Name _____ Date _____

## Reread and Analyze

**9. Determine Importance** In paragraph 8, underline the reason that Salak finds Mungo Park's writing fascinating. Why do you think Salak thought it was important to include these ideas?

**10. Analyze Development of Ideas** Reread paragraph 10. Highlight the words in the paragraph that presents a new event. Circle the words that show the author's reaction. What important idea do we learn about the author?

6 "I'll pray for you," he reminds me.

7 I balance my gear, adjust the straps, get in. And, finally, **irrevocably**, I paddle away.

**Already, I fear the irrationality of my journey...**

8 When Mungo Park left on his second trip, he never admitted that he was scared. It is what fascinates me about his writing—his insistence on maintaining an illusion that all was well, even as he began a journey that he knew from previous experience could only beget tragedy. Hostile peoples, unknown rapids, malarial fevers. Hippos and crocodiles. The giant Lake Debo to cross, like being set adrift on an inland sea, no sight of land, no way of knowing where the river starts again. Forty of his forty-four men dead from sickness, Park himself afflicted with dysentery when he left on this ill-fated trip. And it can **boggle** the mind, what drives some people to risk their lives for the mute promises of success. It boggles my mind, at least, as I am caught up in the same affliction. Already, I fear the irrationality of my journey, the relentless stubbornness that drives me on.

9 The storm erupts in a new overture. Torrential rains. Waves higher than my kayak, trying to **capsize** me. But my boat is self-bailing and I stay afloat. The wind drives the current in reverse, tearing and ripping at the shores, sending spray into my face. I paddle madly, crashing and driving forward. I travel inch by inch, or so it seems, arm muscles smarting and rebelling against this journey.

10 A popping feeling now and a screech of pain. My right arm lurches from a ripped muscle. But this is no time and place for such an injury, and I won't tolerate it, stuck as I am in a storm. I try to get used to the **metronome-like** pulses of pain as I fight the river. There is only one direction to go: forward.

11 I wonder what we look for when we embark on these kinds of trips. There is the pat answer that you tell the people you don't know: that you're interested in seeing a place, learning about its people. But then the trip begins and the hardship comes, and hardship is more honest: it tells us that we don't have enough patience yet, nor humility, nor gratitude. And we thought that we had. Hardship brings us closer to truth, and thus is more difficult to bear, but from it alone comes **compassion**. And I've told the



**In Other Words**

**irrevocably** permanently
**boggle** confuse, puzzle
**capsize** overturn
**metronome-like** regular
**compassion** concern for others



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world that it can do what it wants with me if only, by the end, I have learned something more. A **bargain**, then. The journey, my teacher.

12 And where is the river of just this morning, with its whitecaps that would have liked to drown me, with its current flowing backward against the wind? Gone to this: a river of smoothest glass, a placidity unbroken by wave or eddy, with islands of lush greenery awaiting me like distant **Xanadus**.

13 I barely travel at one mile an hour, the river preferring—as I do—to loiter in the sun. I lean down in my seat and hang my feet over the sides of the kayak. I eat turkey jerky and wrap up my injured arm, part of which has swollen to the size of a grapefruit. I'm not worried about the injury anymore. I'm not worried about anything. I know this feeling won't last, but for now I wrap myself in it, feeling the rare peace. To reach a place of not worrying is a greater freedom than anything I could hope to find on one of these trips. It is my true Undiscovered Country.

14 The Somono fishermen, casting out their nets, puzzle over me as I float by.

15 *"Ça va, madame?"* they yell.

16 Each fisherman carries a young son perched in the back of his pointed canoe to do the paddling. The boys stare at me, transfixed; they have never seen such a thing. A white woman. Alone. In a red, inflatable boat. Using a two-sided paddle.

17 I'm an even greater novelty because Malian women don't paddle here, not ever. It is a man's job. So there is no good explanation for me, and the people want to understand. They want to see if I'm strong enough for it, or if I even know how to use a paddle. They want to determine how sturdy my boat is. They gather on the shore in front of their villages to watch me pass, the kids screaming and jumping in excitement, the women with hands to foreheads to shield the sun as they stare, men yelling out questions in Bambarra which by now I know to mean: "Where did you come from? Are you alone? Where's your husband?" And of course they will always ask: "Where are you going?"

18 "Timbuktu!" I yell out to the last question.

19 *"Tombouctou!?!"* they always repeat, just to be sure.

20 *"Awo,"* I say in the Bambarra I've learned. "Yes." ❖



Remi Benali, 2003.

**In Other Words**

**bargain** agreement, deal
**Xanadus** grand, luxurious places
***Ça va, madame?*** Is everything OK, ma'am? (in French)

## Reread and Analyze

**11. Relate Ideas**
Highlight one fact and one personal observation in paragraph 13. How do they work together to express an important idea?

**12. Relate Ideas** Underline the questions that appear in paragraphs 14–20. How do these questions reflect important ideas in the narrative?



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