

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### I Survived The Great Alaska Earthquake, 1964



# CRITICAL-THINKING QUESTIONS AND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

## CRITICAL-THINKING QUESTIONS:

1. List the ways that Mom and Dad almost died during their first year in the bush? How did these experiences end up helping them?

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2. How does the winter bear cause Jackson's family's cabin to burn down?

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3. What can you tell about Mom and Dad from the steel drums kept 20 feet away from the cabin?

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4. What leads to Jackson going to school for the first time in 5th grade?

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5. How is Jackson's stomach feeling during his first day of school, and why? What are some words to describe how he feels emotionally or mentally?

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## CRITICAL-THINKING QUESTIONS AND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT *(CONTINUED)*

6. How does Jackson convince himself that it's okay to avoid Leonor, Chris, Nora, and Mary? What do you think is going on with him?

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7. After Jackson overhears his friends talking about him, what stops him from running after them to say he doesn't hate them?

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8. When the earthquake first hits, how does Jackson try to calm himself? Why doesn't this work?

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9. When Jackson has been rocketed out of the fissure and onto the street, why doesn't his family's saying—"Get to work"—help him, like it does other times in the book? Who does he identify with in this moment? What does help him, and why?

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10. Why is Jackson happy to see the bear again? How has his view of the bear changed?

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**ESSAY ASSIGNMENT:** Answer the organizer questions on the next page to help you write a three-paragraph essay explaining how Jackson's view of friendship changes from the beginning of the book to the end.

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## CRITICAL-THINKING QUESTIONS AND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT *(CONTINUED)*

### THREE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY ORGANIZER FOR *I SURVIVED THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE, 1871*

Answer the questions below to brainstorm ideas for your first paragraph, which will be your introduction:

How does Jackson feel about friends? What does he think when his mother says he'll "make some friends" while attending school for the first time?

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For your second paragraph, list a moment in which Jackson rejects friendship, then a moment in which Jackson accepts friendship:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Next, answer the questions below to help you write a concluding paragraph.

What did Jackson learn about getting by on his own versus needing other people?

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Now, write your essay on the back of this page or on a computer using your answers above.

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## ANSWERS

#### CRITICAL-THINKING QUESTIONS:

1. During their first year in the bush, Mom and Dad ran out of food halfway through the winter. They also got lost in the forest and nearly froze. Mom ate a poisonous mushroom and was sick for a week. They were practically eaten alive by mosquitoes. But each of these experiences taught them something new and helped them learn how to survive in the bush.
2. While looking for food, the winter bear knocks over the stove. Although Jackson and his parents tamped down the embers inside the stove, they were still glowing, so when the stove fell over, they scattered and set fire to the cabin.
3. Mom and Dad have prepared for the worst. They know that it's possible for something bad to happen to the cabin in the bush, so they keep emergency supplies in bear-proof containers outside but close by.
4. For his whole life, Jackson has been homeschooled in the bush. But when the cabin burns down and his family loses their food and supplies, they have to move to Valdez so his parents can get jobs. Because they'll be working, they no longer have time to homeschool Jackson, so he has to go to school.
5. Jackson is sick to his stomach because he's never been to school with other kids before, and because he feels a bit lost. Some words to describe how he's feeling emotionally or mentally are nervous, exhausted, and overwhelmed.
6. Jackson tells himself that soon he'll be back in the bush, and it won't matter if he knows what a Hula-Hoop is, and because he's never going to see these kids again anyway. Jackson is probably embarrassed that he's never heard of the things the kids are talking about, so it's easier to just stay away from them.
7. Jackson is afraid, since he thinks *they* hate *him* and think he's weird.
8. Jackson reminds himself that earthquakes happen all the time, especially in Alaska. But then the earthquake keeps going, the roaring getting louder and the shaking getting stronger.
9. Because Jackson's ankle is broken and he can't walk or stand, he feels panicked and hopeless. He thinks of the starving winter bear crying out in fear as it escaped the burning cabin. Then his friends show up. They get him up and carry him away from the water. Because he is no longer alone, Jackson starts to feel better.
10. Jackson is happy to see the bear because it looks healthy, with thick, glossy fur. The bear survived, just like Jackson did. He now sees it as an animal that was trying to survive—just like Jackson was during the earthquake—not as an animal that wanted to steal his food and destroy his home.

**ESSAY ASSIGNMENT:** Answers will vary, but should include how Jackson feels like he's always gotten by on his own and doesn't want to make friends at his new school; he rejects friendship when he feels weird about not knowing what the kids at school are talking about (the Beatles, Hula-Hoops, and Silly Putty); he accepts friendship when he's got a broken ankle and his friends help him get away from the water before the waves come; he learned that while he can take care of himself, he also needs other people.