

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

In Emory's Gift, Charlie is a 13-year-old boy just out of seventh grade. His mother's death and his father's grief leave Charlie feeling isolated at school, at home, and even at the junior-lifesaving training class he attends, where he practices his lifesaving skills on seventh-graders, otherwise known as sevies. In the excerpt below, Charlie has returned home after class and has walked to the creek to go fishing.

from **Emory's Gift**

by W. Bruce Cameron

- 1 During the spring the waters of the creek were dark and cold, a sharp contrast from the milky pool water from which I'd been saving sevies all morning. From bank to bank the stream was more than thirty feet. In the summer, though, with the runoff down to a trickle, the creek bed was mainly dry, littered with rocks and mud and tree branches. The creek itself shrank back until it was only six feet wide, hugging the far bank and deep enough to swim in. That's where the fish liked to lurk, up under the tree root overhang. From the base of our hill the creek had only another couple hundred yards of independence before it joined the river, adding strength to the flow to town.
- 2 I started casting along the banks of the opposing shore, and it wasn't long before I'd hooked and pulled in a nice little brook trout. I put it in the creel, thinking that a couple more just like it and we'd skip the hamburgers that evening.
- 3 A few minutes later I had another one, and then another. Man, they were really biting! I left the creel lying on the bank and moved downstream a bit.
- 4 The fourth trout was the best of all, fat and glistening, bending my rod with authority while I wrestled it ashore. I was carefully pulling the hook from its mouth when I got the sense of being watched.
- 5 I turned and studied the opposite bank. The slight breeze gave the woods an empty sound, but I knew there was someone there, and I felt the hair on my arms stand up as my skin goose-bumped in alarm.
- 6 I gave a start when I looked higher up the hill. A pair of amber eyes met mine, unblinking.
- 7 It was a cougar, watching me from a jumble of rocks.

- 8 When he saw I'd spotted him, he leaped with nimble ability down the slope, closing the gap between us. With a soaring jump that was almost absurdly graceful, he cleared the part of the creek that was deep water and bounded to a sudden halt in the shallows, making scarcely a spray.
- 9 It all happened so quickly I never even had time to gasp. He stopped, staring at me, evaluating the situation. No more than fifteen feet of rocky creek bed lay between us.
- 10 There was no retreat possible. Behind me the bank was sandy, capable of supporting some sparse grass but no trees—as if climbing a tree would save me from a cat. If I tried to scramble up the bank the cougar could easily take me from behind. The deep water was too far away and there wasn't enough of it anyway. There were no good options.
- 11 The mountain lion was not running away. His rear end was lowered, his gaze intent. I was reminded of what my dad had said: *Ever see a cat jump on a string?* That's what the cougar looked like to me now, a cat getting ready to pounce.
- 12 There were no sticks nearby. My rod was handy but so thin I doubted it would be intimidating. What was it Dad said? *A bite-sized boy like you could make a tasty meal.*
- 13 My fear was so strong and real I was sick with it. *Stand up big and tall,* my father had instructed. *What you want is for that cougar to see you as a meal that's going to cost him, put up a real fight.*
- 14 I took in a shuddering breath, raising my trembling hands over my head.
- 15 The cougar moved again, holding his body low, slinking toward me. There was absolutely no question of his intentions. He stopped, crouching. I stood my ground, quivering.
- 16 "Go away," I said in a whisper.
- 17 The cougar stood motionless. His muscles bunched; he sank lower; his lips drew back.
- 18 I found my voice. "Grrrr!" I roared at him.
- 19 There was no reaction at all.
- 20 "Grrrr!"
- 21 I watched in terrified fascination as the tension built in the big cat's shoulders. His eyes were locked on mine. *This was it.* I braced myself for the attack. I would put up a good fight. I would make him decide that, as meals go, I was too much trouble to bother with.

- 22 I swallowed. I would put up a good fight, or I would die.
- 23 He was coiling to spring and then he froze, raising his head sharply, his eyes widening. I actually saw the irises turn dark with alarm. The cougar stood still for only a second and then turned and rocketed away, scampering up the bank and disappearing into the brush.
- 24 My legs were still weak and trembling. I wasn't sure what had happened. How had I gone from bite-sized to intimidating in midpounce? I stared after the big cat, terrified he might return, but after ten seconds, then twenty, there was no sign of him.
- 25 I was safe.

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45 This excerpt can best be described as exploring the theme of —

- A survival in extreme conditions
- B courage in the face of danger
- C reverence for the natural world
- D standing up for a principle

46 The details about the size of the creek in paragraph 1 are significant to the story's plot because —

- F the creek is too narrow to offer the narrator any protection from the cougar
- G the narrator knows exactly where to catch the most fish in the creek
- H the creek is so wide and deep that the narrator's escape route is cut off
- J the narrator is so busy studying the creek that he does not notice the cougar right away

47 From paragraphs 11 through 13, what can the reader infer about the narrator's relationship with his father?

- A The narrator wishes that he could be more like his father.
- B The narrator has an instinctive respect for his father.
- C The narrator feels conflicted about his father.
- D The narrator wants to escape his father's influence.

48 What is left unresolved at the end of the story?

- F The narrator's conflict with his father
- G The cougar's dilemma
- H The reason why the cougar fled
- J The narrator's need to find his way home

49 Which sentence best describes how the author uses point of view in the selection?

- A The author uses a third-person narrative to help the reader understand what motivates the protagonist to stand his ground and meet a deadly threat.
- B The author uses an unreliable first-person narrator to suggest that the protagonist exaggerates the dangers he faces.
- C The author uses a first-person narrative to help the reader identify with the thoughts and feelings of a protagonist under extreme stress.
- D The author uses an omniscient narrator to create suspense by revealing the existence of a threat to a naive, vulnerable protagonist.

50 The tone of the story becomes increasingly —

- F hopeful
- G critical
- H despairing
- J suspenseful