Lesson 21
Vocabulary in Context

1. **pace**
   Pony Express riders rode at a fast pace in order to deliver mail as quickly as possible.

2. **undoubtedly**
   Westbound travelers were undoubtedly glad to make it across the mountains alive.

3. **seep**
   If a storm lasted awhile, rain could seep through protective clothes and hats.

4. **evident**
   When it is evident, or obvious, that a wagon wheel is broken, it is repaired or replaced.
Study each Context Card.

Make up a new context sentence that uses two Vocabulary words.

5. factor
The weather was just one factor, or element, that determined the speed of a journey.

6. vain
These pioneers made a vain, or fruitless, attempt to cross the river. It was too deep.

7. mirages
Travelers could be fooled by mirages. It was a blow to learn these visions were false.

8. shuffled
The journey was tiring. Many walkers shuffled slowly along the trail after a few weeks.

9. salvation
A freshwater spring could be the salvation of thirsty travelers, saving their lives.

10. stunted
Only small, stunted trees can grow in the harsh desert conditions of the Southwest.
Background

TARGET VOCABULARY  A Dangerous Trip  Travel was undoubtedly difficult for the thousands of people who journeyed to the American West by wagon train in the mid-1800s. Travelers encountered pouring rain, howling wind, and cold that seemed to seep into their bones. As they shuffled along under a blistering sun, some saw mirages of water or food that raised vain hopes for relief. In reality, the water found along the trail barely supported stunted trees and often carried diseases such as cholera. In this time, before modern medicine, illness spread quickly and many of the sick died.

Meeting people along the trail was another unknown factor in the journey. When travelers met Native Americans, it was not evident whether the encounter would be friendly or fierce. Other strangers could be thieves intent on robbing wagon trains. These hardships and other difficulties slowed the travelers’ pace. Finally reaching their destinations must have seemed like salvation.

- Review the information in the graphic below. In which year did the fewest number of pioneers move west? In which year did the most pioneers move west?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Estimated Number of Travelers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>65,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the many dangers, thousands of people moved west by wagon train after the discovery of gold in California in 1848. Thousands more traveled by sea.
Comprehension

**TARGET SKILL** Sequence of Events
As you read "Tucket's Travels," notice the sequence, or order, in which events take place. Look for clue words that show time, such as coming, last night, and by now. Make a graphic organizer like the one below to show the sequence of events in "Tucket's Travels."

- Event 1:
- Event 2:
- Event 3:

**TARGET STRATEGY** Visualize
Use sequence of events and details from "Tucket's Travels" to help you visualize the action in the story. Creating mental pictures of what is happening makes the story more vivid and interesting.
MEET THE AUTHOR

Gary Paulsen

Gary Paulsen’s characters often rely on wilderness survival skills to survive tough situations. Paulsen sometimes recreates a scene, such as digging for water, in real life so that he can write about it from a firsthand perspective. He has lived in many places, including the Alaskan wilderness and on a boat in California.

MEET THE ILLUSTRATOR

Bill Farnsworth

To create illustrations for a story, Bill Farnsworth travels to its location, takes photographs, and sketches. Then he’s ready to paint. He says, “My goal is to give the viewer a sense of what the main character in the story is feeling, so you can imagine yourself actually there!”

TARGET VOCABULARY

pace  vain
undoubtedly  mirages
seep  shuffled
evident  salvation
factor  stunted

TARGET SKILL

Sequence of Events
Identify the time order in which events take place.

TARGET STRATEGY

Visualize  Use text details to form pictures in your mind of what you are reading.

GENRE

Historical fiction is a story whose characters and events are set in a real period of history.
TUCKET'S TRAVELS

by Gary Paulsen

selection illustrated by Bill Farnsworth

Essential Question
What events take the children across a changing land?
If there was one thing Francis Tucket knew with certainty it was that death was close to taking them.

Dawn was coming and here he was, a fifteen-year-old boy in charge of two children, walking across a sunbeaten, airless plain that seemed to be endless. Francis, Lottie and Billy had no food or water or any immediate hope of getting any, and at any moment a dozen or two of the dirt-meaniest men Francis had ever seen in a world full of mean men could come riding up on them and . . .

He didn't finish the thought. There was no need. Besides, in surviving Indian fights, blizzards, battles and thieves, he had learned the primary rule about danger. It would come if it would come. You could try to be ready for it, you could plan on it, you could even expect it, but it would come when it wanted to come.

Lottie and Billy understood this rule too. He had found them sitting in a wagon on the prairie all alone. Their father had died of cholera (KAHL ur uh) and their wagon train had abandoned the family, afraid of disease. Lottie had been nine then, Billy six. Francis hadn't thought he and the children would stay together long—after all, he had to keep searching for his own family. He'd been separated from them a year before, when Pawnees had kidnapped him from the wagon train on the Oregon Trail. But Francis and Lottie and Billy—well, they were used to each other. They stuck together. Unlike Francis and Jason Grimes, the one-armed mountain man.

Jason Grimes had rescued Francis from the Pawnees and taught him how to survive in the West on his own. Then they'd parted ways.

Until last night. Last night when Grimes had helped them to escape from the Comancheros (koh mahn CHEH rohs). The Comancheros were an outlaw band, ruthless, terrifying, inhumanly tough. To escape, Grimes had had to take the packhorses Francis and Lottie and Billy had been riding and lead them off empty, hoping the Comancheros would follow his tracks westward while the three children headed north on foot in the dark of night.
It was a decent plan—it was their only plan—and it seemed to be working. As Francis and the two children had moved north in the dark, they had seen the Comancheros ride past them after Mr. Grimes, tracking the horses. The Comancheros had missed the footprints of the children, partly because it was hard to see them and partly because Francis made Lottie and Billy walk in each other's footsteps. He came last, brushing out the trail with a piece of mesquite behind him.

But luck was the major factor in the plan. If the Comancheros caught Grimes or even got within sight of him they'd know that Francis and the children weren't with him. They'd turn and come back for the children. Children meant real money because they could be sold or traded into slavery.

Francis knew that brushing out the tracks would only work in the pitch dark of night. In daylight the brush marks themselves would be easy to follow.
“I’m tired.” Billy stopped suddenly. “I think we’ve gone far enough.”

Francis frowned. When Francis had first met Billy, the boy wouldn’t say a word. And now he’d gone from never talking at all to complaining.

“If they catch us they’ll skin you,” warned Lottie. “Now keep walking. If we don’t keep moving they’ll be on us like dogs, won’t they, Francis? On us just like dogs . . .”
Lottie loved to talk, would talk all the time if she had the chance, seemed to have been talking since Francis had found her in that wagon. Lottie would explain every little detail of every little part of every little thing she was talking about so that not a single aspect of it was missed, and she sometimes drove Francis over the edge. Now, as Billy started moving again, Francis picked up the pace, pushed them as hard as they could stand it and then harder, and Lottie didn’t have breath left to speak.

Dawn brought the sun and the sun brought heat. Francis and the children were bareheaded and the sun quickly went to work on them. Billy wanted to complain, especially as the morning progressed and there was no water and the sun rose higher and became hotter, but Francis drove them until Billy began to weave. Then Francis picked Billy up and carried him piggyback, mile after mile, then yard after yard, and finally, step after step.

**STOP AND THINK**

**Sequence of Events** What steps do Tucket and the children take to escape the Comancheros during the night? What is happening now that it is day?
Lottie saw it first.

"There," she said. "See the spot?"

Francis was near dead with exhaustion. He had hardly slept at all for the two nights before and had been used roughly by the Comancheros in the bargain. He was close to the breaking point as he said, "What spot?"

"There. No, more to the right. On the horizon. It's trees. I'm sure of it. A stand of trees."

They had seen many **mirages**—images of trees and water that were not there. But Francis looked where she was pointing and saw it instantly. He stopped and set Billy down. The boy was asleep, and he collapsed in a heap, still sleeping. "You're right! Trees. And trees mean water."

He turned and studied the horizon. He hadn't been able to look up when carrying Billy and he was shocked now to see a plume of dust off to the west and south. It was at least fifteen miles away, against some hills in the distance. It was so far away that it seemed tiny, but Francis knew it was probably caused by riders, many riders.
Lottie saw him staring.

“Could it be buffalo?” She watched the dust. “A small herd?”

Not here, Francis thought. Not here in this dust and heat with no grass and no water. Buffalo wouldn’t be that stupid. “Sure. It’s buffalo.”

“You’re lying.” She sighed. “I can tell when you’re lying to me, Francis Tucket. It’s them, isn’t it?”

Francis said nothing but his mind was racing. So the riders were heading back eastward. But why would they be coming back so soon? Had they caught Grimes already? If so they’d be looking for the children. Or had they given up the chase or just seen Grimes and found that he was alone and turned back, still looking for the children? They might miss the tracks . . .

He knew this was a vain hope. There hadn’t been a breath of wind to blow the dust over the brush marks he’d left, and undoubtedly they had men who were good trackers, men who were alive because they could track mice over rocks. So the Comancheros would find them and then . . . and then . . .
He looked to the trees, which were about two miles away. He could carry Billy there. They could get to the trees in time. Then what? The riders would keep coming back until they came to the place where Francis and the children had turned off, about nine miles back. They would see the marks and turn and start north. Nine miles. The horses would be tired but they would make ten miles an hour. They had to ride maybe twenty miles back to the turn and then nine or ten miles north after the children. He let the figures work through his tired brain. Maybe four hours but more likely three. The riders would be on them in three hours.

Francis and Billy and Lottie would need an hour to make the trees and then . . . and then nothing.

It would all just happen later. They’d get him and take the children and nothing would have changed except that a few horses would be very tired and he, Francis, would be dead.

And as for what would happen to Lottie and Billy—his heart grew cold. But there was something else back there, more than just the plume of dust. There was a cloud. At first it was low on the horizon and showed only as a gray line, so low that Francis almost didn’t see it. But it was growing rapidly, the wind bringing it from the west, and as it grew and rose he could see that it was the top edge of a thunderhead.

It didn’t look like salvation, not at first. He had seen plenty of prairie thunderheads but as he watched it he realized two things.

One, it was growing rapidly, roaring along on the high winds, coming toward them at a much faster rate than the horses of the Comancheros. Two, it would bring rain.
Rain that would ease their thirst and cool their burning bodies and, far more important, rain that might wipe out their tracks, erase everything they had left behind them.

Still, it was a race, and nothing was sure. The clouds had to keep coming to beat the horsemen to where the children’s tracks turned north. And it had to rain.

If the clouds turned off or didn’t beat the Comancheros or didn’t leave rain, then distance was all the children had. They needed to get to the trees and build some kind of defense.

Francis picked up Billy, who was still sound asleep and seemed to weigh a ton. He set off at a shambling walk, abandoning the tedious brushing in their race to get to the trees. Lottie shuffled ahead, carrying Francis’s bag. She was wearing a ragged shift so dirty it seemed to be made of earth. Her yellow hair was full of dust. Francis wore buckskins, but the children only had what was left of their original clothing and what they’d managed to pick up along the way.

We’re a sight, Francis thought. A ragtag mob of a sight.

He looked at the trees and they didn’t seem any closer.

He looked at the cloud and it was still building, though it seemed to be heading off slightly to the south.

He looked at the dust plume and it was still moving on the same line eastward, getting ready to cross their trail.

He looked back to the trees and thought, I would absolutely kill for that old mule we had. But the mule had been taken by the Comancheros.

STOP AND THINK

Visualize Which words on these two pages help you visualize the children, the coming storm, and the approaching Comancheros?
They reached the trees just as the edge of the clouds caught up with them.

“Ten more feet and I would have died,” Lottie whispered, and sank to the ground.

Francis dropped Billy like a stone—the boy fell without awakening—and studied their location. It was a meandering dry streambed with a row of stunted but leafy cottonwoods on each side. There were also stands of salt cedar, thick and green, and while no water was evident the streambed seemed moist. Francis knew there was water beneath the surface or the trees would have been dead.

“Lottie, scoop a hole there, at the base of that rock.”

“You want to start digging, why don’t you just go ahead? I have more important things to do than scrape at the old ground.”

“Water.” Francis was so dry he croaked. “Dig down and let it seep in.”

“Oh. Well, why didn’t you say so?” Lottie knelt by the rock and started digging in the loose sand with her hands. When she was down two feet, she yelped.

“Here it is! Just like you said, coming in from the sides. Oh, Francis, it’s so clear, come see.” She scooped some up and drank it. “Sweet as sugar. Come, try it.”

Francis knelt and cupped his hand and drank and thought he had never tasted anything so good. But he stopped before he was full.

The wind was picking up now, blowing hard enough to lift dust and even sand, and he could no longer see the dust from the riders. The wind was blowing at the coming thunderheads and he smiled because even if it didn’t rain there was a good chance the wind would fill in and destroy their tracks.

By now the thunderhead was over them, dark, so huge it covered the whole sky, and the wind had increased to a scream.

**STOP AND THINK**

*Author’s Craft* A metaphor is a description that compares one thing to another thing without using *like* or *as*. Metaphors make descriptions more vivid. What metaphor does the author use on this page to describe the sound of the wind?
“Over here!” Francis yelled to Lottie. “Beneath this ledge.” Incredibly, Billy was still asleep. Francis grabbed the boy and shook him until his eyes opened. “Get over by that rock ledge. Everything is going to break loose—”

A bolt of lightning hit so close Francis felt it ripple his hair, so close the thunder seemed to happen in the same split instant, and with it the sky opened and water fell on them so hard it almost drove Francis to his knees. He had never seen such rain. There seemed to be no space between the drops; it roared down, poured down in sheets, in buckets. Francis couldn’t yell, couldn’t think, couldn’t breathe. He held Billy by the shirt and dragged him in beneath the ledge that formed the edge of the streambed, away from the trees and out of the wind.

Lottie was there already and they huddled under the overhang just as the clouds cracked again and hail the size of Francis’s fist pounded down. One hailstone glanced off the side of his head and nearly knocked him out.

“Move in more,” he yelled over the roar of the storm. “Farther back—move!”

He pushed against Billy, who slammed into Lottie. They were already up against the clay bank beneath the ledge and could not go farther in. Francis’s legs and rear were still out in the hail and took a fearful beating. He doubled his legs up but even so the pain was excruciating and though the large hailstones quickly gave way to smaller ones, his legs were immediately stiff and sore.

The streambed filled in the heavy downpour. Luckily they were near the upstream portion of the storm and so avoided the possibility of a flash flood—which would have gouged them out of the overhang and taken them downstream to drown. As it was, the water came into the pocket beneath them and turned the dirt to mud and soon they were sitting in a waist-deep hole of thick mud and water. And just as soon, in minutes, the rain had stopped, the clouds had scudded away and the sun was out, cooking the mud dry.
Aching, Francis pulled himself into the sun. The children crawled after. Water still ran in the stream but was receding quickly. The hot sun felt good, and Francis wanted to take his buckskin shirt off to hang. But he knew that if he didn’t keep wearing it the shirt would dry as stiff as a board.

He straightened slowly, working the pain out of his legs. He looked to the west and smiled.

There would be no tracks after that.
Grammar

Correct Uses of the Verbs be and have The verbs be and have can be used as main verbs or helping verbs. As you have learned, a verb and its subject must agree in number. Be and have are irregular verbs. You must change the forms of the verbs be and have in special ways to achieve subject-verb agreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Form of be</th>
<th>Form of have</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singular Subjects:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>am</td>
<td>was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He, She, It (or singular noun)</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plural Subjects:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They (or plural noun)</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Try This! Rewrite each sentence below on another sheet of paper. Use the correct form of be or have shown in parentheses.

1. Francis (is, are) a skilled tracker.
2. He (has, have) survived battles and blizzards.
3. (Are, Is) you familiar with his story?
4. Lottie and Billy (is, are) the children in his care.
5. They (has, have) no one else to look out for them.
Conventions Remember to use the correct forms of be and have. When you write, make sure you keep the verb tenses consistent so your paragraphs make sense.

Shifting Tenses Consistent Tenses

The thunderstorm has frightened the children, and they took shelter. The thunderstorm has frightened the children, and they have taken shelter.

Connect Grammar to Writing

As you edit your procedural paragraph, pay special attention to the verbs in your sentences. Make sure the verb tenses are consistent.