

 Prestwick House

# Instant Short Story Pack



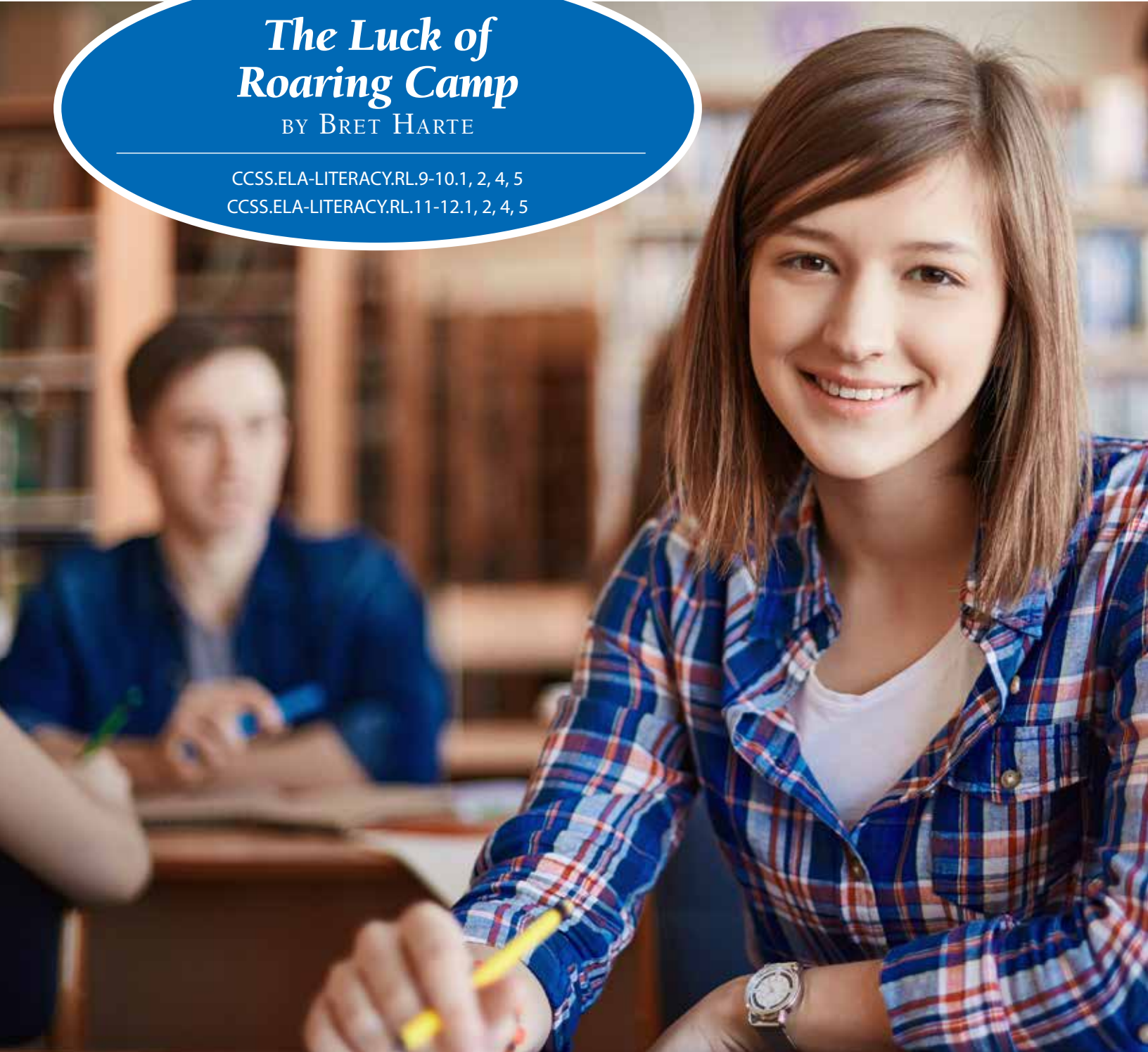
**Each pack contains:**

- Objectives
- Full Text of Story
- Student Questions
- Activities and Graphic Organizers
- Teacher Answer Guide

*The Luck of  
Roaring Camp*

BY BRET HARTE

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1, 2, 4, 5  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1, 2, 4, 5



## Objectives:

After completing the activities in this packet, the student will be able to:

- cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text (RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1),
- determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text (RL.9-10.2; 11-12.2),
- analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4), and
- analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise (RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5).

## Time:

2-3 class periods

## Materials:

✓ 1 copy of each handout per student:

- **Handout #1** (3 pages) – Purpose-setting and Motivational Activities
- **Handout #2** (11 pages) – Text of Story
- **Handout #3** (1 page) – Student Questions
- **Handout #4** (9 pages) – Activities and Graphic Organizers

✓ Teacher Answer Guide

## Procedure:

1. Reproduce all handouts.
2. Distribute **Handouts #1** and **#2**.
  - Allow students to read the short biography of Harte (approximately 10 minutes).
  - Read and discuss the information about Harte's work and ideas (approximately 20 minutes).
  - Assign the story to be read for homework OR
  - Allow students to read the story in class and perform the two **As you read...** activities.
3. Distribute **Handout #3**.
4. Give students time to read the questions (approximately 5 minutes).
5. Review with students what each question is asking for and what type of information is required for a thorough answer (e.g., references to prior knowledge, quotations from the story, additional reading or research, etc.).
6. Distribute **Handout #4**.
7. Walk the class through Question 1, demonstrating that in order to address a complex issue, it is often helpful to divide it into smaller subtopics. Students can then use the ideas generated by each subtopic to build a complete and thoughtful answer to the full question.
8. Have students answer the questions.

Bret Harte

## *The Luck of Roaring Camp*

“The Luck of Roaring Camp” was first published in August 1868, in the second issue of the new *Overland Monthly*. As it was being prepared for publication, the proofreader objected to the inclusion of a prostitute and to the language used by the characters. Harte was able to get the story published as he first wrote it, though.

The story was included in *The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Sketches*, published in 1870.

Roaring Camp was an actual gold mining camp on the Mokelumne River in Amador County, California. Harte witnessed the Great Flood of 1862, which was probably the inspiration for the flood in the story. At its initial release, critics in California were not impressed with the story. Eastern readers and critics, however, were thrilled. The *Springfield Republican* in Massachusetts wrote that the story was “a genuine California story...so true to nature and so deep-reaching in its humor, that it will move the hearts of men everywhere.” Mark Twain praised it as “the best prose magazine article that has seen the light for many months on either side of the ocean.”

The story is humorous, and it is intended to be. The characters and their dialogue might seem clichéd or stereotypical, but remember that Bret Harte is one of the primary inventors of these clichés and stereotypes. Harte can also claim credit as a popularizer of a tale about a gang of coarse and uncouth ruffians who are reformed in language and behavior due to the presence of a baby.

### ***Before you read:***

#### **Know something about the life of the author:**

Francis Brett Hart was born in Albany, New York, on August 25, 1836. His father, a schoolteacher, added the “e” to the family name to mask his Orthodox Jewish ancestry. As a teenager, young Harte preferred to be known by his middle name, and he dropped the final “t.” His family moved to Brooklyn when he was nine years old. He published his first work when he was eleven. His family ridiculed his literary aspirations so harshly that he later wrote to a friend that it was a wonder he ever wrote another thing.

His father died in 1845, and at the age of thirteen, Harte left school and went to work to support his family. His mother remarried in 1853 and moved to California. Harte joined

Bret Harte

## *The Luck of Roaring Camp*

Lexile Measure: 1100L

THERE WAS COMMOTION in Roaring Camp. It could not have been a fight, for in 1850 that was not novel enough to have called together the entire settlement. The ditches and claims were not only deserted, but “Tuttle’s grocery” had contributed its gamblers, who, it will be remembered, calmly continued their game the day that French Pete and Kanaka Joe shot each other to death over the bar in the front room. The whole camp was collected before a rude cabin on the outer edge of the clearing. Conversation was carried on in a low tone, but the name of a woman was frequently repeated. It was a name familiar enough in the camp,—“Cherokee Sal.”

Perhaps the less said of her the better. She was a coarse, and, it is to be feared, a very sinful woman. But at that time she was the only woman in Roaring Camp, and was just then lying in sore extremity, when she most needed the ministrations of her own sex. Dissolute, abandoned, and irreclaimable, she was yet suffering a martyrdom hard enough to bear even when veiled by sympathizing womanhood, but now terrible in her loneliness. The primal curse had come to her in that original isolation which must have made the punishment of the first transgression so dreadful. It was, perhaps, part of the expiation of her sin, that, at a moment when she most lacked her sex’s intuitive tenderness and care, she met only the half-contemptuous faces of her masculine associates. Yet a few of the spectators were, I think, touched by her sufferings. Sandy Tipton thought it was “rough on Sal,” and, in the contemplation of her condition, for a moment rose superior to the fact that he had an ace and two bowers in his sleeve.

Bret Harte

## *The Luck of Roaring Camp*

### STUDENT QUESTIONS:

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1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1) What words and phrases provide the clues to what is happening to Cherokee Sal in the beginning of the story?
2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1) What is the camp's reason for selecting Stumpy as "the extempore surgeon and midwife" of Roaring Camp? What words and phrases in the story lead you to this conclusion?
3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4) What apparent purpose(s) does Harte achieve with his frequent cultural allusions? How do these allusions help define Harte's relationship with the subjects of his story and with the reader?
4. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4) What techniques does Harte use to establish the humorous tone of this story? What specific words and phrases also contribute to this tone?
5. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5) Analyze the plot of this story in terms of inciting incident, introduction of conflict, rising action, climax, and resolution/denouement. Note and explain any departures from conventional plot structure and explain what Harte achieved by making that departure.

Inciting incident:

Introduction of conflict:

Events in rising action (explain how each intensifies the conflict and helps build toward the climax):

Climax:

Resolution / denouement:

6. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2; 11-12.2) What is the theme of "The Luck of Roaring Camp"? How does Harte introduce this theme to his reader and then develop it over the course of the story?

**ACTIVITIES AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:**

Bret Harte, *The Luck of Roaring Camp*

**Question 1: What words and phrases provide the clues to what is happening to Cherokee Sal in the beginning of the story?**

STEP 1: Hopefully, before you are too far into the story, the event being described in the first several paragraphs becomes obvious. However, at first, the author recounts the event with euphemisms and indirect references. Use the following chart to list the words and phrases Harte uses to tell the reader what is happening without being too explicit or graphic. Then, explain how each word or phrase you've listed can be interpreted to suggest this specific event.

Word/Phrase	Explicit Interpretation	Implicit Connotation	Overall Conclusions
"lying in sore extremity"	Cherokee Sal is in an extensive amount of pain.	"Lying" tells that Sal is immobilized by her pain, and the fact that she is "sore" makes it apparent that the pain is an enduring or lasting one.	
"a few of the spectators were, I think, touched by her sufferings"			
"The primal curse"			