

Reading Comprehension — Race to the Klondike

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Race to the Klondike

In 1896, three prospectors found gold in a creek in the Klondike, deep in Canada's frozen Yukon. When the news finally reached the outside world the following year, it set off one of the wildest rushes in history. Around a hundred thousand people dropped everything and set out for the far north, dreaming of gold.

But reaching the Klondike was a punishing test. Most stampeders had to climb the steep, icy Chilkoot Pass on foot, carrying their supplies on their backs. The authorities insisted each person bring almost a tonne of food and equipment — enough to survive a year — so the climb had to be made dozens of times. Many gave up; some did not survive.

Those who made it faced a brutal Arctic winter, with temperatures far below freezing and the sun barely rising. Boom towns like Dawson City sprang up almost overnight, crowded with hopeful miners, traders and adventurers.

The hard truth was that most found little or no gold. By the time many arrived, the best claims had already been taken. Within a few years the rush was over, and the boom towns shrank as quickly as they had grown.

Yet the Klondike Gold Rush became legendary. It opened up Canada's north, inspired countless stories, and is still remembered as one of the great adventures of the age.

Questions

1. In what year was gold found in the Klondike? (1 mark)
2. Roughly how many people set out for the Klondike? (1 mark)
3. How did most stampeders have to cross the Chilkoot Pass? (1 mark)
4. Find and copy a word in paragraph 2 meaning "very harsh or punishing." (1 mark)
5. Why did the climb have to be made many times? (2 marks)
6. Why did most people find little or no gold? (2 marks)
7. Why does the writer call it "a punishing test"? (2 marks)
8. Summarise the gold rush: the discovery, the journey, and the outcome. (3 marks)

Answer Key / Mark Scheme

1. 1896.
2. Around a hundred thousand.
3. On foot, carrying supplies on their backs.
4. "brutal" / "punishing".

5. Each person had to bring nearly a tonne of supplies, too much to carry in one trip.
6. By the time many arrived, the best claims had already been taken.
7. The journey was extremely hard: a steep icy climb carried many times, then a brutal Arctic winter.
8. Discovery: gold found in the Yukon in 1896. Journey: ~100,000 set out, climbing the icy Chilkoot Pass with heavy supplies. Outcome: most found little gold and the boom towns soon shrank.