

Gold Fever

Level 6

3rd November, 1853

Hot as blazes all day so I'm not whinging about the bucketsful of rain hammering down now. That was a long and gruelling trek from the coast to the diggings and like all the rest, I'm determined to strike it lucky. Gold! What a sweet word.

25th December, 1853

Billy's on the boil, damper in the coals and a bit o' leftover stew. Not fancy tucker but it'll do me for Christmas dinner. Be sharing it with these clouds of flies if I don't don the old cork hat! Thinking back to before the gold fever grabbed me. I'd had some schooling so had a good job as a carpenter until times in the city got hard, too hard. News spread of those striking it rich on the goldfields. Along with many others, I caught gold fever.



16th January, 1854

Not much for all my labours yet, but I reckon fortune must smile on me eventually. All day I work hard along with the hordes of other diggers. Men, women and children, thieves and drunks, doctors, lawyers, merchants, thugs and it looks like all the nationalities of the world are here. You look after your mates and you also watch your back. Glad I have a trade behind me so I can earn enough to survive for now. Conditions are rough and the digging is back-breaking, but most of us are driven by that dream of riches. Sleeping damp under our bits of canvas, searing heat, foul water. We might grumble but the lure of gold keeps us plodding on. Bone tired though.

10th March, 1854

Feels like I've been here forever now and precious little reward to show. Mine shaft collapse yesterday – four blokes will never more surface. Makes you take stock.

2nd April, 1854

Not feeling too flash. Guts are killing me. Thirsty, so thirsty. Burning up. Sour taste in my mouth. A raging fever.



Questions

Gold Fever – Level 6

1. What did the digger eat for Christmas dinner?

2. How did the digger get to the goldfields?

3. Name three hardships in life on the diggings.

4. Write the meaning of the following words/phrases in the diary.

gruelling - _____

flash - _____

makes you take stock - _____

5. Briefly describe how the digger's thinking changed from the start to the end.

6. What were the two types of fever he caught and how were they different from each other?

7. Why do you think it was especially important for people on the goldfields to look after their mates?



Answers

Gold Fever – Level 6

1. What did the digger eat for Christmas dinner?

The digger ate damper and leftover stew.

2. How did the digger get to the goldfields?

The digger walked/treked to the goldfields.

3. Name three hardships in life on the diggings.

Limited food, flies, long hours, back-breaking work, extreme heat, foul water, dangerous work, unhealthy conditions.

4. Write the meaning of the following words/phrases in the diary.

gruelling - tough

flash - good

makes you take stock – to assess or consider a situation

5. Briefly describe how the digger's thinking changed from the start to the end.

Answers may vary. The digger was very optimistic at the beginning, hopeful of finding gold. After not finding any gold, enduring the hardships of life on the goldfields, and seeing a mine collapse, the digger began to question whether it was all worth it.

6. What were the two types of fever he caught and how were they different from each other?

Answers may vary. The first fever he caught was 'gold fever' which was the excitement caused by the possibility of finding gold. The second fever was real, caused likely by a lack of clean water and fresh food.

7. Why do you think it was especially important for people on the goldfields to look after their mates?

Answers will vary but may refer to the need for support because of the tough physical conditions or because of working around thieves.

