Sebastian Junger’s book *The Perfect Storm* documents the sinking of the Gloucester fishing boat the *Andrea Gail* and the drowning of its six crew members in 1991. Read the following excerpt to see how Junger creates a compelling narrative that brings the last moments of the *Andrea Gail’s* crew to life.

### The Perfect Storm

*by Sebastian Junger*

1. Everyone on a sinking boat reacts differently. A man on one Gloucester boat just curled up and started to cry while his shipmates worked untethered on deck. The *Andrea Gail* crew, all experienced fishermen, are probably trying to shrug it off as just another storm—they’ve been through this before, they’ll go through it again, and at least they’re not puking. Billy’s undoubtedly working too hard at the helm to give drowning much thought. Ernie Hazard claims it was the last thing on his mind. “There was no conversation, just real business-like,” he says of going down off Georges Bank. “You know, ‘Let’s just get this thing done.’ Never any overwhelming sense of danger. We were just very, very busy.”

2. Be that as it may, certain realities still must come crashing in. At some point Tyne, Shatford, Sullivan, Moran, Murphy, and Pierre must realize there’s no way off this boat. They could trigger the EPIRB, but a night rescue in these conditions would be virtually impossible. They could deploy the life raft, but they probably wouldn’t survive the huge seas. If the boat goes down, they go down with it, and no one on earth can do anything about it. Their lives are utterly and completely in their own hands.

3. That fact must settle into Bobby Shatford’s stomach like a bad meal. It was he, after all, who had those terrible misgivings the day they left. That last afternoon on the dock he came within a hair’s breadth of saying no—just telling Chris to start up the car and drive. They could have gone back to her place, or up the coast, or anywhere at all. It wouldn’t have mattered; he wouldn’t be in this storm right now, and neither would the rest of them. It would have taken Billy at least a day to replace him, and right now they’d still be east with the rest of the fleet.
The previous spring Bobby and Chris rented a movie called *The Fighting Sullivans*, about five brothers who died on a U.S. Navy boat during World War Two. It was Ethel’s favorite movie. Sitting there with Chris, watching the movie, and thinking about his brothers, Bobby started to cry. He was not a man who cried easily and Chris was unsure what to do. Should she say something? Pretend not to notice? Turn off the T.V.? Finally, Bobby said that he was upset by the idea of all his brothers fishing, and that if anything happened to him, he wanted to be buried at sea. Chris said that nothing was going to happen to him, but he insisted. Just bury me at sea, he said. Promise me that.

And now here he is, getting buried at sea. The conditions have degenerated from bad to unspeakable, Beaufort Force 10 or 11. The British *Manual of Seamanship* describes a Force 10 gale as: “Foam is in great patches and is blown in dense white streaks along the direction of the wind. The rolling of the sea becomes heavy and shock-like.” Force 11 is even worse: “Exceptionally high waves, small or medium sized ships might be lost from view behind them. The sea is completely covered with long patches of white foam.” Hurricane Grace is still working her way north, and when she collides with the Sable Island storm—probably in a day or so—conditions will get even more severe, maybe as high as Force 12. Very few boats that size can withstand a Force 12 gale.

Structure: Junger digresses here to include facts about the Beaufort scale for rating the strength of a storm. This is an effective use of digression because (a) the digression provides related information to elaborate on an idea from the main storyline, and (b) it has a clear purpose and effect. As the reader encounters the characteristics of increasingly fierce storms, then reads that Hurricane Grace is even worse, the effect is to heighten the drama and sense of how serious the crew’s situation is.

See especially: Question 8

Ideas for Connected Writing Activities
- Write the newspaper article that might have inspired Junger to write his book.
- Write obituaries for the crew members lost at sea.
- Write an expository essay that incorporates “digressions” for added dramatic effect.

Humanities Connection:
- Research the “perfect storm” of 1991. What conditions are needed for such a storm to form?
- Research the history of the fishing industry in Gloucester. Why would boats be out at sea in such weather?

Spotlight On: Sebastian Junger

Sebastian Junger grew up in Belmont, MA; not far from the Gloucester shore. He explains that he has always been interested in outdoor adventures and this interest has shaped his life and work. After graduating from Wesleyan University with a degree in cultural anthropology, Junger dabbled in journalism. Initially he didn’t find it as exciting as his outdoor adventures, so he took a job as a tall tree trimmer. Following an accident on the job where he cut his leg open with a chain saw, Junger returned to journalism. He began researching what would later become his first book; the Perfect Storm. Junger has continued to pursue journalism and has recently published another book, Fire, which encompasses multiple articles he has written about the frontlines of war and the wilderness.
### Teacher Guide for FAST-R Passage: The Perfect Storm

**Journalistic Narrative**

The annotated answer key below highlights common reasons students might choose each answer, and the sidebar gives more insight into the question types, to help you understand patterns of student responses. Always make time to follow up with students in conferences or small groups to probe their thinking, teach in response to patterns, and help them apply effective reading and thinking strategies to their everyday reading.

**Note:** You may find it helpful to refer to the “Types and Levels of Questions on FAST-R” sheet from your teacher resource folder as you examine your students’ responses. The icon in the right-hand column, below, corresponds to that sheet’s more detailed explanations of the kinds of thinking each type of question asks of readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer(s)</th>
<th>FE1: Identify evidence explicitly stated in the text</th>
<th>MI5: Determine meaning by incorporating an understanding of literary concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the “Andrea Gail”?</td>
<td>A. a Broadway show (OOB)</td>
<td>B. a boat</td>
<td>C. a storm (OOP2, ¶1) D. a member of the crew (OOP2, ¶1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The quotation marks in paragraph 1 are used to show</td>
<td>A. a digression (OOP2, author spotlight)</td>
<td>B. a conjecture (OOP2, ¶1)</td>
<td>C. someone’s exact words D. the author’s thoughts (OOP2, ¶1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Which of the following is an example of conjecture from the story?</td>
<td>A. “A man on one Gloucester boat just curled up and started to cry.” (OOP1, ¶1)</td>
<td>B. “The previous spring Bobby and Chris rented a movie.” (OOP1, ¶4)</td>
<td>C. “Bobby Shatford died in the storm.” (OOP2, ¶5 italics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To which “fact” is the narrator referring in the first line of paragraph 3?</td>
<td>A. Bobby had misgivings about leaving. (OOP1, ¶3)</td>
<td>B. Bobby and Chris rented a movie. (OOP2, ¶4)</td>
<td>C. It was the worst storm in the history of Massachusetts. (OOB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Why does Bobby cry while watching the movie “The Fighting Sullivans”?</td>
<td>A. Bobby wants to die at sea. (OOP2, ¶4)</td>
<td>B. Bobby thinks he will die on a boat. (OOP2, ¶4)</td>
<td>C. His father died in the Navy. (OOB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<th>Grade 8-9 • Journalistic Narrative • The Perfect Storm</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. What promise did Bobby want Chris to make?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. to take care of Ethel (OOP2, ¶4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. to marry him (OOB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ C. to bury him at sea when he died (¶4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. to join the Navy (OOP2, ¶4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE1: Identify evidence explicitly stated in the text</td>
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<td>7. Based on the details in the passage, what else might Bobby have been thinking about while the boat was sinking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. how much he would be paid for the fishing trip (OOB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. how much he loved swimming (OOB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ C. how Chris would deal with his death (Can be inferred from ¶4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. how much he hated his captain (OOB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI4: Determine new meaning and apply it beyond the passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. In paragraph 5, “degenerated” is another way of saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. that conditions improved (OOP2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. the storm was on the move (OOP1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. the storm caused tornadoes (OOB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE2: Recognize the explicit meaning from varied wording in the text</td>
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<td>C. It gives background information on “Manual of Seamanship.” (OOP2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ D. It adds drama to the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI5: Determine meaning by incorporating an understanding of literary concepts</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Which of the following sentences could serve as the first sentence of a paragraph following this passage?</td>
</tr>
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<td>✓ A. Bobby watched as the waves grew higher and white foam splashed onto the deck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Just then, Ernie Hazard decided to speak his mind. (OOP2, ¶1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Bobby had always loved sunsets following a storm at sea. (OOB)</td>
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<td>D. The crew celebrated their victory against the storm long into the night. (OOP2)</td>
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*Continue reading on the next page*

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FAST-R Answer Sheet

Name

School

Date

Grade

Class

Passage Title

Teacher Name

Completely fill the circle for the correct answer.

Write your answer to the open response prompt in the lined space below. if your teacher directs you to do so.

1. A B C D

2. A B C D

3. A B C D

4. A B C D

5. A B C D

6. A B C D

7. A B C D

8. A B C D

9. A B C D

10. A B C D

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RESEARCH: Y N
OPEN RESPONSE: 1 2 3 4

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