

**Dawson Bryant Middle School**

**Mrs. Lucas**

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts**

**Blizzard Bag 1**

**Directions: Follow the directions at the top of the  
page. Any Questions Email  
[amy.lucas@db.k12.oh.us](mailto:amy.lucas@db.k12.oh.us)**

**Grading: 50 points**

**Points Earned: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Students Name \_\_\_\_\_**

# Zaaaaaaaap!

## A Science Fiction Story

### Prologue

*The year is 2160. Thirteen-year old Maitn and her family are living at the end of “The Dark,” a period of history when the world faced a serious energy crisis. Many factors contributed to this dark period. Fossil fuel supplies on Earth suddenly ran out in 2080. At the turn of the century, a severe drought in the Northern Hemisphere limited the use of hydroelectric power. Alternative energy sources—such as solar, wind, and ocean wave power—were in development but not ready for powering whole cities. To respond to the crisis, many nuclear power plants were built as quickly as possible. A massive earthquake in the Pacific Ocean in 2152 damaged nuclear power plants in several countries and exposed thousands of people to unhealthy doses of radiation. Maitn’s best friend, Josha, suffers from radiation exposure.*

*However, this time period has not been all dark. Scientists have made advances in medical research as a result of a whole new field of study called “organic engineering.” Organic engineering of some kinds of fruit has raised the hope of finding a cure for radiation sickness and some types of cancer. This cure is still being tested, however, and is not ready for public use.*

*A major breakthrough in energy generation has also made it possible to harness the power of lightning. The system isn’t perfect, but, overall, it seems to be much safer than nuclear power. But watch out when a lightning storm comes!*

### Zaaaaaaaap!

Maitn shimmied up the branches of the pear tree, her feet feeling for a firm hold. She saw what she was looking for almost ten feet farther above. The fruit glimmered huge and welcoming, a feat of organic engineering and the world’s next miracle cure.

The pear was for Josha, so the fact that picking it from the tree was illegal meant little to her. Josha was close enough to be family. He had been getting weaker. On his last trip to the clinic, the doctor had told his family that his exposure to radiation eight years earlier was slowly killing him. Josha had been visiting a friend near the Powell Nuclear Power Plant when the accident happened. The earthquake damaged the plant’s cooling system, and the radiation leak made many people in the area sick, including Josha. Ironically, both of his parents now worked at the same plant although no power had been produced by it since the accident.

Joshua's parents were part of a team responsible for assisting in the cleanup after the nuclear accident.

Lost in thought, Maitn didn't see the cracked branch above her. As her left hand went to grasp it, the branch split, and she skittered almost halfway down the trunk. Intent on her goal, Maitn deftly climbed back up to the pear. She picked the ripened fruit off the branch and dropped it into the duffel bag that hung at her side.

The task complete, she sighed and looked off to the west. There was a storm brewing; the clouds on the horizon hung dark and heavy. In the distance, she could see the flashes that could only be lightning. The lightning meant that her mom would be working this evening. Her mom had a job at the new Lightning Power Corral.

Maitn looked toward the lightning corral that was right next to the experimental orchard. It consisted of a huge web of thin metal wires. Thousands of thin metal wires connected to the web were lifted into the sky. The wires were held up by small weather balloons that sent meteorological data to the power plant operators on the ground. Just before the lightning was right above the corral, Maitn's mother would flip the vacuum switch. The energy from the lightning bolts would funnel down the wires to be stored in giant batteries and then doled out and shipped to the surrounding counties.

"Hey!" a voice yelled.

Maitn glanced down. It was her brother, Mriel.

"Get down from there! A storm is coming!"

Maitn let gravity take her down the branches until she hung just five feet above the ground. Then she dropped and dusted off her pants.

"What're you doing? Trying to get killed?"

Maitn pointed to the duffel bag. "For Joshua."

Mriel let out a sound that was half smug, half aggravated.

"That won't do him any good. Don't you know that radiation poisoning is irreversible?"

"I know that," Maitn said, shuffling her feet. "But at least he'll have some hope. At least that's something he can hold on to."

"You're a saint, you know that? Come on, Mom's getting ready to go to work, and she said she has permission for us to go with her and watch."

They made it home just before the warning siren sounded. It reverberated off the buildings surrounding the corral. A friendly voice advised them, "Stay indoors or don a rubber

suit. Leave all electrical appliances on standby for the duration of the storm.”

Mom was leaving the house. Maitn and Mriel ran after her. The three of them mounted the four-seater trike and pedaled to the corral. The wind started picking up as they neared Demante Avenue, and now it blew dust in their eyes and rustled in their jackets.

They parked the trike and hurried toward the building. Her mother used a key card to get into power plant next to the corral. Mriel followed closely behind her, but Maitn stopped and turned. Her eyes fell on the same pear tree she had climbed earlier that bordered the station. As they were pedaling, she thought she had seen someone in that tree. “Mom!” she shouted, above the wind.

But Mom and Mriel were now locked inside the power plant. As a safety precaution, the doors locked automatically when a storm was very close.

The flashes of lightning grew brighter. The clouds loomed darker overhead. It wouldn’t be long before her Mom had to activate the switch so that the storm’s energy was sucked down into the power corral.

Maitn ran over to the tree and strained to see through the wind-whipped branches. There was someone up there, all right, and it didn’t take long to see who it was. Quickly, Maitn climbed up the tree.

“My sleeve is stuck!” Josha yelled when he saw her.

His eyes were sunken and his face was pale, but in his hands he held a pear even larger than the one Maitn had picked.

“Great minds think alike,” she muttered.

Josha started to speak, but she waved him to be quiet. She had heard a sound that made her stomach lurch. It was the loud hum of the vacuum switching on. In less than a minute, more than a billion volts of electricity would be spewing through the atmosphere, striking the spiderweb’s wires helter-skelter. Though not many volts would stray, some would, and a tree 40 feet tall would be a great bull’s-eye.

Maitn climbed above Josha and ripped his jacket loose from the branch that held it tight.

“Hurry up!” she screamed, pulling at him as she went down. Another flash of lightning lit up the sky and painted spots in front of her eyes. As her heart pounded in her throat, she jumped from the tree, pulling Josha with her.

Their landing was rough, but necessity jerked them instantly to their feet. Suddenly, the air changed texture. The hairs on the back of Maitn’s neck stood on end. It was coming. The incredible power was coming.

The pair ran as fast as they could, the sound of crackling electricity filling their ears. They spotted a concrete drainage pipe 20 yards from the tree, and dived into it. They lay there while the storm crashed around them, breathing heavily and watching the spectacular fireworks as the corral collected the lightning's power.

Then, after what seemed like an eternity, the storm moved on, and the hum of the wires died down. The plant's workers emerged to inspect the corral. The captured energy would soon be transported to the hundreds of thousands of people in the state who needed it.

Joshua took a huge bite from his prize pear, and offered one to Maitn, his way of thanking her for his rescue. She took the bite willingly, and tucked her smaller pear into his pocket for later. Energized by the power of hope, the two headed home.

*Adapted from "Zaaaaaaaap!" by Jennifer A. Ratliff*

## Assignment

### Blizzard Bag One

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_

1. Write Summary of Short Story (at least 3 paragraphs)

2. Choose 6 vocab words- define all six.