

Read this passage. Then answer the questions that follow.

Jason's Gold

by Will Hobbs

- 1 When the story broke on the streets of New York, it took off like a wildfire on a windy day.
- 2 "Gold!" Jason shouted at the top of his lungs. "Read all about it! Gold discovered in Alaska!"
- 3 The sturdy fifteen-year-old newsboy waving the paper in front of Grand Central Depot had arrived in New York only five days before, after nearly a year spent working his way across the continent.
- 4 "Gold ship arrives in Seattle!" Jason yelled. "EXTRA! EXTRA! Read all about it! Prospectors from Alaska. Two tons of gold!"
- 5 The headline, GOLD IN ALASKA, spanned the width of the entire page, the letters were so enormous.
- 6 People were running toward him like iron filings to a magnet. He was selling the *New York Herald* hand over fist. His sack was emptying so fast, it was going to be only a matter of minutes before he was sold out.
- 7 "Prospectors from Alaska arrive in Seattle! Two tons of gold!"
- 8 Jason wanted to shout, Seattle is where I'm from! but instead he repeated the cry "Gold ship arrives in Seattle," all the while burning with curiosity. Beyond the fact that the ship had arrived this very day—this momentous seventeenth of July, 1897—he knew nothing except what was in the headlines. He hadn't even had a chance to read the story yet.
- 9 It was unbelievable, all this pushing and shoving. A woman was giving a man a purse-beating over his head for knocking her aside. "Skip the change!" a man in a dark suit cried amid the crush, pressing a silver dollar into Jason's hand for the five-cent newspaper. "Just give me the paper!"
- 10 When there was only one left, Jason took off running with it like a dog with a prize bone. In the nearest alley, he threw himself down and began to devour the story.
- 11 *At six o'clock this morning a steamship sailed into Seattle harbor from Alaska with two tons of gold aboard. Five thousand people streamed from the streets of Seattle onto Schwabacher's Dock to meet the gold ship, the Portland.*
- 12 Five thousand people at Schwabacher's Dock! He knew Schwabacher's like the back of his hand. Mrs. Beal's rooming house was only six blocks away! Were his brothers, Abraham and Ethan, among the five thousand? Maybe, but probably not. At that hour they would have been on their way to work at the sawmill. Would they have risked being fired for arriving late? He didn't think so. His older brothers were such cautious sorts. Hurriedly, Jason read on:
- 13 *"Show us your gold!" shouted the crowd as the steamer nosed into the dock.*
- 14 *The prospectors thronging in the bow obliged by holding up their riches in canvas and buckskin sacks, in jars, in a five-gallon milk can, all manner of satchels and suitcases. One of the sixty-eight, Frank Phiscator, yelled, "We've got millions!"*
- 15 Jason closed his eyes. He could picture this just as surely as if he were there. He'd only been gone for ten months. Suddenly he could even smell the salt water and hear the screaming of the gulls above the crowd. Imagine, he told himself, /millions in gold/. His eyes raced back to the newsprint:
- 16 *Another of the grizzled prospectors bellowed, "The Klondike is the richest goldfield in the world!"*

17 *"Hurrah for the Klondike!" the crowd cheered. "Ho for the Klondike!"*

18 *Klondike.* Jason paused to savor the word. "Klondike," he said aloud. The name had a magical ring to it, a spellbinding power. The word itself was heavy and solid and dazzling, like a bar of shiny gold.

19 *One of the newly rich disembarking the ship was a young man from Michigan who'd left a small farm two years before with almost nothing to his name. As he wrestled a suitcase weighing over two hundred pounds down the gangplank, the handle broke, to a roar from the crowd.*

20 It almost hurt reading this, it was so stupendous. Two hundred pounds of gold!

21 That man had left home with almost nothing to his name, Jason thought, just like I did. That could have been *me* if only I'd heard about Alaska ten months ago, when I first took off.... It could have been Jason Hawthorn dragging a fortune in gold off that ship.

22 Jason could imagine himself disembarking, spotting his brothers in the crowd, seeing the astonishment in their eyes...their sandy-haired little brother returning home, a conquering hero!

23 "Dreams of grandeur," he whispered self-mockingly, and found the spot where he'd left off:

24 *A nation unrecovered from the panic of '93 and four years of depression now casts its hopeful eyes upon Alaska. Today's events, in a lightning stroke, point north from Seattle toward that vast and ultimate frontier whose riches have only begun to be plumbed. It may well be that a gold rush to dwarf the great California rush of '49 may already be under way as these lines are penned, as untold numbers of argonauts, like modern Jasons, make ready to pursue their Golden Fleeces. Klondike or Bust!*

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1 Read this sentence from paragraph 6 of the passage.

People were running toward him like iron filings to a magnet.

The author uses this simile to emphasize that the people

- (A) were interested in the news about the gold
- (B) were curious about the ship's arrival
- (C) wanted to become gold prospectors
- (D) were unable to resist reading about the gold

2 Why does the author alternate between sharing information from the newspaper and showing Jason's response?

- (A) to suggest why Jason misses his brothers
- (B) to show Jason's feelings at the moment they occur
- (C) to portray Jason's interest in reading
- (D) to show why Jason might want to return home

3 Which detail would be **most** important to include in a summary of the passage?

- (A) Jason had gone to New York instead of Alaska.
- (B) The headline in the newspaper is written in large print.
- (C) A boarding house is near the dock in Seattle.
- (D) Jason's brothers work at a sawmill.