

BRIAN'S RETURN

GARY PAULSEN

LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

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SYNOPSIS

Chap. 1: On June 3, an hour after flying to the lake, Brian sits at peace in his canoe. He is prepared for the Canadian wild with 200 pounds of survival gear and insect repellent. He recalls hearing that beaver selected the sites for most European cities by clearing trees to build dams. Because he opposes hunting for sport, he kills only for food or self-defense. A previous period of survival in the forest made him famous. The event changed him.

Chap. 2: Seated in The Raft, his Kevlar canoe, he recalls the last straw, when he no longer fit in with his peers. He dislikes extreme sports, pinball, and video games, and cares nothing for gossip about drugs and dating. One day, as he accompanies Haley and Susan to Mackey's Pizza Den, Carl Lammers deliberately slams the door into them, smashing Haley's nose and twisting Susan's kneecap. After Carl swings on Brian, he springs into his adversary, pounding him to the ground.

Chap. 3: The police send Carl to the hospital and handcuff Brian. He tries to explain his instinctive reaction, but his mother and the officers refuse to listen. His mother interprets the incident as fighting over a girl. An officer suggests a retired cop, who counsels boys.

Chap. 4: On arrival at Caleb Lancaster's home, Brian has little hope of aid and resents spending his money for therapy, because a previous visit to a counselor was a failure. Caleb turns out to be an enormous black man. Brian realizes that Caleb is blind. Caleb asks about the woods; Brian tells him about a winter sunset. Seeing a spear of light shoot from sun to star had made him know there is a higher power. The description makes Caleb weep.

Chap. 5: Brian explains that he misses the wild and must return because he dislikes being with people. He tells about locating a mouse city in tall grass covered in snow. At 3:00, Brian must leave. Caleb concludes that Brian is healthy and invites him to return the next day for an informal visit.

Chap. 6: That spring, school becomes difficult because everyone knows about the fight with Carl. Brian avoids Susan and takes refuge in visits with Caleb. A dream about getting ready for a return gives him hope. He envisions bow and arrow, canoe, snowshoes, hooks and line, sleeping bag and tarp, tent, pots, clothes, boots, and moccasins. He records the items in a notebook. To keep his sanity, he begins gathering his equipment and practicing with the bow. Caleb advises him to return to the wild. He suggests that Brian visit the Smallhorns, the Cree family who rescued him.

Chap. 7: Brian's mother fears the bush because of the accidental marooning two years before, but allows him to go because he has already spent a second summer in the wild with Derek. Brian intends to have the pilot who flew him there from International Falls, Minnesota, take him to Williams Lake. Because the pilot is too busy to make the whole run, he agrees

to take Brian 100 miles above Granite Lake and leave him to canoe and portage the rest of the way up the chain lakes.

Brian conceals the plan from his mother. After shipping the canoe ahead, he packs clothing. He does not intend to return home. He promises Caleb to write. His mother cries; his father treats him like a man.

Chap. 8: At Minneapolis, Brian takes the shuttle to International Falls and a cab to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. The pilot ferries him to his shack and plans to return at daylight for the departure. That night, Brian relaxes outdoors, dines on panfish, and sleeps in his tent. He recalls trying to lie in the yard at home to see the stars.

Chap. 9: At first, Brian is disoriented when a skunk sniffs his fire. As dawn appears, he sips tea. Two fishermen in their sixties arrive by Jeep Cherokee and prepare for an annual trip to see the country. The one named Ben believes that Brian has "got the woods in you."

Brian speaks a simple prayer of gratitude. He is equipped with arrows, quiver, knife, hatchet, and simple fishing gear. He has obtained knowledge from reading about people who survived in the wild, particularly the Inuit, Cree, and Southwest Indians. He carries two volumes of Shakespeare and a guide to edible plants.

Brian intends to keep a running letter to Caleb. He packs his gear and supplies. The three passengers and pilot take off from Ranier.

Chap. 10: Finally at Payson Lake in midafternoon, Brian arrives after forty minutes of flight from the fishermen's stop. The pilot explains how to work upstream to Liberty Lake to the Smallhorns' camp at Williams Lake. Brian ties supplies to the cross-strut and covers all with a tarp. Without hurry, he strips to shorts and is paddling away when a deer lands in the canoe.

Chap. 11: Brian realizes that he must be prepared for the unexpected. After the deer turns him upside down, he rights the canoe and makes camp in a nearby clearing. He catches panfish and prepares rice for dinner. To ward off bears, he buries the remains of his supper. That night, he hears predators killing rabbits. He realizes that the intrusive doe picked his campsite.

Chap. 12: Brian realizes that the pilot's map is inaccurate. He spies bear tracks and claw marks on the tree where he had suspended supplies. In the canoe, he tries to accustom himself to kneeling while paddling. He finds the water still, like a tranquil pond. After readying his bow at the sight of a moose cow, he finds the animal placidly chewing. With a catch of four sunfish, he halts to camp at a clearing. A storm hits in the middle of the night.

Chap. 13: After dinner, he writes to Caleb about journeying over twenty miles. In the night, the hiss of rain awakens him. A deluge inundates the tent, which collapses. He rolls down the bank and punctures his leg with an arrow. The canoe falls and dazes him. He recovers enough to crawl under the canoe for the rest of the night.

Chap. 14: Brian spends the next day making repairs and

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analyzing what he had done wrong. He forgot to secure the camp and dig a rain gutter around the tent and also lacked dry wood. With birchback, he makes a fire. He cleans his leg wound, sets up the tent, and dries the sleeping bag. His pack is tangled in tree limbs. While reading aloud from *Romeo and Juliet*, he weeps for the play's sadness.

Chap. 15: Deep in the night, Brian looks out on stars and paddles onto the lake to enjoy the moon's reflection. When a wolf calls, he harmonizes in a duet. The next morning, he spies wolf tracks and urinates where they marked their territory. He intends to cover the eight-mile lake, a half mile portage, and a six-mile lake. Wind slows his progress. On two trips to carry equipment over the land link, he spies a deer, but decides not to shoot it. He thanks the hunting spirit watching over the deer.

Chap. 16: Before starting the second leg of the day's journey, Brian camps to make rice stew. For the meat course, he hunts a grouse and thanks the animal's spirit. At the smell of smoke, he returns with bow drawn to find a man in his fifties named Billy crouched at the camp. The stranger invites Brian to add the bird to his potatoes and onion to make a stew. Billy admires Brian for hunting in the old way without a gun. Brian relates the incident with the deer. Billy interprets the animal as a medicine deer, who points the way ahead. Billy goes to sleep, leaving Brian to prepare his sleeping bag.

Chap. 17: The next morning, Billy is gone. He leaves a medicine token made of deer tail and crow feather on a rawhide loop, which Brian slips over his head. With no wind to deter him, he completes thirty miles. The next day, he paddles over three short lakes connected by a creek so shallow that he has to tow his canoe. He encounters a young bear, which teases and plays with him. In a tense confrontation, Brian orders it away; the bear departs. Brian concludes that his medicine is strong.

Chap. 18: Brian ponders his oneness with the wild. The next day, he completes the first seventy miles to Williams Lake. That evening, he reads from *Romeo and Juliet*. He dreams that Billy points to him and concludes that the older man is himself in years to come. Before daylight, Brian continues. He decides not to rendezvous with the Smallhorns. Rather, he chooses to explore lakes and rivers to the west.

TIME LINE

age 13	Brian is marooned in the Canadian woods.
age 14	He spends the summer in the woods with Derek.
age 15	Brian gets into a fight with Carl Lammers.
afterward	His mother picks him up at the police station.
later	He goes to Caleb for counseling; he leaves after Caleb assures him he is normal.
next day	Brian begins informal weekday visits with Caleb.
later	A dream compels him to prepare for a return to the woods to visit the Smallhorns.
May 24	He ships his canoe to International Falls.
June 2	He flies to Minneapolis, takes a shuttle to International Falls and a cab to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.
June 3	He sits at peace in his canoe in the Canadian woods.
June 4	Brian tries to accustom himself to kneeling while paddling.
after dinner	He writes to Caleb about the first 20 miles.
that night	A storm hits, collapsing the tent. Brian rolls down the bank and punctures his leg with an arrow. The canoe falls and dazes him.
June 5	He makes repairs.

later	He reads aloud from <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> and weeps for the play's sadness.
that night	He paddles onto the lake to enjoy the moon's reflection and harmonizes in a duet with a wolf.
June 6	He spies wolf tracks and urinates where they mark their territory. Wind slows his paddling. He spies a deer, but decides not to shoot it. He thanks the hunting spirit watching over the deer.
later	After camping, he hunts a grouse for dinner. He finds Billy at the camp. Billy admires Brian for hunting in the old way without a gun. Billy interprets the incident with the deer as a medicine deer who points the way.
June 7	Billy is gone. He leaves a medicine token on a rawhide loop. Brian completes thirty miles.
June 8	He paddles over three short lakes connected by a creek so shallow that he has to tow his canoe. He encounters a young bear and orders it away. Because it goes, Brian concludes that his medicine is strong.
June 9	He completes the first seventy miles to Williams Lake.
that evening	He reads from <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> .
that night	He dreams that Billy points to him and concludes that the older man is his future self.
June 10	Before daylight, he continues. He decides not to rendezvous with the Smallhorns. He chooses to explore lakes and rivers to the west.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A man who has undergone unusual character-molding experiences, Gary Paulsen writes from honest reflection. Born May 17, 1939 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, he is the son of Eunice and Oscar Paulsen, a career military officer and alcoholic whose addiction caused Paulsen much grief during the growing-up years. After World War II, Paulsen's father moved to the Philippines, where his son came to know him better. The instability of addicted parents left Paulsen in need of shelter with relatives, some of whom entertained him with storytelling.

At age 15, the stress of poor school performance and low self-esteem pushed Paulsen to the brink of suicide. During cold weather, to warm himself and avoid the misery of school and home, he took shelter in the library, where a staff member handed him books to read. Gradually, like a hungry beggar, he filled in gaps in his education with science fiction, westerns, and classics. Paulsen reminisces, "When she handed me the card, she handed me the world."

After a year at Bemidji College in Duluth and three years in the army, Paulsen served as a field engineer for the aerospace department of Bendix and Lockheed. Settling in California, he worked as an editor and film extra. His first novel, *The Special War* (1966), was so realistic that the FBI investigated his knowledge of missiles. He settled in Taos, New Mexico, where a dependence on alcohol ended his first marriage. The failure cost him a son and daughter, who were adopted by their stepfather. In Evergreen, Colorado, he conquered alcoholism through Alcoholics Anonymous.

In his second marriage, Paulsen found more opportunities to cherish a close relationship with wife Ruth Wright, a painter and co-author of *Dogteam* (1993) and illustrator of *Father Water, Mother Woods* (1995), and their son James. When poverty brought on by a 1978 lawsuit for libel threatened his family, Paulsen returned to home territory to farm, ranch, and trap beaver for the state of Minnesota to supplement a lagging income from writing. While running a dog team, he thrilled to

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the bright star-filled skies and the rhythmic breathing of the team. With sponsorship from Lands' End clothiers, he made an unlikely attempt on the 1983 Iditarod, an annual Alaskan event covering 1,180 miles of rough, late-season ice and snow from Anchorage to Nome. Hopes for returning to the course the following year ended after Paulsen suffered a heart attack at Logan Airport in Boston.

Currently one of America's most prolific writers of young adult literature, Paulsen makes frequent guest appearances, school visits, and readings and divides his times between residences in Leonard, Minnesota, and Tularosa, New Mexico. His current passion is sailing and a proposed solo trans-Pacific journey. He has written for over three decades. At times he grows discouraged with his work, but has accepted the fact that writing is his burden and that he must do it at his own pace, in his own style. From 1993 through 2000 he published over 50 books, most for young adult readers, his favorite audience.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Over the rough years of writing short stories, magazine articles, stage and screenplays, westerns, how-to books, and novels, Gary Paulsen had to find the voice that best expresses self and an erratic work rhythm that accommodates bursts of energy that keep him reading voraciously, studying the classics of Jack London and Herman Melville, perusing current fiction by writers like Alice Walker and Cynthia Rylant, and working into the night. His most common themes—survival and coming-of-age—have brought him adulation from the New York Public Library and from the American Library Association. He received Newbery Honors in 1986 and 1988 for *Dogsong* and *Hatchet*, in 1992 for *Clabbered Dirt*, *Sweet Grass*, and again in 1993 for *Eastern Sun*, *Winter Moon*. Other honors include the Dorothy Canfield Fisher award, William Allen White award, Midland Authors award, Western Writers of America Golden Spur award, Jeremiah Ludington award, Regina Medal, Parent's

Choice award, Tennessee Volunteer State Book award, Notable Children's Trade Book in Social Studies, American Booksellers Pick of the List, Iowa Children's Choice award, Wisconsin Golden Archer award, NCTE Notable Book, *Parenting Magazine* Reading-Magic award, ALA Notable Books for *Nightjohn* and *Woodsong*, IRA/CBC Children's Choice, Booklist Editors' Choice, and a Child Study Association of America's Children award.

Paulsen wrote the screenplay for the 1990 film version of *Hatchet*, entitled *A Cry in the Wild*. The screen story of the lost boy earned a good-to-very good rating from many reviewers, but only an "okay" from Paulsen. The author himself sums up his rapport with children, who send hundreds of letters daily, often from abused or neglected children. He claims, "We have been passive. We have been stupid. We have been lazy. We have done all the things we could do to destroy ourselves. If there is any hope at all for the human race, it has to come from young people. Not from adults."

HATCHET, THE RIVER, BRIAN'S WINTER, AND BRIAN'S RETURN

The appeal of *Hatchet* caused Gary Paulsen to respond to his fans with other studies of Brian Robeson in the wilderness. In 1991 he published *The River*, a story that returns Brian to the Canadian northwest and replicates the challenge of staying alive in the wilderness. As happened in the first account, Brian must cope with unforeseen events. Whereas the original novel shows Brian in a daily struggle to survive, the sequel moves beyond the introduction to woodcraft and places him in a position of authority.

While demonstrating survival skills for a government agency Brian's major challenge is rafting an injured adult to safety. The story develops at a steady pell-mell pace toward resolution because Brian boards a raft and travels with the river's current, which he can neither slow nor stop. Consequently, the thrust of the story removes Brian from a static position by the lake

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toward a rapidly changing panorama of lakeside, bluffs, rock ledge, and falls. Instead of waiting for rescue, Brian seeks deliverance by seeking civilization.

Paulsen's third Brian Robeson novel, *Brian's Winter* (1996), recasts *Hatchet* by removing rescue and following Brian through the winter. The evolving circumstances place Brian amid new demands such as learning to cope with extremes of cold and weather. The conclusion differs from both previous works in that it introduces Brian to a native woods dweller, David Smallhorn. Perhaps the greatest praise for Brian's adaptation to the Canadian wild is the admiration of the Cree for Brian's revival of arrow-flaking and snowshoe-making, all of which echo the survival methods of ancient woodsmen. Characteristically, Brian returns to New York with a backward glance to the lesson-in-the-woods that has brought him through a difficult time from boyhood into manhood.

The fourth segment of the saga, *Brian's Return*, covers an unsettled period in his mid-adolescence when he longs to leave city life and return to the woods. The first day reminds him that he must behave cautiously because the wild is unforgiving. After a gradual unwinding, he relaxes in nature, lives simply, and enjoys the paddle north to reunite with his Cree friends. After a meeting with Billy, an older woodsman, Brian sees himself at that same age at home in the wild and protected by a mystic medicine conferred by a deer. The epilogue assures the reader that Brian's adventures replicate the author's experiences and account for his need to commune with the wild.

OTHER BOOKS BY GARY PAULSEN

Alida's Song (1999)
The Boy Who Owned The School (1990)
Brian's Return (1999)
Brian's Winter (1996)
Call Me Francis Tucket (1995)
Canoe Days (1996)
Canyons (1990)
The Car (1994)
A Christmas Sonata (1991)
The Cookcamp (1991)
The Creature of Blackwater Lake (1997)
The Crossing (1987)
Culpepper's Cannon (1992)
The Curse of The Ruins (1998)
Dancing Carl (1983)
Danger on Midnight River (1995)
Dogsong (1985)
Dogteam (1993)
Eastern Sun, Winter Moon: An Autobiographical Essay (1993)
Escape (2000)
Escape from Fire Mountain (1995)
Father Water, Mother Moon (1994)
The Flight of the Hawk (1998)
Grizzly (1997)
Harris and Me: A Summer Remembered (1993)
Hatchet (1987)
The Haymeadow (1992)
Island (1988)
The Legend of Red Horse Cavern (1994)
Monument (1993)
Mr. Tucket (1968)
My Life in Dog Years (1999)
The Night The White Deer Died (1978)
Nightjohn (1993)
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights (1983)

Project: A Perfect World (1996)
Puppies, Dogs, and Blue Northers: A Tribute to Cookie (1996)
The Rifle (1995)
The River (1991)
Rock Jockeys (1995)
Sarny: A Life Remembered (1996)
The Schernoff Discoveries (1997)
Sentries (1986)
Sisters=Hermanas (1993)
Soldier's Heart (1998)
Super Amos (1997)
The Tent: A Parable in One Sitting (1995)
Thunder Valley (1998)
Tiltawhirl John (1977)
The Time Benders (1997)
The Tortilla Factory (1995)
Tracker (1984)
The Transall Saga (1999)
The Treasure of El Patron (1996)
Tucket's Gold (1999)
Tucket's Home (2000)
Tucket's Ride (1996)
The Voyage of The Frog (1989)
The Winter Room (1989)
Winterdance: The Fine Madness of Running the Iditarod (1994)
Woodsong (1990)
Worksong (1996)
Zero to Sixty: The Motorcycle Journey of a Lifetime (1997)

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To comprehend the demands of living alone in the wild
2. To prioritize the tasks of a camper and canoeer
3. To describe encounters with animals
4. To describe the use of tools, equipment, and weapons
5. To contrast beauty and menace in the wild
6. To describe the lifestyle of the ancient bow hunter
7. To characterize moments of perplexity, change, understanding, and gratitude
8. To analyze elements of a bildungsroman
9. To locate examples of self-awareness and love of nature
10. To enumerate primitive skills necessary for making shelters, storing food, and supplying transportation and first-aid

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To compare Brian and Carl as fighters
2. To account for Brian's dilemma in the city
3. To analyze Brian's avoidance of his peers
4. To contrast Brian after his first adventure in the wild
5. To explain Brian's relationships with his mother, Caleb, Susan, and Billy
6. To account for Caleb's admiration for Brian's accomplishments
7. To comment on Brian's list of gear
8. To typify Brian's woods savvy

9. To project how Brian will react to future dangers and challenges
10. To recount Brian's intense moments with animals

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Gary Paulsen's style, present the following terms and applications to his novel:

bildungsroman a novel that describes the coming-of-age of an untried or naive youth. Paulsen uses the challenge of survival to express the beauties of living in the wild. For a young man still learning his adult role, Brian determines that living in nature is more satisfying and less hazardous than existing among shallow city teens. By the time that he returns to Canada for a summer stay in the wild, he is more mature and more in touch with his capabilities. Within a week, he is certain that he will not return to civilization.

third-person narrative a story or series of actions told from the vantage point of an observer who stands outside the scope of the story and knows what will happen and how actions will affect the characters. *Brian's Return* examines Brian's survival skills under challenging conditions and studies his cool-headed response to danger from rain, puncture wound, and wild animals. Because the observer is not a character in the story, he can relate the conditions that Brian faces and predict how his mastery of daily tasks of feeding, protecting, and caring for himself will assure safety.

symbol a concrete object that stands for a complex or abstract idea or relationship. In *Brian's Return*, numerous objects take on heightened meaning. After relearning to hunt with a bow, he acquires a mystic appreciation for animal life. He spares the deer that he doesn't need and thanks the grouse for its meat. After his successful hunt, he narrates the event to Billy, who rewards him with a medicine symbol, a rawhide loop containing a crow feather and deer hide. These symbols enhance his return to a primitive lifestyle by linking it to a spiritual and philosophical acceptance of solitude in nature.

SETTING

The milieu of *Brian's Return* is a deliberate contrast in city life and survival in the wild. After Brian's marooning and rescue two years before and his return to the wild at age fifteen, he is able to still the yearning to flee the city and its imitation adventures. The events that precede his departure by bushplane from Ranier, Minnesota, to a chain of lakes in Canada illustrate the stresses of school and teen society that depress him. On one occasion, he arises from bed and tries to regain the serenity of the woods by lying on his back and looking up at the stars, but the lights of the city obscure the view.

Similarly obscured are Brian's cues. Having learned to be prepared and to defend himself, he overreacts to a jealous friend, Carl Lammers, a football player who shoves Brian and two friends and slugs Brian while passing through a door to a pizza restaurant. The instinct that compels him to strike back and fight until he puts his adversary down momentarily places Brian back in the wild. By the time the police have rescued Carl and handcuffed Brian, he has no means of explaining how or why his mental landscape had departed back to Canada to fight an "it." To his mother, he was merely scrapping over a girl.

The final setting out for Canada by plane gradually restores Brian to control of his emotions. By listing and ordering specific items of survival gear and by talking through his motivation with Caleb, the blind counselor, Brian is ready for the re-immersion into woods and lakes. Alone, he travels to Minneapolis, shifts to a shuttle to International Falls, and journeys from the pilot's shack at Ranier to Payson Lake. With only the

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pilot on board, Brian makes the forty-minute flight over 100 miles above Granite Lake.

Told in retrospect, the story begins with Brian's arrival and the soul-satisfying serenity of a canoe lightly coursing the surface of the lake. As though rescued from the misery of school and shallow pursuits of gossip, extreme sports, and television, Brian feels no time pressure. He absorbs from nature a contentment that begins his healing. Through the journey up a chain of lakes, he makes a physical crossing while undergoing predictable stages of psychological and emotional growth. Along the way, nature provides him the medicine deer, a guide to his journey northward. When Brian encounters Billy and meets him again in a dream, he realizes the mystic purpose of his journey and perceives a path to maturity that will bring him oneness with the outdoors.

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

Novels

Avi, *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*
Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
Jean Craighead George, *Julie of the Wolves, My Side of the Mountain and The Talking Earth*
William Golding, *The Lord of the Flies*
Robert Heinlein, *Tunnel in the Sky*
Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*
Will Hobbs, *Downriver*
Jack London, *The Call of the Wild and White Fang*
Harry Mazer, *Snowbound*
S. L. Rottman, *Rough Waters*
Armstrong Sperry, *Call It Courage*
Theodore Taylor, *The Cay and Timothy of the Cay*
James Vance Walker, *Walkabout*
Robb White, *Deathwatch*

Short Stories

Bret Harte, "The Luck of Roaring Camp"
Jack London, "To Build a Fire"

Nonfiction

Angier Bradford, *How to Stay Alive in the Woods*
Steven Callahan, *Adrift: Seventy Six Days Lost at Sea*
Robin Lee Graham, *Dove*
John Krakauer, *Into the Wild*
Theodora Kroeber, *Ishi: The Last of His Tribe*
Hugh McManners, *The Backpacker's Handbook and The Compete Wilderness Training Book*
Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf*

Internet

"Children and Grief," <www.psych.med.umich.edu/web/aacap/factsFam/grief.htm>
"Crisis, Grief, and Healing," <www.webhealing.com>
"Quebec's Northern Crees," <www.lib.uconn.edu/ArcticCircle/CulturalViability/Cree/>

Videos

A Cry in the Wild
My Side of the Mountain

THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in Brian's Return should include these aspects:

Themes

- longing
- family
- challenge
- belonging
- comfort
- danger
- survival

- loss
- logic
- change

Motifs

- coping with a personality shift
- adapting to city life
- discovering survival potential
- assuming the role of loner and woodsman
- comprehending a need to abandon the city

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in this adventure novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint the context in which the item appears.

1. Later, after he came back and was trying to understand all that had happened, he read that early Inuits in the North saw the northern lights and believed them to be the souls of dead children dancing. (Chap. 4, p. 20)
(The Inuit or Nunavut of the Arctic are a nation of nomadic hunters and fishers who have traditionally kept dogs to pull sleds. Their ancestors moved from Siberia across Alaska, northern Canada, Thule, and other parts of Greenland to barren tundra and ice-choked waters. They trapped for hides and traded for staples and weapons. Currently, they earn a living as guides and carvers of soapstone.)
2. I had become truly anal, he thought once when he changed the kind of arrowheads from the fancy new razor heads to the old-fashioned MA-3s—three-bladed army-issue arrowheads that needed sharpening but were so strong you could hit a rock without hurting them. (Chap. 6, pp. 29-30)
(Anal is a psychological characterization of negative personality traits, including greed, foul humor, and pickiness. These qualities derive from fixation during the anal stage of development, when children outgrow diapers and learn to control their bowel habits.)
3. The bow was beautiful, a mix of ironwood and rosewood laminated in thin strips with fiber glass on the front and back. (Chap. 6, p. 31)
(Bows made of wood derive strength from being crafted of 3-6 foot strips of different types of wood—aspens, bois d'arc, dogwood, hickory, ironwood, juniper, mesquite, mulberry, willow, witch hazel, or yew. They are glued together and slowly dried and tempered to form a tough, resilient outer frame. The finished length is notched at each end and strung with line. The grip may be wrapped in cording or rawhide for ease of handling.)
4. He also sold arrows so Brian bought a hundred Port Orford cedar shafts and all the tools and precut feathers and nocks he would need to make his own arrows. (Chap. 6, p. 31).
(Nocks are notches in a bow tip and arrow end. The bow is notched to receive the line when a bow is readied for service. The arrow nock is the slot into which the line fits when the archer aims the arrow and pulls back on the line. This act of preparation is called nocking.)
5. How did you know I had a grouse? (Chap. 16, p. 97)
(Grouse, which are medium- to large-sized game birds, are heavily camouflaged with feathers ranging from brown to buff or gray and marked with a ruffled neck back or ruff. Living on the ground and making their nest in sedge along the tundra or in thickets in the forest, grouse provide an easy target and good food for hunters.)

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6. What about that Cree family who rescued you? The Trappers? (Chap. 6, p. 34)
(Native to the Hudson Bay, the Cree were originally nomadic hunter-gatherers, fishers, trappers, and horse breeders. In past times, they decorated their skin with tattoos. During the early days of their association with whites, the Cree suffered smallpox and scarlet fever. To protect the tribe from extinction, they allied with the Assiniboin and intermarried with French pioneers. The offspring of these marriages produced a distinctive métis or half-breed society. Among the most famous Cree are Ochagah, a guide for explorer Pierre Varennes in the early 18th century; actor Graham Greene, a star of Dances with Wolves; and Buffy Sainte Marie, a composer and popular folk performer during the 1960s and 1970s.)
7. The man had a one-place operation working out of International Falls, on the Minnesota-Canada border, and Brian called. (Chap. 7, p. 35)
(Brian intends to fly from home to Minneapolis, a major city on the southeastern border of Minnesota. Traveling by shuttle to International Falls, he journeys to Ranier by water and spends the night at the pilot's shack before continuing across the border into southwestern Ontario, Canada's second largest province. The lake-pocked territory is filled with waterways. Sparsely populated, it contains scarcely two people per square mile.)
8. That's still a hundred miles short of the Smallhorns' camp but it's all chain lakes up there and you can do it without any really bad portages. (Chap. 7, p. 36)
(Canoe trips that combine land and water travel require portage, the task of hauling the canoe from one body of water to another or over shallows or around falls and cataracts. The departure from easy water paddling requires more strenuous carrying of gear and supplies as well as the canoe, which may be constructed of light material and fitted with a yoke for ease of maneuvering.)
9. All that day he felt as if he were in a painting, a beautiful private diorama. (Chap. 12, p. 74)
(Brian pictures himself taking part in a representational scenario viewed close up in a gallery or at a distance through a viewer or in a shadowbox. Impressed or drawn on the backdrop are sculpted figures and lifelike details in miniature, for example, a realistic exhibit of wildlife at a museum.)
10. He would follow his medicine. (Chap. 18, p. 110)
(Brian refers to the native American term for a supernatural force or power over bad luck, disease, injury, weather, loss, or enemies. A shaman or medicine man invoked medicine through a ritual headdress, peace pipe, invocation, dance, observation of a bird or natural phenomenon, or symbolic pattern in colored sand or painted on fabric or the flank of a horse. The manipulation or propitiation of medicine brought the powers of nature into human hands for the purpose of protection, guidance, spiritual growth, or healing.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages from the novel.

Motivation

1. List the changes that compel Brian to return to the wild.
(Brian is gradually sinking into depression and misery at

school and among teens at his school. He avoids their pleasures of television, gossip about dating and drugs, video games, and extreme sports. The incident that forces Brian to accept his fate is the fight with Carl Lammers. Brian is going for a meal with Haley and Susan at Mackey's Pizza Den when Carl slams the door in jealousy over Brian's relationship with Susan. Without warning, Brian shifts into animal readiness and beats Carl senseless. Brian tries to explain the nature of his animosity, but the police are uninterested in his excuse.

Because Brian's behavior suggests a serious emotional maladjustment, he goes into counseling sessions with Caleb Lancaster, a former police officer. At counseling sessions with Caleb, he learns that he is normal, but that he misses some inner satisfaction that only the wild can restore. To preserve his sanity and ready himself for the next trek north, he begins making lists of survival equipment. He carefully selects and purchases each item. On his own, he buys bales of hay on which he fires his bow and arrow at a target.)

Setting

2. Why does the setting become a focus of the story?

(In the Canadian wild near Williams Lake, Brian avoids the banality of city life to become a true woodsman. He keeps alert to changes in animals and weather and uses his senses to learn more about animals and predators. On the tranquil pond in his Kevlar canoe, called The Raft, he observes blue gill and sunfish and spies a large muskie scouting out food. At night, he listens to the sounds of predators stalking rabbits, who cry out like babies before they are killed and eaten.

The wild becomes a clear ground plan that Brian reads like a map. The smell of smoke warns him that another human has altered the balance of human to wild. Exiting a pleasant afternoon of hunting with bow and arrow, he approaches his camp to find Billy, a fifty-year-old canoeer, camped at the clearing and making stew. The instant camaraderie with a fellow lover of the wild offers an opportunity to discuss the unexpected experience Brian had with a deer. Billy alerts Brian to a mystic interpretation of the setting and to his place in nature. Through a dream, Brian concludes that he will devote his life to the wild.)

Character Development

3. Why does Brian seem to merge with nature?

(In the night, Brian finds magic in the Canadian lake setting. Spontaneously awakened in the night, he paddles onto the silvery reflection of the moon on still water. At the sound of a wolf, he echoes its keening and begins a duet of howls that makes him feel like a boy-wolf or wolf-boy. The oneness with wild four-footers puts him in touch with transcendent instincts and an appreciation of beauty that he would never see in the city or at school.

By the end of the novel, Brian has undergone a transformation from temporary sojourner to lifetime devotee of the wild. In the last scene, as he paddles rhythmically along the lake, he is browned by the sun and united with the rhythm of canoeing and "the lake and the morning and the air." An hour later, he changes direction and takes a new, almost pre-determined path. Instead of seeking the Smallhorns on Williams Lake, he chooses to "move west with the sun." As though urged on by the motion of earth, he continues seeking "the end of the lake, and out ahead of that another lake and out ahead of that the forest and out ahead of that his life.")

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Historical Milieu

4. What does the novel say about American society?
(It is important to the story to understand Gary Paulsen's criticism of late 20th-century teens. At age thirteen, Brian returns from his marooning in the wild and finds himself an instant media celebrity. When he returns to normal, he tries to read adult hunting and fishing magazines, but finds them brutal and ego-driven. He has little in common with teens who waste their time on gossip, the drug culture, extreme sports, video games, and television. With nothing to share, he withdraws from friends and appears to his peers like a stuck-up loner.)

Paulsen blames modern society for challenging young people to withdraw from reality into electronic thrills. He implies that a diet of pizza and junk food offers little satisfaction compared to Brian's discovery of tea and his wilderness meals of fish, rice, and stew. Paulsen contrasts a pizza date with the intensely satisfying wilderness stew that he and Billy make from potatoes, an onion, a fresh grouse, and salt. Although Brian is essentially alone in the wild, his peers in the city seem more isolated, less fulfilled by artificial competition like football and video games, and less content with friendships and activities that are shallow and temporal.)

Theme

5. What is the significance of medicine to Brian?
(Medicine is a native American concept of a mysterious supernatural power or force within nature that can quell ill luck, bad weather, sickness, and adversaries. Through birds, four-footed animals, stars and moon, and natural symbols, Brian communicates with an animistic universe that hums with life and meaning. Without instruction in religion, he deduces the existence of a greater power that instills beauty in living things. He instinctively expresses sincere gratitude for it all.)

Brian's animism expands from an encounter with a deer that he chooses not to shoot. With help from Billy, he interprets the incident as a sign from nature that he should continue on his way into the wild and seek a natural path guided by a transcendent power. At the novel's end, the canoe seems self-driven as Brian paddles on toward no particular destination, following the sun west to more lakes, more country, more horizons.)

Interpretation

6. What is special about Brian's relationship with Caleb?
(Caleb Lancaster, a former policeman, applies his experience and understanding to troubled boys. When Brian comes for counseling, he quickly deduces that the boy is emotionally healthy and suffering from a normal yearning to return to the wild. Caleb's blindness causes him to internalize Brian's description of a winter sunset and to thrill to scenes of beauty and appreciation. Quickly, Brian sizes up their relationship as spirit-driven rather than money-driven. He comes to rely on Caleb for respite from the drudgery and misery of school.)

In the first week back in the wild, Brian begins journaling in the form of an open letter to Caleb. As though serving as eyes for his blind mentor, Brian observes and interprets incidents that help him re-acclimate himself to woods life. By learning to drink tea and to read Shakespeare aloud, Brian incorporates Caleb's sensitivity into his own tastes and preferences and adds new pleasures to make a life of solitude more rewarding. His conclusion in the final chapter is a remark to Caleb and to self: "Dear Caleb: I am where I belong and I belong where I am." The state-

ment suggests a balance and contentment that Brian has been seeking for the past two years.)

Conflict

7. Why does the incident with Carl turn ugly?
(The fist fight that sends Carl to the hospital results from a football player's use of force to ease the stress of disappointment. Paulsen implies that contact sports are less useful to a healthy mindset than the experiences that have made Brian both sensitive and deeply unhappy in the city. The surprising factor in the fight scene is that the conflict goes beyond Brian's need to retaliate. In his mind, "he was Brian back in the woods, Brian with the moose, Brian being attacked—Brian living because he was quick and focused and intent on staying alive—and Carl was the threat, the thing that had to be stopped.")

By taking out his frustration on Carl and escalating the incident into a battle for survival, Brian expresses a deep-seated social maladjustment and yearning for release. In striking out at Carl, he combats the insignificance and pettiness of his daily life among city teens. Freed from inaction, "He smashed again and again, striking like a snake, the blows multiplying their force." In his mind, Brian stops thinking of Carl as "he" but as "it," the unidentified abstraction that filled his days with wretchedness. In his only comment on the incident, Brian says, "Don't let it up . . . I have to keep it down . . .")

Atmosphere

8. How does the lake country soothe Brian's spirit?
(Returned to the wild in the opening scene, Brian is at peace for the first time in months. He drifts in the canoe amid "pine, spruce, poplar and birch," his mind turned to the minutia of woodsmanship—smudging against mosquitoes, paddling among teeming wildlife, and attuned to panfish under lily pads and the slap of a beaver's tail on water. With an unstructured appreciation of time and place, he connects the scene to a tidbit of history—the beaver's choice of spots for dams, which developed into Paris, London, and other of Europe's major cities.)

The scene broadens to include a buck with velvet antlers, northern pike, and the shriek of a hawk. Brian's ease in the wild allows him to accept the cycles of animal hunting and to ponder the necessity for carnivorous animals to kill smaller prey. As though divorcing himself more thoroughly from city-bred attitudes, Brian notes, "Only man hunted for sport, or for trophies." Released from two years of longing for the wild, he returns to the place that introduced him to nature, where it "had beaten him down and pounded the stupidity out of his brain until he had been forced to bend, forced to give, forced to learn to survive." As though acknowledging his powerlessness before greater forces, he concludes, "it had become part of him, maybe all of him.")

Author Purpose

9. Why does Paulsen fill the story with longing?
(Gary Paulsen has a reputation for respecting young readers and their needs. By examining in great detail the unease that forces Brian away from school, friends, home, and parents, he acknowledges to teens that their feelings and goals have validity and their lives, value. His respect for Brian's unhappiness and the search for a way back to the Canadian outback rises above the patronizing tone of other works of young adult fiction.)

As though touching something holy and rare, Paulsen gently leads Brian through the maze of wrongdoing, solitude, and life as an outsider on the modern landscape. He

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allows Brian to make his own way, from police station to counselor, from lists of equipment to tickets to International Falls. By the time that Brian reaches Ranier, his release from tension is complete.)

Structure

10. Why does Paulsen return Brian to frustration in the wild? (To maintain touch with reality, Paulsen does not liberate Brian from yearning and set him down in a perfect environment. The wild is a challenge—a perpetually shifting melange of weather, temperature, terrain, animal and plant life, and human need for shelter, warmth, food, and safety. Because the city has softened Brian's instincts, he must re-encounter the errors in judgment and planning that set him at odds with nature during his marooning. By failing to dig a gutter around his tent, he experiences a night of cold, clammy sleep under his canoe until he can dry the sleeping bag in the morning sun.

The constant interaction with wildlife forces Brian to think less like a human teen and more like an animal. Eye-to-eye with the doe that leaps into his canoe, he is so shaken that he rethinks the need for caution and preparation on the lone canoe trip to Williams Lake. When he encounters a bear, he realizes that self-confidence and eye contact will communicate to the bear an assurance against an animal of greater strength. The decline of danger and the crescendo of intrinsic beauty causes Brian to place himself in the night scene, paddle across the moon's reflection, and sing to the wolf. Within his first week, he is once again at home canoeing, hunting, and camping. He has found his measure of challenge beyond cityscapes in the lifestyle that the Indian once followed in the wild.)

HOW LANGUAGE WORKS

Gary Paulsen delineates character not only by action and motivation, but by creating ideosyncratic language from a variety of sentence types and rhetorical patterns. Thus, Brian indicates much about self from his thoughts, words, and conversations:

1. The short, clear structure of Brian's thoughts in the wild express his communion with animal psychology: "The hawk did not hunt to kill. It hunted to eat."
2. More intense statements of discontent express Brian's life at odds with the mainstream teen: "But sports and shooting electronic bullets or rays at imaginary enemies that clomped across screens seemed silly, pale in comparison to what his real life had been like: having moose attack him, living on the edge of starving, living only because his thinking, his brain, kept him alive."
3. His re-assessment of self comes in spurts that sound pagan and visceral: "A boy animal. No, an animal-boy. I am animal-boy, he thought, and tried not to smile."
4. Brian's exchanges with Caleb are tentative at first as he retreats into non-communication to protect himself from an intruder:
"Tell me about the woods."
"Pardon?"
"The Woods. Tell me about them. . . ."
". . . They're all right."
5. In silent protest against being over-mothered, Brian says to himself, "He didn't know what he would do. Go crazy. Never be right. Somehow inside he would die."
6. In response to his first sight of wilderness, he turns thought into communion with God, "He thought, lord, what a wonderful place this is, and knew it was a kind of prayer."

7. Reading Shakespeare aloud jostles Brian from short, quick mental notes to deeper feelings: "A tear slid down his cheek, a tear for Juliet and Romeo, a tear for Shakespeare, who he wished were still alive, a tear for his own loss and a tear for the beauty of knowing sadness."
8. In a moment of light-heartedness, he responds to the wolf marking territory with urine by replying in kind: "Hello to you too, he peed."
9. In the primal act of killing grouse for food, Brian turns his thoughts to the unidentified great spirit and whispers, "Thank you . . . For the food, thank you."
10. Returned to a simplicity of thought and spirit, Brian relaxes in the wild, paddles on across the lake, and resolves, "He would follow his medicine."

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art

1. Organize a group to create step-by-step instructions on testing arrowheads, practicing archery, hanging supplies in a tree, skinning a grouse or scaling and gutting a panfish, reading a map, paddling and portage, digging a rain gutter, smudging to repel mosquitoes, and applying first-aid to a puncture wound. Bind the instructions into a book about the ancient style of living in the wild.
2. Draw a cartoon detailing Brian's encounters with the moose and bear, buying equipment, sharing dinner with Billy, flying from International Falls, or the fight with Carl. Select lines from the text to use as captions.
3. Design a poster displaying the northern lights. Add a caption explaining how the ionosphere ionizes.

Cinema

1. View films with teenage characters and police confrontations. Compare the movies' settings, themes, and dialogue to the incident at the pizza restaurant. Comment on the interplay of people of different social backgrounds, motivation, and experience.
2. Propose a movie of *Brian's Return*. Select actors for important roles, particularly Caleb, the pilot, Billy, Susan, Haley, Ben and his fellow fisherman, Brian's mother and father, and Brian.

Drama

Draw stage settings for a dramatization of boys fighting at a pizza restaurant, lighting a can of green leaves, placing bales of hay for archery practice, checking on the arrival of the canoe in Minnesota, and withdrawing from others at school. Supply sketches of costumes and props, such as a knife, shorts and shirt, notebook, green pond plants, plastic bags, tea cups, plane ticket, pieces of fish in rice, deer hide and crow feather on rawhide loop, paddles, antibiotics, and nylon cord.

Education

1. Role-play the incidents at school that force Brian to appear stuck-up. Put on a parallel scene of his return to school.
2. Propose curriculum, charts, and posters for a first aid class studying treatment of cuts, an arrow wound, sunburn, falls, and insect bites.
3. Brainstorm ways of preparing Brian for the return to the Canadian wild. Discuss areas of his education that need extra work, for example, paddling and portage, balancing nutrients, and weather watching. Suggest ways that he can overcome a distaste for city life.

Geography

1. Work with a small group to create a fictional encounter

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with indigenous people in another wilderness setting, for example, along the Amazon River, in the Australian outback, along the Congo River in Zaire, or in the Himalayan Mountains of Nepal. Suggest forms of sign language that communicate common needs, for instance, hunger, danger, injury, or request for directions or assistance.

2. Using a computer map program, generate a series of maps describing the Crees' ancestral tribal lands and their current reservations. Provide a sidebar listing population, employment, ancestry, schools and museums, and landmarks or tourist attractions that inform the public of the Cree way of life and contributions to Canadian history.
3. Mount an illustrated web site of terms describing the terrain. Include photos and definitions of the bush, lagoon, portage path, pond, lakeshore, and chain lakes.

Health

1. List the nutrients Brian obtains from fish, meat, rice, tea, potatoes, onion, salt, and sugar. Suggest areas of his diet that are lacking, for example, green leafy vegetables. Discuss his ability to postpone breakfast by drinking sweetened tea. What aspect of his diet provides calcium? What nutritional deficiencies is he subject to in the wild, such as beriberi, scurvy, or pellagra?
2. Make an illustrated report on the importance of dressing for moderate or light activity in warm months. What does Brian accomplish by sleeping nude in the sun? How do his shorts and life jacket protect him on his final canoe trip? Explain why Brian is wise to guard against mosquito bites.
3. Report orally on the importance of vitamins to supplement Brian's diet. Add symptoms of vitamin B deficiency that he hopes to overcome by taking the pills his mother suggests.
4. Define jet lag. List methods of avoiding or overcoming it.

History and Social Studies

1. Write a report on the Beringia land bridge and on the original native settlers of North America. Determine when migrants crossed from Russia into Alaska and Canada. Add a list of native skills, such as use of knives and arrows for hunting and transportation by canoe.
2. Make a list of manners and courtesies that will enable Brian to visit Cree campers, especially those with wives and children, and to express his thanks and willingness to learn from them. Include how to request food or directions or borrow equipment or weapons.
3. Outline the motivation and behavior of a bully. Characterize Carl Lammers's actions and explain why Brian is not at fault for Carl's hospitalization.

Language Arts

1. Read aloud from nonfiction, novels, plays, essays, and stories that describe survival lore and solitude, such as Jean Craighead George's *Julie of the Wolves* or Robin Lee Graham's *Dove*.
2. Explain in a theme the significance of reading Shakespearean tragedy aloud. Propose other titles that Brian might enjoy.
3. Write a theme in which you explain the role of a minor character, such as the pilot, the fishermen, Haley, the police, and Brian's father. Determine which characters interact effectively with Brian. Explain why they are more successful than Carl, Brian's mother, or Susan.
4. Read aloud a summary of the adventures of Alexander Selkirk, whom Daniel Defoe popularized as Robinson Crusoe. Compare Brian's adaptation to the wild with that of

Selkirk. Discuss why their stories make suspenseful reading.

5. Collect a group of biographies of authors who describe life in the woods. Include Black Elk, Barbara Kingsolver, John Steinbeck, Willa Cather, Dee Brown, Sarah Winnemucca, John James Audubon, Conrad Richter, James Fenimore Cooper, Suzanne Fisher-Staples, Charles Portis, Marjorie Kinan Rawlings, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and Grey Owl.
6. Make an illustrated pronouncing gazetteer to accompany *Brian's Return*. Include technical and scientific terms such as gunwale, predator, nocturnal, and fletcher.
7. Write a vignette or one-act radio play about Brian's June experience, going to the police station in handcuffs, departing Ranier, recovering from a storm, or meeting a blind counselor for the first time. Discuss which of Brian's actions are suited to pantomime, for example, complying with police orders or deplaning on the surface of a lake.
8. Write a theme on self-reliance. Include details from the novel, particularly Brian's study of the land and weather and his recall of articles on wilderness survival. Suggest ways that Brian could avoid other mishaps with his canoe, food scraps, and tent.
9. Draw a web of life showing the interrelation of skunks, rabbits, deer, beaver, grouse, humans, bears, wolves, moose, panfish, hawk, loon, muskie, and other creatures. Add an essay on how the season of the year would influence Brian's selection of available food supplies and alter his hunting and gathering methods. Why would he be more vulnerable in deep snow and ice or during severe weather, such as howling wind, extreme cold, or a blizzard?

Law

1. Read aloud state laws governing the penalties for fighting, improper bow hunting, and line fishing out of season. Determine why Brian is less likely to commit infractions of the law in the Canadian wild than he is at a pizza restaurant with friends.
2. Make a chart of advice to Susan about the fight she witnessed and the kind of testimony that she would have to give against Carl in court for shoving her and twisting a kneecap.
3. Discuss the value of intermediaries to represent underage suspects at police stations and in court. List the personal and professional qualities each should possess. Explain why a former police officer like Caleb impresses Brian with his ability to understand the need for communion with the wild.

Mathematics and Logic

1. Make a summer weather chart detailing the rise and fall of temperatures and the effects of extreme rain and wind on Brian's body, animals, and trees. Include information about flooding, storms, and lake and portage conditions.
2. Determine how much meat Brian consumes after he begins fishing with line and hooks and hunting with bow and arrow. Compare the weight of the animals to Brian's body weight.
3. Make a model to illustrate why Brian chooses to kneel at the back of the canoe and balance his weight with gear stowed in the front. Show why kneeling is safer than sitting on the seat to paddle.

Psychology

1. Compose an extended definition of social, emotional, and physical isolation. Explain why the term suits Brian at

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home and school, in police custody, and at International Falls, the pilot's shack, and the Canadian lakes.

- Using incidents from the book, comment on gradual changes in Brian. Discuss how growing up in the confines of the city produces an awareness that not everyone can live an average life.
- Write an encyclopedia entry on delinquency. Add details that explain why counseling is one method of controlling bullies and rehabilitating conflicted children like Brian.
- Project a return visit to the lake to the Smallhorns' camp. Offer Brian's explanation of the difficulties of returning to the city, school, and normal teen expectations. Explain why Brian's maturity in the wild isolates him from peers.

Religion

Debate reasons for Brian's reverence to indeterminate spirits of nature. Why does he thank the grouse?

Science

- Draw a wall chart proving Brian's suppositions about the formation of European cities around sites cleared by beaver.
- Make an audiotaped report on wolf behavior. Explain why wolves howl at night and mark territory with urine.
- Compose a list of features on hunting weapons, for example, feathers to guide an arrow along a straight path to the target. Explain why Brian needs both knife and bow for hunting. Comment on his choice of two styles of arrows.
- Act out scenes from the food chain. Include humankind as part of the progression of animal and plant life.
- Summarize the elements of flying that a pilot must master, including taxiing, idling, takeoff, and throttling back.
- Assemble a handbook to the wild that describes the appearance of pine, cedar, ironwood, rosewood, spruce, poplar, birch, and pond lilies and the habits of the muskie, rock bass, blue gill, northern pike, sunfish, grouse, loon, hawk, rabbit, mice, grubs, and otter.
- Join a research team to study the identification of the planet Venus. Explain why it is often called the morning star.

Speech

Compose a speech to deliver to parents of teens who want to learn survival skills. Balance the dangers of hunting and orienteering with the benefits of wholesome endeavors, such as woods and animal lore, fresh air, exercise, and learning self-reliance.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

- List examples in the novel of cold, wet, yearning, hard work, practice, memories, terror, daydreams, planning, discomfort, welcome, thanks, disgust, false accusation, contemplation, and admiration.
- Compile lines that express Brian's respect for animals and dislike of killing.
- Compose a scene in which Brian returns to the woods as an adult to join Billy or the Smallhorns and other Crees.
- Make a list of animals and characters from the novel and explain the relationship of each to the return to the wilderness. Include the pilot, Caleb, Brian's father, mice, rabbits, Brian, Susan, police, Haley, Brian's mother, bear, Smallhorns, cow moose, doe, Billy, a grouse, Carl, skunk, wolf, panfish, and Ben. Why does Brian thank the animals he kills?

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. F |
| 2. H | 7. D |
| 3. C | 8. A |
| 4. J | 9. G |
| 5. B | 10. I |

Part II: Fact/Opinion (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. O | 7. T |
| 3. F | 8. O |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. F | 10. O |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

- Brian's arrows are slotted and ready for use.
- He fits the canoe yoke to his shoulders for portage between lakes.
- He believes that the deer he didn't shoot has a mystic meaning that Indians refer to as medicine.
- The waterways that Brian travels are lakes linked by ponds and rivulets, some too shallow for him to navigate.
- The pilot takes Brian to his shack by bushplane, which taxis across the water to a pier.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. D |
| 2. A | 7. C |
| 3. A | 8. A |
| 4. D | 9. B |
| 5. C | 10. B |

Part II: Setting Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. police station | 6. Mackey's Pizza Den |
| 2. two-car garage | 7. shack |
| 3. backyard | 8. Ranier |
| 4. Williams Lake | 9. chain lakes |
| 5. Raft | 10. Minneapolis |

Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

- Caleb, mouse
- bow, hay bales
- Ben, woods
- Shakespeare, edible
- rabbits, doe

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

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VOCABULARY TEST

Using the terms in parentheses, complete each sentence below with a detail from the novel.

1. (stringer) The panfish he needed for dinner _____

2. (marooned) His mother's memories _____

3. (nocked) To hunt small game, bows _____

4. (deluge) Tumbled down the lakeshore, _____

5. (birchbark) The sputtering flame erupted _____

6. (castigating) Brian had to leave school and _____

7. (mickle) In reading *Romeo and Juliet*, _____

8. (keening) The duet with the wolf _____

9. (calling card) The smell of wolf urine _____

10. (illusion) The wavelets traveling from prow to rear _____

11. (velvet) The buck's horns _____

12. (medicine) The spirit of the deer _____

13. (carnivorous) Among hibernating animals, _____

14. (feint) The bear's playful jabs _____

15. (nocturnal) The squeaks of the dying rabbits _____

BRIAN'S RETURN

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match the following descriptions with characters. Choose your answers from the list of names and creatures below. You may use some of the answers more than once and some not at all. Some questions may have multiple answers.

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| _____ 1. claws a tree. | A. Carl |
| _____ 2. agrees to go one hundred miles beyond the initial destination. | B. Brian's mother |
| _____ 3. receives a medicine token on rawhide. | C. Brian |
| _____ 4. keens in a duet with Brian. | D. Cree |
| _____ 5. believes Vitamin C will be necessary. | E. bear |
| _____ 6. twists a kneecap. | F. Susan |
| _____ 7. fish on Williams Lake. | G. cow moose |
| _____ 8. goes to the hospital in an ambulance. | H. pilot |
| _____ 9. chooses not to charge Brian and continues chewing. | I. Ben |
| _____ 10. fishes annually as a way to return to the wild. | J. wolf |

Part II: Fact/Opinion (20 points)

Mark each statement either **T** for true, **F** for false, or **O** for opinion. Explain your answer on the line that follows.

- _____ 1. Brian deceives his mother concerning his intent to return home.

- _____ 2. The canoe offers full shelter from rain during the night of the storm.

- _____ 3. Without a rifle, Brian is helpless against large game like moose and bear.

- _____ 4. The flight to Canada puts Brian within one hundred miles of Williams Lake.

- _____ 5. Late the first afternoon, Brian makes contact with Billy.

- _____ 6. Brian's arrow is in place as he walks toward the stranger at his camp.

- _____ 7. Ben and his comrade care little about catching muskie.

- _____ 8. Brian is partial to his father.

- _____ 9. It feels normal to Brian to be thinking about his mother.

- _____ 10. Brian is foolish to leave off his life jacket.

BRIAN'S RETURN

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain the significance of the following details:

1. nocked
2. yoke
3. medicine
4. chain lakes
5. bushplane

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe the state of Brian's gear after the storm.
2. List ways that animals behave in the night.
3. Explain why smudging rids the air of mosquitoes.
4. Summarize Brian's arrival to the wild.

BRIAN'S RETURN

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose a correct answer to complete each statement. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Brian's father considers him a
A. competent bowman. B. man. C. troublemaker for assaulting Carl. D. stuck-up loner.
- _____ 2. The panfish A. go well with rice. B. make a good stew with potatoes and an onion.
C. draw bears to the hidden supplies. D. take too long to cook in the aluminum pot.
- _____ 3. The sudden shove A. twists Susan's kneecap. B. bloodies Brian's nose.
C. ends Brian's problems with the football player.
D. expresses Carl's attitude toward Haley, who is small for his age.
- _____ 4. The thump on the head A. comes from the backpack frame.
B. sends Carl to the police to complain of assault. C. kills the grouse.
D. momentarily knocks Brian unconscious.
- _____ 5. The doe's sudden leap A. costs Brian one life jacket. B. is a demonstration of animal medicine.
C. overturns Brian's canoe. D. changes Brian's mind about being ready to return to the wild.
- _____ 6. Caleb asks A. about sunsets in the North. B. why Brian would assault a football player.
C. if the police were right in handcuffing Brian. D. for no money.
- _____ 7. Brian's mother insists on A. a fleecy anorak. B. accompanying him to Minneapolis airport.
C. vitamins during the return. D. consulting his father for permission.
- _____ 8. The axe reminds Brian A. of the hatchet he carried when he was marooned.
B. to collect dry birchbark for a fire. C. of the Cree style of hunting.
D. about his mother's insistence that he return home at the end of summer.
- _____ 9. In the night, Brian awakens to A. find a skunk spraying his campfire.
B. paddle across the lake in the moon's reflection. C. give thanks for food. D. see if Billy is asleep.
- _____ 10. The dream suggests that A. the Smallhorns are nearby. B. Brian will one day live like Billy.
C. Caleb is right about the need to return to Williams Lake.
D. Shakespeare was speaking about young people in love.

Part II: Setting Identification (20 points)

Identify the settings in which the following events take place. Select your answers from the list that follows.

backyard	chain lakes	Mackey's Pizza Den	The Raft	shack
Billy's canoe	father's house	Minneapolis	Ranier	two-car garage
bushplane	hospital	police station	school	Williams Lake

- _____ 1. Brian's mother believes that he was fighting over a girl.
- _____ 2. Caleb Lancaster's surroundings are sparse and poorly decorated.
- _____ 3. Brian sleeps outdoors and tries to see the stars.
- _____ 4. The Smallhorns are fishing.
- _____ 5. Brian finds a rawhide loop and a feather and deer hide.
- _____ 6. Susan tries to explain Brian's involvement in the fight.
- _____ 7. Brian chooses to sleep outdoors and sips sweetened tea for breakfast.
- _____ 8. The bushplane takes off with four aboard.
- _____ 9. Brian plans to cover one hundred miles alone.
- _____ 10. He locates the shuttle to International Falls.

BRIAN'S RETURN

Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

Fill in the blanks with answers that complete each statement.

1. He tells _____ about locating a _____ city in tall grass covered in snow
2. To keep his sanity, Brian begins gathering the items, orders a canoe, and practices with the _____ using _____ for targets.
3. _____ believes that Brian has "got the _____ in you."
4. He carries two volumes of _____ and a guide to _____ plants.
5. That night, he hears predators killing _____ and realizes that the _____ picked his campsite.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Explain the significance of two of the following quotations:

1. I will kill to eat, or to defend myself. But for no other reason.
2. He was meeting himself years from now, an old man who looked carved in wood moving through and with the forest, being of and with the woods, and he decided that it wouldn't be so bad a thing to be.
3. They tell me you're the boy who lived in the woods."
4. Suddenly—and it was so quick he almost missed it—a spear of golden light shot from the sun and seemed to pierce the star.
5. There was something bigger than he was, something bigger than everybody, bigger than all.



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