Imagine you are in a dark forest on a winter night, hunting an enemy—who just happens to be your neighbor. Now suppose that your neighbor is hunting you, too. What makes people who should be friends become fierce enemies? Who is the loser in this story’s deadly fight? The answer may shock you.

**LITERARY FOCUS: OMNISCIENT NARRATOR**

A story’s omniscient narrator knows everything that happens, and why. This type of narrator is not a character in the story but an outside observer who can tell you what each character is thinking and feeling.

- As you read “The Interlopers,” pay special attention to the information the narrator gives you about the two characters’ pasts.
- The narrator of “The Interlopers” makes us think that events are leading one way—up until the story’s very end. Prepare to be surprised.

**READING SKILLS: MONITORING YOUR READING**

Some of the words and sentences in “The Interlopers” may seem difficult. The following tips will help you understand this classic story.

- Look for context clues that can help you figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Break down long sentences into shorter ones.
- Look for the subject and verb in confusing sentences.
- Stop to summarize important passages or scenes.
- Re-read tough passages. Some passages are hard to understand the first time.
- Try to visualize, or picture, the events that are happening.
The Interlopers

precipitous (prē-sip'ə-tas) adj.: very steep.

The wooded slope was precipitous—a vertical cliff—and hard to climb.

acquiesced (ak'wē-est') v. (used with in): accepted; agreed; consented.

They never acquiesced in the judgment of the court; instead, they bitterly opposed it.

marauders (ma-rôd'ərz) n.: people who roam around in search of loot, or goods to steal.

The man kept a sharp lookout for marauders who might be prowling through the woods.

exasperation (eg-zas'par-āshən) n.: great annoyance.

His exasperation at being captured was so great that he cursed aloud.

pious (piəs) adj.: showing religious devotion.

Although not religious, his words were pious.

retorted (ri-tôr'tid) v.: replied in a sharp or witty way.

Feeling insulted, he retorted angrily.

condolences (kan-dōləns-iz) n.: expressions of sympathy.

When he heard about his enemy’s death, he sent condolences to the widow.

languor (lan'gər) n.: weakness; weariness.

After hours of hard work, he felt a great languor, and this exhaustion lasted all day.

reconciliation (rek'n-sil'ə-əshən) n.: friendly end to a quarrel.

The fight could end in one of two ways—reconciliation or death.

succor (suk'ər) n.: help given to someone in distress; relief.

Unable to free themselves, they waited for rescuers to give them succor.

CONTEXT CLUES: SOLVING WORD MYSTERIES

Successful readers are like detectives looking for clues. When good readers see an unfamiliar word, they look at the context—the words and sentences around the word—for clues to its meaning. Look at these examples to learn more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Context Clue</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition or restatement</td>
<td>Tito’s languor, his complete weariness, came when the danger was over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Tito’s languor was like the feeling you get after defeat in a basketball game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonym</td>
<td>His cousin was full of pep, but Tito had a feeling of languor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause and effect</td>
<td>Because of his languor, Tito slept all day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In a forest of mixed growth somewhere on the eastern spurs of the Carpathians, a man stood one winter night watching and listening, as though he waited for some beast of the woods to come within the range of his vision and, later, of his rifle. But the game for whose presence he kept so keen an outlook was none that figured in the sportsman’s calendar as lawful and proper for the chase; Ulrich von Gradwitz patrolled the dark forest in quest of a human enemy.

The forest lands of Gradwitz were of wide extent and well stocked with game; the narrow strip of precipitous woodland that lay on its outskirt was not remarkable for the game it harbored or the shooting it afforded, but it was the most jealously guarded of all its owner’s territorial possessions. A famous lawsuit, in the days of his grandfather, had wrested it from the illegal possession of a neighboring family of petty landowners; the dispossessed party had never acquiesced in the judgment of the courts, and a long series of poaching affrays and similar scan-

1. Carpathians (kär-pa’thē-anz): mountain range that starts in Slovakia and extends through Poland, Ukraine, and Romania.
2. poaching affrays (a-frāz’): noisy quarrels or brawls about poaching, which means “fishing or hunting illegally on private property.”
dals had embittered the relationships between the families for three generations. The neighbor feud had grown into a personal one since Ulrich had come to be head of his family; if there was a man in the world whom he detested and wished ill to, it was Georg Znaeym, the inheritor of the quarrel and the tireless game snatcher and raider of the disputed border forest. The feud might, perhaps, have died down or been compromised if the personal ill will of the two men had not stood in the way; as boys they had thirsted for one another’s blood, as men each prayed that misfortune might fall on the other, and this wind-scourged winter night Ulrich had banded together his foresters to watch the dark forest, not in quest of four-footed quarry, but to keep a lookout for the prowling thieves whom he suspected of being afoot from across the land boundary. The roebuck, which usually kept in the sheltered hollows during a storm wind, were running like driven things tonight, and there was movement and unrest among the creatures that were wont to sleep through the dark hours. Assuredly there was a disturbing element in the forest, and Ulrich could guess the quarter from whence it came.

He strayed away by himself from the watchers whom he had placed in ambush on the crest of the hill and wandered far down the steep slopes amid the wild tangle of undergrowth, peering through the tree trunks and listening through the whistling and skirling of the wind and the restless beating of the branches for sight or sound of the marauders. If only on this wild night, in this dark, lone spot, he might come across Georg Znaeym, man to man, with none to witness—that was the wish that was uppermost in his thoughts. And as he stepped round the trunk of a huge beech he came face to face with the man he sought.

The two enemies stood glaring at one another for a long silent moment. Each had a rifle in his hand, each had hate in his heart and murder uppermost in his mind. The chance had come

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3. **roebuck** (rōˈbak) *n.*: male (or males) of the roe deer, small deer that live in Europe and Asia.

4. **skirling** (skurlˈin) *v.* used as *n.*: shrill, piercing sound.
to give full play to the passions of a lifetime. But a man who has been brought up under the code of a restraining civilization cannot easily nerve himself to shoot down his neighbor in cold blood and without a word spoken, except for an offense against his hearth and honor. And before the moment of hesitation had given way to action, a deed of Nature’s own violence overwhelmed them both. A fierce shriek of the storm had been answered by a splitting crash over their heads, and ere they could leap aside, a mass of falling beech tree had thundered down on them. Ulrich von Gradwitz found himself stretched on the ground, one arm numb beneath him and the other held almost as helplessly in a tight tangle of forked branches, while both legs were pinned beneath the fallen mass. His heavy shooting boots had saved his feet from being crushed to pieces, but if his fractures were not as serious as they might have been, at least it was evident that he could not move from his present position till someone came to release him. The descending twigs had slashed the skin of his face, and he had to wink away some drops of blood from his eyelashes before he could take in a general view of the disaster. At his side, so near that under ordinary circumstances he could almost have touched him, lay Georg Znaeym, alive and struggling, but obviously as helplessly pinioned down as himself. All round them lay a thick-strewn wreckage of splintered branches and broken twigs.

Relief at being alive and exasperation at his captive plight brought a strange medley of pious thank offerings and sharp curses to Ulrich’s lips. Georg, who was nearly blinded with the blood which trickled across his eyes, stopped his struggles for a moment to listen, and then gave a short, snarling laugh.

“So you’re not killed, as you ought to be, but you’re caught, anyway,” he cried, “caught fast. Ho, what a jest, Ulrich von Gradwitz snared in his stolen forest. There’s real justice for you!”

And he laughed again, mockingly and savagely.

5. pinioned (pin′yand) v. used as adj.: pinned, as if chained or tied up.
“I’m caught in my own forest land,” retorted Ulrich. “When my men come to release us, you will wish, perhaps, that you were in a better plight than caught poaching on a neighbor’s land, shame on you.”

Georg was silent for a moment; then he answered quietly: “Are you sure that your men will find much to release? I have men, too, in the forest tonight, close behind me, and they will be here first and do the releasing. When they drag me out from under these branches, it won’t need much clumsiness on their part to roll this mass of trunk right over on the top of you. Your men will find you dead under a fallen beech tree. For form’s sake I shall send my condolences to your family.”

“It is a useful hint,” said Ulrich fiercely. “My men had orders to follow in ten minutes’ time, seven of which must have gone by already, and when they get me out—I will remember the hint. Only as you will have met your death poaching on my lands, I don’t think I can decently send any message of condolence to your family.”

“Good,” snarled Georg, “good. We fight this quarrel out to the death, you and I and our foresters, with no cursed interlopers to come between us. Death and damnation to you, Ulrich von Gradwitz.”

“The same to you, Georg Znaeym, forest thief, game snatcher.”

Both men spoke with the bitterness of possible defeat before them, for each knew that it might be long before his men would seek him out or find him; it was a bare matter of chance which party would arrive first on the scene.

Both had now given up the useless struggle to free themselves from the mass of wood that held them down; Ulrich limited his endeavors to an effort to bring his one partially free arm near enough to his outer coat pocket to draw out his wine flask. Even when he had accomplished that operation, it was long before he could manage the unscrewing of the stopper or get
any of the liquid down his throat. But what a heaven-sent draft it seemed! It was an open winter, and little snow had fallen as yet, hence the captives suffered less from the cold than might have been the case at that season of the year; nevertheless, the wine was warming and reviving to the wounded man, and he looked across with something like a throb of pity to where his enemy lay, just keeping the groans of pain and weariness from crossing his lips.

“Could you reach this flask if I threw it over to you?” asked Ulrich suddenly. “There is good wine in it, and one may as well be as comfortable as one can. Let us drink, even if tonight one of us dies.”

“No, I can scarcely see anything; there is so much blood caked round my eyes,” said Georg; “and in any case I don’t drink wine with an enemy.”

Ulrich was silent for a few minutes and lay listening to the weary screeching of the wind. An idea was slowly forming and growing in his brain, an idea that gained strength every time that he looked across at the man who was fighting so grimly against pain and exhaustion. In the pain and languor that Ulrich himself was feeling, the old fierce hatred seemed to be dying down.

“Neighbor,” he said presently, “do as you please if your men come first. It was a fair compact. But as for me, I’ve changed my mind. If my men are the first to come, you shall be the first to be helped, as though you were my guest. We have quarreled like devils all our lives over this stupid strip of forest, where the trees can’t even stand upright in a breath of wind. Lying here tonight, thinking, I’ve come to think we’ve been rather fools; there are better things in life than getting the better of a boundary dispute. Neighbor, if you will help me to bury the old quarrel, I—I will ask you to be my friend.”

Georg Znaeym was silent for so long that Ulrich thought perhaps he had fainted with the pain of his injuries. Then he spoke slowly and in jerks.

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6. **draft** n.: drink.
7. **open winter**: mild winter.
“How the whole region would stare and gabble if we rode into the market square together. No one living can remember seeing a Znaeym and a von Gradwitz talking to one another in friendship. And what peace there would be among the forester folk if we ended our feud tonight. And if we choose to make peace among our people, there is none other to interfere, no interlopers from outside. . . . You would come and keep the Sylvester night beneath my roof, and I would come and feast on some high day at your castle. . . . I would never fire a shot on your land, save when you invited me as a guest; and you should come and shoot with me down in the marshes where the wild-fowl are. In all the countryside there are none that could hinder if we willed to make peace. I never thought to have wanted to do other than hate you all my life, but I think I have changed my mind about things too, this last half-hour. And you offered me your wine flask. . . . Ulrich von Gradwitz, I will be your friend.”

For a space both men were silent, turning over in their minds the wonderful changes that this dramatic reconciliation would bring about. In the cold, gloomy forest, with the wind tearing in fitful gusts through the naked branches and whistling round the tree trunks, they lay and waited for the help that would now bring release and succor to both parties. And each prayed a private prayer that his men might be the first to arrive, so that he might be the first to show honorable attention to the enemy that had become a friend.

8. Sylvester night: feast day honoring Saint Sylvester (Pope Sylvester I, d. 335), observed on December 31.
Presently, as the wind dropped for a moment, Ulrich broke the silence.

“Let’s shout for help,” he said; “in this lull our voices may carry a little way.”

“They won’t carry far through the trees and undergrowth,” said Georg, “but we can try. Together, then.”

The two raised their voices in a prolonged hunting call.

“Together again,” said Ulrich a few minutes later, after listening in vain for an answering halloo.

“I heard something that time, I think,” said Ulrich.

“I heard nothing but the pestilential wind,” said Georg hoarsely.

There was silence again for some minutes, and then Ulrich gave a joyful cry.

“I can see figures coming through the wood. They are following in the way I came down the hillside.”

Both men raised their voices in as loud a shout as they could muster.

“They hear us! They’ve stopped. Now they see us. They’re running down the hill toward us,” cried Ulrich.

“How many of them are there?” asked Georg.

“I can’t see distinctly,” said Ulrich; “nine or ten.”

“Then they are yours,” said Georg; “I had only seven out with me.”

“They are making all the speed they can, brave lads,” said Ulrich gladly.

“Are they your men?” asked Georg. “Are they your men?” he repeated impatiently, as Ulrich did not answer.

“No,” said Ulrich with a laugh, the idiotic chattering laugh of a man unstrung with hideous fear.

“Who are they?” asked Georg quickly, straining his eyes to see what the other would gladly not have seen.

“Wolves.”
The Interlopers

**Narrator Questionnaire**  
This story is told by an omniscient narrator, who knows all the story’s secrets. Fill out this chart to examine the way point of view affects the plot and characters of “The Interlopers.”

1. Does the narrator reveal the thoughts and feelings of the two men? Explain.

2. How would the story be different if it were told from the point of view of one of the men?

3. How might the story be different if it were told from the point of view of the wolves?
Narrator Chart

The point of view of the narrator determines what you learn as you read a story. A third-person-omniscient narrator knows and tells all. The third-person-limited or first-person narrator tells only what one character knows. If the narrator is biased or unreliable, you may not be able to believe what you read. In the chart below, fill in the point of view of the narrator who tells the story you have just read. Then tell what you have learned from the narrator. (You may not learn anything about an omniscient narrator.) Finally, decide if what you learned is reliable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of View:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I Learned About</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Narrator:</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Characters:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Is the information reliable? ____________________________________________
Directions: As you read, answer the following questions. Be sure to give as much detail as possible.

1. Who do you think are "the interlopers" referred to in the title, and why do they deserve that name?

2. The disputed land was not particularly desirable. What does this fact reveal about the families who contested its ownership for so many years?

3. What does the wild weather foreshadow?

4. What is Ulrich doing in the forest?

5. When they meet in the forest, why can Georg and Ulrich not shoot each other?

6. How does each man envision his rescue?

7. To whom is Georg referring when he says, "...with no cursed interlopers to come between us"?

8. What do you think motivated Ulrich's change of heart? Does this change reflect internal or external conflict?

9. Why doesn't Georg consider himself a poacher?

10. With his surprise ending, what comment does the writer seem to be making about the role of human plans and wishes? What literary element does this illustrate?
Conflict is the ground upon which a plot is built. The conflict between opposing forces determines which actions the characters will take and the sequence in which those actions will occur. Stories rarely involved a single conflict. More often, several conflicts of different types are intermingled, challenging the characters in a variety of ways. An internal conflict occurs within a character’s mind. An external conflict takes place between the characters or between characters and the forces of nature. A fight-to-the-end contest between two enemies in an adventure story is an example of a physical external conflict; however, external conflicts need not be physical or violent. A quiet disagreement between two friends is also an external conflict.

Directions: “The Interlopers” is a brief story, but it involves more than one type of conflict. On the lines below, briefly describe the story situations that illustrate the type of conflict named.

1. external conflict/person against nature
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. external conflict/person against person
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. internal conflict/person against self
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

Directions: Although the ending of the story is resolved based on the external conflict of man against nature, the author clearly focused on another type of conflict throughout the story. Identify the type of conflict you consider most central to the story and explain why you thing it is the most important in the story.

   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
Stories are usually built around conflict, or a struggle between opposing forces. A conflict may be internal, or inside the mind of a character. An external conflict is between a character and an outside force. That outside force may be another character or an aspect of society or nature. The resolution is the part of the plot in which the conflict is finally resolved. However, not all stories offer resolution to their conflicts, or a writer may only imply the resolution to a conflict without stating it directly.

Directions: Identify the conflict in each passage listed in the following chart. Tell whether it is internal or external and name the two opposing sides in the conflict. Then tell how each conflict is resolved. When you are done, answer the question that follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Opposing Forces</th>
<th>Type of Conflict</th>
<th>Is Conflict Resolved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ulrich von Gradwitz patrolled the dark forest in quest of a human enemy.</td>
<td>Ulrich von Gradwitz and George Znaeym</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A fierce shriek of the storm had been answered by a splitting crash over their heads, and ere they could leap aside a mass of falling beech tree had thundered down on them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In the pain and languor that Ulrich himself was feeling the old fierce hatred seeming to be dying down.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “I can see figures coming through the wood. They are following the way I came down the hillside.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How do you think the final external conflict between the two men and the wolves will be resolved? Why do you think Saki chose not to resolve this conflict in the story?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________