

DANGER

The noise of the plane changed.

The roar that had been rattling him from both sides for the whole trip went suddenly lopsided. The pilot yelled something. George couldn't tell what he was saying. Diggs reached over and yanked at George's seat belt to make sure that it was tight, and it occurred to George that the pilot must have been telling them to buckle up.

The plane banked again and George looked down out of the window. He was frightened and confused. They seemed to be changing directions. All he could make out below him, as far as he could see, was a sea of trees. Where the trees stopped, there were mountains.

They continued on in the lopsided noise for a few minutes. Then the engine roar was gone completely.

For a moment, the very briefest of moments, George experienced utter silence for the first time in his eleven years.

"What is it! What's going on!" Diggs yelled.

"Everything's fine," the pilot yelled back. "We're going to land."

"What do you mean, fine? It doesn't sound fine!"

"Buckle up," the pilot said. "We're going to make an emergency landing."

George felt like he was going to be sick. The plane kept going and going, getting lower, but not slowing down. Where were they going to land? He still couldn't see anything but trees. It was more trees than George had ever seen. Over the pilot's shoulder, out the windshield of the plane, he could see the blue-grey of mountains speeding toward them. Then the plane banked again and George saw a blue and almost perfectly round lake. Then trees and trees and more trees and then he saw it—what the pilot must have seen too—the thing that they were circling around, a flat, empty field surrounded on all four sides by trees.

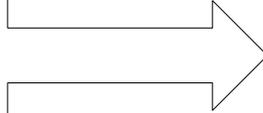
The trees were mesmerizing.

For most of the time after the engines stopped working it had felt like they were still flying. But as they got closer and closer to the ground, it stopped feeling like flying and started feeling like falling. George's breath left his body with a sudden whoosh. He felt like a balloon that had been let go in the air and was now speeding towards its limp end. He couldn't breathe or cry out. Later he would remember that right then everything seemed to slow down. He saw the glasses slip off of Diggs' nose and seem to hover in the air. Everything seemed to get dark, not a grayish black dark but a green and purple dark. Outside of the plane window, for a moment, George felt like he could see, fully articulated, every leaf that was moving slowly towards them. And that's how George knew that despite his calm and his best effort, the pilot had missed the field.

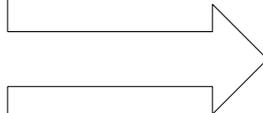


Answer the questions below. Quote from the text to support your answers.

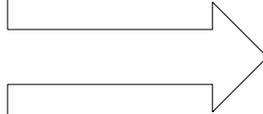
1. What happens to the plane in the beginning of the story?



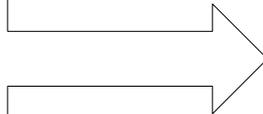
2. Why does everything get suddenly silent?



3. Where do you think that they are?



4. What is the significance of the field?



5. What is happening at the end of the story?



6. What do you think happens next?

