

Name:

Date:

THE WOLF STORY

Directions: Read the story below, then answer the questions.



"Wolf! Wolf! Wolf!"

Three farmers were walking across a field and looking eagerly for tracks in the soft ground. One carried a gun, one had a pitchfork, and the third had an ax.

"Wolf! Wolf! Wolf!" they cried, as they met another farmer coming over the hill.

"Where? where?" he asked.

"We don't know," was the answer, "but we saw her tracks down there by the brook. It's the same old wolf that has been skulking around here all winter."

"She killed three of my lambs last night," said the one whose name was David Brown.

"She's killed as many as twenty since the winter began," said Thomas Tanner.

"How do you know that it is only one beast that does all this mischief?" asked the fourth farmer, whose name was Israel Putnam.

"Because the tracks are always the same," answered David Brown. "They show that three toes have been lost from the left forefoot."

"She's been caught in a trap some time, I guess," said Putnam.

"Samuel Stark saw her the other morning," said Tanner. "He says she was a monster; and she was running straight toward the hills with a little lamb in her mouth. They say she has a family of young wolves up there; and that is why she kills so many lambs."

"Here are the tracks again," said Putnam.

They could be seen very plainly, for here the ground was quite muddy. The four men followed them for some distance, and then lost them on the hillside.

"Let us call the neighbors together and have a grand wolf hunt tomorrow," said Putnam. "We must put an end to this killing of lambs."

All the other men agreed to this, and they parted.

The next day twenty men and boys came together for the grand wolf hunt.

They tracked the beast to the mouth of a cave, far up on the hills.

They shouted and threw stones into the cave. But the wolf was too wise to show herself. She lay hidden among some rocks, and nothing could make her stir.

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"I will fetch her out," said Israel Putnam.

The opening to the cave was only a narrow hole between two rocks. Putnam stooped down and looked in. It was very dark there, and he could not see anything.

Then he tied a rope around his waist and said to his friends, "Take hold of the other end, boys. When I jerk it, then pull me out as quickly as you can." He got down on his hands and knees and crawled into the cave. He crawled very slowly and carefully.

At last he saw something in the darkness that looked like two balls of fire. He knew that these were the eyes of the wolf. The wolf gave a low growl and made ready to meet him.

Putnam gave the rope a quick jerk and his friends pulled him out in great haste. They feared that the wolf was upon him; but he wished only to get his gun.

Soon, with the gun in one hand, he crept back into the cave. The wolf saw him. She growled so loudly that the men and boys outside were frightened. But Putnam was not afraid. He raised his gun and fired at the great beast. When his friends heard the gun they pulled the rope quickly and drew him out. It was no fun to be pulled over the sharp stones in that way; but it was better than to be bitten by the wolf. Putnam loaded his gun again. Then he listened. There was not a sound inside of the cave. Perhaps the wolf was waiting to spring upon him. He crept into the cave for the third time. There were no balls of fire to be seen now. No angry growl was heard. The wolf was dead.

Putnam stayed in the cave so long that his friends began to be alarmed. After a while, however, he gave the rope a quick jerk. Men and boys pulled with all their might; and Putnam and the wolf were drawn out together.

This happened when Israel Putnam was a young man. When the Revolutionary War began he was one of the first to hurry to Boston to help the people defend themselves against the British soldiers. He became famous as one of the bravest and best of the generals who fought to make our country free.

Adapted From: "Fifty Famous People" by James Baldwin

1. List three adjectives that describes the character traits of Israel Putnam in the context of this story.

2. How did David Brown identify that the same old wolf has been killing lambs around here all winter? What does it say about his character?

3. What happened when Israel Putnam crept into the cave for third time?
