

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Hatchet

by Gary Paulsen

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ISBN 13: 978-1-60389-794-5
Reorder No. 201371

Objectives

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to

1. point out and discuss why this novel may appropriately be called “a coming of age” novel.
2. discuss why, or why not, this novel may also be considered an example of “the loss of innocence” novel.
3. define and point out examples in the novel of
 - A. flashback
 - B. foreshadowing
4. distinguish between the forms of narration, and state what narrative form is used in this novel.
5. point out and give examples of the different forms of conflict found in this novel.
6. write an essay identifying those qualities of mind and heart one needs to survive on his/her own in the wilderness.
7. trace the plot in this novel pointing out the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.
8. comment on the author’s style of writing pointing out how his style is similar or different from the style of other authors you’ve read.
9. point out and give examples of how the character’s relationships with nature changes in the course of the novel.
10. An important theme in this novel is the importance of keeping a positive outlook in troubling times. Point out when and where we see this idea emerge.
11. Another important point the book makes is that having a purpose in life brings satisfaction and some happiness to individuals. Point out where and how this idea is brought out.

Questions for Discussion and Essay

1. In this novel, the main character survives in the wilderness by “inventing” fire and tools. Compare the sequence of development of fire and tools by early man to the sequence and development of tools in this novel.
2. Many children are traumatized by divorce. Trace how the main character in this novel comes to terms with his parent’s divorce.
3. Describe the scientific information the main character remembers from school that is instrumental to his survival.
4. Discuss the problem solving techniques employed by the main character and how students can apply them to their modern lives.
5. Third person narrative can take three forms: omniscient, limited omniscient and camera view. Define which form of narrative is used in this novel.
6. Trace the plot line in this novel: the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.
7. Discuss the author’s style of writing. Why does he make up words such as *clouddown* and *foolbird*?
8. Many students have trouble setting goals. Discuss the main character’s ability to set and to accomplish his goals.
9. Compare and contrast the main character’s relationship to nature at the beginning of the novel and his relationship at the end.
10. The brief biography of the author on the back flap, states that he really ate turtle eggs and made a fire with a hatchet and rock. Discuss the believability of the events in the book. Could a boy realistically survive for 54 days? Are there still wildernesses where he would not be found for months?

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Study Guide Student's Copy

CHAPTER ONE

1. In chapter one, Brian Robeson is taking his first plane ride. Why does he believe there is no chance for conversation with the pilot?
2. Brian notices the instruments in the plane. How high are they flying and in what direction? Over what kind of terrain are they flying?
3. Soon after takeoff why does Brian feels like crying?
4. Speculate on Brian's "Secret". What do you think he knows about his mother?
5. Brian takes the wheel of the plane and learns valuable flying skills. List the skills he acquires in his short flying lesson.
6. A flashback is when the author goes back in time to explain something to help the reader understand the story. Brian has a flashback after his flying lesson. What details of the divorce do you learn from this flashback?

CHAPTER FIVE

1. When Brian awakens, he knows he has two problems. Briefly explain these obstacles.
2. Once he is able to concentrate Brian forces his mind to think in a special way. What thinking rules does he devise for himself?
3. Why does Brian expect to be rescued soon?
4. What is Brian thinking of when the hunger hits?
5. Who is Perpich? What advice had he given Brian?
6. How does Brian act on Perpich's advice?
7. What do you think is the most important thing on Brian's inventory list? The second most important?
8. What bothers Brian about the plane and the pilot? How does he cope with his fears?
9. How long of a wait for rescue does Brian expect? What two problems does he decide to solve to make his stay better?

CHAPTER TEN

1. What discovery does Brian make about the fire?
2. How does Brian plan to use the fire to get rescued?
3. As Brian prepares to sleep, why is he happy? (Keep in mind that a theme in this book is that humans need a purpose in their lives to be happy.)
4. When Brian hears a noise in the night, what action does he take?
5. Why does Brian laugh at the idea that an animal came ashore to play and to dig in the sand?
6. How many eggs are in the turtle nest? How does he eat the eggs? How many does he eat?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. List two ways that Brian measures time?
2. What kind of meat is available to Brian, if he knows how to catch it?
3. Another recurring point made in this book is that it is better to stop and to think before acting. How does this point apply to Brian's successful foolbird hunt?
4. How is the secret of the foolbirds revealed to Brian?
5. How does Brian remove the feathers?
6. Another point in the book is that human survival under adverse conditions requires patience, thinking, and doing things right. Point out how Brian is patient when trying to cook the foolbird.
7. What name does Brian give to this special event?
8. Define sarcasm and find an example of sarcasm in this chapter.

EPILOGUE

1. How long was Brian alone at the lake?
2. What changes in Brian were temporary? What changes were permanent?
3. Describe Brian's dreams about the lake.
4. What had been fortunate about the timing of Brian's rescue?
5. Why does Brian not tell his father the secret?
6. In what way may this novel be a good example of "loss of innocence?"
7. What may the hatchet symbolize in this story?