

On the Ice

As everyone knows, a person has a slim chance of surviving for more than a few minutes in very cold water. A strong person may have about a fifty-fifty chance of surviving a short swim in fifty-degree water. If you are in water below fifty degrees for any amount of time, you are in great danger of freezing.

Jules was a smart boy, well aware of the danger of freezing water when he went out on a sledding trip with his team of dogs. Jules grew up in the icy regions of the Yukon, learning from his community about how to survive in the wintry wilderness. He knew how to hunt for food, fish under the ice, build a snow cave, huddle with his dogs for warmth, and even navigate home using either a compass or a Global Positioning System. Jules was well prepared for many different emergencies and even for being completely lost in the wilderness.

This knowledge helped him survive many times. He had been out with his friend Sara looking for wild carrots to eat one autumn when they got trapped in a sudden early blizzard. They made a snow cave and ate the carrots they had dug up earlier while they waited out the storm, even playing and making carvings on the cave walls to pass the time. Another time, Jules had traveled to the next village to invite them to a summer party in his own village, and on his way home realized he had not brought enough food for the two-day journey. Jules easily managed to catch a fish and find some nutritious plants to eat - and it ended up being one of the best meals he had ever eaten.

One spring, Jules was sledding across the Great Lake near his home. He had gone to town to buy some groceries and supplies for his whole village. Mr. Tom wanted a box of nails for a doghouse he was building. Mrs. Nancy wanted some candy to give to her students at the community school. Jules' friend Sara wanted some new long underwear because she had outgrown her old set.

Jules had lots of things to carry for all of the neighbors and friends who asked him to bring them something. He packed his sled tight, filled his pockets, and even had to wear the long underwear for Sara to save space! He felt a little silly wearing her clothes, but every bit of room on the sled was taken up by other supplies. Jules was on his way home and decided to cut across the lake to save some time. It was springtime, and the ice would soon melt, but surely it was still plenty cold enough to cross the lake. Jules set out over the Great Lake, miles wide, enjoying the open expanse of white ice all around him and the sun that had just come out to warm the day.

As Jules went farther and farther over the Great Lake, the sun kept getting

brighter. He grew warm, loosened his thick cap and jacket, and let his sled dogs slow down a little bit. Suddenly, off in the distance he heard a thunderous CRAAAACK! The ice was definitely breaking up early!

Jules yelled to his sled dogs to speed up again, top speed, to race across the ice before it broke up under them. They went faster and faster, and the opposite shoreline grew near. All at once, the ice just below the sled broke, and the sled plunged into the water and bobbed back up, as the dogs slid to a stop and Jules went flying and sliding well past them all. Jules slid to a stop on his back, lifted his head slowly and glanced back to see his dogs resting and the sled easily floating in a small hole in the ice. He breathed a sigh of relief for his dogs and the supplies they were pulling.

All of a sudden, he heard another crack right below him, and the icy water wrapped him up and closed around him! He came up for air, freezing cold, and tried to remember what he had to do in this situation. What if he didn't make it out? Would his mother ever learn what had happened to him? Would Sara ever be able to look at the lake without feeling sad? Jules shook his head to clear his thoughts. There wasn't time for them now.

Jules turned back the way he had come, knowing that the ice was most likely strongest there where it had supported him before. He slowly, slowly lifted his arms up out of the water and onto the ice. He was shivering intensely already, but he managed to remain calm. Jules knew he was going to be much heavier with his wet clothes now, so he needed to let some water run out of his sleeves and his jacket before he tried to climb back on the ice. Thankfully, he was wearing Sara's new long underwear which would help keep him warm even in the water.

Under the sun, the surface of the ice was smooth and wet, and Jules knew it was going to be hard to pull himself up. The sled dogs were not strong enough, and he did not want to risk their falling in with him. Jules had to figure out a way to do this on his own. Suddenly, he remembered the box of nails for Mr. Tom. It was in his chest pocket! He slowly reached inside and found only candy. It was some of Mrs. Nancy's candy. He remembered Sara telling him about how candy could help keep a person's energy up in an emergency situation, and he put some in his mouth and spit out the wrapper. It tasted wonderful, and he felt a good surge of energy!

He concentrated on the memory of his mom's voice telling him stories about courageous people from the village, and he knew he couldn't give up. The nails must be in the other pocket, he thought. Jules slowly reached in and took out two nails. He grabbed one nail in each hand, and jammed them into the ice. Little by little, he pulled and poked the nails into the ice, moving himself slowly out of the water.

Pull... poke... pull... poke... It seemed like it would take forever, but Jules knew that he

had to move slowly and carefully so as not to break the ice again. His legs hung relaxed, and he used only his hands and arms to slowly pull himself along. Suddenly, he felt a quick nudge and a swish against his leg! Jules almost panicked and dropped himself right back in, when he realized it must just be a big fish swimming by. Maybe I'll eat that fish for dinner by the end of this summer, he thought, and laughed himself along some more.

Once Jules had pulled himself all the way out, he stopped to rest, and stayed laying flat with his arms and legs spread out. He let more of the water drain out of his clothes. He was close to his dogs, and they happily reached over to lick him and nuzzle his head. This reassured Jules more than ever, and he knew they all had to act fast to get off the ice.

Jules ordered the dogs to move forward a little bit, staying flat as he did so, and he saw that they could pull the sled right out of the water. He directed them around the hole he had made, and just as the sled passed him by he grabbed onto it, staying flat on the ice, and told the dogs to run for it!

Jules' dogs bolted forward, barking and charging ahead. Jules held on tight to the sled and went for the ride of his life, holding onto the back of the sled while he slid along on his belly at top dog-speed! Faster and faster they went, flying over the melting ice with Jules gripping tightly and staying flat on the ice that swished speedily under him!

When they finally arrived on the other side of the Great Lake, Jules breathed a heavy sigh and broke out laughing at the wild adventure they had just survived! Even better, they still had everything his village had asked for - almost everything, that is. Jules grinned as he told himself that surely his on-the-ice story would bring plenty of forgiveness for two missing nails and a piece of candy.

1. What danger did Jules know about when sledding across a frozen lake?

- A. There was a good chance that the dog teams would tire out.
- B. There was always a chance that you could slide out of control.
- C. There was only a slim chance of surviving in very cold water.

2. How did Jules learn about how to survive in the icy regions where he lived?

- A. He went out on his own and learned from experience.
- B. He learned from the people in his community.
- C. His parents sent him to the community survival school.

- 3. What concern did Jules have about the time of year that he went sledding?**
- A. He knew that in springtime the ice starts to melt.
 - B. He knew that animals come out in the spring.
 - C. He needed to know how much daylight he would have.
- 4. Why was it good for Jules that he had to wear the underwear he had bought for Sara?**
- A. It gave him more padding when he slipped and fell on the ice.
 - B. It gave him traction so he could pull himself out of the water.
 - C. It helped keep him warm when he was in the icy water.
- 5. Why did Jules decide to cross the lake on his way back home?**
- A. He wanted to enjoy the warmth of the sun.
 - B. He thought it would save some travel time.
 - C. He was tired of traveling through the forest.
- 6. What happened right after Jules heard the ice crack in the distance?**
- A. He told the dogs to run at top speed to get across the lake quickly.
 - B. He loosened his thick cap and jacket as he thought about what to do.
 - C. The sled plunged into the water and pulled Jules into the water with it.
- 7. How did Jules act when his sled fell into the water and he went flying across the ice?**
- A. He remained calm and was more concerned about his dogs and sled than about himself.
 - B. He started to panic but then calmed down when he saw that his dogs were still on top of the ice.
 - C. He forgot about everything except how he was going to get back home alive and in one piece.
- 8. How did Jules pull himself out of the hole in the ice?**
- A. He ate candy and got strong enough to pull himself out.
 - B. He held onto the sled as his dog team pulled him out.
 - C. He jammed nails into the ice to hold on to and pulled.

9. What was on Jules' mind when he first fell through the ice?

- A. He immediately analyzed his situation and thought about how to survive.
- B. He couldn't think about anything except his mother, Sara, and dying.
- C. He thought about holding onto the sled and having the dogs pull him out.

10. What was the main problem in this story?

- A. Jules made a mistake when he thought the ice on the lake was safe to travel on.
- B. The ice on the lake was beginning to melt early because spring was warmer than usual.
- C. Jules didn't cross the lake fast enough because he slowed down to loosen his jacket.

11. Why was Jules sledding in this story?

- A. He went to town to get some building materials for his parents.
- B. He was taking things to town for his neighbors and friends.
- C. He went to town to get groceries and supplies for his village.

12. Why did Jules lie flat on the ice when he hung onto the sled as the dogs pulled it to safety?

- A. He didn't think he had enough strength to climb back up onto the sled.
- B. It would be harder to fall through the ice when his weight was spread out.
- C. The ice had gotten too slippery for him to stand or to crawl onto the sled.

13. What will Jules probably do the next time he is sledding in the springtime and is thinking about crossing a frozen lake?

- A. He will remember what happened to him and go around the lake.
- B. He will go around the lake looking for a place that can be safely crossed.
- C. He will walk out onto the ice to test it to see if it is safe for the sled.

14. What made it so hard for Jules to pull himself out of the water?

- A. He was so cold that he had trouble moving his arms.
- B. The heat from the sun had made the ice smooth and wet.
- C. The ice kept cracking under him because it was so thin.

15. How did memories about his mother help Jules survive?

- A. He knew his mother would want him to come back safe.
- B. He thought about how his mother would feel if he died.
- C. He remembered her stories about courageous people.

16. What was this story mostly about?

- A. What can happen when you make a wrong decision in a dangerous situation.
- B. How dangerous life can be in a place where the weather is always cold.
- C. How using knowledge and remaining calm can save your life in an emergency.

17. Why did Jules drain the water out of his clothes?

- A. He wanted to reduce his weight on the ice.
- B. It was cold and he didn't want it to freeze.
- C. The water made the ice under him slippery.

18. Which of the following is an example of how Jules reacted in the middle of a potentially deadly situation?

- A. After he was off the ice and safe, he thought it would be funny to tell Sara that her underwear had saved him from freezing.
- B. He laughed when he thought about eating the fish that had scared him and almost caused him to fall back into the water.
- C. He laughed and thoroughly enjoyed flying over the ice when the dogs were pulling him to safety after he almost drowned.

19. What was the first example in the story that showed that Jules knew how to survive on his own?

- A. He caught fish and ate plants when he ran out of food.
- B. He made a snow cave when he got caught in a snow storm.
- C. He traveled on a two-day journey and didn't get lost.

20. What was Jules like at the end of the story?

- A. He was relieved he was safe and thought about how great it would be to see his mom and Sara.
- B. He was mostly thinking about his wild adventure and about the best way to tell about it.
- C. He was as happy about saving the supplies he had bought as he was about being safe.