



# OAA STYLE BLIZZARD BAG

## *7<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts Louisville Middle School*

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Read the story "The Ransom."
2. Complete the active reading assignment using the skills and examples taught in class. (*Hint: Your previous work on the elements of fiction will be very, very helpful.*)
3. You may print out the packet or recreate all necessary before, during, and after reading activities NEATLY on notebook paper.
4. This assignment will be worth 20 points. Neatness, thought, and effort will be a part of your final grade.

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# THE RANSOM

ADAPTED FROM THE SHORT STORY "THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF" BY O. HENRY

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It looked like a good thing, but wait till I tell you. We were down South, in Alabama—Bill Driscoll and myself—when this kidnapping idea struck us. It was, as Bill put it afterward, "during a moment of temporary insanity"; but we didn't find that out till later.

There was a town down there, as flat as a pancake, called Summit, of course. It contained as harmless and happy a class of folk that ever celebrated life.

Bill and me had about six hundred dollars between the two of us, and we needed just two thousand more to pull off a scam up in western Illinois. We talked it over on the front steps of the hotel. Love of children, says we, is strong in little towns. Moreover, a kidnapping would go off more easily away from the big-city newspapers and reporters that can stir up pots of trouble. We knew Summit could not get after us with anything stronger than part-time peace officers and, maybe, some lazy bloodhounds and an editorial in the farm report. So, it looked good.

We selected for our victim the child of a well-known banker named Ebenezer Dorset. Ebenezer, we'd learn, was an uptight kind of guy. Real straight edge. His kid was a boy about ten, with blended freckles, and hair the color of an apple you swipe from a seller's cart as you pass. Bill and me figured that Ebenezer would melt down for a ransom of two thousand dollars to a cent. But wait till I tell you.

About two miles from Summit was a little mountain, covered in a thick forest. On the far side was a cave. We set up camp there and stored our stuff.

One evening after sundown, we drove into town in a buggy. The kid was in the street, throwing rocks at a kitten near the fence.

"Hey, little boy!" said Bill. "Would you like to have a bag of candy and go for a nice ride?"

The boy hit Bill square in the eye with a piece of brick.

"That will cost the old man an extra five hundred dollars," said Bill.

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*The narrator, Sam, and Bill grab the kid and drive back to their cave in the mountain. Sam leaves to hide the buggy. When he returns to the cave, he finds Bill and the kid playing a game. The kid is pretending to have kidnapped Bill. Bill complains to Sam that the kid can "kick hard."*

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Yes, sir, that boy seemed to be having the time of his life. The fun of camping out in a cave had made him forget that he was a captive himself. He immediately named me Snake-eye and announced that when his friends returned to camp, I was to be burned at the stake.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_ #+ \_\_\_\_\_

Then, we had supper, and the kid filled his mouth full of bacon (more bacon than I even got to eat!) and bread and gravy, too. Then he began to talk. He made a speech something like this:

"I like this fine. I never camped out before, but I had a pet possum once, and I was nine last birthday. I hate to go to school. Rats ate up sixteen of Jimmy Talbot's aunt's speckled hen's eggs. Are there any real Indians in these woods? I want some more gravy. Does the trees moving make the wind blow? We had five puppies. What makes your nose so red? Sam? My father has lots of money. Are the stars hot? I don't like girls. Why are oranges round? Have you got beds to sleep on in this cave? Amox Murry has got six toes. A parrot can talk, but a monkey or a fish can't. How many does it take to make twelve?"

And what are we supposed to say to all that?

Well, every few minutes he would remember his game, and pick up his stick rifle and tiptoe to the mouth of the cave to look for any pretend enemies. Now and then he let out a war cry that made Bill shiver. That boy had Bill scared from the start.

"Hey, kid," said I, "would you like to go home?"

"Aw, what for?" said he. "I don't have any fun at home. I hate to go to school. I like to camp out. Don't you, Snake-eye?"

I told him I most certainly did, though, I hadn't thought about it in a while.

"You won't take me back home again, Snake-eye, will you?"

"Not right away," said I. "We will stay here in the cave a while."

"All right!" said he. "That will be fine. I never had such fun in all my life."

We went to bed around eleven o'clock. We spread down some wide blankets and quilts and put the kid between us. We were not afraid he would run away. He kept us awake for three hours, jumping up and reaching for his rifle and screeching. Every slight sound to him was the warning of some made-up enemy. At last, I fell into a troubled sleep and dreamed that I had been kidnapped and chained to a tree by a terrible pirate with red hair.

At dawn, I was woken by a series of awful screams from Bill. There were not yells, or howls, or shouts, or whoops, or yawps, like you might expect from a man's lungs—they were simply terrifying, embarrassing, high-pitched screams like a small child might make when he or she gets splashed with cold water or sees a mouse or a spider. It is an awful thing to hear a strong adult man scream in a cave at daybreak.

I jumped up to see what the matter was. The kid was sitting on Bill's chest attempting to tie him up. I got the kid away from Bill and made him lie down again. But, from that moment, Bill's spirit was broken.

That morning, I went up on the peak of the little mountain and scanned the surrounding area. Over toward Summit I expected to see the sturdy villagers armed with pitchforks and torches beating the countryside for us awful kidnapers. However, what I saw was a peaceful summer landscape. I

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_ #+ \_\_\_\_\_

saw a man guiding a plow pulled by a grayish brown mule. No messengers dashed back and forth, bringing word of no news to worried parents. There was a pleasant air of warm and comfortable sleepiness hanging over the homes and shops in view. "Perhaps," says I to myself, "it is not yet been discovered that the wolves have made off with the tender lamb from the flock. Heaven help the wolves!" says I, and I went down the mountain to breakfast.

After breakfast, the kid took out a piece of leather with strings wrapped around, and he went outside the cave, unwinding it.

"What is he up to now?" said Bill anxiously. "You don't think he will run away, do you, Sam?"

"No fear of it," said I. "He don't seem to be much of a homebody. But we have got to fix up some plan about the ransom. There don't seem to be much excitement around Summit on account of his disappearance, but maybe they have not realized yet that he is gone. His folks may think he is spending the night with Aunt Jane or one of the neighbors. Anyhow, he will be missed today. Tonight, we must get a message to his father demanding that two thousand dollars for his return."

Just then we heard a kind of war cry, the kind that David might have made when he knocked out the champion Goliath. It was the sling that the kid pulled from his pocket, and he was whirling it around his head. The kid was out of control, a plain nuisance!

I dodged and heard a heavy thud and a kind of sigh from Bill, like a horse gives out when you take his saddle off. A rock the size of an egg caught Bill just behind his left ear. He went limp and fell toward the fire across the frying pan of hot water for washing the dishes. I dragged him away and poured cold water over his head for half an hour.

By and by, Bill sat up and felt behind his ear and said, "You won't go away and leave me here alone, will you, Sam?"

I went out and caught the boy and shook him until his freckles rattled.

"If you don't behave," said I, "I will take you straight home. Now, are you going to be good, or not?"

"I was only funning," said he sourly. "I didn't mean to hurt Bill. I'll behave if you wont sent me home, and if you will let me play Hunter today."

I told him that I did not know the game, but that he and Bill could play while I went on...business. I made the two of them shake hands, and then I took Bill aside and told him I was going to Poplar Cove, a little village about three miles from the cave. I wanted to find out what I could about how people in Summit were responding to the kidnapping. Also, I thought it best to send a letter to Dorset that day, demanding the ransom and directing how it should be paid. Sending it from Poplar Cove would help throw any pursuit off our trail.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_

Sam sends the ransom note to Ebenezer Dorset demanding \$1,500 instead of the original \$2,000. Bill thinks \$2,000 is too much to ask for a kid who is so hard to handle. Sam leaves Bill alone with the kid one more time to watch the spot where the \$1,500 is supposed to be dropped.

Exactly on time, a boy rides up the road on a bicycle, locates the box at the foot of the fencepost, slips a folded piece of paper into it, and pedals away back towards Summit.

I waited an hour and figured no one was going to ambush me. I slid down the tree, got the note, and was back at the cave in another half hour. I opened the note and read it to Bill:

Gentleman,

I received your letter today about the ransom for my son. I think you are a little high in your demands, and will make you another offer, which I think you will accept. You bring Johnny home and pay me two hundred and fifty dollars cash, and I agree to take him off your hands.

Respectfully,

Ebenezer Dorset

"Unbelievable!" says I, "of all the disrespectful..."

But I glanced at Bill, and paused. He had a happy look in his eye like I had never seen in all my year of traveling with him.

"Sam," says he, "we have got the money. This is a small price to pay. We have to take him up on the offer."

We took him home that night. We knocked on Ebenezer's door about midnight. At that moment, I should have been taking fifteen hundred dollars out of a box by a tree, Bill was counting two hundred and fifty dollars into Dorset's hands. Once the kid realized what was happening, he started to howl and attached himself to Bill's leg. Dorset peeled him off.

"How long can you hold him?" Bill asks.

"I am not as strong as I used to be," says old Dorset, "but I think I can give you ten minutes."

And, as dark as it was, and as big as Bill was, and as good a runner as I am, Bill was a good mile and a half out of Summit before I could catch up with him.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_

# ACTIVE READING: *THE RANSOM*

*AN APPLICATION IN READING AND UNDERSTANDING FICTION*

DIRECTIONS: READ THE STORY, *THE RANSOM* BY O. HENRY. **SHOW** YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ACTIVE READING STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING FICTIONAL TEXT.

## BEFORE READING

### • SET A PURPOSE

- YOUR PURPOSE FOR READING NEEDS TO BE MORE THAN "THE TEACHER TOLD ME TO READ IT" OR "I WANT TO DO WELL ON THE TEST." ASK YOURSELF WHAT YOU MIGHT FIND IN THE STORY. START WITH THE TITLE AND MAKE IT PART OF A QUESTION.

*Directions: ANSWER THE FOLLOWING IN COMPLETE SENTENCES.*

1. What is your purpose for reading a story such as *The Ransom*?

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2. What should you expect to be able to do after reading?

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### • PREVIEW THE READING

- USE THE FOLLOWING CHECKLIST TO PREVIEW *THE RANSOM*. IF YOU LOCATE THE ITEM ON THE CHECKLIST, PLACE A CHECKMARK ON THE LINE PROVIDED.

- \_\_\_\_\_ background or biographical information
- \_\_\_\_\_ the title and the author
- \_\_\_\_\_ the first paragraph or two
- \_\_\_\_\_ any names of characters or places
- \_\_\_\_\_ anything repeated or set off in larger or bolder type
- \_\_\_\_\_ any questions printed at the end

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_ #-\_\_\_\_\_

- LIST THREE THINGS YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR PREVIEW OF *THE RANSOM* ON THE LINES BELOW. THIS CAN BE WORDS, PHRASES, OR SENTENCES. USE THE CHECKLIST ABOVE TO HELP YOU.

1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____

• **PLAN A READING STRATEGY**

*WHILE READING, THE RANSOM, YOU WILL...*

• Ask yourself questions	• Identify conflict	• Use graphic organizers
• Focus on main characters	• Identify point of view	• Practice reading comprehension skills
• Watch what changes	• Identify theme	
• Describe setting		

**DURING READING**

• **READ WITH A PURPOSE**

- GO THROUGH THE STORY AT YOUR OWN PACE. "SPEED READING" IS VERY OVERRATED. FAST IS NOT NECESSARILY BETTER. READ AS SLOWLY AS YOU NEED TO READ IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING. TAKE YOUR TIME.
- CREATE A GRAPHIC ORGANIZER TO ASSIST YOU IN KEEPING TRACT OF THE PLOT OF A STORY.
  - A GRAPHIC ORGANIZER CAN HELP YOU ZERO IN ON A PARTICULAR PART OF THE STORY. FOR EXAMPLE, IT MAY HELP YOU UNDERSTAND A PARTICULAR CHARACTER BY FOCUSING YOUR PURPOSE. POSSIBLE GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS INCLUDE:
    - CHARACTER MAP
    - FICTION ORGANIZER
    - INFERENCE CHART



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_ #- \_\_\_\_\_

**ESTABLISH POINT OF VIEW**

1). What is the point of view of the narrator of "The Ransom"? List some clues that tell you this.

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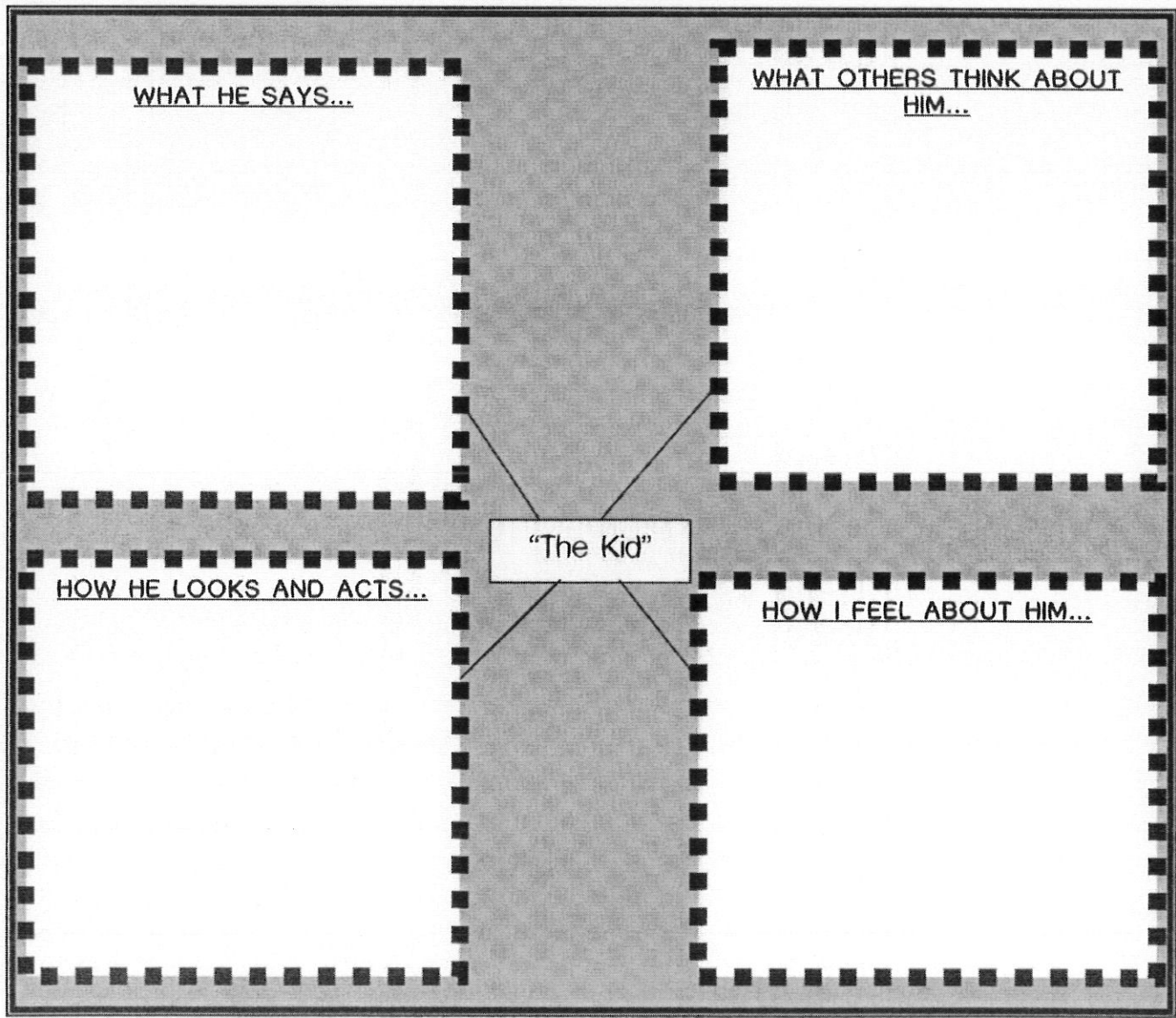
2). How might this story be different if it were told from Ebenezer's point of view?

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**ANALYZE CHARACTERS**

1). Go back to the story and circle any details about the kidnapped kid.

2). Then, complete the following CHARACTER MAP:





NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_

3). Finally, answer the following character questions about "The Kid".

1). How does the kid react when asked if he wants to go home? What does this say about his character?

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\_\_\_\_\_ 2). Which word best describes the kid?

- A. stubborn
- B. obedient
- C. adventurous
- D. scared



How do you know??

\_\_\_\_\_ 3). From what we know, how is the narrator similar to the kid?

- A. They both do not enjoy going to school.
- B. They both do not trust Bill Driscoll.
- C. They both enjoy camping.
- D. They both think Ebenezer is nice.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4). Which statement best describes how the kid feels about being kidnapped?

- A. He is afraid Bill and Sam will hurt him.
- B. He misses his father and wants to go home.
- C. He knows he can escape when he wants.
- D. He thinks he is not in any danger at all.



How do you know??

**ANALYZE SETTING**

- THE DETAILS AUTHORS USUALLY INCLUDE ON SETTING HELP YOU PICTURE WHERE THESE CHARACTERS YOU ARE STUDYING ARE. IN THE BLANKS THAT FOLLOW, FILL IN AS MANY SETTING DETAILS IN THE SETTING CHART AS YOU CAN FROM *THE RANSOM*.

<u>CLUES ABOUT TIME</u>	<u>CLUES ABOUT PLACE</u>
Time of Day:	Place Names:
Season:	Physical Environment:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_ #- \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 1). Where do most of the events in this story take place?

- A). a town
- B). a side street
- C). a large city
- D). on a mountain

• **THE SETTING MAY ALSO HELP DETERMINE HOW CHARACTERS HANDLE THE PROBLEMS THAT COME UP IN THE STORY.**

- **FOR EXAMPLE, PART OF SAM AND BILL'S KIDNAPPING PLAN (AS STATED IN THE FIRST PART OF THE STORY) DEPENDS ON THE FACT THAT SUMMIT IS A SMALL TOWN WITHOUT A LARGE POLICE FORCE. IF THE STORY'S SETTING WAS IN A MORE MODERN TIME OR IN A MORE POPULATED AREA, THESE KIDNAPPERS MIGHT HAVE HAD A HARDER TIME PULLING OFF THEIR SCHEME-NOT THAT THEY HAVE A VERY EASY TIME OF IT AS IT IS!**

Go back to the story and choose another example of how the setting creates a problem and offers a solution. Write your response on the lines below:

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### **ANALYZE CONFLICT AND PLOT**

**ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT CONFLICT AND PLOT.**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1). What is the main conflict in *The Ransom*?

- A). *Sam and Bill need to raise two-thousand dollars so they can live happily and stop being criminals.*
- B). *Sam wants to get a letter to Dorset without being noticed, but Sam does not know how to do this.*
- C). *Bill is trying to avoid being injured by the kid's hurled rocks but gets hit with one right behind the ear.*
- D). *Sam and Bill need to trade a kidnapped boy for money, but nobody seems to notice the boy is even missing.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Which of these events is most important to the plot of *The Ransom*?
- A). Sam looks down at the town of Summit.
  - B). The kid talks a lot of nonsense at dinner.
  - C). Bill and Sam send a letter to Dorset.
  - D). Bill screams loudly and like a small child.

3). At the beginning of *The Ransom*, the kid hits Bill in the head with a brick. Using details from the passage, explain how this early scene foreshadows later events.

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. How do Bill and Sam resolve their problem with the kid?
- A). They pay the father to take him back.
  - B). They get less money than they first wanted.
  - C). They sneak back to Summit and drop him off.
  - D). They take the kid with them to Illinois.





# TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

FILL IN THE FOLLOWING PLOT DIAGRAM BASED ON EVENTS IN *THE RANSOM*.

**RISE ACTION:**  
List three events that lead to the climax and help create suspense:

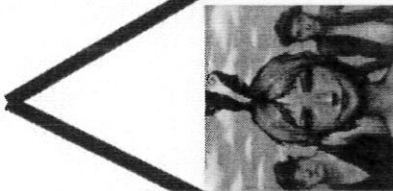
1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**CLIMAX**

What is the climax of this short story?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**FALLING ACTION**

Name three important events following the climax:

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

**CONFLICT**

When is the conflict introduced?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the primary conflict?

\_\_\_\_\_

**RESOLUTION**

What is the outcome of the conflict?

\_\_\_\_\_

Who were the monsters on Maple Street?

\_\_\_\_\_

**EXPOSITION**

Describe the setting in detail:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List the main characters introduced in the exposition: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**THEME**

What is the lesson or theme of *The Ransom*?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_