

## *The Secrets of Nature*



*Riding on the sled was a very big man.*

- Preview**
1. Read the name of the story.
  2. Look at the picture.
  3. Read the sentence under the picture.
  4. Read the first two paragraphs of the story.
  5. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that Robert Walton

- a. knows many people who have gone to the North Pole.
- b. hopes to learn things about nature that will help people.
- c. believes he will find many animals at the North Pole.
- d. is writing to his sister from the North Pole.

*Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 10 for the right answer.*

**Now read the story.**

*Read to find out about the strange things the men see from their ship.*

## *The Secrets of Nature*

Robert Walton was on his way to explore the top of the world. Dear Margaret, he wrote to his sister. I have gone as far as I can by land! Later I will find a ship and the men to sail her. But now my first duty is to write to let my dear little sister know I'm all right!

No one has ever reached the North Pole before. People say it must be cold and empty of life. I think it will be beautiful! I will explore where no one has walked before! I will find a way for ships to sail to the other side of the world! I will discover secrets of nature than no one else knows! Think of all the people I will help with what I learn!

In a month I will have everything ready on the ship. But I will still be missing one thing. I wish I had a friend coming with me! I need someone to talk with, someone who lives out his noble ideas, someone as excited to discover new things as I am. I won't find such a friend at the top of the world!

Months passed before another one of Robert Walton's letters reached his sister. Dear Margaret, he wrote. Last week the ice closed in around our ship. We could not move ahead, or the ice would break our ship into pieces. Then we would be lost under the sea, and

you would never learn what happened to me.

While we were waiting for the ice to break, we saw something moving far away from the ship. Dogs were pulling a heavy sled over the ice! Riding on the sled was a very big man. He seemed so big that we wondered if he could really be a man at all. We watched until we could no longer see the sled and the strange thing it carried. Soon the ice began to break, and we sailed on.

The next morning, we saw another man. He was on a sled on a block of ice next to our ship! He would not have been able to live much longer if we had not found him. But he did not thank us. "Which way are you going?" he asked.

"We are on our way to discover the North Pole," I said.

"That is the same way I am going," he said. We carried him onto the ship. His arms and legs were as cold as ice, and he could not stand. His eyes looked so wild that I thought that being alone on the ice had driven him crazy. But then, when he saw how we were all trying to help him, his smile lighted up his face.

"Why were you so far out away from land?" asked one of my men.

"I am following someone," he answered.

"We saw another sled

just a day ago," said another of my men. "Could it belong to the man you are following?"

"He is not a man! He is a demon!" The man's eyes grew wild again. "I must stop him!"

My men carried him to a bed where he could rest in quiet. In the days that followed I learned what a noble man we had brought in from the cold world outside. I remember that I wrote to you, Margaret, that I could never find a friend in such a cold, empty place. But I have! His name is Victor Frankenstein.

One day I was telling Frankenstein how I would willingly pay with my life to learn nature's secrets. "I will change the world," I said. "No longer will people be held down by nature! We will make nature do as we please."

"I once thought the same way," said Frankenstein. "Now I know I was crazy to try to change how nature works. You still have hope before you, but it is too late for me. I have nothing left but the duty to kill the demon I made. Listen to my story, my friend. Learn from me, and you will have a safe and happy life!"

# The Secrets of Nature

## COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

**Preview Answer:**

b. hopes to learn things about nature that will help people.

1. Robert Walton is happy he is about to go exploring, but he
  - a. is mad his sister would not come with him.
  - b. thinks they will run out of food on the ship.
  - c. wishes he had a friend to stop him from feeling alone.
  - d. thinks the men he is paying will not listen to him.
2. When the ice closes in around the ship,
  - a. Walton tells his men to break the ice away from the ship.
  - b. the men know the ice may break the ship to pieces if it moves.
  - c. they sail back the way they came.
  - d. the men walk out onto the ice.
3. As they look out over the ice, the men see
  - a. a strange, big man far from the ship.
  - b. dogs chasing each other over the snow.
  - c. a break in the ice ahead.
  - d. a way to sail to the other side of the world.
4. The man on the block of ice next to the ship
  - a. is glad that he can get onto their ship.
  - b. asks which way their ship is heading before he gets on.
  - c. is on his way back from discovering the North Pole.
  - d. runs across the ice far from the ship.
5. When they first bring the man onto the ship, Walton thinks he may be
  - a. a friend of the strange big man.
  - b. a demon.
  - c. trying to reach the North Pole before Walton does.
  - d. crazy from being alone on the ice.
6. The man says he was so far out on the sea because
  - a. he is chasing someone.
  - b. his own ship went under the water.
  - c. he wanted to catch up with Robert Walton.
  - d. he lives in a village next to the sea.
7. Victor Frankenstein is chasing after the man in the dogsled because
  - a. he took Frankenstein's money.
  - b. Frankenstein believes the man is a demon he must kill.
  - c. he wants Robert Walton to have a good life.
  - d. Frankenstein wants to reach the North Pole first.
8. When Robert Walton says he wants to learn the secrets of nature
  - a. Frankenstein thinks Walton is crazy.
  - b. Frankenstein is glad to meet someone like himself.
  - c. he asks Frankenstein to help him.
  - d. Frankenstein tells him to learn from the things he has done.
9. Another name for this story could be
  - a. "Life at the North Pole."
  - b. "The Letter from My Brother."
  - c. "A Man Alone at Sea."
  - d. "A New Way Around the World."
10. This story is mainly about
  - a. dogsled racing to the North Pole.
  - b. a man chasing what he believes to be a demon.
  - c. how nature is bad for people.
  - d. Robert Walton missing his sister.

Check your answers with the keys on page 67.

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