

The Invaders

by Jack Ritchie

None of them left the ship on the first day of its arrival, but I knew they would be watching carefully for signs of human life.

The skies were dark with swiftly moving clouds, and the cold wind moved high in the trees. Thin snow drifted slowly to the ground.

From the cover of the forest, I now watched as a small, heavily armed group of them left the large craft. When they reached the edge of the woods, they hesitated for a few moments. Then they moved cautiously forward.

I had seen them before and I knew that in appearance, at least, they were not monsters. They looked very much like us. There were some differences, of course, but all in all, we were really quite similar to them.

I met them first when I was almost a boy and I had been without **caution**. I approached them and they seemed friendly. But then suddenly they seized me and carried me off in their strange ship.

It was a long journey to their land, and when our ship made a landing, I was shown about and exhibited.

I saw their cities, and I was shown plants and animals completely strange to me. I learned to wear their clothing and even to eat their food.

They taught me to communicate in their strange and difficult tongue until I could, at times, even think in their language.

I had almost given up the hope of ever seeing my home again. But one day they put me back on one of their ships and told me that they were returning me because they wished to establish friendly relations with my people. But by now, I knew enough of them to know that this was not true. However, I nodded and smiled and watched for my opportunity to escape.

When the ship landed, I went out with the first search party. It was near

evening, and as the darkness gathered, I edged away from them. Finally I fled into the blackness and safety of the forest.

They came after me, of course, but I was hidden deep in the woods where they could not find me.

Finally they gave up and I watched their ship become smaller and finally disappear, and I hoped earnestly that they would never return.

But now they were back again.

I felt a coldness inside of me as I watched them moving slowly through the trees. They seemed somehow different from the others who had been here before. It was not so much in their appearance as in their manner—the way they walked, the way they looked about with questioning and speculating eyes.



Slowly, I realized that this time they were not here on just another raid for a captive or two.

This time they had come to stay.

What could we do now? Could we **lure** them deeper into the forest and kill them? Could we take their weapons and learn how to use them?

No, I thought with **despair**. There were so many more of the invaders on the ship. And more weapons. They would come out and hunt us down like animals. They would hunt us down and kill us all.

I sighed. We must find out what it was that they wanted this time and whatever it might be, we must learn to adjust and to hope for the best.

But I still retreated silently before them, afraid to approach. I watched them search the ground ahead of them and knew they were looking for footprints, for some signs of life. But there was not yet enough snow on the ground to track us down.

Their strangely colored eyes glanced about suspiciously, warily. They were cautious, yes.

They could be cruel, I knew. I had seen with my own eyes how they treated their animals and even their own kind.

I sighed again. Yes, we could be cruel, too. In this respect we could not claim to be superior to the invaders.

They paused now in a clearing, their eyes gleaming beneath their helmets.

It was time for me to approach them.

I took a deep breath and stepped into the open.

Their weapons quickly pointed at me.

"Welcome," I said.

They stared at me, and then one of them turned to their bearded leader.

"It appears that he can speak some English, Captain Standish!"

"Welcome," I said again. But I wondered what they would do to my land and my people now.

1. **Captain Standish:** Miles Standish (1584?-1656) was an English colonist who came to America with the Pilgrims on the *Mayflower* and helped establish Plymouth Colony in America.

SELECTING DETAILS FROM THE STORY. Each of the following sentences helps you understand the story. Complete each sentence below by putting an x in the box next to the correct answer.

1. When the narrator (the person who tells the story) first met the strangers, they
- a. welcomed him warmly.
 - b. seized him and carried him off.
 - c. scared him away.
2. When the narrator returned to his land with the strangers, he
- a. edged away from them and escaped into the forest.
 - b. introduced the strangers to his people.
 - c. helped the strangers adjust to the new land.
3. The narrator realized that it would be useless to fight the strangers because
- a. there were many more of them on the ship.
 - b. they had many powerful weapons.
 - c. of both of the above.
4. At the end of the story, the narrator was concerned about
- a. whether the strangers would remember him.
 - b. whether the strangers would be able to understand him.
 - c. what the strangers would do to his land and his people.

$\times 5 =$
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

HANDLING STORY ELEMENTS. Each of the following questions reviews your understanding of story elements. Put an x in the box next to the correct answer to each question.

1. What happened last in the *plot* of "The Invaders"?
- a. The narrator learned to wear the strangers' clothing and to eat their food.
 - b. The strangers searched for the narrator without success.
 - c. One of the strangers said, "It appears that he can speak some English."
2. Which sentence best *characterizes* the narrator?
- a. He was worried about what the return of the strangers would mean.
 - b. He was certain that the strangers would be friendly.
 - c. He knew that the strangers would never act cruelly.
3. In this story, there is *conflict* between the
- a. narrator and his people.
 - b. narrator and the strangers.
 - c. strangers and their leader, Captain Standish.
4. Where is "The Invaders" *set*?
- a. on a distant planet
 - b. in England
 - c. in America

$\times 5 =$
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

OBSERVING NEW VOCABULARY WORDS. Answer the following vocabulary questions by putting an *x* in the box next to the correct answer. The vocabulary words are printed in **boldface** in the story. If you wish, look back at the words before you answer the questions.

1. He thought, with **despair**, that there were too many of them to fight. What is the meaning of the word *despair*?
 - a. eagerness
 - b. enjoyment
 - c. loss of hope
2. As a boy he had been without caution and had approached the strangers. Which of the following best defines (gives the meaning of) the word *caution*?
 - a. care or concern with safety
 - b. curiosity or a desire to know
 - c. power or strength
3. He wondered if they could lure the invaders deeper into the forest and then kill them. The word *lure* means
 - a. push away.
 - b. draw into.
 - c. insult.
4. The strangers walked slowly as they looked around with questioning and speculating eyes. As used here, the word *speculating* means
 - a. wondering about or guessing.
 - b. dull or dim.
 - c. buying in order to make a profit.

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

COMPLETING A CLOZE PASSAGE. Complete the following paragraph by filling in each blank with one of the words listed in the box below. Each of the words appears in the story. Since there are five words and four blanks, one word in the group will not be used.

In 1620, _____ colonists
 crossed the Atlantic on a ship named the
Mayflower. After a difficult and dangerous
 _____, they arrived in America
 and settled at Plymouth. There they
 _____ Plymouth Colony. It is
 interesting to note that the colonists left
 Plymouth, England, and named their new
 _____ Plymouth, Massachusetts.

silently	English
established	
colony	journey

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

KNOWING HOW TO READ CRITICALLY. Each of the following questions will help you think critically about the selection. Put an x in the box next to the correct answer.

1. Which statement is true?

- a. The strangers came to the new land on a spaceship.
- b. The author tries to make you think that the strangers are aliens, or creatures from another planet.
- c. The author was glad to see the strangers return.

2. The story probably takes place during the winter because

- a. the narrator felt cold when he observed the strangers.
- b. the strangers were wearing very warm clothing.
- c. the strangers looked for footprints, but there was not enough snow on the ground.

3. Who were the strangers?

- a. aliens from a distant planet
- b. Native Americans
- c. English colonists

4. Who was the narrator?

- a. a Native American
- b. a visitor from space
- c. an English colonist

$\times 5 =$
 NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

Questions for Writing and Discussion

- Why do you think the author called the story "The Invaders"? Is this a good title for the story? Explain.
- The narrator was a very brave and intelligent person. Present evidence from the story to support that statement.
- In "The Invaders," events are seen through the eyes of the narrator and are told in his words. Do you think that makes the story more powerful? Explain your answer.

Use the boxes below to total your scores for the exercises. Then write your score on pages 150 and 151.

SELECTING DETAILS FROM THE STORY
+

HANDLING STORY ELEMENTS
+

OBSERVING NEW VOCABULARY WORDS
+

COMPLETING A CLOZE PASSAGE
+

KNOWING HOW TO READ CRITICALLY

Score Total: Story 7