

The Martian - Lesson 1 - Written Understanding

LOG ENTRY: SOL 7

[...]

Here's my situation :

The surface mission was supposed to be thirty-one days. For redundancy, the supply probes had enough food to last the whole crew fifty-six days. That way if one or two probes had problems, we'd still have enough food to complete the mission.

We were six days in when all hell broke loose, so that leaves enough food to feed six people for fifty days. I'm just one guy, so it'll last me three hundred days. And that's if I don't ration it. So I've got a fair bit of time.

[...]

I'm going to start rationing food right now. Meals are pretty minimal already, but I think I can eat a three-fourths portion per meal and still be all right. That should turn my three hundred days of food into four hundred.

[...]

LOG ENTRY: SOL 10

[...]

In other news, I'm starting to come up with an idea for food. My botany background may come in useful after all.

Why bring a botanist to Mars? After all, it's famous for not having anything growing there. Well, the idea was to figure out how well things grow in Martian gravity, and see what, if anything, we can do with Martian soil. The short answer is: quite a lot...almost. Martian soil has the basic building blocks needed for plant growth, but there's a lot of stuff going on in Earth soil that Mars soil doesn't have, even when it's placed in an Earth atmosphere and given plenty of water. Bacterial activity, certain nutrients provided by animal life, etc. None of that is happening on Mars. One of my tasks for the mission was to see how plants grow here, in various combinations of Earth and Mars soil and atmosphere.

That's why I have a small amount of Earth soil and a bunch of plant seeds with me.

I can't get too excited, however. It's about the amount of soil you'd put in a window box, and the only seeds I have are a few species of grass and ferns. They're the most rugged and easily grown plants on Earth, so NASA picked them as the test subjects.

So I have two problems: not enough dirt, and nothing edible to plant in it.

But I'm a botanist, damn it. I should be able to find a way to make this happen. If I don't, I'll be a really hungry botanist in about a year.

Vocabulary :

Sol : The term **sol** is used by planetary astronomers to refer to the duration of a solar day on Mars. A mean Martian solar day, or **sol**, is 24 hours, 39 minutes, and 35.244 seconds.

redundancy = redondance

(space) probes = sondes (spatiales)

fair = honnête, correct

to grow = pousser

seeds = graines

rugged = rude

edible = mangeable

supply = réserves

"all hell broke loose" = "l'enfer se dechaine"

useful = utile

bunch = bouquet, groupe, paquet

grass and ferns = herbes et fougères

dirt(US) = terre

1. What is this document? What is it about?

2. Who is the main character? What is his job?

3. In this passage, what is the character doing?

4. Is this the beginning or the end? Quote few sentences to justify your answer.

5. Write a little text (5 to 10 lines) in which you will try to explain what happened to the character.

The Martian - Lesson 2 - Comprehension

Mark watney's personal log

Mission day : Sol 21

"Right... Let's do the maths!

Our service mission here was supposed to last thirty one sols. For redundancy, they send sixty eight sols worth of food, that for six people. So for just me, that's gonna last three hundred sols, which I figure I can stretch to four hundred five rations. So I gotta figure out a way to grow three years worth of food on a planet where nothing grows...

Luckily, I'm a botanist.

Mars will come to fear my botanist powers!"

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