Stanislav Petrov – reading tasks

Name _____ Date _____

A former Soviet military officer credited with averting a possible nuclear disaster at the peak of the Cold War has died at the age of 77.

Stanislav Petrov was on duty at a Russian nuclear early warning centre

5   in 1983 when computers wrongly detected incoming missiles from the

US. He took the decision that they were a false alarm and did not report

them to his superiors. His actions, which came to light years later,

possibly prevented nuclear war.

Petrov died at his home in Moscow in May but his death has only now

10   been made public. In an interview with the BBC in 2013, Petrov told how

he had received computer readouts in the early hours of the morning of

26 September 1983 suggesting several US missiles had been launched.

"I had all the data [to suggest there was an ongoing missile attack]. If I

had sent my report up the chain of command, nobody would have said a

15   word against it," he said. "All I had to do was to reach for the phone; to

raise the direct line to our top commanders - but I couldn't move. I felt

like I was sitting on a hot frying pan."

Although his training dictated he should contact the Soviet military

immediately, Petrov instead called the duty officer at army headquarters

20 and reported a system malfunction.

If he had been wrong, the first nuclear blasts would have happened

minutes later. "Twenty-three minutes later I realised that nothing had

happened. If there had been a real strike, then I would already know

about it. It was such a relief," he recalled.

25 A later investigation concluded that Soviet satellites had mistakenly

identified sunlight reflecting on clouds as the engines of intercontinental

ballistic missiles. Petrov, who retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel,

died on 19 May but news of his passing became widely known only this

month, thanks to a chance phone call.

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German film-maker Karl Schumacher, who first brought Petrov's story to

an international audience, telephoned him to wish him a happy birthday

on 7 September only to be informed by his son, Dmitry Petrov, that he

had passed away. Mr Schumacher announced the death online and it

35 was eventually picked up by media outlets.

Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-41314948

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1. Which of the following is the best title for this story?

   a) A brief history of the Cold War. ☐

   b) Famous accidents. ☐

   c) The man who saved the world. ☐

   d) A birthday celebration. ☐

2. What decision did Stanislav Petrov take?

   a) To do nothing. ☐

   b) To report a problem with the detection system. ☐

   c) To report that US missiles had been launched. ☐

   d) To leave his job. ☐

3. In lines 4-8, which word or words means "became public"?

   _____

4. What was the cause of the false alarm?

   a) faulty detection systems ☐

   b) Petrov made a mistake ☐

   c) the system was switched off ☐

   d) false intelligence reports from the US ☐

5. In lines 25-29, which word or words means "death"?

   _____

6. In line 17, Petrov describes himself as feeling "like I was sitting on a hot frying pan". This is an example of

   a) alliteration ☐

   b) personification ☐

   c) phrasal verb ☐

   d) simile ☐

7. "Petrov **told** how he **had received** computer readouts in the early hours of the morning".

   This is an example of reported speech, using the past perfect tense. Find another example in the text and write it here:

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. What do you think would have happened if Petrov had followed his training?

   _____

   _____

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9. Think of another situation where a decision changed an outcome. It can be personal, public, real or imagined. Use the past tense to tell the story, and conditionals to describe what changed. Tell the story here.

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