

Brian's Winter

Gary Paulsen

Teacher's Guide

Written by Laurie Ryzans, Ph.D.

PERMA-BOUND
CLASSROOM FAVORITES

CLASSROOM
FAVORITES

A Perma-Bound Production

This guide was prepared using the Random House edition, ©1996. Other editions may differ.

Synopsis

Foreword

The author explains that he wrote this book at the request of readers who wanted to know what would have happened to Brian if he had not been rescued.

Part One Fall

Chapter 1

Brian has been marooned in the Canadian wilderness nearly three months after a plane crash. With the supplies he salvaged from the wreck exhausted, he feels severe hunger pains. He also notices that it is starting to get cold. Preparing to hunt, Brian realizes that his rifle is broken and cannot be repaired. He is forced to hunt with his bow and arrow, but he easily kills a rabbit. Brian's only saved food is some fish that he has saved in a pool.

Chapter 2

Brian is doing well until a bear comes to his camp, lured by the scent of food. The bear attacks him but fortunately does only minimal damage. Brian has become his own worst enemy because he has stopped paying attention to his surroundings.

Chapter 3

Brian makes a stronger bow and arrows so he can catch larger game. He kills a foolbird with his new equipment and commemorates the event by drawing the event in charcoal on the stone wall above his bed.

Chapter 4

Brian realizes that surviving will become more difficult when winter begins. To prepare, he

winterproofs his shelter, makes razor-sharp flint arrowheads, and sews the rabbit skins into warmer clothing.

Chapter 5

Some wolves kill a deer and after they have eaten their fill, Brian takes the rest of the meat. He cooks and eats most of it and dries some to make jerky. A skunk comes by and threatens to spray Brian unless it gets some of the meat. Brian complies.

Chapter 6

The skunk come back every day and Brian regards it with rueful good humor. He practices with his new arrows, determined to kill a deer.

Chapter 7

The bear returns for some of the venison, but the skunk drives it off by spraying it in the eyes. Brian decides to make a large lance.

Part Two Winter

Chapter 8

Brian is running out of food and his clothing is in shreds. He makes a pair of moccasins from the deer hide, and they prove a great success. The next day the ground is blanketed in snow.

Chapter 9

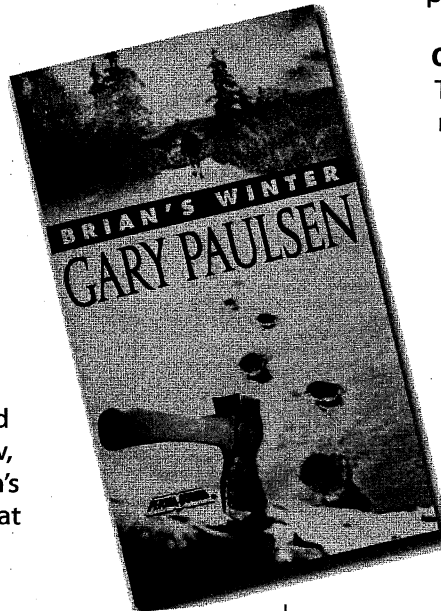
Brian goes hunting and kills a moose with his lance. The moose falls on him and he narrowly avoids serious injury.

Chapter 10

Working through the night, Brian skins the moose and cuts up the meat. The meat is delicious.

Chapter 11

The moose proves to be a godsend, as the weather turns sharply colder. It rains for days on end. Then it snows, but Brian has plenty of meat, all safely frozen.



Chapter 12

Brian makes himself a Thanksgiving dinner with moose meat and a sauce of red berries. He misses home and family. To distract himself, Brian cleans his shelter and gives thanks. He hears what he thinks is a gunshot.

Chapter 13

The gunshot turns out to be the sound of trees exploding from the extreme cold.

Chapter 14

Brian makes himself snowshoes, which enable him to move around outside much more easily. He is astonished to find that he has consumed most of his meat. He must hunt soon.

Chapter 15

In the brutal cold, Brian shoots a deer.

Chapter 16

Brian sees wolves brutally kill a deer. They eat the deer while it is still alive, to Brian's horror. Brian hears what sounds like shots, but it is too warm for trees to explode.

Chapter 17

Brian finds four huge sled dogs, malamutes. Then he sees a Native American man and his family! The man says that he noticed Brian three weeks ago and didn't want to bother him.

Epilogue

The Native American man, David Smallhorn, is the head of a Cree family that makes its living trapping. Brian stays with them for three weeks until the supply plane rescues him. Brian thinks that he almost doesn't want to leave.

Timeline

- 1939 Gary Paulsen born
- 1941 December 7: America enters World War II
- 1948 State of Israel founded
- 1950 Korean War begins
- 1952 Elizabeth II crowned Queen of England
Car seat belts introduced
Polio vaccine invented
- 1954 Supreme Court issues *Brown v. Board of Education*, making segregation illegal
- 1955 Disneyland opens
McDonald's corporation founded
- 1956 Sabin invents oral polio vaccine
- 1957 Dr. Seuss publishes *The Cat in the Hat*
- 1958 NASA established
- 1960 First televised U.S. presidential debate
- 1961 Peace Corps founded
Berlin Wall built
Alan Shepard is first American in space
- 1963 President Kennedy assassinated
- 1967 First Super Bowl
First heart transplant
Six Day War in Middle East
- 1969 Neil Armstrong is the first human on the moon
- 1974 President Nixon resigns
- 1979 Sony introduces the Walkman
- 1981 First woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court
Pac-man video game is very popular
- 1983 Sally Ride becomes first woman in space
- 1989 Berlin Wall taken down
- 1990 Nelson Mandela is freed in South Africa
- 1991 Collapse of Soviet Union
- 1996 *Brian's Winter* published
- 1997 Scientists clone sheep
China resumes control of Hong Kong
- 1999 World population reaches 6 billion
- 2001 Sept. 11: al-Qaeda terrorists destroy twin towers at World Trade Center in Manhattan
- 2002 Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter wins Nobel Peace Prize
- 2004 Huge tsunami in the Indian Ocean kills more than 280,000 people, one of the deadliest natural disasters in history.
- 2005 Hurricane Katrina pounds Gulf Coast, destroying many parts of New Orleans.

Author Sketch

Born in 1939, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Gary Paulsen had an extremely difficult childhood. Because his father was an Army officer, the family relocated often. In addition, both his parents were alcoholics and his mother was also a drug addict who suffered from mental illness. As a result, Paulsen was often left unattended or thrust on others. Early on, survival became more important than school. Recalling his childhood in an interview in *Publishers Weekly*, Paulsen said: "I sold newspapers at night in bars, and I found that if I let the drunks get a little drunker, I could get a little more money for my papers. Instead of a dime, I could get a quarter."



A turning point came one bitter cold winter, when Paulsen sought refuge in a library. When the librarian offered him a library card, he took one without thinking. "The most astonishing thing happened," Paulsen said. "This silly little card with my name on it gave me an identity I had not had. I felt I had become somebody." With the encouragement of the librarian, Paulsen became an avid reader.

Paulsen was only fourteen when he ran away from home and began traveling with a carnival. Eventually his wandering led him to work as a migrant farm hand, a construction worker, a truck driver, a sailor, and an engineer. Paulsen began writing and had some success. However, a libel claim over his young-adult book *Winterkill* sparked a lawsuit. Combined with his problems with alcohol, Paulsen gave up writing for about two years and turned to racing dogsleds. When a medical condition forced him to sell his dog teams, he returned to writing and met with great success.

Many of Paulsen's books draw from his event-filled life. For example, in *Eastern Sun, Winter Moon: An Autobiographical Odyssey*, Paulsen describes his cross-country journey to meet his long-absent father, his family's unsettling life in the Philippines, and the collapse of his parents' marriage.

Brian's Winter, as with the other books in the "Brian" series, draws from Paulsen's experiences working as a trapper. When a friend gave him an old

dogsled and dogs, Paulsen quickly took to the work. He spent long hours running his sled and entered a few local races. In 1983, he entered the famous Iditarod dogsled race, the 1,200-mile run across Alaska that has been called "the last great race on earth." Voted by his fellow mushers "the least likely to get out of Anchorage," Paulsen managed to finish the grueling race, and it forever changed him as a person.

"I don't make stuff up much," admits Paulsen. "Most of the things I write about are based on personal inspection at zero altitude, and I have scars pretty much all over my body to prove those things."

Paulsen has been married three times and has children from his first and third marriages.

Critic's Corner

Paulsen is justly celebrated for his achievements. His awards include the Central Missouri Award for Children's Literature (1976); a Newbery Honor designation for *Dogsong* (1986); and a Newbery Honor designation and a Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award for *Hatchet* (1989).

Brian's Winter is a continuation of *Hatchet*. In that novel, the pilot of a single-engine plane has a heart attack and dies, crashing his plane in the Canadian wilderness. Brian Robeson, the sole passenger, must set aside his problems and try to survive, armed only with a hatchet his mother gave him as a parting gift.

Brian's Winter was greeted with accolades. *Publishers Weekly*, for example, said: "The pace never relents—the story begins, as it were, in the middle, with Brian already toughened up and his reflexes primed for crisis. Paulsen serves up one cliffhanger after another (a marauding bear, a charging elk), and always there are the supreme challenges of obtaining food and protection against the cold."

School Library Journal was equally positive: "The author's ability to cast a spell, mesmerize his audience, and provide a clinic in winter survival is reason enough to buy this novel. Although the plot is both familiar and predictable, Paulsen fans will not be disappointed."

Brian's Winter Gary Paulsen

Hazel Rochman, writing in *Booklist*, said: "Writing with simplicity, Paulsen is at his best in an elemental story of wilderness survival. ... Paulsen writes with the authoritative particularity of someone who knows the woods. This docunovel is for outdoors lovers and also for all of those adventurers snug at home in a centrally heated high-rise. The facts are the drama." *Kirkus Review* said: "Paulsen crafts a companion/sequel to *Hatchet* containing many of its same pleasures... Read together, the two books make his finest tale of survival yet."

Critic Eugene J. Lineham praised the author's style, saying: "There is poetic majesty in the descriptions without a touch of condescension to the young." Gary M. Salvner commented in *Writers for Young Adults*: "Whether angry or happy, whether writing about survival or growing up, Gary Paulsen is always a hopeful writer, for he believes that young people must be respected as they are guided into adulthood."

Other Books By Gary Paulsen

Mr. Tucket (1968; 1994)
Winterkill (1976)
The Death Specialists (1976)
The Implosion Effect (1976)
C. B. Jockey (1977)
Tiltawhirl John (1977)
The Foxman (1978)
The Night the White Deer Died (1978)
Hope and a Hatchet (1978)
Meteorite-Track 291 (1979)
The Spitball Gang (1980)
The Sweeper (1980)
Compkill (1981)
Clutterkill (1982)
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights (1983)
Dancing Carl (1983)
Tracker (1984)
Dogsong (1985)
Sentries (1986)
The Crossing (1987, 2006)
Hatchet (1987)
The Island (1988)
Murphy's Gold (1988)
Murphy's Herd (1989)
Night Rituals (1989)
The Winter Room (1989)
The Voyage of the Frog (1989)

The Boy Who Owned the School: A Comedy of Love (1990)
Kill Fee (1990)
Murphy's War (1990)
Canyons (1990)
Woodsong (1990)
The Cookcamp (1991)
The Monument (1991)
The River (1991)
A Christmas Sonata (1992)
Clabbered Dirt (1992)
The Haymeadow (1992)
Harris and Me (1993)
Nightjohn (1993)
Sisters/Hermanas (1993)
The Car (1994)
Father Water, Mother Woods (1994)
Legend of Red Horse Cavern (1994)
Rodomonte's Revenge (1994)
Winterdance: The Fine Madness of Running the Iditarod (1994)
Call Me Francis Tucket (1995)
Danger on Midnight River (1995)
The Rifle (1995)
The Tent: A Tale in One Sitting (1995)
Murphy's Ambush (1995)
The Tortilla Factory (1995)
Murphy's Trail (1996)
Worksong (1997)
Tucket's Ride (1997)
The Schernoff Discoveries (1997)
Soldier's Heart: A Novel of the Civil War (1998)
The Transall Sag (1998)
Alida's Song (1999)
Brian's Return (1999)
Canoe Days (1999)
Escape, Return, Breakout (2000)
Tucket's Home (2000)
The White Fox Chronicles (2000)
Sarny: A Life Remembered (2001)
Dancing Carl (2001)
Tucket's Gold (2001)
Canoe Days (2001)
Alida's Song (2001)
Captive (2001)
Puppies, Dogs, and Blue Northers (2002)
Brian's Hunt (2003)
The Beet Fields (2002)
My Life in Dog Years (2003)
The Glass Café; or, The Stripper and the State: How My Mother Started a War with the System That Made Us Kind of Rich and a Little Bit Famous (2003)

Shelf Life: Stories by the Book (2003)
Caught by the Sea: My Life on Boats (2003)
White Fox Chronicles (2003)
Tucket's Home (2003)
Guts: The True Story Behind Hatchet and the Brian Books (2003)
Cookcamp (2003)
The Tent (1995)
The Quilt (2005)
The Winter Room (2005)
World of Adventure Omni (2006)
Molly McGinty Has a Really Good Day (2006)
The Amazing Life of Birds: The Twenty-Day Puberty Journal of Duane Homer Leach (2006)
The Time Hackers (2006)
The Legend of Bass Reeves (2006)

Paulsen has also written volumes of short stories, nonfiction, books for children, the Culpepper Adventures series, the World of Adventure series, one-act plays, and screenplays.

Bibliography

Books

Chevalier, Tracy, ed. *Twentieth Century Children's Writers*, 3d ed. Chicago: St. James, 1989.
 Commire, Anne, ed. *Something About the Author*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1993, vol. 54, pp. 76-82.
 Garrett, Agnes, and Helga P. McCue, eds. *Authors and Artists for Young Adults*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1989, vol. 2, pp. 165-173.
 Paulsen, Gary. *The Beet Fields: Memories of a Sixteenth Summer*. Delacorte Press (New York, NY), 2000.
 Paulsen, Gary. *Caught by the Sea: My Life on Boats*. Delacorte (New York, NY), 2001.
 Paulsen, Gary. *Pilgrimage on a Steelride: A Memoir about Men and Motorcycles*. Harcourt (New York, NY), 1997.
 Paulsen Gary. *Puppies, Dogs, and Blue Northers: Reflections on Being Raised by a Pack of Sled Dogs*. Harcourt (New York, NY), 1996.
St. James Guide to Young Adult Readers, 2nd ed. St. James Press (Detroit, MI), 1999.
 Salvner, Gary, M. *Presenting Gary Paulsen*. Twayne. (New York, NY), 1996.
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 4th ed. St. James Press (Detroit, MI), 1995.
Twentieth-Century Western Writers, 2nd ed. St. James Press (Detroit, MI), 1991.
Writers for Young Adults. Scribner. (New York, NY), 1997.

Periodicals

ALAN Review, fall, 1994, James A. Schmitz, "Gary Paulsen: A Writer of his Time." *Best Sellers*, July, 1985.
Christian Science Monitor, November 6, 1987, p. B5.
Horn Book, January, 1999, review of *Brian's Return*, p. 69.
 Lewis, Randy. "He Owes It All to Librarians and Dogs." In *Los Angeles Times*, 31 July 1994, pp. E1, E6.
Library Journal, February 15, 1993.
London Review of Books, May 23, 1996, p. 28.
Los Angeles Times, December 12, 1987.
Los Angeles Times Book Review, March 21, 1993, pp. 1, 11; February 27, 1994, pp. 2, 13.
 Miller, Kay. "Suddenly Fame and Fortune." *Minneapolis Star-Tribune Sunday Magazine*, 10 July 1988, pp. 5-12.
 Nelms, Elizabeth D. and Ben F. Nelms. "Gary Paulsen: The Storyteller's Legacy." *English Journal*, January 1992, pp. 85-88.
New York Times Book Review, June 29, 1986, p. 30; May 22, 1988; May 5, 1991, pp. 22-23; November 10, 1996, p. 46; November 15, Leonard S. Marcus, interview with Paulsen, p. 98.
Seattle Times, February 28, 1999, Kari Wergeland, "Award-winning Stories of Hope, Survival," p. M9.
Voice of Youth Advocates, October, 1986, p. 148; June, 1994; February, 1996, p. 375; February, 1997, p. 332.
Writer's Digest, January, 1980.

General Objectives

1. To appreciate nature's fierce beauty
2. To analyze the difficulty of survival in nature
3. To define maturity
4. To compare and contrast the woods in summer and winter
5. To understand wild animals
6. To compare Brian's experiences with the reader's own life
7. To understand the novel's title
8. To analyze Brian's character
9. To probe the relationship between predator and prey
10. To assess the novel's veracity and believability

Specific Objectives

1. To appreciate Paulsen's beautiful descriptions of the woods
2. To see how Brian makes weapons, including bows and arrows
3. To understand how Brian kills, skins, and eats smaller game as well as moose and deer
4. To appreciate the effect of the snowshoes
5. To trace Brian's astonishing abilities to survive
6. To analyze the tremendous difficulty of life in the north woods
7. To understand Brian's conflicted feelings about hunting
8. To grasp the effect of luck on Brian's survival
9. To appreciate Brian's resourcefulness, determination, and intelligence
10. To identify the novel's structure, especially its climax

The Importance of Setting

Brian is marooned in the Canadian wilderness, a wildly dangerous environment. This setting is crucial to the novel because the entire plot centers on it. The novel would not make sense in a comfortable and safe environment, such as Brian's home. As a result, the setting functions much as another character would.

Winter in the region is brutal because temperatures can dip as low as -60 F, as Brian discovers. During winter, the soil is often frozen. Life can be cold and dreary, as Brian finds. Snow, cold, and a scarcity of food make life very difficult in the winter. Some animals migrate south, others go into hibernation, while others simply cope with the environment.

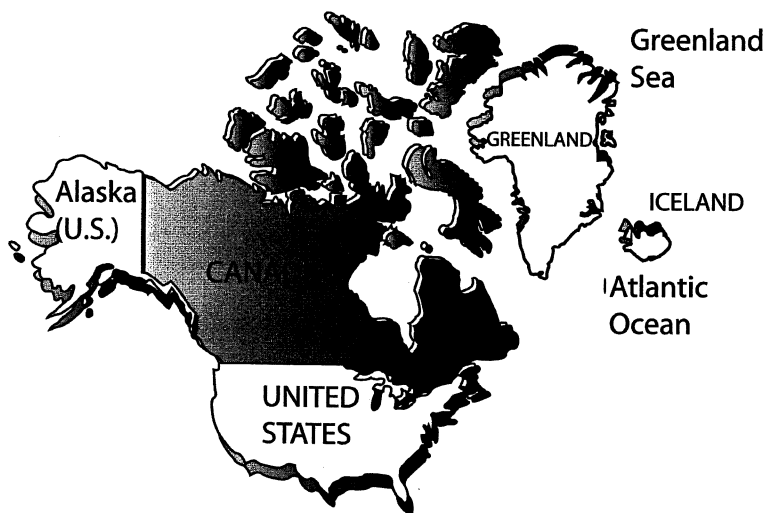
Brian realizes that to prevent hypothermia, he must be sheltered from the cold, wind, snow, and rain. He conserves body heat by making and wearing extra clothing. He also realizes that he needs high energy foods, especially fatty meat. He makes a fire and keeps its embers in his shelter. Despite all his precautions, Brian can be killed by a twist of fate or simple carelessness, as he comes to realize.

Literary Terms and Applications

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

description a word picture of what something or someone is like. Description is made up of sensory details that help readers form pictures in their minds. Paulsen uses description to help readers visualize the scenes. An especially beautiful passage reads: "As he sipped, the sun came up over the lake and for the hundredth time he noted how beautiful it was—mist rising, the new sun shining like gold."

suspense the feeling or tension or anticipation an author creates in a work. Authors create suspense by unexpected plot twists. This keeps readers interested in the story and makes them want to read on to find out what will happen. Paulsen creates suspense by ending many of the chapters with a cliffhanger. For example, Chapter 2 ends this way: "Everything in nature means something and he had missed the warnings that summer was ending, had in many ways already ended, and what was coming would be the most dangerous thing he had faced since the plane crash." As a result of this suspense, readers eagerly turn the page to see what event will place Brian in the most danger of his life.



climax the highest point in the action. During the climax, the conflict is resolved and the end of the story becomes clear. The climax is also called the turning point. The climax of *Brian's Winter* occurs in the last chapter when Brian discovers that he is not alone in the wilderness. This means that he has been rescued at long last.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Nonfiction

- Craig Childs, *The Way Out: A True Story of Survival*
Norma Cobb and Charles Sasser, *Arctic Homestead: The True Story of One Family's Story of Survival and Courage in the Alaska Wilds*
Loretta Cox, *The Winter Walk: A Century-Old Survival Story from the Arctic*
P. Dowswell, *True Survival Stories*
David Fletcher, *Hunted: A True Story of Survival*
Edmund Sir Hillary and Lennard Bickel, *Mawson's Will: The Greatest Polar Survival Story Ever Written*
Larry Kaniut and Brian Sostrom, *Cheating Death: Amazing Survival Stories from Alaska*
Dorcas Miller, *Rescue: Stories of Survival from Land and Sea*
Katherine Rhett, *Survival Stories: Memoirs of Crisis*
Jennifer Schwamm, *Explore: Stories of Survival from Off the Map*
Patricia Van Tighem, *The Bear's Embrace: A True Story of Survival*
Lamar Underwood, *The Greatest Survival Stories Ever Told: Seventeen Incredible Tales*
Clint Willis, *Wild: Stories of Survival from the World's Most Dangerous Places*

Fiction

- James Fenimore Cooper, *The Leather Stocking Tales*
Daniel Defoe, *The Incredible Story of Robinson Crusoe*
Nate Hardcastle, *The Best Adventure and Survival Stories of 2003*
Jack London, *Call of the Wild*
Jack London, *White Fang*
Jack London, *Klondike and Other Stories*
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*

Media Adaptations

- Dogsong* was adapted as a filmstrip with cassette; Random House/Miller-Brody, 1986.
Dancing Carl was adapted as a narrative ballet for two dancers, original music by John Collins and

choreography by Nancy Keller, and aired on Minnesota Public Television. Numerous books by Paulsen have been adapted as audiobooks.

Videos/Films

- Cast Way* (2000)
Bears (2002)
The Edge (1997)
Gentle Ben (2002)
Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey (1993)
Real Animals: A Day with Bears (1998)
Robinson Crusoe (1996)
Six Days, Seven Nights (1998)
Wilderness Adventure: Inspiring Stories of Survival (2001)

Internet

- Gary Paulsen Web site
<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/garypaulsen/>
Gary Paulsen biographical information and interviews
www.randomhouse.com/features/garypaulsen/
Gary Paulsen biographical information and interviews
www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/paulsen.html
Author Profile
www.trelease-on-reading.com/paulsen.html
Kidsreads.com
www.kidsreads.com/authors/au-paulsen-gary.asp
Author Profile
www.ipl.org/div/kidspace/askauthor/paulsen.html
Scholarly information on Gary Paulsen
scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/fall94/Schmitz.html
Author Profile: Gary Paulsen
www.teenreads.com/authors/au-paulsen-gary.asp

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Gary Paulsen's *Brian's Winter* should include these aspects:

Themes

- boredom
- cold
- hunger
- isolation
- loneliness
- maturity
- nature
- physical danger
- survival
- wolves

Motifs

- appreciating nature's beauty
- being resourceful
- coping with wolves, bears, and other predators
- dealing with loneliness
- exploring the environment
- growing to love the wilderness
- overcoming adversity
- protecting yourself against dangerously cold weather
- respecting all living things
- solving problems

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. This book is written for all those readers of *Hatchet* and *The River* who wrote (I received as many as two hundred letters a day) to tell me they felt Brian Robeson's story was left unfinished by his early rescue before... (Foreword)
(As Paulsen states in the Foreword, *Brian's Winter* is a continuation of the series he began with *Hatchet*. This quote also shows the tremendous interest *Hatchet* sparked and the vast number of loyal readers it attracted. Last, the quote indicates that Paulsen listens to his readers and responds to their desires.)
2. The firing pin—a raised part of the bolt—was broken cleanly away. (p. 8)
(Initially, Brian had relied on the supplies in the plane. When they ran out, he could shoot the game he needed. Now that the rifle is broken and cannot be repaired, the book takes a dramatic turn as Brian's survival is imperiled.)
3. But Brian had become a part of nature, had become a predator, a two-legged wolf. (p. 10)
(The longer Brian is in the woods, the more he adapts to survive. Brian's body must have food to live, so Brian must kill other living creatures. As a result, he has changed from a soft suburban boy to a tough man who does what he must do to live.)
4. Brian had become his own worst enemy because in all the business of hunting, fishing and surviving, he had forgotten the primary rule: Always, always pay attention to what was happening. (p. 21)
(Brian gets distracted and forgets that the animals will smell his food and come after it. He is shocked into this realization when a bear attacks him to get at his food. Miraculously, Brian is not badly injured—but he does learn a crucial lesson that greatly improves his chances for survival. He learns to pay attention to his surroundings at all times.)
5. It is my medicine arrow. (p. 30)
(After he kills two animals with the same arrow, Brian decides that the arrow is lucky. Here, we see Brian adopting some of the beliefs of early peoples, especially the belief in luck. Indeed, luck is a vital force in Brian's survival.)
6. But the truth was that killing her made him feel sad—elated and sad all at once, as he had been with the wolf-killed doe. (p. 81)
(Brian feels very conflicted about having killed the moose. On one hand he has no choice, because if he does not kill the creature he will starve. On the other hand, it saddens him that something has to die for him to live.)
7. What he wanted more than anything was out, to be back in the world. (p. 94)
(Brian does not often feel homesick, but when he does, it hits him hard. In this scene, he misses home very much and yearns to return to civilization. However, he does not dwell on his feelings. Instead, he keeps himself busy. This shows his resourcefulness and intelligence.)

8. The hatchet. The key to it all. (p. 95)
(Paulsen states that Brian would not have been able to survive without the hatchet. Readers can debate this point, because regardless of the tool, Brian would not have been able to survive had he not been well-trained in survival skills, determined, and lucky.)
9. He couldn't think of a word. He wanted to say "play," but he didn't think in terms of playing any longer. Or maybe it was that he considered it all play. (p. 117)
(Despite the hardships that he endures on a daily basis, Brian is enjoying his time in the woods. He misses his parents and civilized luxuries, but he revels in the freedom and beauty of nature. Given Paulsen's background, readers can logically assume that this part of the novel reflects Paulsen's feelings about living in the wilderness.)
10. "Smelled your smoke three weeks ago." (p. 130)
(This is the novel's climax, the point of highest interest, as Brian is rescued. His great adventure is over.)

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 in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. Where is Brian?
(He is in a remote and isolated part of the Canadian woods. The exact location is never revealed.)
2. Why is Brian there all alone?
(He was marooned in a plane crash.)
3. What happens to Brian's rifle? Why does this matter?
(The rifle breaks and cannot be repaired. This matters because winter is approaching and Brian must trap and kill all his food with a bow, arrow, and lance.)
4. How does Brian help the skunk? How does the skunk help Brian?
(Brian feeds the skunk hunks of meat. In

exchange, the skunk sprays the bear and scares him off. This likely saves Brian's life.)

5. What happens to some of the trees in the middle of the winter?
(They explode from the cold.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. Why does Brian draw the story of his kills on the wall?
(As with hunters in the ancient days, he wants to celebrate and commemorate his success. He wants to leave a permanent record of his accomplishments.)
7. What are Brian's main character traits?
(Resourceful, clever, capable, determined, upbeat, realistic, careful)
8. Why does Brian feel conflicted about killing the moose and deer?
(On one hand, he must kill these creatures to survive. Without the meat, he will die. On the other hand, he does not enjoy killing. It upsets him to take a life, even an animal's life.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Do you find the novel realistic? Why or why not?
(Yes, because Brian is a well-trained survivalist and possesses the character traits necessary to endure and even flourish in the wilderness. No, because he was too lucky. The bear and the moose should have killed him; he is able to make clothing, weapons, and catch food too easily.)
10. Which event poses the most danger for Brian? Why?
(Both the bear and moose pose significant danger, as does the extreme cold.)

Questions 11-13 (Creative Level)

11. Working with a small group of classmates, discuss some ways that you might have coped with Brian's situation in his place.
12. Debate whether or not the ending is realistic.

Across the Curriculum

Language Arts

1. On page 17, Brian recalls reading some books by Farley Mowat. Read one of Mowat's books and explain how it fits with the setting, plot, and/or theme of *Brian's Winter*.
2. Create a new title for the novel and explain its significance.
3. Writing as Brian, draft three diary entries: one as winter begins, one when you kill the moose, and one when you meet the Native American family.
4. Create a character sketch of Brian. What skills enable him not only to survive, but also to thrive?
5. In your own words, state the novel's theme or message.
6. Write a brief essay to describe Brian's life before the novel began.

Drama

1. Role-play the reunion scene when Brian arrives home and first sees his parents.
2. Deliver a speech about the dangers of going into nature unprepared.
3. Imagine that Brian did not leave the wilderness. In a speech, explain what you think happens to him in ten, twenty, and fifty years.
4. Debate whether or not people should hunt.
5. Reread page 12. Then role-play a "visit" with someone you cherish, as Brian does.

Art and Music

1. Make one of Brian's drawings to commemorate his successful hunt.
2. Design a poster for a movie version of *Brian's Winter*.
3. Divide a piece of paper in half lengthwise. On the left, draw Brian's life before his time in the wilderness. On the right, draw his life after.
4. Choose a dramatic scene and select background music. Play the music for the class as you read the scene.
5. Design a new cover for this novel.

Geography/History

1. Report on the Cree Indians. Where do they live? What do they believe? Analyze whether David Smallhorn is typical of his fellow tribe members. Tell why or why not.
2. Brian is marooned in the Canadian wilderness. Locate the main Canadian cities on a map.
3. Start a conservation group in your school.
4. Report on Canada's history. Include information on its geography, population, settlement, and technology.
5. Map the wilderness areas in your state. Indicate which ones are protected by the federal government.

Science/Health

1. Imagine that you were going to a remote northern setting for January, February, and March. List the items you would need not only to survive, but also to stay healthy and safe.
2. Find a recipe online or in a cookbook for preparing beer, moose, or deer. Explain to your classmates how to cook the dish and what nutrients it contains.
3. The moose is the largest member of the deer family. It is identified by its size, its broad, overhanging muzzle and the flap of skin (the "bell") hanging from its throat. Find out more about these fascinating animals to decide whether or not Paulsen's description is realistic.
4. Learn more about bears. Show your findings on a web page.
5. Make a star map for your region. Identify the primary stars for the class.
6. Brian recalls a fierce tornado. Make a poster to educate your classmates about these dangerous storms.
7. Brian is shocked when it snows. Create a web page or other visual that explains what atmospheric conditions are necessary for it to snow.
8. Paulsen writes that the trees explode in the cold. Is this possible? Find out.

Math

1. Make a scale showing the relative size of all the creatures mentioned in the novel, from the hare to the moose.
2. Brown bears are one of the largest species of bears. They weigh between 300 - 860 pounds and can be up to 9' 6" in total body length. Pace off this distance in the classroom and show your classmates how much this weight represents in books, computers, or other objects.
3. Find out how many calories an active twelve-year-boy has to consume every day to stay healthy. Contrast this to the number of calories a sedentary boy needs.
4. Make a chart showing the average temperatures in your area and in the Canadian wilderness in November, December, January, and February.

Alternate Assessment

1. An archeologist once said that "Without tools, man is nothing. With tools, he is everything." Apply this quote to *Brian's Winter*.
2. Stage a dramatic reading of a key chapter in the novel.
3. Imagine that you were producing a movie version of *Brian's Winter*. Cast Brian. Explain your choice of actor.
4. Write a critical review of the novel for publication in the school newspaper.

Vocabulary

Match each word to its definition. Write the letter of the definition in the space provided.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| ___ 1. ration | A. search vigorously |
| ___ 2. fluke | B. just enough |
| ___ 3. crouch | C. portion |
| ___ 4. mutation | D. hunter |
| ___ 5. predator | E. sled |
| ___ 6. prey | F. quarry; victim |
| ___ 7. fatal | G. hindquarters |
| ___ 8. hibernation | H. natural change |
| ___ 9. toboggan | I. deadly |
| ___ 10. animosity | J. smell |
| ___ 11. adequate | K. random event |
| ___ 12. haunches | L. hatred; strong dislike |
| ___ 13. ransack | M. torture |
| ___ 14. torment | N. stoop |
| ___ 15. whiff | O. lie dormant for the winter |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Explain the significance of each quotation in the novel.

1. This made the rifle worthless, as least as far as being a gun was concerned.
2. But in reality, the bear was not his primary adversary. Nor was the wolf, nor any animal. Brian had become his own worst enemy.
3. Everything in nature means something and he had missed the warnings that summer was ending, had in many ways already ended, and what was coming would be the most dangerous thing he had faced since the plane crash.
4. It is my medicine arrow.
5. He had killed her, ended her life so that he could live, and he felt as bad as he felt good.

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements T if they are true or F if they are false.

1. This novel is a continuation of Gary Paulsen's previous books about Brian Robeson.
2. Brian has been marooned on a desert island after a plane crash.
3. He has been there for five years, all alone.
4. Brian's rifle breaks and he cannot repair it.
5. Brian has lots and lots of food saved, so he does not have to hunt.
6. A bear attacks Brian, but does not hurt him badly.
7. Brian makes a drawing in charcoal on the rocks to show his successful hunt.
8. To prepare for winter, Brian winterproofs his shelter, makes razor-sharp flint arrowheads, and sews the rabbit skins into warm clothing.
9. Some wolves kill a deer and leave a lot of meat, but Brian won't touch it because the wolves have been all over it.
10. Brian tames a skunk, and the creature later helps drive off a bear.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Motivation (30 points)

Complete each line below with a reason or explanation.

1. The bear comes to Brian's shelter because

2. Brian makes a big lance to

3. Brian kills the moose because

4. The moose is very important to Brian's survival because

5. During his Thanksgiving meal, Brian gets sad because

6. After his Thanksgiving meal, Brian cleans his shelter because

7. The trees explode because

8. Brian is horrified to see the wolves eat the deer because

9. Brian finds David Smallhorn when he

10. David Smallhorn did not visit Brian because

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Which situation do you think posed the most danger to Brian? Explain why.
2. Explain how Brian changes from the beginning of the novel to the end.
3. Analyze the role of nature in this novel.
4. Explain what you learned about survival from this novel.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Circle the word or phrase that best completes each of the following statements.

1. Brian has been marooned in the (**South American, Canadian**) wilderness after a plane crash.
2. Brian has been there for about three (**months, years**).
3. When Brian first goes to hunt, he realizes that his (**bow and arrow, rifle**) is broken.
4. Brian's only saved food is a (**pool of fish, pile of canned goods**).
5. Brian is doing well until a (**wolf, bear**) comes to his camp, lured by the scent of food.
6. To prepare for winter, Brian makes razor-sharp (**arrowheads, knives**).
7. He also sews the (**wolf, rabbit**) skins together to make warm clothing.
8. A (**lion, skunk**) comes by and threatens to harm Brian unless he gets some meat.
9. Brian goes hunting and kills a (**moose, goose**) with his lance.
10. Brian makes himself (**snowshoes, skis**) and finds that he can move around outside much more easily.

Part II: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Explain the significance of each quotation in the novel.

1. It was then that he first really noted the cold.
2. He shook his head, pushed the thoughts away, the sneaky thoughts, the ones that said he was hunting meat for food, moose were made out of meat, he had a larger bow, primitive people hunted moose with weapons like his, he was different now.
3. Brian had become his own worst enemy because in all the business of hunting, fishing and surviving, he had forgotten the primary rule: Always, always pay attention to what was happening.
4. He took a stick of charcoal from the fire and drew what he had done on the rock wall above his bed.
5. "I didn't want to bother you—there's some in the bush want to be alone. Figured you'd be here before this..."

Comprehension Test B

Part III: Key Elements (30 points)

Explain why each is important in the novel.

1. snowshoes
2. the bear
3. the moose
4. fish
5. the skunk

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Give two examples of ways that Brian is resourceful.
2. A critic has commented: "Paulsen respects nature. His characters learn to survive, not because they conquer the natural world but because they learn to adjust themselves to it." Agree or disagree with this statement. Support your opinion with details from the novel.
3. Describe the novel's setting and explain its importance to the story.
4. Describe the author's theme or message in this novel.

Answer Key

Vocabulary

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. F | 11. B |
| 2. K | 7. I | 12. G |
| 3. N | 8. O | 13. A |
| 4. H | 9. E | 14. M |
| 5. D | 10. L | 15. J |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

1. Initially, Brian had relied on the supplies in the plane. When they ran out, he could shoot the game he needed. Now that the rifle is broken and cannot be repaired, the book takes a dramatic turn as his survival is imperiled.
2. Brian gets distracted and forgets that the animals will smell his food and come after it. He is shocked into this realization when a bear attacks him to get at his food. Miraculously, Brian is not badly injured—but he does learn a crucial lesson that greatly improves his chances for survival. He learns to pay attention to his surroundings at all times.
3. Here, readers see how Paulsen builds suspense with a cliff-hanger chapter ending.
4. After he kills two animals with the same arrow, Brian decides that the arrow is lucky. We see Brian adopting some of the beliefs of early people, especially the belief in luck. Indeed, luck is a vital force in Brian's survival.
5. Brian feels very conflicted about having killed the moose. On one hand, he has no choice, because if he does not kill the creature he will starve. On the other hand, it saddens him that something has to die for him to live.

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

Part III: Motivation (30 points)

1. the bear smells Brian's food and wants it
2. help him hunt large game
3. he needs a lot of meat to get him through the winter
4. the weather suddenly turns sharply colder and hunting becomes more difficult
5. he misses his family and old life back home
6. he wants to distract himself from his sadness by keeping busy
7. it is extremely cold
8. the deer is still alive
9. follows the sound of gunshots
10. David did not want to bother Brian; he thinks Brian wants to be alone

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. Canadian | 6. arrowheads |
| 2. months | 7. rabbit |
| 3. rifle | 8. skunk |
| 4. pool of fish | 9. moose |
| 5. bear | 10. snowshoes |

Part II: Quotation Identification (20 points)

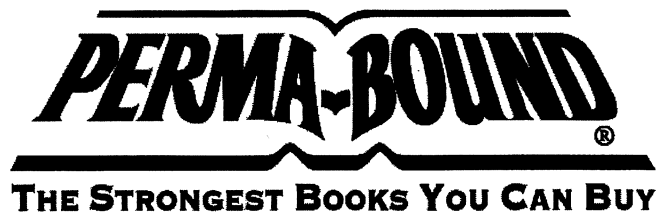
1. Winter sneaks up on Brian and he barely realizes in time that he must prepare for its challenges. Without significant preparations, Brian will not be able to survive. As it is, he barely makes it in time, winterproofing his shelter, killing sufficient meat, and making warmer clothing.
2. The longer Brian is in the woods, the more he adapts to survive. Brian's body must have food to live, so Brian must kill other living creatures. As a result, he has changed from a soft suburban boy to a tough man who does what he must do to live.
3. Brian gets distracted and forgets that the animals will smell his food and come after it. He is shocked into this realization when a bear attacks him to get at his food. Miraculously, Brian is not badly injured—but he does learn a crucial lesson that greatly improves his chances for survival. He learns to pay attention to his surroundings at all times.
4. As with cave people, Brian commemorates his kill by drawing it on the rock wall. This suggests that the urge to celebrate great deeds may be instinctive.
5. This is the novel's climax, the point of highest interest, as Brian is rescued. His great adventure is over.

Part III: Key Elements (30 points)

1. The snowshoes are important because they enable Brian to move outside more easily. As a result, he can hunt far more successfully, which helps ensure his survival.
2. The bear comes after Brian twice, seeking food. The bear represents the dangers that nature presents.
3. Brian kills the moose, which provides huge quantities of food. As with the snowshoes, the moose helps Brian to survive.
4. Brian stores fish in a small pool. They are his only stored food. When winter comes, however, the pond freezes over and Brian does not have access to the fish. As a result, the fish are useless.
5. When Brian feeds the skunk, it becomes a pet of sorts and drives off the bear. This lucky stroke helps Brian avoid serious injury.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



Perma-Bound

617 East Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650
Toll Free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169
E-Mail: books@perma-bound.com

Perma-Bound Canada

Box 868, Station Main • Peterborough, Ontario K9J 7A2
Toll Free 1-800-461-1999 • Fax 1-888-250-3811
E-Mail: perma-bound.ca@sympatico.ca

Visit us online at www.perma-bound.com