7TH GRADE
SBA REVIEW

NURSES IN THE WILDERNESS

DETERMINE HOW LITERARY DEVICES CONVEY THE AUTHOR’S INTENT
CHARACTERIZATION
Nurses in the Wilderness
by Ruth L. Ewers

Not even a flooded river could stand between Mary Breckinridge and the hospital her patients needed.

1 Christmas at the mountain clinic would have to wait. A fierce rain had swollen the middle fork of the Kentucky River and the brown water overflowed its muddy banks beside Mary Breckenridge's Wendover, Kentucky clinic. The trails were washed out, and she had to find a way to get her five patients to the hospital in Lexington.

2 There was only one thing to do. Since overland travel was impossible, she would turn the flood to her advantage and go out by the boat. But first she had to build one! Time was precious, and she knew she had to work fast.

3 A neighbor gave her some wooden planks, and he helped Mary and the nurses build a sturdy boat. They named it Ambulance, and on the morning of December 30, 1926, Mary, and another nurse, and the patients set off down the river. The churning, muddy water rushed and swirled around them.

4 After sixteen wild miles on the treacherous river, they left the boat and got into a mule cart. At eight o'clock that evening, they arrived at the train station in Krypton. As she watched the train pull away with her patients safely on board, Mary smiled and waved, knowing that they now had a chance to live a healthy life.

5 Mary had not planned to be a nurse. She was the daughter of a wealthy Kentucky politician and grew up with money, governesses, and trips to Europe. But the family had always been concerned about the poorer people of the state, and, as a child, Mary was influenced by an aunt who spent most of her fortune paying for the education of poor Kentucky children.

6 As an adult, Mary was inspired to become a nurse after she had watched helplessly as a child died of typhoid fever. A few years after she graduated from nursing school, her own two small children died. In her grief, she and her husband divorced, and she decided to devote her life to helping rural Kentucky children.

7 Mary picked the most out-of-the-way place in the Kentucky mountains – Leslie County – to start a health clinic and prove that dedicated people could bring medical care to even the most isolated areas. So in 1925 Mary hired a few British-trained nurse-midwives and, with some money from her family, started the Frontier Nursing Service in Wendover, Kentucky.
Before Mary and her nurses came, the mountain folk had no trained medical caregivers. The men worked in the coal mines or for the lumber companies, and the women grew vegetable gardens. Families made so little money they could not afford doctors or medicine – even if they could get them. Many children had diseases such as tuberculosis and pneumonia, and nearly every person was malnourished.

Mary and the nurse-midwives built clinics and a small hospital deep in the forests of Leslie County, spacing them throughout the rocky hills so that no one would be far from care. There were no paved roads, electricity, or telephones. Each day the nurses rode on horseback to isolated farms, often in bad weather, to answer calls for help. They worked hard to keep an eye on their patients.

To the grateful mountain people, Mary and the nurses seemed to be everywhere. They treated everything from cut fingers and pneumonia, gave shots, and delivered babies. Their patients joked that they finally knew where babies came from – the nurses brought them in their saddlebags! The proud country folk liked the nurses because they treated everyone with respect.

The Frontier Nursing Service grew, and today the Mary Breckinridge Hospital still cares for patients Hyden, Kentucky, just a few miles from Wendover. But the work of the Nursing Service now reaches far beyond the Kentucky mountains.

Today, medical professionals from all over the world come to Wendover to study rural health care in action. When these men and women go back to their own countries, they are prepared to help people in need – people like the mountain folk of Kentucky, who might have been left behind if not for Mary and her nurses in the wilderness.

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QUESTIONS

1. The word malnourished in paragraph 8 is made
   from adding the Latin word *ma*! to the word nourished. The Latin word *ma*! most nearly means
   A diseased.
   B needy.
   C bad.
   D more.

2. Which excerpt from paragraph 9 is an example of an idiom?
   A Mary and the nurse-midwives built clinics
   B There were no paved roads
   C Each day the nurses rode on horseback
   D keep an eye on their patients

3. The author's attitude toward Mary Breckinridge is *best* described as
   A respectful.
   B humorous.
   C objective.
   D indifferent

4. There is enough information in this passage to show that the author believes that Mary Breckinridge
   A trained all of her assistants herself.
   B wiped out disease in the Kentucky mountains.
   C never had enough money for her work.
   D remains a major influence on health care today

5. The main purpose of the first four paragraphs is to show
   A what life was like in the Kentucky mountains.
   B how determined Mary was to help people.
   C how difficult it was to find medical help in the 1920s.
   D how wild and dangerous the Kentucky River could be.

6. The first four paragraphs of this selection can *best* be described as
   A an idea.
   B a metaphor.
   C an anecdote.
   D a point of view.
ANSWERS

1. C
2. D
3. A
4. D
5. B
6. C