

Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Read "The Man, the Tiger, and the Jackal." Then answer questions 1-7.

The Man, the Tiger, and the Jackal

(A Folk Tale From India)

While traveling along a jungle path one day, a man heard a pitiful cry coming from the edge of the forest. He found a tiger caught in a trap, gnashing his teeth and weeping at his lost freedom.

"Oh, please," cried the tiger when he saw the man, "let me out of this trap! I was just out hunting and minding my own business when I accidentally got caught, and if you don't let me go, I will certainly starve to death."

"Definitely not," replied the man, "for if I were to let you out, you would surely devour me."

"No, I would not," cried the tiger, and he swore a solemn oath. "I swear that if you release me from this cage, I shall be your faithful servant forever and shall only consume creatures that you have allowed me to eat."

The man took pity on the wretched tiger, but as he slipped the latch to open the door of the cage, the tiger leapt out and grabbed him by the arm.

"What a foolish man you are to trust a tiger! Now I've got you, and you shall be my dinner."

The man pleaded with the tiger, and somehow his fear and the tiger's teeth on his arm sharpened his wits. He made a very convincing argument and finally persuaded the tiger to at least let him argue his case before three judges. He felt confident that everyone would take his side against the tiger.

First the man turned to an old, gnarled tree with leafy branches that were shading the path.

"I don't see why you are complaining to me," said the tree unsympathetically. "Just consider my situation, if you feel unfortunate! I stand here day and night, offering shelter to every passerby who needs it, and how do they return the favor? They rip off my leaves to feed to the cattle. You should cease your sniveling and accept your fate."



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This was not the response the man had been anticipating, and he began to feel even more miserable. Next he approached a withered old water buffalo that was tethered to a nearby waterwheel.

"Don't expect any sympathy from me," the buffalo retorted. "You must be a fool to think that anyone would be grateful for your charitable deeds. Just consider my situation, if you feel you have been wronged! When I was younger, I gave people all of my milk so they would have nourishment, but now they repay my devotion with difficult labor and meager rations."

The man was beginning to despair. As a last resort, he turned to the path itself and requested its opinion.

"This world brings nothing but injustice," declared the path emphatically. "Just consider my situation, if you want a fine example! I am helpful to all travelers, whether they are wealthy or destitute, important or insignificant, gigantic or small. I let them travel upon me to ease their journey, and, in return, they give me a kick in the face and utter disregard. No, you must be a fool to expect to find justice here."

Since the three judges had all ruled against him, the man felt obliged to give himself up to the tiger and become his next meal. As he glumly turned back to face his adversary, a jackal came along the road, whistling cheerfully and swaggering along as if he had no care in the world. The jackal came to a sudden halt when he saw the downcast man.

"Whatever could have happened to make you look so thoroughly dejected?"

When the man had finished telling the jackal his story, the jackal shook his head. "I don't understand this story," he said, evidently quite perplexed. "The proceedings are not making sense to me. Would you forgive my lack of intellectual prowess and recount your tale once more?"

The man repeated the entire story, but the jackal just shook his head again. "No," he said, "I can't get this story straight in my head. Perhaps if I were to see the scene where the events occurred, I would achieve some clarity."

So the man and the jackal went back to the trap, where they found the tiger sharpening his claws with a savage gleam in his eye.

"Aha," cried the tiger, licking his lips in anticipation, "I see that my dinner has arrived."

The man turned to the tiger and begged, "Oh, please, just another moment. I need to clarify something for this jackal, who is not the most intelligent of creatures."

The tiger grudgingly acquiesced, and the man explained his story again, making it last as long as possible.

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"Oh, dear," exclaimed the jackal, rubbing his head furiously, "I just can't quite get it straightened out. Let me see now, if you were in the cage when the tiger came walking by . . ."

"No, jackal, you are a fool," interrupted the tiger. "I was the one trapped in the cage."

"Ah, yes, of course," exclaimed the jackal. "I was in the cage when the tiger walked by . . . No, no, I was in the tiger when the cage walked by . . . No, that can't be right! Oh, my poor head is spinning, and I can't get it straight. You'll just have to carry on with your dinner because I'm afraid I'll never be able to understand."

The tiger, annoyed by the jackal's stupidity, was determined to set him straight. "Now, look here, it's not that complicated," he snarled. "I am the tiger, this is the man, you are the jackal, and this here is the cage," he said angrily, pointing a gigantic, sharpened claw at each of them.

"Yes, yes, I see," squeaked the jackal, trembling with fright.

"Now, I was in the cage," continued the tiger, nearly knocking the jackal to the ground as he swept his massive paws around. "Do you comprehend that?"

"Yes, mighty one, I see that, well, no, not entirely . . ."

"What could you possibly not understand?" cried the tiger, at his wit's end with impatience and frustration.

"Well, if you please," stammered the jackal, cowering away from the tiger's wrath, "how did you get into the cage?"

"How do you think I got in, you fool? In the usual way!"

"Oh, don't be furious with me," pleaded the jackal in a tremulous voice that was barely audible, "but what is the usual way?"

In great irritation, the tiger jumped up and leapt into the cage. "This is the usual way!" he bellowed. "Have you finally got it through your thick head how a tiger could get into a trap?"

The jackal slammed the cage door tightly shut and swiftly secured it.

"Ah, yes," said the jackal, grinning slyly, "now I can see the situation quite clearly."

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Questions 1-7: Choose the best answer to each question, or write your answer on the lines provided.

1. **What will most likely happen next?**
 - (A) The tiger will escape from the trap.
 - (B) The jackal will have the man for his dinner.
 - (C) The man will thank the jackal for saving him.
 - (D) The man will kick the path, the tree, and the buffalo.

2. **What feature of this passage makes it a folk tale?**
 - (A) It has dialogue between humans and animals.
 - (B) It originally came from India.
 - (C) It takes place in a jungle during the day.
 - (D) It begins with a man traveling along a road.

3. **Why did the man release the tiger?**
 - (A) He was afraid of the tiger.
 - (B) The tiger promised not to eat him.
 - (C) He knew he could defeat the tiger.
 - (D) The three judges took his side against the tiger.

4. **Why doesn't the tree rule in favor of the man?**
 - (A) The man took his leaves to feed to the cows.
 - (B) The man was standing in its shade.
 - (C) The tree is too old to consider such trivial matters.
 - (D) The tree believes that the world is unjust.

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5. Read this sentence from the passage.

"I let them travel upon me to ease their journey, and, in return, they give me a kick in the face and utter disregard."

If the word *regard* means "respect or consideration," what does the word disregard mean in this sentence?

- (A) a state of respect
- (B) lack of respect
- (C) one who shows respect
- (D) of or like respect

6. Which word best describes the jackal?

- (A) foolish
- (B) timid
- (C) dull-witted
- (D) cunning

7. Describe the responses of the tree, the water buffalo, and the path, and tell how they are all similar. (4 points)
