

SYNOPSIS

In the alleys of Juárez, Mexico, Manny Buston dreams of crossing into the United States to live a better life. Thirteen or fourteen years old, Manny begs from tourists and keeps on the lookout for tougher street boys who prey on the weak and unsuspecting and for a more dangerous type, the child kidnapers who look for attractive boys to sell. He remains near the bridge that crosses from Mexico into El Paso, Texas.

In El Paso, Sergeant Robert S. Locke peers out of a drunken stupor at his reflection in the mirror. The image he sees is a spruce, 18-year career veteran from Kansas who is scarred from battles in Vietnam and carrying a heavy psychological load that troubles his spirit. He follows army regimen carefully and never wears civilian clothes. When free of night duty, he crosses into Juárez to fog his brain with all-night drinking until he vomits. The binges cloud his hurtful memories of old friends who died in battle.

The Santa Fe Bridge is the sole access to the United States from Juárez. The water under the bridge is muddy and sparse because northern dams divert its flow for irrigation. Tourists enjoy tossing coins to poor children and watching them fight over the money. Manny hates the scramble and prefers to dangle a limp left leg and twist his right wrist to fake a handicap. He needs money so badly that he joins the children in the murky waters. Lifting a homemade cardboard cone on a stick, he catches a coin and swiftly conceals it under his tongue. A second race for a dollar bill brings another boy down on Manny, who is undersized and easily subdued by blows to his stomach and groin.

Sergeant Locke makes his way to the Club Congo Tiki. On his first visit to the club seven or eight months earlier, when he came to Fort Bliss from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, the dancers plied him for attention and money. Now they leave him to his drinking. Hours before the floor show, he sits alone at his usual corner table, drinking and waiting for the images of dead soldiers to leave him in peace.

In the dark, Manny crouches in a cement culvert in a crumbling building. After midnight, a wave of hundreds of Mexicans run to the American side. As Manny begins his move, four street thugs apprehend him to give to Raoul, who likes red-haired boys.

Fleeing the thugs, Manny runs behind the Club Congo Tiki, where Locke leans against a wall to vomit. Manny waits for an opportunity to pick the sergeant's pocket. Locke grasps his wrist. Manny asks if he is one of the men who kidnap boys. Locke drags him toward the bridge. A Mexican police guard intervenes and asks why Locke is dragging Manny. Manny replies that Locke is kidnapping him. Locke's memories of armed sentries flashes to Saigon, El Salvador, and Honduras. To the policeman's questions, Locke replies that Manny is guiding him to the bridge. The policeman knows that he will not get the truth from either Manny or Locke.

Returning to begging and pretending to be a cripple, Manny survives on money he cadges on the street. On a Saturday morning, he patrols the area around the railroad tracks. Nearby is the Rio Brava Hotel and a bullring. Manny recalls stories of Pancho Villa, who fired bullets into the brick hotel walls. He considers changing his name, which honors Mañuel the prizefighter, to Pancho. He used to look for a likely spot to beg among the food vendors. Now he waits behind the meat stalls and helps with cleanup to earn a few scraps of food.

Manny again encounters Locke, who strolls across the tracks toward the Rio Brava. Manny follows him into the hotel café. He trusts the sergeant because he did not turn Manny over to the police for trying to steal his wallet. Still drunk, Locke recognizes Manny and stops the waiter from ejecting him from the premises. At Locke's invitation, Manny joins him.

To Locke's questions, Manny gives his name and claims that he was named for his father, who died fighting bandits in Chihuahua. Conversation halts as Manny begins cramming himself with food. His crude table behavior reminds Locke of a starving monkey in the Bagio mountains of the Philippines. Locke warns that the monkey ate a picnic lunch, then died after a snake swallowed him.

At the bullring at 10:00 A. M., Locke stands at the main entrance and studies a poster. Manny follows and offers to describe the fights. He lies about being an expert. Locke warns him about the snake that ate the monkey, then moves on toward the liquor store, where he buys Cutty Sark Scotch and for Manny, a Pepsi.

As they stand by the ticket booth, Manny confesses that he lied about his father. He describes his father as an animal who beat Manny and his sisters. Locke ignores this lie and sips his scotch. Manny judges Locke to be the kind of drunk who drinks himself into a stupor rather than the type who turns mean.

At the bullfight, Locke buys a bucket of beer and more Pepsi for Manny. The fight progresses from a colorful procession to a brutal death for the bull. Locke goes to the Club Congo Tiki where the bouncer stops Manny from following.

Manny returns to a week of begging on the street. In the early morning behind the club, he again finds Locke vomiting at the wall. Manny greets him with the same lies about his father beating him. Locke goes to the bridge, then stops and, believing that Manny follows him solely for money, hands him a five-dollar bill. Overjoyed that he has enough to cross, Manny considers telling Locke the truth about his ambition to go to the United States.

The next night, Locke is bemused that Manny confesses being abandoned at a nunnery. Manny approaches the crux of his story: he must leave the street life because he is too small to avoid the kidnapers. Manny asks Locke to help him get a green card and find a shelter for children. Locke agrees

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to help and plans to get a pass to see the legal officer.

While the pair stand in the alley, four thugs approach. They declare that their business is with Manny, not Locke. They pull out knives and a chain. Locke stands his ground and in a quick fight, uses his hands to strike at first one, then the other three. Manny is amazed that the first to fall is dead. When the fight ends, the remaining three are wounded. Locke is badly cut and sinks to the ground. Before dying, Locke insists that Manny take his wallet before the police come. As Manny runs for the crossing, Locke joins his dead comrades.

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. The instability of addicted parents left Paulsen in the care of relatives, some of whom entertained him with storytelling.

At age 15, Paulsen delivered the *Grand Forks Herald*. The stress of poor school performance and low self-esteem pushed him 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 insider's 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 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. When he returns to Minnesota, he enjoys public readings and storytelling at nearby town halls.

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 1996 he published nearly 50 books, most for young adult readers, his favorite audience.

CRITIC'S CORNER

The unprecedented appeal of *Hatchet* (1987) served as an impetus to Gary Paulsen to respond to his fans with a trilogy about Brian Robeson's experiences in the wilderness. In 1991, he published *The River*, a story that returns Brian to the Canadian northwest and replicates the challenges of staying alive in the wilderness. As happened in the first account, Brian must manage against unforeseen events. Paulsen's third Brian Robeson novel, *Brian's Winter* (1996), is neither sequel nor prequel. The action recasts *Hatchet* by removing rescue and following Brian through the winter. The evolving circumstances place Brian amid new demands and brings him from boyhood through a difficult time into manhood. *The Crossing* follows in the tradition of the Brian Robeson trilogy by emphasizing survival techniques.

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 establish 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 his historical *Nightjohn* and *Woodsong*, IRA/CBC Children's Choice, Booklist Editors' Choice, and a Child Study Association of America's Children award. Charles Kuralt featured him in an interview in December 1988 for CBS-TV.

Paulsen wrote the screenplay for the 1990 PG 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 reviewers Mark Martin and Marsha Porter, but only an "okay" from Paulsen. The unabridged audio version, read by Peter Coyote and published in 1992, proved Paulsen's continued success with young readers. The author himself sums up his rapport with children, who send hundreds of letters daily, often from abused or neglected kids. 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."

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To comprehend the miseries of poverty

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2. To account for pride in military dress and medals
3. To list symptoms of psychological stress
4. To note the meaning of *coyote* and other street slang terms
5. To contrast deaths of human and animal characters
6. To define third-person point of view
7. To characterize moments of terror, despair, menace, regret, and enjoyment
8. To contrast the martyr with the picaresque hero
9. To locate examples of dishonesty and deceit
10. To list images of movement or travel

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To account for Manny's need to quit his life on the streets
2. To note how Locke perceives himself in the mirror
3. To analyze the symbolism of the bridge
4. To contrast encounters with the coyotes
5. To explain how Locke changes after he meets Manny
6. To interpret fantasies about Pancho Villa and Mañuel the prizefighter
7. To comment on the sufferings of half-breeds
8. To typify Manny's response to danger and hunger
9. To project how Manny will use Locke's money
10. To recount intense moments when Locke and Manny interact

MEANING STUDY

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

1. Juárez, Mexico, was never quiet. (Chapter 1, p. 3)
(The city of Juárez is situated in the state of Chihuahua opposite El Paso, Texas, on the Rio Grande River (called the Rio Bravo del Norte in Mexico). Originally named El Paso del Norte, it took the name of Mexico's benevolent president and freedom fighter, Benito Pablo Juárez, in 1888. The city bears a negative image for sleazy border town entertainments, fights, drugs, poverty, despair, crime, and tourist traps. In addition to the bullring, Juárez offers jai-alai and greyhound racing as enticements to the tourist trade.)
2. The coyotes will have you. They are not good people, the coyotes who take people across the border. (Chapter 1, p. 9)
(Slang terms for border predators tend to be names of fierce carnivorous animals—coyotes, hawks, and wolves. The irony for Manny is that he is threatened by his own people rather than by Anglos. The gang that stalks Manny to the cement culvert intends to placate Raoul, another predator, by giving him a red-haired boy for his sexual pleasure. Manny and others in Juárez know the treachery of these kidnappers, who add to the danger of prowling the river by night in search of a safe crossing into the United States.)
3. This afternoon I will go to the bridge and work the turistas, and there may be enough money to pay. (Chapter 1, p. 10)
(“Working the turistas” is a significant part of the economy of Juárez. Because the border town has a bridge extending toward El Paso, frequent visits by soldiers from nearby Fort Bliss and other tourists to bars, restaurants, shops, and entertainments bring commerce to the town, which has too few manufacturing jobs to employ its residents. Manny and the other street beggars know that holiday-minded Anglos are likely to take pity on the poor and toss them money.)
4. He thought, even now, even with the slippage from the Cutty Sark Scotch whiskey and the clouded vision that was coming as the whiskey took him, even with all that he was still, above all things, a sergeant. (Chapter 2, p. 13)
*(The Cutty Sark is the last of the famed tall ships, square-rigged sailing vessels designed by Hercules Linton for speed and maneuverability. It was built in 1869 in Dumbarton, Scotland, and took its name from a line from “Tam O’Shanter,” a romantic narrative poem written in 1791 by Robert Burns, Scotland’s treasured poet, who refers to the short shirt of Nannie:
Her cutty sark, o’ Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho’ sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie. (lines 171-174)
A favorite of reciters, the poem was carved on the clipper’s hull. A figurehead of Nannie with wide-spread locks and ample bosom adorns the bow.
The romance and reputation of the Cutty Sark marked the end of the sleek clippers as sturdy, wide-bottomed steam ships began taking most of Britain’s sea trade. During its heyday, the Cutty Sark made numerous trips from the British isles to China and Australia, primarily to trade woolens and other British goods for tea. Currently, the clipper remains on display in dry dock on the Thames River beside Greenwich Pier in Greenwich, England.)*
5. The man in the mirror showed only one scar, the one from the tiny bit of shrapnel in Vietnam that had cut white-sizzling across his left temple and missed ending him by less than a quarter inch. (Chapter 2, p. 14)
(Locke’s war wound is a common, but unavoidable mishap to bystanders from shells, bullets, and bombs. When a charge is detonated, it fires scraps of metal casing in a broad circular pattern ranging out from the point of impact. Because the pieces are jagged and hot from contact with expanding gas, they tumble and ricochet, gouging ugly gashes in human flesh. Shrapnel may imbed itself so deeply near major organs that it is left in place rather than disturbed.)
6. He wore only issue clothing and spit-shined his shoes until they were black mirrors; just as he did not wear civilian clothes, only army issue uniforms, even when going off Fort Bliss for a night in Juárez, as he was now—because he was, above all things, a sergeant. (Chapter 2, p. 15)
(A deeply troubled veteran, Robert Locke stares at his image in the mirror to identify more completely with his military image. He wears only the GI or government issue clothing that the Military provides. By rejecting his human side, he finds strength and glory in the neatness of his attire and the shine on his shoes. To alter the

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mental side of his human nature, he drinks to excess so that he can forget comrades who did not survive battles in Vietnam, El Salvador, and Honduras.)

7. At any given moment of any given day or night the room could be inspected and would pass with no gigs—demerits. (Chapter 2, p. 15)
(The rigidity of Locke's military behavior saves him the dishonor of demerits for storing anything but GI items in his clothes and foot lockers. He acknowledges that, except for his Cutty Sark bottle and glass, everything about him is "completely army issue.")
8. Once the Rio Grande had been a flowing river. It cut the desert sand between El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, Mexico, and defined the border. It was never mighty there, the way it is up north, near Taos, New Mexico, where it roars through canyons in white water—but once it had been a river. (Chapter 3, p. 18)
(Because of the aridity of the southwestern United States, farmers cut irrigation ditches along the Rio Grande to direct its waters to their orchards, pastures, and vegetable fields. Civic authorities also make demands on the river by using it to water lawns, golf courses, and parks. By the time that the Rio Grande reaches the U.S.-Mexico border, it is no longer the "Great River," but only a filthy stream.)
9. The one on the left had a sign across her middle that said simply GIRLS, hiding her body. The one on the right was covered with a carefully coiled and wrapped snake. It was a boa constrictor, or perhaps a pilated python—Robert could not be sure because he did not know for certain how to tell the difference—but it was a real snake. (Chapter 4, p. 27)
(The use of constricting snakes as adjuncts to exotic dance mirrors the sinuous movements of the dancer in the muscular contortions of the snake. Another reason for the pairing is a reflection on Eve, the biblical matriarch who was tempted by Satan in the guise of a snake. Both the biblical image and the dance draw on nudity, allure, and carnal sin, but for widely different reasons.)
10. Once he had known a lieutenant in an infantry unit who actually liked it, liked what the infantry meant—the smell of it, the rattle of it, the fire and maneuver, the cover and assault. (Chapter 4, p. 30)
(The infantry, the basic fighting force of the military, experiences most of the front line combat, which results in high casualty rates and strong claims of glory. The term, like infant, derives from the Latin for "can't talk." Just as babies are voiceless, soldiers in the infantry are expected to say nothing about their assignments and do as they are ordered.)

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.

Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. Explain Manny's predicament.
(A mixed-blood boy abandoned in infancy and left for nuns, Manny survives to his early teens with no family or guardian to feed and dress him, send him to school, protect him from predatory coyotes or child thieves, or to establish his sense of family or belonging. Alone on the
- streets of Juárez, Mexico, he must beg money or food, steal, catch money dropped by tourists, find odd jobs cleaning stalls, hustle tourists, or deceive people into believing he is handicapped. The little food he receives comes in irregular amounts from Maria or the chance meal with Locke. Lack of security forces him to gobble to protect food and money from theft. Because he is undersized and red-haired, he is a mark of the coyotes, who intend to give him to Raoul, who likes boys. Manny believes that his only choice is to cross the Rio Grande into the United States and locate a shelter for children.)
 2. How does Robert Locke meet Manny?
(In their meetings in Juárez, Robert Locke walks the territory that Manny combs for food and money. When Manny finds Locke vomiting in the alley behind the Club Congo Tiki in the early morning hours, Manny is fleeing the coyotes and considers stealing Locke's wallet to pay for emigration to the north. Their first meeting concludes with an act of trust: Locke could report Manny to the Mexican police officer at the bridge, but he, like Manny, tells the policeman lies.
During a second meeting, Manny boldly follows Locke into the Rio Brava Hotel café and accepts an invitation to eat with him. The meeting ends abruptly at the club door as Locke enters to drink away his troubles and Martinez the bouncer forces Manny to wait outside. On a subsequent encounter, Locke is considering going to the bullfight when Manny intervenes and helps him buy tickets, liquor, and snack food.
The final meeting brings Locke and Manny together on a night when the coyotes track Manny to the alley, where Locke is again vomiting his gutful of alcohol. The clash of fearful memories and stalkers pits the coyotes against a surprisingly fierce warrior who kills one and injures the other three. Near death from the hands of Manny's enemies, Locke gives the boy his wallet and a chance at crossing to a better life.)
 3. What does Manny witness at the bullring?
(A newcomer to bullfighting, Manny lies to Locke that he can guide him to the ticket booth, secure good seats and snack food, and explain the sport. In cushioned seats on the shady side, Locke grows quiet. He sips dark beer and Scotch; Manny drinks Pepsi. Below, three matadors fight six bulls in the ring. The spectacle begins with a colorful procession. A brass band plays while spectators await the death of the bulls.
The actual fight is what Locke terms a "death watch." The bull enters and kicks dirt in the arena in a display of toughness. The picador inserts a short lance into the bull's shoulder, weakening the joints. The bull retaliates by thrusting its horns into the horse's stomach. Locke mutters "For nothing" as the fight proceeds. There are capes, barbed sticks, and more jabs that release the blood-stink. The matador makes the killing thrust of the sword, bringing the bull to its knees. Locke leaves in disgust at the brutal and pointless death of the bull.)
 4. What does Locke see in the mirror?
(Drawn to his reflection in the full-length barracks mirror, Locke studies the other man as though he were a separate person—an image of the ideal soldier. He has a straight nose and blue eyes rimmed in red. His beard is cut close and his ears are flat. Everything that he wears

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is army issue. The uniform that Locke takes such pride in is sharply pressed and neat. Across his barrel chest he displays service medals.

Closer examination finds a small white shrapnel wound in his left temple, a hint of the imperfection that lurks in his brain. The sight causes Locke to remember how close he came to death in Vietnam. He knows that the mirror can't reflect the mortal scars on his psyche. In torment during his sober moments, he relives the deaths of comrades and churns up guilt that he couldn't help them and didn't die with them. To an outsider, Locke looks like a "recruiting poster and . . . above all things, a sergeant.")

5. How does Locke meet death?

(After spending his post-war career in fear of the faces that he left behind on battlefields in Vietnam, El Salvador, and Honduras, Locke meets an ignoble death early in the morning in the alley behind the Club Congo Tiki, the cheap night spot where Locke spends his off hours. As he confers with Manny on the crossing that will take the boy out of poverty, Locke senses the approach of trouble. The coyotes fail to realize Locke's lethal state of mind and skill with martial arts as he steels himself to fight all four thugs.

The fight begins with knives and a chain. Locke fearlessly faces the first attacker without words: "Manny saw his arms come up slightly, the hands forming in semi-fists, saw the sergeant's back roll with a tightening, saw the hand swing and rhythm of something come into him; and when he looked up at the sergeant's face it had changed, was hard and lined, edged and cutting, wild-looking, even and wild." The first opponent feints with a knife and falls from a swift chop of the sergeant's hand. Manny realizes that one coyote is dead.

Within seconds, the other three come for the sergeant in unison. The slashing and stabbing is terrible. Locke suffers wounds to his stomach and neck and sinks to the ground as his strength ebbs. The coyotes lay immobile. As Locke's eyes fade into dullness, Manny sees the look of the fallen bull in his expression. Locke has one last chance to offer his wallet and urge Manny to make the crossing.)

Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. What fantasies does Manny cultivate?

(Without a father or surname, Manny is free to choose among the stories and heroes that intrigue and amuse him. He is pleased to have the name of Mañuel the prizefighter. The name confers some toughness that Manny lacks because of his small stature. While walking near the railroad tracks, he recalls the era of Mexican history when Pancho Villa and his revolutionaries shot up the town of Juárez. Bullet holes in the hotel walls retain some of the romance and dash of an era that gave hope to the peasants who tried to throw off the yoke of the upper class. Out of admiration for Pancho Villa, Manny considers naming himself Pancho.)

7. What Spanish words are essential to the story?

(Paulsen writes the novel with a minimum of Spanish words. The few he includes are essential to the atmosphere and meaning of the plot. For example:

- *norte americano*—Citizens of North America seem like privileged beings to Manny and other emigrants.

- *turista*—Tourists are the key factor in Juárez's economy.

- *gringo*—The coyotes consider Robert Locke a gringo or white outsider.

- *mestizo*—Manny is victimized because his red hair indicates that he is a mestizo or half-breed.

- *olé*—Tourists shout *olé* to applaud and encourage the bull after it gores a horse.

- *barrios*—The barrios or ghettos are the living quarters of the Mexican poor.)

8. How do the mirror and bridge symbolize the theme of longing?

(Both Manny and Locke harbor inner yearnings. Manny looks toward the north as the source of a better life and freedom from constant stalking and mugging. The bridge symbolizes the tie that links Juárez with Texas. It is a physical, palpable juncture that Manny must cross to reach his promised land.

For Locke, crossing over means departing life to merge with the spirits of fallen comrades. The mirror is the mystic bridge that shows him the image of the staunch soldier. Locke, who carries a burden of anguish and guilt, considers his inner self separate from the outer sergeant. The man in the mirror is true to the military code and wears the uniform proudly and well. The inner man is a drunk. The hurt that festers in his brain wears its own covering of alcohol, which Locke drinks in great quantity, then spews up in the alley after long bouts at the Club Congo Tiki. It is after the failed binges that Manny encounters him in the alley.)

Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. How does the novel account for waves of illegal immigration from Mexico?

(Paulsen depicts the life of an unwanted boy as an untenable human situation. The red-haired child, whom Paulsen hints is fathered by an American, has no sense of belonging in Juárez. Small in stature and incapable of outrunning thugs and coyotes much longer, Manny reaches for the United States as a refuge from constant misery and menace. As Paulsen describes the waves of hundreds, maybe thousands of emigrants per night, he demonstrates the desperation that forces people to risk capture or even death to leave home, learn a new language, and espouse a new loyalty to better themselves.)

10. What does the novel say about savagery?

(The parallel savageries of war, bullfighting, and life on the streets threaten both Manny and Locke. War stalks Locke's mind as relentlessly as the coyotes stalk Manny. An afternoon's pleasure in shaded seats in the arena conclude with an unforeseen savagery—the slicing of the bull's shoulder, its drooping head, a thrust of its horns at the underside of a horse, and the eventual collapse from loss of blood and the death blow. As Manny notes changes in Locke, he begins to know the sergeant's dark moods, which return at the sight of bullfighting and cheering throngs.

Locke despises needless death. He recalls the wartime carnage that destroyed fellow soldiers and compares it to bullfighting. Manny, who is less cerebral, has no great love of bullfighting, which he has never before attended. His main reason for courting Locke is an afternoon of food, relaxation, and protection from street

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predators. The scene that joins the two characters irrevocably is the fight in the alley, a pyrrhic victory that kills one coyote, maims three others, and dooms Locke. The passage of the wallet from Locke to Manny ends the brutality of the four stalking coyotes at the same moment that Locke eludes bad memories and rejoins his comrades in a spiritual haven.)

Questions 11 and 12-Creative Level

11. Construct an illustrated time line of U. S. military action in Vietnam, El Salvador, and Honduras. Make charts of casualties, costs, and enemy dead. Express the purpose of each action and the territory or rights that each involvement secured.
12. Compose an epitaph to accompany a monument to military dead from all causes. Indicate the qualities that cause the soldiers to risk their lives. Comment on the extrinsic and intrinsic worth of loyal patriots.

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

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

picaresque novel adventure lore or chronicle that reveals the life and mishaps of a low-born rascal, rogue, outlaw, or picaroon through episodic adventures, scrapes with the authorities, trickery, and predicaments. In *The Crossing*, Manny survives by lying, fighting, picking pockets, begging, and pretending to be a cripple. He makes his living by his wits and rationalizes that his actions are really necessary and therefore not dishonorable. He evolves from the picaroon by developing his character through interaction with Locke and confession of his true background.

symbol a concrete object that stands for a complex or abstract idea or relationship. Paulsen stresses the importance of the bridge as the point of interaction between residents of Mexico and the United States. Because there are limits on visits and changes of residence, both sides are closely guarded. The bridge suggests that Manny has a limited chance to overcome poverty and rootlessness by going north to the United States. Death, a parallel bridge, takes Robert Locke from mental torment in the land of the living to the spirits of his dead comrades. The crux of the meetings between Manny and Locke is the use of one crossing to actualize another crossing. Robert's last name implies that his emotions are locked on painful battle memories and that assisting Manny is the best way to escape psychological hurt.

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. *The Crossing* examines Manny's approach to manhood and his decision to escape poverty and victimization by emigrating. Because the third-person speaker is not a character in the story, the author can branch out into the minds of characters, reflect on their past lives, and explain how events are maturing Manny and helping him make necessary decisions about how he will survive.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art

1. Draw the layout of a Mexican border town. Include a

schematic drawing of main streets, alleys, entertainment centers, shops, restaurants, railroad, bridge, and hotels. Design a plaza in the Spanish style.

2. Create sketches, watercolor drawings, or encyclopedia or textbook charts on army uniforms and medals. Include caps, shoes, belts, and work outfits for male and female soldiers.

Geography

1. Indicate on a wall map the entire course of the Rio Grande. Shade adjoining lands to indicate arid, fertile, wild, residential, agricultural, and military sections.
2. Discuss how the topography and climate of Mexico influences a diet of corn-based tortillas, burritos, and roast chicken. Contrast the emphasis on grain and vegetables with the United States's beef-based cuisine.

Computer Graphics

1. Work with a small group on an illustrated tourist brochure to Mexican and United States border towns. Give pertinent information about currency, climate, transportation, cuisine, sports, gambling, sightseeing, and shopping. Suggest a scenic itinerary from Oklahoma south through Texas to Mexico. Highlight battlegrounds that date to the Mexican Revolution and the career of Pancho Villa.
2. Compose a poster or website advertisement for the bullring in Juárez. List amenities, particularly cushions, snack food, and cold drinks. Outline the parts of the bullfight, including the duties of the matador and picador. Conclude with dates of bullfights, ticket prices for cheap and expensive seats, and locations.

Social Studies

1. Draw parallel time lines of the history of the Old West and the history of Mexico. Note where the lines intersect, for example, during raids by Pancho Villa on American settlers and Geranimo's revenge killings of Mexicans who destroyed his village and murdered his family.
2. Post a list of rules or local laws on the Santa Fe Bridge that will prevent injury or victimization of smaller children by tourists, gangs, kidnappers, and street toughs.

Mathematics and Logic

1. Calculate the value of a five-dollar bill in Mexican currency at the going rate. Create a chart of the coins that make up a peso.
2. Compose instructions in Spanish for a Pepsi vending machine that takes only Mexican coins.

Health and Science

1. Name the physical and emotional dangers to unsupervised children who beg in the streets of border towns or scramble for coins dropped into the river. Comment on sources of deadly pollution in the Rio Grande.
2. Discuss with a research team the symptoms and treatment of post-traumatic stress syndrome. Explain why veteran's hospitals are skilled in treating this disorder as well as alcoholism, drug addiction, anxiety attacks, and other war-related diseases and mental disorders.
3. Write a report on tai-chi, ju jitsu, tai kwon do, and other types of martial arts that inflict deadly damage to the brain and spinal cord. Draw a chart of the body and mark sites where a single blow can do irreparable harm by causing paralysis or death.

Language Arts

1. Discuss how words like *mestizo* are used as insults.

THE CROSSING

Explain why Manny's red hair is both a benefit and a curse.

2. Draw up a master plan for teaching Spanish to soldiers, tourists, border guards, waiters, hotel workers, and others whose lives and jobs place them along the United States-Mexican border. Compose a list of categories that most bilingual workers need to know. Include transportation, food, first aid, and commerce.

Economics

1. Explain why officers of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service keep a close watch on illegal crossings along the Mexican border, particularly in the dark. Discuss how their work protects citizens from disease, illegal drugs, crime, and competition from poor laborers.
2. In a brief chalk talk, explain the purpose of a green card. Discuss the types of information found on each card. Explain why the government uses post offices as an issuing point for legal documents to alien residents.
3. Present a demonstration, slides, or audiotape detailing the advantages of a career in the military. Include a chart of likely careers, for example, refrigeration, radio and radar repair, electronics, computer science, meteorology, marine biology, and food service. Name additional enticements, including medical and dental care, clothing, housing, travel, retirement, and pride in service to the nation.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Compose a list of requirements for a convent orphanage or other housing facility for abandoned children. Name ways that boys like Manny can be trained to earn a living, for example, by learning to read and write.
2. Compare Pancho Villa with other adventurers of the West, for instance, Calamity Jane, Wyatt Earp, Bill Pickett, Joaquin Murietta, or John Wesley Hardin. Include details of Villa's self-imposed exile in El Paso and the cause of his death.
3. Improvise a telephone conversation between Manny and Robert Locke. Express Manny's need of a green card and enough money to buy food and supplies for the crossing. Conclude with Locke's advice about negotiating with border authorities.
4. Contrast the lifestyle and work experience of these figures: border guard, cook, waiter, picador, nun, train conductor, matador, sergeant, bouncer, club dancer, restaurant owner, and gang leader. Which is likely to need training in self-defense? Which is unlikely to suffer the same hazards that street beggars face?
5. With a small group, discuss the difference between physical and psychological pain. Why does Locke's death reunite him with the dead soldiers he recalls from past battles? How does his military record compare with his martyrdom for Manny?
6. Compose a letter, telegram, fax, email message, or phone call to Gary Paulsen asking about *The Crossing*. Indicate your interest in Manny's future and in a possible sequel. Ask Paulsen what plans he has to turn the novel into an audiocassette, film, or made-for-TV movie.
7. Draw a character web linking Manny, nuns, Maria, Martinez, the Mexican police officer, border patrol,

Robert Locke, lieutenant, Raoul, coyotes, restaurant owner, waiter, picador, matador, dancers, emigrants, and tourists. Comment on similar purposes, for example, characters who risk their lives to earn a living or who thrive on the border's history and romantic atmosphere.

8. View films about escape, such as *The Great Escape*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Treasure Island*, *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*, *Alcatraz*, or *Andersonville*. Discuss why the Rio Grande River is an integral part of Manny's flight from poverty. Suggest how other types of escape illuminate the dangers of crossing legal barriers.
9. Write a theme on self-reliance. Include details from the novel, particularly knowledge of coyotes and border guards, hiding at night, expertise in two languages, work alternatives, and the ability to think and act quickly.
10. Write a scene in which Manny arrives at a children's shelter in the United States. Express his need for attention, education, nourishment, and safety. Make a list of questions about his past that will help shelter workers determine his intelligence, experience, and ambitions.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List examples of hunger, odd jobs, memories, revulsion, threat, relaxation, lies, planning, discomfort, and fantasy.
2. Compile lines that express Robert Locke's fear of memories.
3. Compose a scene in which Maria helps to outfit Manny for the crossing.
4. Make a list of names and characters from the novel and explain the relationship of each to the crossing. Include Raoul, Robert Locke, the coyotes, Maria, the restaurant owner, emigrants, the border patrol, tourists, and the Mexican police officer.

OTHER BOOKS BY GARY PAULSEN

Mr. Tucket (1968)
Winterkill (1977)
The Curse of the Cobra (1977)
Tiltawhirl John (1977)
The Night the White Deer Died (1978)
The Green Recruit (1978)
The Spitball Gang (1982)
The Sweeper (1981)
Campkill (1981)
Clutterball (1982)
Dancing Carl (1983)
Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights (1983)
Tracker (1984)
Dogsong (1985)
Sentries (1986)
Murphy (1987)
Hatchet (1987)
Island (1988)
Murphy's Gold (1988)
Murphy's Herd (1989)
The Voyage of the Frog (1989)
The Winter Room (1989)
The Madonna Stories (1989)
Night Rituals (1989)
Kill Fee (1990)
Woodsong (1990)
The Boy Who Owned the School (1990)

THE CROSSING

Canyons (1990)
A Christmas Sonata (1991)
The Cookcamp (1991)
The River (1991)
The Haymeadow (1992)
Culpepper's Cannon (1992)
Clabbered Dirt, Sweet Grass (1992)
Monument (1993)
Sisters/Hermanas (1993)
Nightjohn (1993)
Eastern Sun, Winter Moon (1993)
Murphy's Stand (1993)
Father Water, Mother Woods (1994)
The Car (1994)
Case of the Dirty Bird (1994)
Winterdance (1994)
Call Me Francis Tucket (1995)
The Tent (1995)
The Rifle (1995)
The Tortilla Factory (La Tortilleria) (1995)
Murphy's Ambush (1995)
Rock Jockeys (1995)
Hook 'Em, Snotty! (1995)
The Gorgon Slayer (1995)
Escape from Fire Mountain (1995)
Captive! (1995)
Brian's Winter (1996)
Samy: A Life Remembered (1996)
Tucket's Ride (1996)
Canoe Days (1996)
Worksong (1996)
Project: A Perfect World (1996)

RELATED READING

Avi's *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*
Patricia Beatty's *Lupita Manana*
Jean Craighead George's *Julie of the Wolves*
William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies*
Esther Hautzig's *The Endless Steppe*
Will Hobbs's *Downriver*
Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*
Mark Mathebane's *Kaffir Boy*
Harry Mazer's *Snowbound*
Scott O'Dell's *Sing Down the Moon* and *Streams to the River, River to the Sea*
Theodore Taylor's *The Cay* and *Timothy of the Cay*
James Vance Walker's *Walkabout*
Yoko Kawashima Watkins's *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*
Robb White's *Deathwatch*

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THE CROSSING

VOCABULARY TEST

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

1. (frijoles) Maria stood at the steel drum _____

2. (si) Locke nods his head _____

3. (Dios) Manny swears to himself _____

4. (mestizo) Pacho's insult _____

5. (barrios) Beyond the alleys lay _____

6. (burrito) On the table at the Rio Brava _____

7. (tequila) The club's watery drinks _____

8. (serape) Tourists bought the big hats _____

9. (sombreros) Villa's men rode _____

10. (huevos) Robert knew little Spanish _____

11. (menudo) The menu lists _____

12. (leche) He takes his *café* _____

13. (plaza de toros) Alongside the railroad tracks _____

14. (matador) By the end of the bullfight _____

15. (olé) The arrival of the picadors _____

THE CROSSING

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| _____ 1. cooks over a steel drum | A. nuns |
| _____ 2. find Manny in infancy | B. Manny |
| _____ 3. conceals teeth so they won't shine | C. dancer |
| _____ 4. doesn't believe that Manny is guiding Robert | D. Raoul |
| _____ 5. left bullet holes in the hotel wall | E. Martinez |
| _____ 6. shine strong lights on emigrants | F. Pancho Villa |
| _____ 7. is entwined by a snake | G. waiter |
| _____ 8. thinks Manny is too small to cross | H. Mexican police officer |
| _____ 9. likes red-haired boys | I. U. S. border guard |
| _____ 10. tries to keep Manny from following Robert | J. Maria |

Part II: Fact/Opinion (30 points)

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

- _____ 1. Manny knows that his father was a soldier. _____

- _____ 2. The Mexican police officer has an easier job than the U. S. border patrol. _____

- _____ 3. The sight of the fallen bull dismays Robert. _____

- _____ 4. Robert prefers Cutty Sark Scotch to tequila. _____

- _____ 5. Manny fantasizes about being Pancho Villa's son. _____

- _____ 6. The coyotes attack with knives and a chain. _____

- _____ 7. Robert hands Manny his wallet and a green card. _____

- _____ 8. Manny hides in a culvert and eats a garlic-spiced chicken. _____

- _____ 9. Maria gives Manny enough chicken and tortillas to feed him on the crossing. _____

- _____ 10. Robert's memories about Vietnam are more painful than physical death. _____

THE CROSSING

Part III: Short Answer (10 points)

Explain the significance of the following details:

1. culvert
2. cardboard cone
3. mirror
4. Club Congo Tiki
5. bridge

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two of the following and answer in complete sentences.

1. Account for Robert Locke's pride in military precision.
2. List ways that Manny demonstrates caution.
3. Describe ways that Manny acquires food and money.
4. Summarize Manny's relationship with Robert Locke.

THE CROSSING

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Setting Identification (20 points)

Identify the settings in which the following events take place. Select your answers from the list that follows. You may use some answers more than once.

alley
bullring
café

Club Congo Tiki
culvert
El Paso

Fort Bliss
Fort Ord
liquor store

railroad
restaurant
Rio Brava Hotel

Rio Grande
Santa Fe Bridge
stalls

- _____ 1. A thug steals Manny's money
- _____ 2. The locker holds only government issue items
- _____ 3. Manny guides Robert Locke three hours before the bullfight begins
- _____ 4. Women pity Robert
- _____ 5. The first attacker lies dead
- _____ 6. Pancho Villa shot bullets into a wall
- _____ 7. A tourist drops a dollar bill
- _____ 8. Robert sits alone at a corner table
- _____ 9. Manny looks for opportunities to help clean up
- _____ 10. Manny waits until a wave of Mexicans departs

Part II: Fill-in (20 points)

Fill in the blanks with answers that complete each statement.

- 1. After collapsing in the _____, Robert Locke insists that Manny take his _____.
- 2. In the cushioned _____ of the arena, Manny drinks _____ and watches the bullfight.
- 3. At first, Manny lies that his father makes him provide money for the _____, then admits that he was found by _____.
- 4. _____ claim to help emigrants enter the United States, but they are notorious for stealing _____.
- 5. Manny can't read the _____ and eats _____ with his hands.

THE CROSSING

Part III: 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. Robert remembers how the monkey a. ate a snake. b. was chained to a table.
c. was eaten by a snake. d. entertained a group of soldiers.
- _____ 2. The lieutenant pretended a. to be tough. b. to be hit by an AK-47. c. to haunt Robert's dreams.
d. to inspect the foot locker.
- _____ 3. In the mirror Robert sees a. images of his former comrades. b. his own death. c. nothing.
d. a well-groomed soldier.
- _____ 4. After the first wave departs, a. Manny holds back. b. coyotes follow hundreds of emigrants.
c. Raoul grabs Manny out of the culvert d. a tourist drops a dollar bill into Manny's cone.
- _____ 5. Manny marvels at a. the amount of money Robert carries. b. Maria's steel drum.
c. Robert's deadly hands. d. the price of items on the menu.
- _____ 6. Manny fears that a. the nuns will keep him from crossing. b. he is too small to survive.
c. Robert will not get a pass to ask for the legal papers. d. coyotes will find him asleep in the doorway.
- _____ 7. Without enough alcohol to quiet his mind, Robert fears a. demerits. b. the edges. c. war. d. old friends.
- _____ 8. The bullfight causes a. Manny to think of Mañuel the prizefighter.
b. the coyotes to wait for Manny in the culvert. c. tourists to leave in disgust.
d. Robert to think of the waste of life.
- _____ 9. The Mexican police officer a. dislikes U. S. soldiers. b. suspects that Manny is not crippled.
c. knows that Manny and Robert are lying. d. accuses Manny of being a pickpocket.
- _____ 10. Catching money under the bridge a. is easy for Manny. b. draws bigger boys.
c. gives emigrants an opportunity to cross the river. d. is easier than begging or cleaning stalls.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Explain in essay form the significance of two of the following quotations:

1. We have work with the small one, not with you.
2. Go home, gringo.
3. And it was like the bullfight for Manny, the hacking of the bull, except that the sergeant, the tall one, took a terrible toll.
4. Robert felt the edges, and the friends started to come through, to meet him, to be with him; and Robert did not fear them now but knew what they wanted, what they had always wanted.
5. Mornings were the best time, not a good time—there were no good times for him—but the best.

THE CROSSING

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

Part II: Fact/Opinion (30 points)

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

Part III: Short Answer (10 points)

Answers will vary.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Setting Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Rio Grande | 6. Rio Brava Hotel |
| 2. Fort Bliss | 7. Santa Fe Bridge |
| 3. liquor store | 8. Club Congo Tiki |
| 4. Club Congo Tiki | 9. stalls |
| 5. alley | 10. culvert |

Part II: Fill-in (20 points)

1. alley, wallet
2. seats, Pepsi
3. lottery, nuns
4. coyotes, boys
5. menu, eggs

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

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

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

THE CROSSING

TEACHER'S NOTES



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