Name: _____ Date: _____

Davy Crockett and the Frozen Sunrise

Reading level 9 (5th grade) · 993 words

Davy Crockett lived in the backwoods of Tennessee, and he was famous for three things. He could grin so wide that a wildcat would sit down and listen. He could jump across a river and come back before his hat landed. And he could tell a story so tall that you needed a ladder to reach the end of it. This is one of his stories, and Davy swore that every word of it was true.

One January morning, Davy woke up in his cabin and knew right away that something was wrong. It was cold, but it was not ordinary cold. It was so cold that the trees in the forest were frozen too stiff to shake. It was so cold that the smoke froze in the chimney and stuck there like a gray stick. When the rooster opened his beak to crow, his crow froze and fell on the ground with a clink.

Worst of all, it was dark. Davy looked out of the window, and there was no morning at all. The sky was black and full of stars, even though his stomach said it was breakfast time. He tried to strike a spark to light his fire, but the sparks froze before they could catch. "Well, this won't do," said Davy. "The daybreak must be stuck somewhere. I'd better go and see about it."

He pulled on two coats and three pairs of socks and his coon-skin cap with the striped tail. Then he picked up a little tin of bear grease from the shelf. Every backwoods family kept bear grease for squeaky doors and stiff boots and cracked hands. Davy tucked the tin inside his shirt, right against his chest, to keep it from freezing. "My heart is the warmest thing in Tennessee," he said, "so that's where it goes."

Out he went into the frozen dark. The snow crunched like crackers under his boots. He walked up one hill and down another, and the cold nipped at his nose until it was as red as a cherry. He passed a deer frozen in the middle of a jump, hanging in the air like a picture. He passed an owl with an icicle on its beak. "Hold on, friends," Davy told them. "I'm working on it."

At last he climbed Daybreak Hill, the highest hill around, where the sun comes up every morning. From the top, he could see the edge of the world. And there was the trouble, plain as a pancake. The whole earth had frozen stiff on its axle, like a wagon wheel stuck in winter mud, and it could not turn around. The sun had tried to roll up into the sky, and it had got jammed between two great blocks of ice.

The poor old sun had been pushing and shining all night, trying to wriggle free. It had worked so hard that it had broken into a sweat, and then the sweat had frozen too. Now the sun was stuck tight, glowing sadly through the ice like a candle in a jar. "Creation!" said Davy, pushing back his cap. "That's the worst traffic jam I ever saw. Somebody has to do something, and it looks like that somebody is me."

He pulled the tin of bear grease out of his shirt. It was still warm and soft, because he had kept it next to his big warm heart the whole way. Davy scooped out a handful. He climbed right up onto the earth's frozen axle and rubbed the warm grease all along it, the way you grease a squeaky wheel. The ice began to drip. The axle gave a little creak, and then a little groan.

Next, Davy rubbed grease on the edges of the two blocks of ice that held the sun. He rubbed some on the sun's round cheeks, too, very gently, so it would slide. "Now then," said Davy, "when I count to three, you push, and I'll kick. One, two, THREE!" He gave the earth's big wheel a mighty kick with his boot, and the sun gave a mighty push, and something went POP, as loud as a cannon.

The sun slid free from the ice like a melon seed squeezed between two fingers. It shook itself, it stretched its rays, and it rolled up into the sky, round and gold and blazing. The earth gave a creak and began to turn again, as smooth as butter. All across the hills, the morning came pouring out. The frozen trees began to shake, the frozen deer finished its jump, and the owl's icicle melted with a drip.

Back at Davy's cabin, the smoke unfroze in the chimney and drifted up into the sky. In the barnyard, the rooster's frozen crow thawed out on the ground, and it went off all at once: COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO! The rooster was so surprised that he fell off the fence. All over Tennessee, people opened their doors and blinked in the sunshine. They never knew why the morning had come so late, and Davy never told them until now.

Before he left Daybreak Hill, Davy lit his lantern from the top of the sun, as easy as you please. Then he broke off one little piece of sunrise, no bigger than a peach, and put it in his pocket. He walked home whistling, with his pocket glowing and his hands toasty warm. That evening he set the piece of sunrise on his table, and it lit the whole cabin, pink and gold, until bedtime.

And that, said Davy Crockett, is the honest truth about the coldest morning there ever was. If you ever wake up on a winter morning and it is still dark outside, do not worry. The sun is probably just a little stiff. Somebody is up on Daybreak Hill with a warm heart and a good strong boot, getting it loose. Give it a minute. It always comes up in the end.

Questions

1. Why was it still dark when Davy woke up?

A. He woke up in the middle of the night

B. The sun was frozen stuck and could not rise

C. A storm cloud covered the sky

2. Why did Davy carry the bear grease inside his shirt?

A. To keep it warm so it would not freeze
B. To hide it from the rooster
C. Because his pockets were full

3. The sun was jammed between two blocks of ice. What does jammed mean?

A. Painted
B. Sleeping
C. Stuck tight

4. What did Davy take home from Daybreak Hill?

A. A frozen rooster crow
B. A little piece of sunrise in his pocket
C. A block of ice

5. This is a tall tale. What makes it a tall tale?

A. It is about a very tall man
B. It tells true facts about the weather
C. It stretches the truth in big, funny ways

6. What does Davy's story suggest about hard problems?

A. A warm heart and a brave try can fix a lot
B. It is wiser to stay in bed
C. Only the sun can fix the weather

Words to know

backwoods: wild forest land
axle: wheel rod
jammed: stuck tight
grease: slippery fat
thawed: melted

Answer key: Davy Crockett and the Frozen Sunrise

1. B. The sun was frozen stuck and could not rise
2. A. To keep it warm so it would not freeze
3. C. Stuck tight
4. B. A little piece of sunrise in his pocket
5. C. It stretches the truth in big, funny ways
6. A. A warm heart and a brave try can fix a lot