

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

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- Have you ever done something difficult just for the experience? What did you do and why?
- 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. Why it is difficult 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.

3 Key words

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

badge
challenge
coffin
compass

distant
dramatic
funeral song
moors

pale
physical discomfort
route
the lack of

trophy cup
ultimate

1. something given as a prize, often shaped like a cup, for winning or completing something

2. a small symbol that you wear on your clothes to show membership or achievement

3. large, open, often high areas of land, usually covered in grass _____

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4. something difficult that tests a person's skill, strength or ability _____
5. a special song that is sung when someone dies _____
6. very important or powerful in appearance or feeling _____
7. a box in which a dead person is buried _____
8. painful or unpleasant feelings in the body _____
9. very far away in space or time _____
10. the fact that something does not exist or is not present _____
11. a line or path that you follow to get from one place to another _____
12. describing the most extreme or best example of something _____
13. not bright in colour or strong in appearance _____
14. a tool with a needle that always points north and helps you find your way to a place

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

1. The winning cyclist receives a small _____ when they complete the race.
2. Without a clear _____ to the top, we might get lost on the mountain.
3. I think Scott is ill. His face looks very _____, and he has a high temperature.
4. Grandpa chose the song *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life* as his _____.
5. All students must wear the school _____ on their ties.
6. Many villages in the north of England are surrounded by wild, open _____.
7. From the top of the hill, they could see a(n) _____ mountain range in the background.

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8. Frankie opened the map and used a(n) _____ to check their position.
9. Our three-day camping trip was full of _____ – sore feet, sunburn and insect bites.
10. After ten hours of hiking, reaching the lake felt like the _____ goal.
11. Cleo accepted _____ experience she had in her new job and asked for help.
12. What seemed like a simple task at first quickly became a real _____.
13. Soldiers carried the officer's _____ through the streets to the church.
14. I could hear a dog barking in a(n) _____ street for a few hours last night.

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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 the York Mountaineering Club met in the Olde Starre Inne. They were complaining about the lack of hills in York when the club's chairman, David Laughton, walked in holding a copy of The Dalesman magazine. He showed them a challenge from a writer named Bill Cowley. Cowley promised to give a small trophy cup to anyone who could cross the North York Moors in less than 24 hours.
- 2 The club members quickly agreed. After several weekends of visiting the moors to plan the route, seven men and three women from the club were ready. They, along with Cowley, two scouts and a forest ranger, began the walk at noon on 1 October. They walked for 23 hours, using a compass to guide them, and finally reached Ravenscar on the coast. There, Cowley gave them the cups. The walk was named after the old Yorkshire funeral song, The Lyke Wake Dirge – "lyke" being a Yorkshire word for a dead body.
- 3 One of the walkers was Malcolm Walker, a fit and cheerful 19-year-old. Years later, in 1971, he moved with his wife Edna and their children, Paul and Lindsey, to the same street in York where I lived. I think I always knew Malcolm had done the Lyke Wake Walk. He didn't talk about it much, but the walk was very popular at the time – the ultimate challenge across the wild Yorkshire moors.
- 4 In 2005, I walked the Lyke Wake with Malcolm and his son Paul for the 50th anniversary. After finishing, I received the traditional badge – a small black coffin – and truly understood the Yorkshire phrase of not trusting anything that creates joy or happiness. There's very little fun on the walk. The moors feel unfriendly. The weather changes fast. The sun burns, the wind bites and insects attack. Only afterwards do you really see how beautiful it is – the pink and yellow flowers, the green hills, the dramatic skies.
- 5 A few weeks ago, Paul called me again. To celebrate the 70th anniversary, he was planning another walk. Five of his six children were joining, plus Lindsey's husband and their three sons. Malcolm, now 89, would walk the final part. Paul asked, "Are you in?" At 62, I couldn't say no. My son Nat came too as he'd once done a 30-mile walk with Malcolm.
- 6 We started from Osmotherley at 2:15 in the morning, hoping to finish the darkest part early. As we climbed the rocky Carlton Bank, we saw the lights of Middlesbrough below. Slowly, the sun came up, pale and surrounded by clouds. The hardest part came six hours later walking a long, windy track above Farndale that used to carry a railway.
- 7 We met Malcolm in the early evening. He joined us for the final five miles, happily chatting with anyone who still had the energy to talk. Our target, a distant radio mast, seemed to move further away every time I looked. But we reached it at 8pm with 42 miles done.
- 8 As Malcolm drank from his 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 listed the physical discomfort of walking so far. "I count the walk an achievement, I suppose," Malcolm added, "but nothing to this ..." and he waved his mug in the direction of his family. I could have mentioned that this wasn't just some family tea party, it was a day that would be remembered for a long time, but in Yorkshire, as mentioned, one doesn't want to be too emotional.

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4 Comprehension check

a. Complete the sentences with information from the article.

1. The challenge to walk the North York Moors in under 24 hours was originally suggested by _____.
2. The original Lyke Wake Walk in 1955 was done by a party of _____ people in total.
3. In the early seventies, Malcolm Walker _____ as the author.
4. According to the text, the most difficult section of the walk was _____.
5. Malcolm Walker joined the group for the _____ of their 70th anniversary walk.
6. In 2005, the author earned a(n) _____ that showed he completed 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.

be named after
came up

chatting with
complaining about

surrounded by
walked in

1. _____ : (of the sun) appeared above the horizon in the morning
2. _____ : having people or things all around you
3. _____ : to be given the same name as something or someone else
4. _____ : saying you are not happy about something
5. _____ : talking to someone in a friendly way
6. _____ : moved on foot inside or through a place

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

1. We stopped for a break on the drive through Italy while the sun slowly _____ behind the trees.
2. The small town was _____ by green hills and farmland.
3. Hilary _____ to the meeting twenty minutes late.
4. That street _____ a famous author who lived there in the 1900s.
5. I've just been _____ our neighbour – he's planning a street party in the summer.
6. Local residents have _____ the amount of litter in the children's playground.

6 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- Would you like to try a long walk or physical challenge like the Lyke Wake Walk? Why or why not?
- What were some of the main challenges the group faced during the walk?
- Do you think difficult experiences like this can bring people closer together? Why?

7 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.