

Before You Read

This selection also
appears in *Elements
of Literature*.

The Interlopers by Saki

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.

SKILLS FOCUS

Literary Skills

Recognize an omniscient narrator (or point of view).

Reading Skills

Monitor your reading.

Vocabulary Skills

Understand and use context clues.

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

PREVIEW SELECTION VOCABULARY

Preview the following words from “The Interlopers.” Study the words before you begin the story.

precipitous (prē-sip'ə-təs) *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 (mə-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'pər-ā'shən) *n.*: great annoyance.

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

pious (pī'əs) *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 (kən-dō'ləns-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'an-sil'ē-ā'shən) *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.

Type of Context Clue	Example
Definition or restatement	Tito's languor , his complete weariness, came when the danger was over.
Example	Tito's languor was like the feeling you get after defeat in a basketball game.
Antonym	His cousin was full of pep, but Tito had a feeling of languor .
Cause and effect	Because of his languor , Tito slept all day.