

SHORT STORY

PREVIEW SELECTION VOCABULARY

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

precipitous (pri-pís&tp&as) <i>adj.</i> : very steep. <i>The wooded slope was precipitous—a vertical cliff—anchored to a cliff.</i>	retorted (ri-tír&tid) <i>v.</i> : replied in a sharp or witty way. <i>Feeling insulted, he retorted, angrily.</i>
acquiesced (ak'wē-sēd) <i>v.</i> (used with <i>in</i>): accepted; agreed; consented. <i>They never acquiesced in the judgment of the court; instead, they bitterly opposed it.</i>	condolences (kan-dō'lans&ns) <i>n.</i> : expressions of sympathy. <i>When he heard about his enemy's death, he sent condolences to the widow.</i>
marauders (m&rd'&rs) <i>n.</i> : people who roam around in search of loot, or goods to steal. <i>The man kept a sharp lookout for marauders who might be prowling through the woods.</i>	langor (lāng&gər) <i>n.</i> : weakness; weariness. <i>After hours of hard work, he felt a great langor, and this exhaustion lasted all day.</i>
exasperation (ek'spāz̄ē-sh&n) <i>n.</i> : great annoyance. <i>His exasperation at being captured was so great that he cursed aloud.</i>	reconciliation or death . <i>succor</i> (suk'ər) <i>n.</i> : help given to someone in distress; relief. <i>Unable to free themselves, they waited for rescuers to give them succor.</i>

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Before You Read

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 narration 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 (from a point of view).
Reading Skills
Monitor your reading.
Vocabulary Skills
Understand and use context clues.

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 20 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 30 prayed that misfortune might fall on the other, and this wind-scorched 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 about from across the land boundary. The roebuck,³ which usually leapt 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 40 through the tree trunks and listening through the whistling and skirring⁴ 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 Znaeyn, 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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IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 19–31. Underline what you learn about why the two men continue the fight between the neighboring families. Whom is Ulrich feuding with?

Georg Znaeym

VOCABULARY

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

WORD STUDY

In lines 44–45, underline the compound word—a word that is made up of two words. What does this compound word mean?

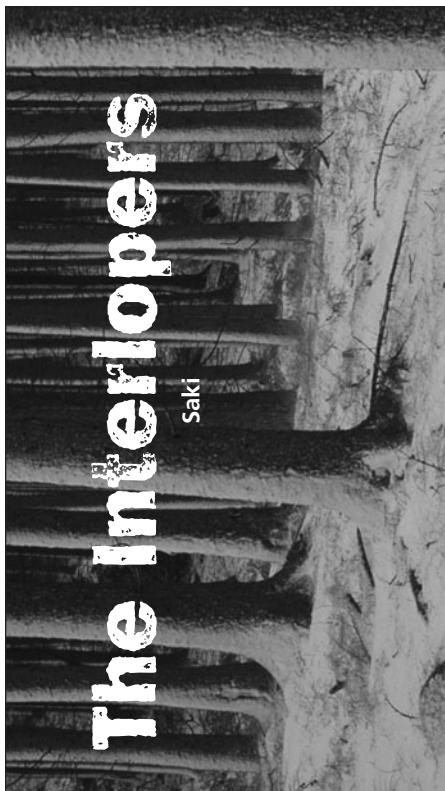
highest; most important

important

In lines 48–49, circle the sentence in which the omniscient narrator tells you what each character is thinking and feeling.

The Interlopers

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Saki

Michael Basile/Getty Images.

In a forest of mixed growth somewhere on the eastern spurns of the Carpathians,¹ 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 outskirts 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 affrays² and similar scanc-

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Which character are you introduced to in the first paragraph? What is he looking for in the forest?
Ulrich von Gradwitz;
he is hunting a human enemy.

VOCABULARY

precipitous (pri'sipitəs) *adj.:* very steep.

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

Acquiesce has the same Latin origin as *quiet*. Someone who acquiesces agrees quietly and without excitement.

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IDENTIFY

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VOCABULARY

precipitous (pri'sipitəs) *adj.:* very steep.
affray (äf'rij) *n.*: noisy quarrels or brawls about poaching.

- Carpathians** (kär părfəanz) *n.*: mountain range that starts in Slovakia and extends through Poland, Ukraine, and Romania.
- Poaching **affrays** (äf'rijz) *n.*: noisy quarrels or brawls about poaching, which means "fishing or hunting illegally on private property."

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Collection 3

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"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 Gradvitz."

"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

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VOCABULARY
retorted (ri-tor'tid) v.: replied in a sharp or witty way.
condolences (kən-dôl'ans-iz) n.: expressions of sympathy.
Condolence comes from two Latin words: *com-*—a prefix meaning "with," and *dolere*, meaning "to grieve."

CLARIFY
Re-read lines 82–94. What do the enemies threaten to do to each other once they are rescued?
Each threatens to have the other killed.

WORD STUDY
In line 113, circle the word that restates the meaning of endeavors.

50 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 Gradvitz 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 winkle 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 strangled, but obviously as helplessly pinioned⁵ 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 struggling 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 fest, Ulrich von Gradvitz snared in his stolen forest. There's real justice for you!"

And he laughed again, mockingly and savagely.

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IDENTIFY
Circle the important event that happens to the two enemies (lines 56–59).

MONITOR YOUR READING
Draw lines to break down the long sentence in lines 69–72 into shorter units of thought. Then, paraphrase the sentence.
At Ulrich's side, so near that Ulrich . . . could almost have touched him, lay Georg Znaeym. Georg was alive and strangled, as helplessly pinned down as Ulrich was.

VOCABULARY
exasperation (ĕks-păr'ĕ-shən) n.: great annoyance.
pious (pī'ēs) adj.: showing religious devotion.

5. **pinioned** (pīn'yōnd) v. used as adj.: pinned, as if chained or tied up.

Notes _____

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VOCABULARY

reconciliation (rek'ən-sī'zhən) n.: friendly end to a quarrel.
succor (suk'är) n.: help given to someone in distress; relief.

COMPARE & CONTRAST

Pause at line 175. Earlier in the story (lines 83–100), why did each man hope that his friends would be the first to arrive? What has changed?

EARLIER: ULRICH AND GEORG

GEORG EACH WANTED HIS MEN TO ARRIVE FIRST SO THE OTHER MAN, THE ENEMY, WOULD BE KILLED. NOW, ULRICH AND GEORG EACH WANTS HIS MEN TO ARRIVE FIRST SO HIS FORMER ENEMY MAY BE RESCUED AS A SHOW OF FRIENDSHIP.

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MONITOR YOUR READING

Re-read the long sentence in lines 118–124. Then, summarize the sentence.

The winter was mild, so the trapped men were warmer than usual in winter. The wine warmed Ulrich and made him feel better. He began to pity Georg, who was trying not to groan with pain.

“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.

FLUENCY

Read the boxed passage aloud several times. Focus on conveying the different attitudes of Ulrich and Georg.

VOCABULARY

languor (lāng'gr) n.: weakness; weariness.

IDENTIFY

In lines 132–137, the narrator reveals an important change in Ulrich’s attitude. Circle the important change the narrator tells you about.

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8. **Sylvester night**: feast day honoring Saint Sylvester (Pope Sylvester I, d. 335), observed on December 31.

6. **draft** n.: drink.
7. **open winter**: mild winter.

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SKILLS PRACTICE

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.
Yes, the narrator describes how the two men hated each other since childhood and now want to kill each other; how the two men react when trapped under the tree; how their feelings change when they fear that they may both die; how they both react to the wolves.
2. How would the story be different if it were told from the point of view of one of the men?
The reader might be more sympathetic to the man from whose point of view the story was told; the reader might not care that the wolves attacked the other man.
3. How might the story be different if it were told from the point of view of the wolves?
The reader might be sympathetic to the wolves instead of to the two men. The story might not have the surprise ending it has.

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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."

INTERPRET
Pause at line 203. The narrator doesn't reveal who is coming toward the men. What effect does this lack of information create? **It creates suspense.**

IDENTIFY
Read to the end of the story. Underline the one word that reveals the story's surprise ending.

ANALYZE
Why is it fitting that the two men, who were hunting each other in the forest that winter night, are discovered by wolves rather than by rescuers? **The men were acting more like wolves than humans, out hunting their enemies at night.**

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VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT



The Interlopers

TestPractice
Context Clues

Skills Focus: VOCABULARY
Analyze context to identify word meaning. Use words in context.

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage, using context clues to identify the meaning of the boldface word. Then, circle the letter of the definition of that word.

1. The hunter examined his **quarry** after it had been shot.

- A** rifle
- C** enemy
- B** land
- D** hunted animal

2. No one could stop the bitter **feud** between the two neighbors.

- F** ongoing argument
- G** broken fence
- H** agreement
- J** flooded lands

3. They heard the loud sound when the tree **thundered** down on them.

- A** fell from the sky
- B** was split by lightning
- C** fell with a roaring noise
- D** yelled

4. He felt no pain in his right arm, which was now numb.

- G** bandaged
- H** painful
- I** without
- J** foolish

Vocabulary in Context

DIRECTIONS: Complete the paragraph below by writing the correct word from the box in each blank. Not all words from the box will be used.

You'd Better

The two enemies stared at each other. The gray-haired one laughed, "What are you laughing at?" the brown-haired one asked in **exasperation**. "I am laughing at two helpless men caught in (1) — **retorted**, the other (2) — **reconciliation** (3) — not in my plans. I will never make up with you. And don't give me any (4) — **pious** words about what religion has taught us. We will always be enemies. Our widows can send each other (5) — **condolences** if they wish."

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LITERATURE



The Interlopers

TestPractice
Sample Test Question

Explanation of the Correct Answer
Directions: Circle the letter of each correct response.

Who is the story's narrator?
The correct answer is **D**.

A Georg Znaeym
A and C are not correct, because the story is told from the omniscient point of view, not the point of view of just one character. B is not correct; Saki is the author.

B Saki

C Ulrich von Gradwitz

D an unnamed, all-knowing storyteller

Complete the sample test item below. Then, read the explanation at right.

Sample Test Question
Explanation of the Correct Answer

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B Saki

C Ulrich von Gradwitz

D an unnamed, all-knowing storyteller

Directions: Circle the letter of each correct response.

1. Which passage reveals that the narrator is **omniscient**?

A "Both men spoke with the bitterness of possible defeat, for each knew that it might be long before his men would seek him out."

B "The forest lands of Gradwitz were of wide extent and well stocked with game."

C "The two raised their voices in a prolonged hunting call."

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

2. The narrator tells us the two men—

F are hunting wolves

G don't go hunting at night

H want to kill each other

I go to hunting parties together

Directions: Complete the paragraph below by writing the correct word from the box in each blank. Not all words from the box will be used.

Explanation of the Correct Answer
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Skills Focus: LITERARY SKILLS
Analyze use of the omniscient narrator or point of view.

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