



Name: _____ Class: _____

Klondike Gold Rush

By Anonymous
1898

On August 16, 1896, miners found gold in the Klondike region of the Yukon in northwestern Canada. This inspired a migration of an estimated 100,000 people between 1896 and 1899, hoping to find similar success and riches. As you read, take notes on what miners expected to find and how this compared to the reality of their experiences.

Yukon Territory 1897

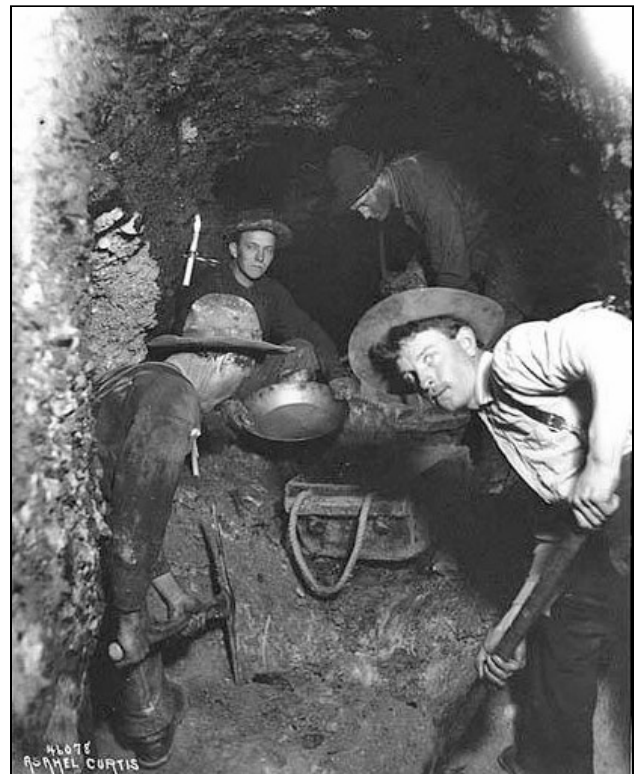
- [1] The Klondike gold rush began in July of 1897 when two ships docked in San Francisco and Seattle carrying miners returning from the Yukon with bags of gold. The press was alerted and papers carried the story to the masses.

Soon, miners of all shapes and sizes, called “stampeder,” were on their way to the gold fields. Within six months, approximately 100,000 gold-seekers set off for the Yukon. Only 30,000 completed the trip.

Most stampeder knew little or nothing about where they were going, so pamphlets were available to help them on their way. Many of the pamphlets contained little or no real information and made outrageous claims of wealth to be had by everyone. Outfitters¹ sprang up overnight that were happy to sell the stampeder whatever they needed to get started. This included food, clothing, tools, and camping, mining and transportation equipment. Helping the outfitters in this regard were the Northwest Mounted Police who required all stampeder to have one year’s supply of goods before they allowed them across the border into Canada. This was roughly one ton of goods per person. Towns such as Seattle made fortunes outfitting the miners.

The easiest and more expensive route to the gold fields was by boat upstream from the mouth of the Yukon in western Alaska. The most difficult route was the “All Canadian Route” from Edmonton and overland through the wilderness.

- [5] The most common route taken by the stampeder to reach the fields was by boat from the west coast of the continental U.S. to Skagway in Alaska, over the Chilkoot or White Passes to the Yukon River at Whitehorse and then by boat 500 miles to Dawson City.



"Underground mining at Klondike gold field, 1898" by Curtis, Asahe is in the public domain.

1. an establishment that sells clothing, equipment, and services, especially for outdoor activities

The Chilkoot Pass trail was steep and hazardous.² Rising 1,000 feet in the last ½ mile, it was known as the “golden staircase”: 1,500 steps carved out of snow and ice worked their way to the top of the pass. Too steep for packhorses,³ stampeders had to “cache”⁴ their goods, moving their equipment piecemeal⁵ up the mountain. Stampeders who gave up often did it here, discarding their unneeded equipment on the side of the trail.

Conditions on the White Pass trail were even more horrendous.⁶ Steep, narrow and slick, over 3,000 pack animals died on the trail causing it to be dubbed the “Dead horse trail.”

Those who made it across the passes found themselves at Bennett Lake. Here, boats had to be built to run the final 500 miles down the Yukon River to the gold fields. A three week trip, the miners had to survive many sets of rapids before making it to Dawson City. Many miners lost their lives or their possessions when their boats broke up in the rapids.

Those who survived the perilous⁷ journey mostly found disappointment once they reached Dawson City. Locals had already claimed all of the gold-bearing creeks and claims of “gold for the taking” were grossly exaggerated. Many stampeders headed home, some worked for others on the claims, and still others stayed to work in Dawson City.

- [10] The work that was necessary to retrieve the gold was incredible. Most of the gold was not at the surface, but rather 10 or more feet below. To reach it, the miners had to dig through the permafrost — the layer of permanently frozen ground. The ground had to be thawed before it could be dug. Then the dirt had to be sluiced⁸ to separate it from the gold. All digging had to be done during the summer as it was impossible to dig in the winter when temperatures could reach -60°F. It was incredibly difficult work.

The biggest boom to hit this part of the world was a huge bust for the miners. The only ones to strike it rich were the merchants and profiteers who took advantage of those who hoped to “get rich quick.”

“Klondike Gold Rush” by William Gordon Stables (1898) is in the public domain.

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2. **Hazardous (adjective):** risky; dangerous
 3. a horse used to carry loads
 4. to place or store something in a hidden or secure place
 5. one piece at a time
 6. **Horrendous (adjective):** extremely bad or unpleasant
 7. **Perilous (adjective):** full of danger
 8. to wash or rinse with water

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: In paragraph 2, what does the phrase “miners of all shapes and sizes” mean?
 - A. Many people were invited.
 - B. People with supplies traveled to the Yukon.
 - C. People experienced discrimination.
 - D. Many types of people traveled to the Yukon.

2. PART B: What additional idea does the reader understand from the phrase in Part A?
 - A. a large number of miners arrived
 - B. most miners had gold field experience
 - C. a large number of miners were rejected
 - D. most miners could handle the hard labor

3. PART A: What is the meaning of “pamphlets” as it is used in paragraph 3 of “Klondike Gold Rush”?
 - A. tokens for miners
 - B. stocked wagons
 - C. guides for miners
 - D. camping kits

4. PART B: Which detail from paragraph 3 helps the reader understand the meaning of “pamphlets”?
 - A. “Most stampeders knew little or nothing about where they were going”
 - B. “This included food, clothing, tools, and camping, mining and transportation equipment.”
 - C. “Helping the outfitters in this regard were the Northwest Mounted Police”
 - D. “This was roughly one ton of goods per person.”

5. PART A: Based on the information from “Klondike Gold Rush,” which sentence states a central idea of the article?
 - A. Most miners were pleased with the outcome of the gold rush.
 - B. Most miners labored hard for very little gain.
 - C. Work in the Yukon Territory was worth the danger of traveling there.
 - D. The gold rush hurt many small businesses.

6. PART B: Which TWO sentences from the article provide the best evidence for the answer in Part A?
- A. "Outfitters sprang up overnight that were happy to sell the stampedeers whatever they needed to get started." (Paragraph 3)
 - B. "Towns such as Seattle made fortunes outfitting the miners." (Paragraph 3)
 - C. "Those who made it across the passes found themselves at Bennett Lake." (Paragraph 8)
 - D. "Many stampedeers headed home, some worked for others on the claims, and still others stayed to work in Dawson City." (Paragraph 9)
 - E. "The work that was necessary to retrieve the gold was incredible." (Paragraph 10)
 - F. "The biggest boom to hit this part of the world was a huge bust for the miners." (Paragraph 11)
7. PART A: Based on evidence in the article, why did so few miners stay in the Klondike to mine gold after arriving?
- A. The conditions for mining were difficult.
 - B. Many laws outlawed miners.
 - C. The lack of wildlife made mining nearly impossible.
 - D. The value of gold dropped significantly.
8. PART B: Which detail from the article supports the answer to Part A?
- A. "helping the outfitters in this regard were the Northwest Mounted Police" (Paragraph 3)
 - B. "The Chilkoot Pass trail was steep and hazardous." (Paragraph 6)
 - C. "Here, boats had to be built" (Paragraph 8)
 - D. "Most of the gold was not at the surface" (Paragraph 10)
9. PART A: Based on the information in "Klondike Gold Rush," how did most miners reach the Yukon territory?
- A. by boat and by train
 - B. by train and using pack animals
 - C. by boat and by walking overland
 - D. by train and by walking overland
10. PART B: Which paragraph offers evidence for the answer to Part A?
- A. Paragraph 2
 - B. Paragraph 5
 - C. Paragraph 9
 - D. Paragraph 10
11. PART A: How does the author mainly organize paragraphs 1-2 in the article "Klondike Gold Rush"?
- A. chronological order
 - B. cause and effect
 - C. problem and solution
 - D. compare and contrast

12. PART B: Which description best illustrates how the structure in Part A is achieved?
- A. "The Klondike gold rush began in July of 1897" (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "The press was alerted" (Paragraph 1)
 - C. "miners of all shapes and sizes" (Paragraph 2)
 - D. "Only 30,000 completed the trip" (Paragraph 2)

