

Joseph Netmaker brought the letter out to me. Winter had just started to settle itself into the country. Joseph walked on snowshoes from the town. 'This is for you, Niska,' he said. 'It is from the Canadian boss, their hookimaw.'

5 As soon as I saw the brown letter, the English words written upon it, I knew what it contained. I sat down beside the fire and stirred at it with a stick while Joseph read, first out loud and in his stumbling English, then for me in our language.

'Serial No.6711. Deeply regret to inform you, Private First Class Xavier Bird, infantry, officially reported died of wounds in the field, November 3, 1918. Director of Records.' [...]

10 Many moons later, when the winter ice was leaving and travel was difficult, Joseph came back with another letter. He explained that it was in reference to Elijah, and that Old Man Ferguson had given it to him to give to me since I was the closest thing to a relation that Elijah had.

15 The letter said that Elijah had been wounded, that he had only one leg now, that he had tried to rescue another soldier, was given a medal for bravery. It said that although weak, he had healed enough to travel and was expected to arrive in the same town from which he and Xavier had left so long ago.

20 I had Joseph explain to me how the wemistikoshiw calendar worked, what month I was to be there, and I made careful preparations to journey by canoe to that town where Elijah would arrive. I left early in the summer and paddled up the river. It was difficult. I am older now, but I travelled light. Joseph had asked to come along, but I told him no.

I went alone.

25 I watch the beast pull up and give one last great sigh, as if it is very tired from the long journey, smoke pouring from its sides. People wave from the windows and people on the ground wave back, just as I have watched them do for days. Then men and women and children who have arrived start stepping down into the arms of others. I see a few soldiers and search among them for Elijah's face with his sly grin. The crowd begins to thin, and once again I do not see an Indian soldier with one leg.

30 I am turning to leave when I see through one of the windows the silhouette of a man inside. He walks slowly along the aisle, on crutches, in a uniform, a small bag slung over his shoulder. I step away from the shadow of the wall.

He wears a hat, just like the wemistikoshiw do, but this one is of their army and I cannot see his face for his looking down as he slowly makes his way down the steps on his crutches. He is an old man I think. So skinny. This cannot be the Elijah I know. [...]

35 When he is off the steps I begin to back away, thinking it is not him. He looks up and I see his face, thin and pale, high cheekbones, and ears sticking out from beneath his hat. I stumble a little, the blood rushing away from my head. The ghost of my nephew Xavier looks at me.

40 He sees me at the same moment, and I watch as his eyes take a long time to register what they see, but when they do he begins to rock back and forth on his crutches. He falls to the ground. I rush up to him, kneel beside him, grab his warm hands. He is no ghost. I hold him to me. His heart beats weakly. I am struck suddenly that he is very ill.

'Nephew,' I whisper. 'You are home. You are home.'

45 I hug him, and when he opens his eyes, I look into them. They are glassy. Even in the shadows of the station his pupils are pinpricks.

'I was told you were dead, Auntie,' he whispers.

'And I was told you were, too,' I say.

We sit on the ground for a while, both of us too weak for the moment to get up. We are

50 crying, looking at one another. A small group of wemistikoshiw gathers and stares at us. I help
Nephew up so that we can get away, get to the river where he can drink water and I can better
protect him.

55 We do not stay in the town long. It makes me too nervous. Automobiles, they are
everywhere. We must cross the dusty road that they travel upon before we can get to the river
where I keep my canoe. Nephew walks slowly on his crutches, his eyes cast down. People stare
at us, at him. There was a time before he left that he would have stared back, he and Elijah
both, not intimidated by them.

Joseph Boyden, *Three Day Road*, 2005

NOTE AUX CANDIDATS

Les candidats traiteront le sujet sur la copie qui leur sera fournie et veilleront à

- **respecter l'ordre des questions et reporter la numérotation sur la copie (numéro et lettre repère, le cas échéant ; ex. 8b)**
- **faire précéder les citations de la mention de la ligne ;**
- **composer des phrases complètes à chaque fois qu'il leur est demandé de rédiger la réponse ;**
- **respecter le nombre de mots indiqué. En l'absence d'indication, les candidats répondront brièvement à la question posée.**

I. COMPRÉHENSION — EXPRESSION

1. a) Using the information mentioned in the text, describe the historical context in which the story takes place.
b) Through whose eyes does the reader discover the events?
2. What is the relationship between Niska, Xavier and Elijah?
3. The narrator has received two letters. In your own words, say what information they contain. (30-35 words)
4. What is the role of Joseph in Niska's life? (25-30 words)
5. Focus on Niska
 - a) Where does she start out from and where does she arrive?
 - b) What means of transport does she use?
 - c) What does she go there for'?

6. Focus on the soldier
 - a) Where does he come from?
 - b) Why do you think he has come back? Give at least two reasons. (20-25 words)
 - c) What does the word "beast" (1.23) refer to?
 - d) How do you know this? Pick out three quotations that enable you to do so.

7. Compare the two means of transport mentioned and show what they symbolize. (30-40 words)
 - a) for Niska.
 - b) in general (for us as readers).

8. Niska and the soldier both arrive at the same place
Focus on the following quotations and answer the questions:
 - a) Who is Niska expecting to see and what is the problem?
(1.26-27) *"I see a Jew soldiers and search among them for Elijah face with his sly grin."*
(1.28) *"I do not see an Indian soldier with one leg."*
(1.34) *"This cannot he the Elijah f know."*

 - b) Who does she think it is? Why does she call him a ghost?
(1.37-38) *"The ghost of my nephew Xavier looks at me"*
(1.41) *"He is no ghost"*

 - c) What may the explanation for this confusion be? (20-30 words)
(1.55-56) *"There was a time before he left that he would have stared back, he and Elijah both, not intimidated by them."*

**9. Choose ONE of the following subjects. Write down the number of words.
(250 words, +/- 10%)**

Subject 1:

Have you ever taken a journey that has altered your way of seeing things or people?
Recount it.

OR

Subject 2:

In this text the role of the family is important. Do you think that family life still has a part to play in the twenty-first century?

II. TRADUCTION

Translate from (1. 43) “ *‘Nephew,’ I whisper.* ” to (1. 51) “ *... better protect him.* ”