

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Hatchet

by
Gary Paulsen

Book Information

Gary Paulsen, Hatchet
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195 Pages
Book Level: 5.7
Interest Level: MG

After a plane crash, thirteen-year-old Brian spends 54 days in the wilderness, learning to survive initially with only the aid of a hatchet given to him by his mother, and learning also to survive his parents' divorce.

Award: ALA Notable/Best Books; Margaret A. Edwards Award; Newbery Honor; SLJ Best Book; State Award

Topics: Adventure, Lost/Abandoned; Character Traits, Self Improvement; English in a Flash Recommended List, Library 3, Chapter 14, 90%; Popular Groupings, Middle Grades Popular Authors/Starred Reviews; Power Lessons AR, Grade 5; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 9+; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 3-5; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 6-8; Recommended Reading, Oprah's Book Club - Kids Reading List; What Kids Are Reading, 2012, 100 Most Read Fiction, ATOS Book Levels 4.0-5.9; What Kids Are Reading, 2012, Grade 5: 40 Most Read Books Overall; What Kids Are Reading, 2012, Grade 6: 40 Most Read Books Overall; What Kids Are Reading, 2012, Grade 7: 40 Most Read Books Overall; What Kids Are Reading, 2012, Grade 8: 40 Most Read Books Overall

Main Characters

Brian Robeson a thirteen-year-old boy who finds himself struggling to survive alone in the wilderness of the Canadian north woods

Vocabulary

altitude height above the ground; a distance above or below sea level
bluff a high, steep face of rock or earth; a cliff
dozed slept lightly; napped; slumbered; snoozed; slept for a short period of time
drone a low, steady noise or hum
initial of, relating to, or occurring at the beginning; coming or happening before all others; original; first
intact whole or complete; unharmed; together
motivated driven to act or succeed; compelled or aroused to do something; having a reason to act in a certain way
murky dark and gloomy; cloudy; unclear; muddy
survival a state of remaining alive; continued existence
transmissions broadcasts or messages that are sent, most often by wire or over air waves

Synopsis

Thirteen-year-old Brian is headed north to the oilfields of northern Canada to visit his father for the summer when he must take over the controls of a small aircraft after its pilot has a heart attack. By calling upon all his previous knowledge and innate survival instinct, Brian manages to land the plane in a remote lake.

Alone in the woods, he takes stock of his belongings and creates a shelter, starts a fire, and finds food. Along the way, he "invents" the bow and arrow, builds a fish trap to store live fish, learns to hunt "foolbirds," and manages to become almost a part of his surroundings.

Nearly two months into his adventure, he experiences the unimaginable when he is attacked by a moose and thrown around by a tornado, both on the same day. These events still do not defeat the new Brian Robeson. He realizes he was in the same situation when he entered this environment and that he can regain what he had before.

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As he sets out to rebuild his "home," he notices that the wind pulled part of the crashed airplane out of the water. This sparks him to realize that there is a survival pack inside the plane. He builds a raft, pushes it out to the plane, and retrieves the pack. Inside he finds numerous items including food, cooking equipment, fishing lures, and a radio transmitter. Unwittingly, he turns on the transmitter before he sets about to cook his newly found treasure--freeze-dried food. While he is cooking, a seaplane locates him and lands on the lake. Stunned at being found and unsure what to do, he offers to share his food with the pilot. He returns home safely, a permanently changed boy.

Contrast

Extending Meaning Extending Meaning**Recognizing Detail** Recognizing Details

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Literary Analysis

Brian discovered that his experience with the "foolbirds" was similar to that of the early trappers' experiences. What else did he experience that the trappers no doubt had also experienced?

He had encounters with bears and was caught in violent natural events such as tornadoes. He also found wild berries and built crude fish traps.

Constructing Meaning

Though this story may seem wildly impossible, there have been cases of individuals experiencing similar situations. What makes stories like this interesting?

Answers will vary but may include the following. We enjoy hearing about others who have overcome difficult situations and survived. Stories such as these are exciting and give us hope. We like to imagine what we would do in similar situations.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting Recognizing Setting**Comparing and Contrasting** Compare &