sometimes Mercedes sided with her husband, sometimes with her brother. The result was a beautiful and unending family quarrel. In the meantime the fire remained unbuilt, the camp half-pitched, and the dogs unfed. [. . .]

32 In the excess of their own misery they were callous to the suffering of their animals. Hal's theory, which he practiced on others, was that one must get hardened. He had started out preaching

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<sup>11</sup> hastened it: made it go faster

<sup>12</sup> cajole: tempt

it to his sister and brother-in-law. Failing there, he hammered it into the dogs with a club. At the Five Fingers the dog food gave out, and a toothless old squaw offered to trade them a few pounds of frozen horsehide for the Colt's revolver that kept the big hunting knife company at Hal's hip. A poor substitute for food was this hide, just as it had been stripped from the starved horses of the cattlemen six months back. In its frozen state it was more like strips of galvanized iron, and when a dog wrestled it into his stomach, it thawed into thin and unnutritious leathery strings and into a mass of short hair, irritating and indigestible.

33 And through it all Buck staggered along at the head of the team as in a nightmare. He pulled when he could; when he could no longer pull, he fell down and remained down till blows from whip or club drove him to his feet again. All the stiffness and gloss had gone out of his beautiful furry coat. The hair hung down, limp and dragged, or matted with dried blood where Hal's club had bruised him. His muscles had wasted away to knotty strings, and the flesh pads had disappeared, so that each rib and every bone in his frame were outlined cleanly through the loose hide that was wrinkled in folds of emptiness. It was heartbreaking, only Buck's heart was unbreakable. The man in the red sweater had proved that.

34 As it was with Buck, so was it with his mates. They were skeletons. There were seven all together, including him. In their very great misery they had become insensible to the bite of the lash or the bruise of the club. The pain of the beating was dull and distant, just as the things their eyes saw and their ears heard seemed dull and distant. They were not half-living, or quarter-living. They were simply so many bags of bones in which sparks of life fluttered faintly. When a halt was made, they dropped down in the traces like dead dogs, and the spark dimmed and paled and seemed to go out. And when the club or whip fell upon them, the spark fluttered feebly up, and they tottered to their feet and staggered on.

35 There came a day when Billee, the good-natured, fell and could not rise. Hal had traded off his revolver, so he took the axe and knocked Billee on the head as he lay in the traces, then cut the carcass out of the harness and dragged it to one side. Buck saw, and his mates saw, and they knew that this thing was very close to them. On the next day Koonah went, and but five of them remained: Joe, too far gone to be malignant; Pike, crippled and limping, only half-conscious and not conscious enough longer to mangle; Sol-leks, the one-eyed, still faithful to the toil of trace and trail, and mournful in that he had so little strength with which to pull; Teek, who had not traveled so far that winter and who was now beaten more than the others because he was fresher; and Buck, still at the head of the team, but no longer enforcing discipline or striving to enforce it, blind with weakness half the time and keeping the trail by the loom of it and by the dim feel of his feet.

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1. Part A

Read this excerpt from paragraph 5 from Chapter 5 of *The Call of the Wild*:

Hal was a youngster of nineteen or twenty, with a big Colt's revolver and a hunting knife strapped about him on a belt that fairly bristled with cartridges. This belt was the most salient thing about him. It advertised his callowness--a callowness sheer and unutterable. Both men were manifestly out of place, and why such as they should adventure the North is part of the mystery of things that passes understanding.

Which word or phrase provides the **best** meaning for *callowness* as it is used in this sentence?

- A. eagerness
- B. intelligence
- C. lack of patience
- D. lack of experience

Part B

Which **three** of Hal's actions **best** support the answer to Part A?

- A. his purchase of additional dogs to pull the sled
- B. his use of a whip to make the dogs run
- C. his decision to join in the rush to find gold
- D. his ignoring suggestions about overloading the sled
- E. his speed in getting started on the journey
- F. his miscalculation of the amount of dog food to bring

2. Part A

What is revealed about Mercedes in the dialogue in paragraphs 8 through 15 of Chapter 5?

- A. She is good at giving orders to other people.
- B. She has well-placed confidence in her family members.
- C. She has a thorough understanding of animals.
- D. She has no clue about the difficulties that lie ahead.

Part B

What evidence from the passage **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "Mercedes continually fluttered in the way of her men and kept up an unbroken chattering of remonstrance and advice." (paragraph 7)
- B. "'Undreamed of!' cried Mercedes, throwing up her hands in dainty dismay. 'However in the world could I manage without a tent?'" (paragraph 10)
- C. "'You poor, poor dears,' she cried sympathetically, 'why don't you pull hard? Then you wouldn't be whipped.'" (paragraph 18)
- D. "And in her zeal, when she had finished with her own, she attacked the belongings of her men and went through them like a tornado." (paragraph 23)

3. Read this excerpt from paragraphs 19 and 20 of Chapter 5.

**One of the onlookers, who had been clenching his teeth to suppress hot speech, now spoke up: "It's not that I care a whoop what becomes of you, but for the dogs' sakes I just want to tell you, you can help them a mighty lot by breaking out that sled.**

How does the phrase “clenching his teeth to suppress hot speech” add to the meaning of the speech?

- A. It adds fuel to Hal’s and Charles’ frustration as they try to get the dogs to pull the sled.
- B. It reinforces the opinions of the onlookers who suggested the trio lighten the load on the sled.
- C. It reveals the onlooker’s anger who lacks respect for the men because of their treatment of the dogs.
- D. It illustrates the good-natured humor of the onlookers who find the failure of dogsled team comical.

**4. Part A**

What does the purchase of six additional dogs in paragraph 24 show about Hal and Charles?

- A. They have the ability to adapt to their surroundings by planning ahead.
- B. They fail to do enough research to know how to manage and care for sled dogs.
- C. They are thinking primarily about the welfare of the first dogs they purchased.
- D. They have confidence that all their preparations are going to result in success.

**Part B**

What evidence from paragraph 25 supports the answer to Part A?

- A. “The two men, however, were quite cheerful. And they were proud, too.”
- B. “They were doing the thing in style, with fourteen dogs. .... never had they seen a sled with so many as fourteen dogs.”
- C. “There was a reason why fourteen dogs should not drag one sled ..... Charles and Hal did not know this.”
- D. “They had worked the trip out with a pencil, so much to a dog, so many dogs, and so many days..... it was all so very simple.”

**5. Part A**

Which sentence **best** states how the interactions of Hal, Charles, and Mercedes in paragraphs 30 through 31 move the story along?

- A. Their isolation brings out their negativity and leads them to make bad decisions.
- B. Their weariness slows them down so much that they run out of food and risk their own lives.
- C. Their lack of respect for each other leads to each expressing selfishness in his or her own way.
- D. Their constant bickering distracts them from tending to their survival needs and leads them to lose dogs.



**Part B**

What evidence from the passage **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "Their irritability arose out of their misery, increased with it, doubled upon it, out-distanced it." (paragraph 30)
- B. "They were stiff and in pain; their muscles ached, their bones ached, their very hearts ached." (paragraph 30)
- C. "It was the cherished belief of each that he did more than his share of the work." (paragraph 31)
- D. "In the meantime the fire remained unbuilt, the camp half-pitched, and the dogs unfed." (paragraph 31)

**6. Part A**

Read this sentence from paragraph 26.

**Buck felt vaguely that there was no depending upon these two men and the woman.**

How does Buck's view of his new owners relate to the events that follow?

- A. Buck perceives that the trio's greed and inexperience foreshadow difficulties.
- B. Buck senses the woman traveling with them will get in the way and cause trouble.
- C. Buck has already been beaten by Hal which foreshadows more beatings.
- D. Buck knows the new dogs have no respect for the trio which will make his job harder.

**Part B**

What evidence from the passage **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "On other days they were unable to get started at all. And on no day did they succeed in making more than half the distance used by the men as a basis in their dog-food computation." (paragraph 26)
- B. "The Newfoundland went first, followed by the three short-haired pointers, the two mongrels hanging more grittily on to life, but going in the end." (paragraph 29)
- C. "Sometimes Mercedes sided with her husband, sometimes with her brother. The result was a beautiful and unending family quarrel." (paragraph 31)
- D. "When he could no longer pull, he fell down and remained down till blows from whip or club drove him to his feet again." (paragraph 33)

## 7. Part A

What is a central idea that emerges over the course of the passage from Chapter 5?

- A. Those who can't learn from others and their mistakes are not likely to survive in the wild.
- B. The natural world is unforgiving, but humans have the knowledge and skills to cope.
- C. Humans and animals working together as a team can accomplish many things.
- D. It only takes one mistake to start a series of events that can end in disaster.

## Part B

Which **two** incidents involving Hal, Charles, and Mercedes **best** support the answer to Part A?

- A. the trio reduces the amount they load on the sled after it topples over
- B. the men purchase additional dogs to reach Dawson in a reasonable amount of time
- C. the trio sets out for Dawson even though some of the gold rushers advise them to wait
- D. the trio over feeds the dogs at first then severely cuts back on the dog's food
- E. the dogs continue to pull the sled despite being worn out physically
- F. the trio does a poor job of packing the sled and setting up and taking down their camp sites

## 8. Part A

How do London's descriptions of the trio's treatment of the dogs relate to a central idea of the passage?

- A. Hal has no feeling for the dogs, which reveals that nature lacks any feeling for human beings.
- B. Mercedes has sympathy for the dogs while Hal beats them, which shows that women are kinder than men.
- C. The trio is unable to care for the dogs or themselves, which supports the idea that no good comes from overconfidence.
- D. The dogs persist on the trail despite how the trio treats them, which reinforces the idea that animals will act based on instinct.

## Part B

What evidence from the passage **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "When Mercedes, with tears in her pretty eyes and a quaver in her throat, could not cajole Hal into giving the dogs still more, she stole from the fish-sacks and fed them slyly." (paragraph 27)
- B. "But it was impossible to make the dogs travel faster, while their own inability to get under way earlier in the morning prevented them from traveling longer hours." (paragraph 28)
- C. "Hal's theory, which he practiced on others, was that one must get hardened." (paragraph 32)
- D. "And through it all Buck staggered along at the head of the team as in a nightmare. He pulled when he could." (paragraph 33)

## 9. Part A

Read this sentence from paragraph 30:

**The wonderful patience of the trail which comes to men who toil hard and suffer sore, and remain sweet of speech and kindly, did not come to these two men and the woman.**

How do the onlookers and citizens at the beginning of the chapter demonstrate this concept?

- A. They laugh behind their backs at the blunders the trio makes.
- B. They make gentle suggestions that would help the trio.
- C. They try to tell the trio exactly how to prepare for the trip.
- D. They look at each other and shake their heads in disbelief.

**Part B**

How do differences in points of view among the onlookers, Buck, and the trio contribute to the meaning of the excerpt?

- A. The differences create humor, as the trio makes comical mistakes.
- B. The differences reveal the ignorance of the trio, which develops a central idea.
- C. The differences create suspense, as it is unclear what will happen to the trio on the trail.
- D. The differences reveal the trio as unfit dog owners, which develops Buck's character on the trail.

10. Determine how the structure of both "To Build a Fire" and "The Toil of Trace and Trail" contributes to a theme of both texts.

Structure of each text which contributes to the development of a theme	Common theme developed through each text's structure

Structure:

- A. The texts develop contrasting perspectives among the main character(s) and other characters in the text.
- B. The texts use flashbacks and flashforwards to reveal the impact of each character's decisions.
- C. The texts set up a problem and then describe how the main characters solve the problem.
- D. The texts tell the story in chronological order to emphasize how quickly the events unfold.

Theme:

- E. The way a person treats an animal reveals that person's character.
- F. Animal instinct is greater than human reason.
- G. The natural world is unforgiving and no place for humans.
- H. Excessive pride leads to a person's demise.