

Walking 42 miles in one day: tackling North Yorkshire's Lyke Wake route on its 70th anniversary

Level 3: Advanced

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- Have you ever done something very difficult just for the experience, not for a prize? Why did you do it?
- Do you think doing something hard together, such as a long walk, can bring people closer? Why or why not?
- Are there any outdoor traditions or challenges in your region or country? What makes them special?

2 Reading for gist

a. Spend one minute to go through the article quickly to find out what it is about. Choose the correct description of the topic of the article.

1. The enormous sacrifices needed to win competitions in endurance sports like walking very long distances.
2. A group of people meet to learn about the biodiversity of the British countryside along a historic trail.
3. A family returns to a historic walking trail in the British countryside enjoying shared memories and adventure.

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2 Key words

- a. Find the words from the wordpool in the article. Then use the words to complete the definitions.

adder	dialect	lamenting	suppressed
coffin	dissipated	mounting	testing ground
compass	fellow	pioneer	to throw in the towel
convened	in retrospect	reluctance	
corpse	jollity	seemingly	

1. to decide to stop trying to do something because it seems too difficult _____
2. something used to show direction, with a needle that always points north _____
3. an early explorer or someone who does something for the first time _____
4. came together for a meeting or purpose _____
5. happiness, celebration or cheerful behaviour _____
6. a local or regional form of a language _____
7. the feeling of not wanting to do something _____
8. used to describe people who share a job, interest or experience as someone else

9. disappeared slowly, especially something like smoke or a feeling _____
10. looking back at something after it has happened _____
11. feeling sad or expressing regret about something _____
12. a type of small poisonous snake found in the UK _____
13. to keep something under control or hidden, often by force _____
14. a box in which a dead person is buried _____

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15. a situation where something is tried out to see how well it works _____
16. a dead body _____
17. organising or beginning something (like an event or challenge) _____
18. appearing to be true, but not definitely _____

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity in the correct form.

1. The villagers spoke in a local _____ that was hard for outsiders to understand.
2. My _____ volunteers at the community centre are a great group of people from different walks of life.
3. After failing the exam twice, I finally decided _____ and choose a different course.
4. Peter's _____ to speak in front of large audiences held him back at work.
5. As the heat rose, the morning mist gradually _____, and the sun came through.
6. The board members _____ in the main hall to discuss the budget changes.
7. The university became a(n) _____ for new teaching methods and educational tools.
8. There was little _____ at the meeting – just serious discussions and tense faces.
9. _____, I realise that taking a gap year was the best decision I've ever made.
10. Yolanda was a(n) _____ in using social media for political campaigns, having first used them in 2010.

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11. Authorities _____ information about the case until the investigation was complete.
12. Some elderly residents are _____ the loss of the free bus service into town.
13. Always carry a(n) _____ when hiking in remote areas with no phone signal.
14. We froze when we saw a(n) _____ in the grass ahead.
15. The police found the _____ of a homeless man in an outbuilding.
16. _____ are often made of oak and carried into the funeral service by pallbearers.
17. The mental health charity is currently _____ a nationwide campaign.
18. Their story was _____ unbelievable, but every detail turned out to be true.

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The walk across the North York Moors – which has to be completed in 24 hours – is a mix of trudging and wild beauty. I experienced both as I joined one of the first people to do it in 1955

Andrew Martin

13 May, 2025

- 1 One August evening in 1955, members of York Mountaineering Club had convened in the city's Olde Starre Inne. They were, perhaps, lamenting the shortage of mountains (or indeed hills) in York, when club chair David Laughton turned up waving a copy of that month's Dalesman magazine.
- 2 It contained a challenge, issued by Bill Cowley, author of the Farmer's Diary column. Cowley would provide a cup – "an inexpensive one" – to anyone who traversed the North York Moors in less than 24 hours. When Laughton asked his fellow mountaineers if they were on for it, a loud "Aye" went up. After several weekends of hitchhiking to the moors to finalise a route, the seven men and three women of the YMC were ready. They, plus Cowley himself, two senior scouts from Middlesbrough and a forest ranger from Guisborough, began their attempt at noon on 1 October.
- 3 For 23 hours, the party waded through heather and navigated by compass towards Ravenscar on the coast, where the cups were distributed. Mindful of the burial mounds on the Moors, Cowley had named the walk after the ancient Lyke Wake Dirge, a "lyke" being a Yorkshire dialect word for a corpse.
- 4 Among that original party was Malcolm Walker, a trim, bronzed, humorous young man of 19. In 1971, he and his wife, Edna, and their children, Paul and Lindsey, moved into the York street where I lived. I think I always knew Malcolm had been a Lyke Wake pioneer – not that he ever boasted about it, but the walk was at the peak of its popularity then, the ultimate challenge in the great testing ground of the "broad acres".
- 5 I walked the Lyke Wake with Malcolm and Paul in 2005, to mark the 50th anniversary, and so I earned the black coffin lapel badge that signifies the achievement and summarises the Yorkshire philosophy: mistrust jollity. There's never much of it on the walk. The moors, it seems, don't want you there. If the sun doesn't burn you, the wind will. Dare to sit on the heather and something will bite you, ideally not an adder. Only in retrospect do you appreciate the scenery: the colours – pinks, yellows, lime greens – and the drama of the time-lapse weather.
- 6 A few weeks ago, Paul Walker called me to say that, in this 70th anniversary year, he was mounting another Lyke Wake attempt. Five of his six children would be taking part, as well as Lindsey's husband and their three sons. Malcolm, now 89, would walk the final stretch. Was I on for it? Well, to say "no" at 62 years of age would have been to throw in the towel. My son, Nat, veteran of a 30-miler with Malcolm, would also come along.
- 7 We started from Osmotherley at 2.15am, to get the dark bit out of the way first. As we scrambled over the crazy paving of Carlton Bank, Middlesbrough glittered below. Dawn broke slowly and with the greatest reluctance, the sun pasty white and wreathed in rain clouds. The hardest part came six hours later, as we followed the seemingly endless exposed ridge above Farndale that once carried an ironstone railway.
- 8 We trudged past enigmatic standing stones, orange ponds and black expanses of burnt heather (to keep it suppressed, hence the resentful mood of the landscape). Occasionally, the smoky rain clouds dissipated, and all Farndale became golden green for a few minutes.
- 9 We met Malcolm in the early evening, on dusty Jugger Howe Moor, under a sky of milky blue. He walked the last five miles with us, chatting to anyone who wanted to chat (which was not everyone at this point), our target being a radio mast that seemed to retreat further into the distance every time I glanced away. We reached the mast at 8pm, having walked 42 miles.
- 10 As Malcolm sipped from his "inexpensive" trophy mug of 1955, I asked him why anyone should do the walk. "Well, there's a lot to be said against it," he said, and we reflected silently on our crossings (my two, his half-dozen) – on bouts of nausea, hay fever, bites and blisters. "I count the walk an achievement, I suppose," Malcolm said at length, "but nothing to this ..." and he waved his mug in the general direction of his family, all reanimated by hotel comforts.
- 11 I pointed out that the walk had been the pretext for their coming together. "Aye," said Malcolm, nodding, "I suppose that's another thing you could say in its favour." I could have mentioned that this wasn't just some family tea party, it was a day that would be seared into everyone's memory, but in Yorkshire, as mentioned, one doesn't want to go over the top.

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4 Comprehension check

a. Complete the sentences with information from the article.

1. The initial challenge to walk the North York Moors in under 24 hours was issued by _____.
2. The original attempt of the Lyke Wake Walk in 1955 consisted of a party of _____ people in total.
3. In the early seventies, Malcolm Walker _____ as the author.
4. The author describes the landscape of the moors as having a(n) _____ feeling, partly due to the practice of burning shrubs.
5. According to the text, the most challenging section of the walk was _____.
6. During their anniversary walk, the group began at 2:15 am specifically to _____.
7. Malcolm Walker joined the group for the _____ of their 70th anniversary walk.
8. In 2005, the author earned a(n) _____ that denotes the completion of the Lyke Wake Walk.

5 Key language

a. Find the collocations from the box in the article. Then use the collocations to complete the definitions.

reanimated by
scrambled over

seared into
trudged past

waded through
wreathed in

1. _____: walked with difficulty into and out of deep water or mud
2. _____: be brought back to life, energy or enthusiasm
3. _____: fixed deeply in the memory, usually because something is emotionally powerful or intense

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4. _____: walked slowly and heavily, usually because of tiredness or difficult conditions
5. _____: surrounded or covered by smoke, mist or clouds in the shape of a ring or layer
6. _____: climbed awkwardly or quickly using hands and feet, often with effort

b. Complete the sentences with collocations from the previous activity in the correct form.

1. The children _____ the rocks to get to the top of the hill.
2. Almost invisible from below, the mountain was _____ mist.
3. After a long nap and a strong coffee, Suzie felt _____ a sudden return of energy.
4. We _____ the bus stop in the pouring rain, soaked and ready to give up.
5. The image of the accident was _____ Lewis's mind for years afterwards.
6. During the floods, families had to _____ knee-deep water to reach their homes.

6 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- What does the Lyke Wake Walk seem to represent for the writer and Malcolm's family?
- How does the writer balance humour and seriousness in describing the walk?
- What effect does this have on how we understand his experience of completing the challenge?

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6 In your own words

- a. Think of a time when you shared a physical challenge or outdoor activity (a walk, hike, sport, etc.) with others. Then write a short personal essay or record an audio recording to share your thoughts. Mention:
 - what made the experience memorable
 - how it affected your relationship with the people involved
 - what you learned from the experience
- b. Share your essays or audio recordings with your classmates.