

Read the following passage carefully and then answer the questions that follow. The letter writer is a character by the name of Robert Walton who is planning to travel to the North Pole.

Letter 1

To Mrs. Saville, England.

St. Petersburg, Dec. 11th, 17—.

5 You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings. I arrived here yesterday, and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking.

10 I am already far north of London, and as I walk in the streets of Petersburg, I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks, which braces my nerves and fills me with delight. Do you understand this feeling? This breeze, which has travelled from the regions towards which I am advancing, gives me a foretaste of those icy climes. Inspired by this wind of promise, my daydreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and
15 delight. There, Margaret, the sun is for ever visible, its broad disk just skirting the horizon and diffusing a perpetual splendour. There—for with your leave, my sister, I will put some trust in preceding navigators—there snow and frost are banished; and, sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe. Its productions and features may be without example, as the phenomena of the heavenly bodies
20 undoubtedly are in those undiscovered solitudes. What may not be expected in a country of eternal light? I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle and may regulate a thousand celestial observations that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent for ever. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man. These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death and to induce me to commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native
30 river. But supposing all these conjectures to be false, you cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind, to the last generation, by discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite; or by ascertaining the secret of the magnet, which, if at all possible, can only be effected by an undertaking such as mine.

35 These reflections have dispelled the agitation with which I began my letter, and I feel my heart glow with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven, for nothing contributes so much to tranquillise the mind as a steady purpose—a point on which

the soul may fix its intellectual eye. This expedition has been the favourite dream
of my early years. I have read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages
40 which have been made in the prospect of arriving at the North Pacific Ocean
through the seas which surround the pole. You may remember that a history of all
the voyages made for purposes of discovery composed the whole of our good
Uncle Thomas' library. My education was neglected, yet I was passionately fond
of reading. These volumes were my study day and night, and my familiarity with
45 them increased that regret which I had felt, as a child, on learning that my father's
dying injunction had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a seafaring life.

These visions faded when I perused, for the first time, those poets whose
effusions entranced my soul and lifted it to heaven. I also became a poet and for
one year lived in a paradise of my own creation; I imagined that I also might obtain
50 a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated.
You are well acquainted with my failure and how heavily I bore the
disappointment. But just at that time I inherited the fortune of my cousin, and my
thoughts were turned into the channel of their earlier bent.

Extract taken from Frankenstein by Mary Shelley.

1. Who was Mrs. Saville? (line 2)
 - A. Robert Walton's wife.
 - B. Robert Walton's mother.
 - C. The letter writer.
 - D. The narrator.
 - E. Robert Walton's sister.

2. 'I arrived here yesterday' (lines 5-6)
Where does 'here' refer to?
 - A. North London.
 - B. England.
 - C. St. Petersburg.
 - D. Norway.
 - E. We are not told.

3. 'I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks' (lines 8-9)
Which language technique is being used here?
 - A. Personification.
 - B. Alliteration.
 - C. A simile.
 - D. Onomatopoeia.
 - E. A metaphor.

4. Which of the following is a synonym of 'commencement'? (line 4)

- A. Making.
 - B. Beginning.
 - C. Middle.
 - D. Survival.
 - E. Ending.
5. 'gives me a foretaste of those icy climes' (lines 11-12)
What do these words tell us?
- A. Robert Walton enjoyed cold weather.
 - B. Robert Walton was heading somewhere extremely cold.
 - C. Robert Walton liked eating cold food.
 - D. Robert Walton could taste snow in the air.
 - E. Robert Walton's home was in a very icy region.
6. What did Robert Walton think the North Pole was going to be like?
- A. He thought it was going to be hot with the sun always shining.
 - B. He thought it was going to be cold and depressing.
 - C. He thought it was going to be frosty and barren.
 - D. He thought it was going to be beautiful.
 - E. He thought it was going to be dangerous and scary.
7. What was Robert Walton's occupation when he wrote the letter?
- A. Author.
 - B. Barber.
 - C. Chef.
 - D. Doctor.
 - E. Explorer.
8. Which word best sums up how Robert Walton felt about his impending voyage?
- A. Excited.
 - B. Terrified.
 - C. Indifferent.
 - D. Unhappy.
 - E. Nonchalant.
9. Which of the following statements is **not** true?
- A. Robert Walton knew that the voyage would be hard.
 - B. Robert Walton was keen to set foot on undiscovered territory.
 - C. Robert Walton thought his journey could be beneficial to mankind.
 - D. Robert Walton was travelling with his mates.
 - E. Robert Walton believed that you can always see the sun at the North Pole.

10. What does the word 'undertaking' refer to? (line 34)
- A. Robert Walton's ship.
 - B. Robert Walton's planned trip to the North Pole.
 - C. Robert Walton's letter writing.
 - D. Robert Walton's crew.
 - E. Robert Walton's family.
11. 'nothing contributes so much to tranquillise the mind as a steady purpose' (lines 36-37)
What does this mean?
- A. A sick mind will not achieve anything.
 - B. It is best to be in a tranquillised state.
 - C. Having a goal helps to calm the mind.
 - D. Everybody has a duty to be quiet and purposeful.
 - E. Being honourable and loyal is very important.
12. What role did Uncle Thomas play in Robert Walton wanting to travel to the North Pole?
- A. Uncle Thomas encouraged Robert to go to the North Pole.
 - B. Uncle Thomas had travelled there himself.
 - C. Uncle Thomas persuaded Robert's father to allow Robert to travel to the North Pole.
 - D. Uncle Thomas's books about voyages made Robert want to go on a voyage himself.
 - E. He paid for all of Robert's expenses.
13. What did Robert Walton's father think about Robert's dreams to go on a sea voyage?
- A. He was proud of Robert for being so adventurous.
 - B. He was unsure whether he wanted Robert to go to sea.
 - C. He wanted to go to sea with him.
 - D. He was jealous that Robert would get the opportunity to go to sea.
 - E. He definitely did not want Robert to go to sea.
14. Which of the following best sums up Robert Walton's personality?
- A. Cautious and modest.
 - B. Ambitious and arrogant.
 - C. Argumentative and sensitive.
 - D. Quiet and unassuming.
 - E. Miserable and idle.
15. 'my thoughts were turned into the channel of their earlier bent' (lines 52-53)
What does this mean?

- A. Robert's thoughts returned to the idea of going on a voyage to the North Pole.
- B. Robert decided that he wanted to be a successful poet.
- C. Robert decided he did not really know what he wanted to do with his life.
- D. His thoughts were all over the place.
- E. He wanted to go back to his uncle's house to read his books.

Answers

1. **E** We are told the letter was to 'Mrs. Saville' at the start and then later in the letter it says: 'with your leave, my sister'.
2. **C** 'I walk in the streets of Petersburg'
3. **A** The wind is given a human characteristic (wind cannot really play).
4. **B** If you commence something then you start something, so commencement means the start/beginning.
5. **B** 'icy climes' means very cold climate and 'foretaste' means a preview of what is to come.
6. **D** 'it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight'
7. **E** He was clearly an explorer as he was on a voyage to discover new lands.
8. **A** He was starting the journey 'with the joy a child feels...' His excitement comes across through the way he wrote about all he could achieve.
9. **D** There is no suggestion that he was with anybody at all at this stage, let alone a friend.
10. **B** An undertaking is a pursuit/venture. His venture was to go to the North Pole.
11. **C** Having 'a steady purpose' means having a goal. Being tranquil means being calm.
12. **D** He wrote about the books of his uncle being all about voyages and it is clear that reading them inspired him. 'These volumes were my study day and night'.
13. **E** His dad tried to stop him going to sea with an injunction that had 'forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a seafaring life'.
14. **B** He was clearly ambitious in wanting to travel to the North Pole and in wanting to be a poet as great as Shakespeare. He also comes across as arrogant in thinking that he could possibly be as great as Shakespeare and thinking that he would benefit 'all mankind'.
15. **A** 'earlier bent' means previous inclination. His previous inclination (before being a poet) was to go on a voyage to the North Pole.