



 Prestwick House

# Activity Pack

## INTO THE WILD

BY JON KRAKAUER



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Item No. 303180  
Written by Ashlin Bray

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 1 and 2****Nonfiction Sources**

**Objective:** Understanding how different sources are used in nonfiction writing

**Activity**

One of the important stylistic elements of *Into the Wild* is its combination of remembered experience, researched narrative, and the letters of Chris McCandless. These are all different sources used by the author to construct his nonfiction account.

As a class, answer the following questions about the different nonfiction sources used by Jon Krakauer.

1. Which source that the author uses gives readers the authentic words of Chris McCandless?

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2. How was the story of Jim Gallien obtained?

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3. What elements of the narrative indicate that it is based on research?

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4. List the nonfiction sources the author uses in the first two chapters.

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**Individual Student Activity:**

Using a text from another class (math, history, geography, science), write a single paragraph based on factual information contained in the text. Then add a paragraph that describes an experience from your own life related to the information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 3

### Point of View

**Objective:** Exploring first-person and third-person narratives and point of view

#### Activity

The point of view of a story is often conveyed through the narrator. In *Into the Wild*, the author uses primarily the third-person point of view: he writes as if he is outside the story and reporting on it as he would see it from afar. In contrast, a first-person narrative is delivered in the voice of the person who is experiencing the story; it uses that person's point of view as the filter for all events and feelings.

This chapter introduces Wayne Westerberg, who owns a grain business in Carthage, South Dakota. The chapter also gives biographical background on Chris McCandless. Rewrite a few paragraphs of this chapter from the point of view of Wayne Westerberg or the point of view of Chris McCandless. Then get into a group with a few other people and share your work.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 4 and 5****Poetry****Objective:** Translating prose into poetry**Activity**

Krakauer provides his own description of the areas around Lake Mead and the story of McCandless's yellow Datsun. These chapters also include McCandless's description of his canoe trip from Arizona to Mexico and Krakauer's account of the young man's life in Bullhead City. In addition, the author introduces several new characters, including Jan Burres and the investigator Peter Kalitka.

Write a poem in free verse on any of the subjects provided above or any other significant event or encounter described in these two chapters. Free verse is poetry that is not dependent on rhyme or meter but is written "freely" and discloses a sense of the writer's feelings about the subject of the poem.

**Example:****"Thoreau's Apprentice"**

Free from the bondage of  
Worldly things  
Burning the trouble that  
Money brings  
Lighter, brighter, the  
Future sings  
Taking flight on  
Nature's wings

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 1 – 5****Missing Person Poster**

**Objective:** Creating a visual aid that uses information from the book

**Activity**

In Chapters One through Five, the reader learns a great deal about the background and appearance of Chris McCandless. Taking the perspective of his parents, create a poster of McCandless as a missing person.

The poster should include a graphic of McCandless's face, possibly based on the photograph inside the cover of the book but this is not necessary, include a physical description of the young man (height and weight, general build), and additional background information, such as his age, educational status, special talents that could help locate him, his car, the date he was last seen, and other relevant information. Make the poster as eye-catching as possible to draw attention to it. You may draw, use images from the Internet, magazines, or any other source to create the poster.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 6

### Philosophical Background: Transcendentalism

**Objective:** Understanding historical and philosophical background pertinent to the story

#### Activity

Chapter Six begins with a passage written by the writer Henry David Thoreau and highlighted by Chris McCandless. Thoreau (1817-1862) was part of a literary and philosophical movement called Transcendentalism, which started in New England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Some of the main ideas of Transcendentalism include the following:

- Self-reliance: The Transcendentalists distrusted anyone claiming political, religious, or intellectual authority. They believed that each person should trust his or her own intuition.
- Society vs. the individual: Society is usually misguided, and it tends to force conformity.
- The connection between people and nature: Nature and human beings are not separate; in fact, everything that exists is unified by one spirit.

Take the following quiz to see if you agree with the main ideas of Transcendentalism.

1. I get most of my knowledge from
  - A. books and other people.
  - B. my own experience and intuition.
2. I believe that government should be
  - A. very powerful.
  - B. very limited.
3. When walking through the woods, I feel
  - A. scared.
  - B. comfortable.
4. Titles, positions of power, and awards are
  - A. important.
  - B. unimportant.
5. Good decisions are more often made by
  - A. groups.
  - B. individuals.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 7****Characterization****Objective:** Identifying character traits through quotes**Activity**

This chapter examines some of Chris McCandless's personality traits through the memories of people he met on the road. Each of the following quotes illuminates one or more of McCandless's personality traits. Study the quotes carefully, and identify what trait or traits are made clear. The first one has been done for you.

1. "[M]any creative people fail to make mature personal relationships, and some are extremely isolated."

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2. "‘Alex hadn't been around machinery much,' Westerberg says with a shake of his head, 'and it was pretty comical to watch him try to get the hang of the clutch and all those levers. He definitely wasn't what you'd call mechanically minded.'"

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3. "He was a big eater. Never left any food on his plate. Never. He was a good cook, too. Sometimes he'd have me over to Wayne's place and fix supper for everybody. Cooked a lot of rice. You'd think he would of got tired of it, but he never did. Said he could live for a month on nothing but twenty-five pounds of rice."

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4. "Flying would be cheating. It would wreck the whole trip."

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 8

### Perspective

**Objectives:** Viewing information from different perspectives  
Writing an editorial

#### Activity

In Chapter Eight, Krakauer notes some of the responses that his original piece about Chris McCandless in the magazine *Outside* received. Most people regard McCandless with derision, stating that he was self-absorbed and irresponsible. From what you've read so far about McCandless, you've probably formed an opinion about him yourself. People form opinions based on their own life experiences, beliefs, personality, and many other factors.

To see McCandless from another person's perspective, choose one of the following individuals and consider how that person's situation would influence his or her opinion. Then, write an editorial to *Outside* magazine from that person that states your opinion of McCandless. In your letter, you must identify yourself, give your opinion, information that supports your opinion, and a closing statement.

- an experienced wilderness guide and mountain climber
- a parent whose son or daughter is on active military duty
- a successful inventor who followed his or her own path to success

The following is an example of how you might begin your letter:

Dear Editor:

For over thirty years, I have been a wilderness guide in Alaska, including the area in which Mr. McCandless died.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 9

### Importance of Names

**Objective:** Understanding the significance of names

#### Activity

The story of Everett Ruess, who disappeared into the wilderness of Utah, is told in this chapter. Like Chris McCandless, Ruess created several pseudonyms during his travels. A person's name is part of his or her identity. The fact that Ruess and McCandless changed their names during their travels indicates that they were trying to dissociate from their former lives and identities. They chose names for themselves that they could identify with.

It can be interesting to imagine how or if your life would be different if you had a different name. To explore this idea, pair up with another student for this activity.

1. Individually, make a list of traits that you feel are an important part of who you are. Also list some significant events or changes in your life that are either happening now or have occurred in the past. Exchange lists with your partner. Each of you, based on the information given by your partner, will come up with a new name for the other. Discuss with each other why you chose the name, whether you like the new name, and what name you would have chosen for yourself.

OR

2. After you make your list, create a new name for yourself. Give your list and name to your partner. He or she will then come up with three to five reasons why you might have chosen this name; Discuss why your partner's guesses are correct or incorrect.

If you feel comfortable, share with the rest of the class the names that you and your partner chose and your reasons for choosing them.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 12

### Comprehension

**Objectives:** Writing an essay  
Demonstrating comprehension of character relationships

#### Activity

Write a short essay (250 words or less) about the relationship between Chris McCandless and his parents from high school through his disappearance and his parents' involvement after he left.

Think of the following questions as you write:

- How did the relationship between parents and son seem in public—for example, at McCandless's high school and college graduations?
- How did McCandless's experiences at Emory affect their relationship initially, and how did their relationship change as his Emory experience changed?
- What did McCandless discover when he visited his old home in El Segundo, California?
- How did this discovery change his view of his parents?
- What does Billie McCandless's dream say about her relationship with her son?