

Read the passage below about gathering maple syrup. Then answer questions 17–24 that follow.

An Indian Sugar Camp

Adapted from *Indian Boyhood*

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With the first March thaw, thoughts turned to the annual sugar-making. The rest of the tribe went out upon the spring fur-hunt, leaving the elders and children at home to make the sugar.

The most important utensils were the huge iron and brass kettles for boiling. Everything else could be made, but these must be bought, begged, or borrowed. A maple tree was felled and a log canoe hollowed from it to hold the collected sap. Little basins were made to catch the sweet drops of sap as they trickled from each tree.

Then we all proceeded to the bark sugar house. The hut was partially filled with the snows of winter and the dried leaves of autumn, and had to be cleared. My grandmother worked like a beaver in these days. If there was prospect of a good sugaring season, she made a second or even a third canoe to contain the sap. These canoes were afterward utilized by the hunters for their proper purpose.

My grandmother did not confine herself to making canoes. She also collected a good supply of fuel for the fires, for she would not have much time to gather wood when the sap began to flow. Presently the weather moderated and the snow began to melt. The month of April brought showers which carried most of it off into the Minnesota river.

Now the women began to test the trees—axe in hand, striking a single quick blow to see if the sap would appear. Trees, like people, have their individual characters. Some were ready to yield up their life-blood, while others were more reluctant. One of the basins was set under each ready tree, and a hardwood chip driven deep into the axe-cut. From the corners of this chip—at first drop by drop, then more freely—the sap trickled into the dishes.

It is usual to make sugar from maples, but several other trees were also tapped. From the birch and ash was made a dark-colored sugar, with a somewhat bitter taste, which was used for medicinal purposes. The box-elder yielded a beautiful white sugar, whose only fault was that there was never enough of it!

A long fire was made in the sugar house, and a row of brass kettles suspended over it. Women collected the sap in buckets, and then poured it into the canoes, from which the kettles were kept filled. The hearts of the boys beat high with anticipation when they heard the hissing sound of the boiling sap! Each boy claimed one kettle for his special charge. It was his duty to see that its fire was kept up, to keep it from boiling over, and finally, when the sap became syrup, to test it upon the snow, dipping it out with a wooden paddle.

So frequent were these tests that for the first day or two we consumed nearly all that could be made. It was not until the sweetness began to pall that my grandmother began to store up sugar for future use.

She made it into cakes, in birch molds, and sometimes in hollow canes or reeds. Some of it was crushed and packed in rawhide cases. She did not give it to us after the first month, except upon special occasions, so as to make it last almost the year around. The smaller candies were reserved as treats for the little fellows. The sugar was eaten at feasts with wild rice or parched corn, and also with pounded dried meat.

Every pursuit has its trials and anxieties. My grandmother's special tribulations, during the sugaring season were the upsetting and gnawing of holes in her birchbark pans. The transgressors were the rabbit and squirrel tribes, and we little boys for once became useful, in shooting them with our bows and arrows. We hunted all over the sugar camp, until the little creatures were fairly driven out of the neighborhood. Occasionally one of my older brothers brought home a rabbit or two, and then we had a feast.

The sugaring season extended well into April, and the returning birds made the precincts of our camp joyful with their songs. I often followed my older brothers into the woods, although I was then but four or five years old. Upon one of these excursions they went so far that I ventured back alone. When within sight of our hut, I saw a chipmunk sitting upon a log, and uttering the sound he makes when he calls to his mate. How glorious it would be, I thought, if I could shoot him with my tiny bow and arrows! Stealthily and cautiously I approached, keeping my eyes upon the pretty little animal, and just as I was about to let fly my shaft, I heard a hissing noise at my feet. There lay a horrid snake, coiled and ready to spring! Forgetful that I was a warrior, I gave a loud scream and started backward; but soon recollecting myself, looked down with shame, although no one was near.

However, I retreated to the inclined trunk of a fallen tree, and there, as I have often been told, was overheard soliloquizing in the following words: "I wonder if a snake can climb a tree!"

I remember that I stood one day outside of our hut and watched the approach of a visitor—a bent old man, his hair almost white, and carrying on his back a large bundle of red willow, or kinnikinick, which the Indians use for smoking. He threw down his load at the door and thus saluted us: "You have indeed perfect weather for sugar-making."

It was my great-grandfather, Cloud Man, whose original village was on the shores of Lakes Calhoun and Harriet, now in the suburbs of the city of Minneapolis. He was the first Sioux chief to welcome the missionaries among his people, and a well-known character in those pioneer days. He brought us word that some of the peaceful sugar-makers near us on the river had been attacked by roving Ojibways. This news disturbed us not a little, for we realized that we too might become the victims of an Ojibway war party. Therefore we all felt some uneasiness from this time until we returned heavy laden to our village.

17. Descriptions like “hearts of the boys beat high with anticipation” and “the hissing sound of the boiling sap” give the reader a sense of
- A the difficulty of gathering sap and then cooking it.
 - B what it was like to be present at the sap gathering.
 - C the way that trees make sap.
 - D how to make sap.
18. Which is the **best** summary of the fifth paragraph?
- A Trees needed to be tested to see which were ready to be tapped.
 - B The women test the trees to see which are ready and then basins are placed under each ready tree to catch the sap.
 - C A fire was built in the sugar house, and the sap was put into kettles so that it would cook and become syrup.
 - D The sugar is put into cakes or crushed, and was given out only for special occasions so it would last the entire year.
19. Why did Grandmother need to make the sugar last the year around?
- A Sugar making could only be done once a year.
 - B Sugar was a special treat for the little children.
 - C It was too much work to make more sugar.
 - D The tribe moved away from the sugar maple trees.
20. Which job did the boys do during sugar-making?
- A making additional canoes
 - B collecting firewood
 - C watching the boiling syrup
 - D testing the maple trees with axes
21. How did the author feel about the snake?
- A He was terrified of it.
 - B He thought it was interesting looking.
 - C He was worried that he would hurt it.
 - D He thought it was friendly.

22. As told by the author, the story makes the reader feel
- A indifferent to the author's experiences as a child.
 - B that making maple syrup was a hard and unrewarding experience.
 - C that the author's childhood was filled with fear.
 - D a sense of warmth and wonder about the author's childhood experiences.

23. How do we know that the story is told by a first person narrator?
- A The narrator knows everything that is happening.
 - B The narrator refers to himself as "I."
 - C The narrator knows what his grandmother is thinking.
 - D The narrator is not a part of the story himself.

