

SYNOPSIS

In early October outside Silverton in the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado, 15-year-old Jessie, a native of Boulder, Colorado, joins three girls — Heather, Star, and Rita — and four boys — Adam, Pug, Troy, and Freddy — at Discovery Unlimited, a camp for troubled youth. The participants, who refer to themselves as Hoods in the Woods, camp, hike, and climb while learning to understand and support each other. Led by Al, a fortyish Vietnam veteran and an able climber, they plan to tackle Storm King Peak, which soars 13,752 feet. Al selects Troy to navigate, but urges each climber to develop self-reliance as a survival tool.

Jessie shares a cabin with Star and recounts arguments with her father, an anthropology professor and expert on Amazon River cultures. Because his wife died nine years before, Jessie's father is selling their home and moving his girl friend, Madeline, to a new canyon house. Jessie grows livid with anger and jealousy. Her father reminds her that the therapist advised that Jessie explore her emotions. She feels victimized for what she considers minor infractions, including truancy and her second traffic accident.

In the final moments before parting from familiar surroundings, Jessie looks at her room for the last time. In defiance, she smashes a picture of herself with her father and pulls away from his hug, refusing to acknowledge his "I love you." Smoldering with hatred, resentment, and rebellion, she strides to the commuter plane.

Partnering with Freddy, a taciturn loner from New Mexico, Jessie sets out at dawn for the day's hike. She suits up in nylon climbing harness and mounts the pitons. Unforeseen thunder and lightning paralyze Jessie, sending her eyes from her partner to Troy, whom she trusts. With advice from below, she makes her move, but falls. Freddy catches her. Al helps him haul her to safety.

The group bails out of their planned climb and stops at the base of the mountain for lunch. A warning sign indicates that three climbers have died on Storm King Peak. Troy blames Al for endangering Jessie's life on so treacherous an ascent. Al reminds Troy that he chose the route, which was the wrong way to scale the peak. Jessie plans to find a telephone and order her father to get her out of Discovery Unlimited.

On the hike back to the cabins, Troy tells Jessie about his surfing days in San Diego. She admires his independence and admits that falling during the climb humiliated and terrified her. Troy refuses to let her take the blame for aborting the climb. In his view, Al is on a power trip based on scaring climbers, then rescuing them. Troy claims to be "sick of people playing God with my life." Al approaches Jessie to reassure her. He encourages her to outgrow her limitations.

Jessie screams, "Get lost." Adam labels their experience a kind of torture. Al calls it "wilderness therapy."

At the base camp, the boys fire the boiler for a hot shower. The girls watch the progress of the fire, then sneak into the shower and use all the hot water for baths and shampoos. In retaliation, the boys steal their clothes. They reach a compromise — the boys will return the clothes if Rita cooks lasagna. During dinner preparations, Star suggests that Jessie use crystal power or Tarot cards to improve her life. The cards predict love, happiness, and a new relationship.

At dinner, the boys get a large casserole of lasagna and the girls take a smaller one. Immediately, the boys realize that Rita has overloaded their portion with garlic, but they continue eating. After dinner, the group studies a whitewater raft trip down the San Juan River. Al proposes that they get a permit to train at a stretch called Westwater, which features a rapid called Skull. The experience terrifies Heather, who refuses to try again. Al entices her aboard the raft for the float down a mild stretch to Moab, Utah.

At Bluff, the party stops at a store for junk food before re-entering the river for a ten-day trip. Troy surprises them by paying for whatever they want. While Al arranges for pickup of supplies, the teen climbers sit in the van and plot to steal it. At Rita's suggestion, they opt to raft through the Grand Canyon.

The trip begins with an easy departure from the store, toward Navajo territory, and farther west toward Glen Canyon Dam. In the night, Jessie insists on stopping to make a phone call to her father. At Lee's River, the group finds a place to launch the boats. Before dawn, Heather disappears. The seven remaining teenagers lack a proper map, but opt to continue downriver on the Colorado.

The rafters exult in the wild water that roars through dry walls. Troy gives orders for steering; Pug takes over the rudder. Jessie falls overboard. Star grabs her life jacket and pulls her back in. Troy replaces Pug with Adam. Pug glares his resentment. The group needs rest after 30 hours of action. Troy estimates a distance of 200 miles of river between Lee's Ferry and Lake Mead and concludes that they must cover 20 miles a day to make the food last.

As unofficial expedition leader, Troy repositions Jessie in the front of his boat as a stabilizer. Every half mile, they reach rapids. A hole upends the boat and fills it with water. The second craft hits the same hole and dislodges Rita, Star, Pug, and Freddy. The group drags the boat ashore and prepares to dry off.

Stretched out for the night, the seven teenagers sink into exhausted sleep. Jessie awakens from a nightmare about her mother, who died of cancer. She and Star go for a walk. Star confides how her pregnant mother abandoned her at a shelter. Star envies Jessie's father and wonders if the baby

DOWNRIVER

her mother was carrying might have been a sister. Star cements their friendship by tying a bracelet on Jessie's wrist.

By a dawn fire, the group sips coffee and considers their situation. The river has fallen dramatically, leaving their boats dangling vertically from drop-offs. Ahead, they explore falls and a cave. Jessie overcomes her bad experience with climbing by scaling to the top, where she identifies handprints left by prehistoric Anasazi Indians. From their vantage point, the group spies three boats passing below.

In his exuberance, Adam carelessly kicks a rock onto Rita's head. Jessie asks Freddy to check the first aid box for advice on stitches. Freddy is embarrassed to admit that he is a poor reader, but he does a good job of suturing the hairline wound. A little farther downstream, the group camps for the night under an overhang and plays frisbee with a pie plate.

The girls wash Rita's blood-soaked hair, which Jessie braids. Star settles on her scarf and deals the Tarot cards. The boys cook dinner as the girls relax and meditate on the area's natural beauty. Their days of floating and tending camp stretch out in contemplation and contentment. They name a warm azure stream the River of Blue. Pug discovers that mud stops the itch of his poison ivy.

As Freddy departs to explore, Jessie tags along and enjoys the rhythm of rock hopping. They approach a flattened dome and climb atop. Scattered about are feathered sticks. Freddy, whose mother was Hopi, indicates that the amulets are prayer sticks. He weeps at memories of his father, a Basque shepherd who was killed by the police. Freddy and Jessie return to camp and find the others in a testy mood. Troy appears jealous of Freddy's attentions to Jessie. Adam displays his pet scorpion.

The next day, the group reaches a dramatic portion of the Grand Canyon and reconnect with Al. He indicates that they face Hance Rapids, the first of a series of big drops. To protect his gear, Al claims the right to steer. At dinner he warns that the group is only a third of the way down the river and that they are devouring food too rapidly. He is amazed that they lack a printed river guide. The group ponders excluding Al from the rest of the trip, then tentatively agree to let him stay for the next rapids.

Troy grows moody over loss of leadership. Downstream, Al leads a small party to Clear Creek. On return, they set out for Phantom Ranch, the only stopping place for food, telephone, and mail. At the bridge, Troy and Freddy realize that Al has set up a trap. Police and park rangers clatter across the footbridge. Pug holds Al at knifepoint as the group grabs the boats and escapes. Al reminds them that they lack enough supplies for the rest of the journey.

Jessie tries to help navigate by reciting from the guide. At Horn Creek, they study their options. Troy, irritated by challenges to his authority, hurls the guide into the stream. Jessie rebels at Troy's insistence on running the rapid at night. They assemble at a small camp and exult at their luck. Star grows morbid after turning over the Grim Reaper, a card prophesying death.

Helicopters hover overhead, but are unable to land. Adam dons his ninja costume and entertains the group. He reveals a puncture wound on his arch. Farther along, the rafters spot the helicopters on a beach and renew their intention to run the river. At the juncture of the Colorado

River, a boat flips. Adam's shoulder is dislocated. The supplies disappear with the missing boat, which floats down later.

With their gear in hand, the group contemplates camping, but fears that a flash flood could drown them at the wash. Freddy pulls Adam's shoulder into place. That night, a savage storm interrupts Jessie's bad dream. As water gushes and boulders threaten to hurtle down, the group loads the boats and moves on. They realize that Star is not with them and turn against Troy, who could have prevented trouble by listening to Freddy. They reunite with Star.

Late the next day, the group locates four boats. On a brief walk, Star, Jessie, and Freddy meet a dozen or so adult rafters, who give them advice about running Lava Falls. That night, after the group drinks a stolen bottle of tequila, Freddy is bitten by a scorpion. Jessie blames Troy for putting the poisonous insect in Freddy's sleeping bag. Jessie and Star treat Freddy's wound and, leaving Pug and Troy behind, move Adam and Freddy by boat toward Havasu Creek. Al and a ranger pick them up near Thunder River. Freddy and Adam are taken to Flagstaff for medical care; Rita, Star, and Jessie go to a juvenile detention center in Kingman.

In March, Star, Jessie, and Madeline ski near the Hacienda, where Jessie serves a year's probation under her father's supervision. Freddy goes to southwestern Colorado for rehabilitation. Troy disappears. A letter from Adam reports that Troy was found in Los Angeles. Al recommends that he receive punishment for his crimes. Adam plans to join Al as a go-fer at Hoods in the Woods. Star enjoys being included in a real family.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A former reading and English teacher in Durango, Colorado, Will Hobbs applies his experiences with teenagers to his writing. A native of Pittsburgh, he was born, the middle child of five, on August 22, 1947, to Mary Rhodes and Gregory J. Hobbs, a career officer in the U.S. Air Force. Both of his parents encouraged him to love and appreciate the wilds. In childhood, Hobbs moved frequently and recalls liking Alaska's outback best. He was an active child in sports and gardening and maintained an interest in books, particularly fiction and biography, from which he learned tolerance and compassion.

Hobbs, a Phi Beta Kappan, earned a B. A. and M. A. in English from Stanford before beginning his sixteen-year career in the junior and senior high classroom. After publishing two novels and contributing to *Writers in the Classroom*, he left the teaching profession to initiate a full-time career as freelance writer. A resident of Bayfield, outside Durango, Colorado, the author and his wife Jean, a former realtor, live in an environment shared by eagles, coyotes, badgers, and black bears. The Hobbs family enjoy hiking, whitewater rafting, nature study, archeology, native American lore and the other Southwestern attractions that form the core experiences of Hobbs's young adult novel, *Downriver*, which is set on the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon.

CRITIC'S CORNER

For his four novels, Will Hobbs has earned a notable book

DOWNRIVER

award from the Children's Book Council, two ALA awards — Best Book for Young Adults and a Recommended Book for the Reluctant Young Adult Reader, an IRA Teachers' Choice Award, a Regional Book Award from Mountains and Plains Booksellers Association, Mountains and Plains Booksellers Association Children's Book Award, Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies and a second place in the Earthworm Children's Book competition. While writing *Downriver*, his third novel (which he dedicated to conservationist David Brower, leader of the Sierra Club during the 1960s) Hobbs wrote two unsuccessful drafts before settling on the voice of Jessie as narrator. For his painstaking work, he received a Best Book for Young Adults and Best Book for Reluctant Young Adult Readers as well as a Pick of the Lists citation from ABA. He also earned nominations for awards from the states of California, Colorado, Maryland, Nebraska, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the value of individuality and self-esteem
2. To explain the importance of peer acceptance to a healthy outlook
3. To evaluate the use of wilderness experiences, climbing, and orienteering in training self-reliant adventurers
4. To account for problematic behaviors, especially withdrawal, neurotic fears, superstition, aggression, boasting, bullying, and victimizing
5. To relate the problems caused by shifts in family structure from death of a parent, abandonment, divorce, remarriage, or absentee or irresponsible parents
6. To discuss literary methods of revealing character strengths
7. To comment on dreams as revelations of weaknesses and character flaws
8. To express the importance of supervision for troubled teens
9. To characterize adventure literature in terms of drama and suspense

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explain why Jessie and Star make compatible roommates
2. To assess when and how Freddy reveals his troubled past and his inability to read
3. To account for Troy's jealousy and unreasonable demands for control
4. To order events that lead up to the airlift above Lava Falls
5. To describe turning points in the story, for example, the decision to steal the van, Al's instigation of an ambush, Heather's withdrawal from the group, and Jessie's evolving fondness for Freddy
6. To account for Adam's use of humor and posturing as a Ninja warrior
7. To predict how Jessie will adapt to responsibility after a year's probation and the receipt of a driver's license
8. To explain how the group handles crises, as with Rita's hairline cut and the overturning of the boat
9. To evaluate the emotional growth of the group in terms of compassion and realism

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Chapter and page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which each item is taken.

1. Hike, freeze, starve, break out the ropes and carabiners and risk your life every day — for what? (Chapter 1, p. 2)
(Al instructs his charges in the proper use of climbing gear and in avoiding injury, exposure, or starvation in the wild. An essential part of the climber's equipment is the carabiner, an oval fastener with a spring clip on one side that allows rope to slide through the center.)
2. He reminded me in his body language of an aborigine or a tribesman from the Amazon, right out of one of the slide shows my dad used in his anthropology classes. (Chapter 1, pp. 4-5)
(Al's relaxed pose — squatting on his haunches — recalls pictures Jessie's father has displayed of Brazilian natives or other primitive folk who squat contentedly by the fire as though they have no need for furniture. The purpose of an anthropologist's studies is accounting for patterns of behavior in peoples from different racial origins, milieus, and cultures. The Amazon River is a worthy center for study of peoples who have had little contact with the more civilized world.)
3. Freddy led the way, climbing easily if not gracefully, pausing here and there to hammer pitons into the rock. (Chapter 2, p. 16)
(Until he reveals his part-Hopi heritage, Freddy remains an enigma to Jessie and the others in the group. Part of his job as he labors up the sheer rock face is to hammer in a wedge or peg to be used as a hand- or foothold.)
4. My center of gravity was out beyond the ledge and above that bottomless drop. (Chapter 2, p. 19)
(After the flash of lightning over Storm King Peak, Jessie swings out from her handhold, the mass of her body weight out of equilibrium and threatening to tumble her into the chasm below. In order to right herself, she must concentrate her weight over a stable resting place, but uncontrollable terror prevents her from thinking this strategy through or applying the logic of physics to her predicament.)
5. He used to talk about the rapids in the Grand Canyon all the time. "So does Al," I said, "but we aren't going to the Grand Canyon. We're just going to the San Juan River, and it's supposed to be pretty flat. (Chapter 3, p. 25)
(The geographic setting of the story centers on Four Corners, the junction of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. The San Juan River, a gentle curve on the map, winds south from Colorado into New Mexico and back north at Four Corners into Utah, where it joins the Colorado River near Glen Canyon. From there, the Colorado swings south through rough terrain in northwestern Arizona and the Grand Canyon. The watercourse enters a stopping place in southwestern Nevada at Lake Mead, about 20 miles from Las Vegas.)

DOWNRIVER

6. Back in his home town in Kansas he would actually dress up like a Ninja, robe and sword and all, and sneak around at night, climbing trees and prowling rooftops, and he'd come in through girls' windows and leave roses on their pillows. (Chapter 3, p. 28)

(As Jessie learns the idiosyncrasies of her fellow "Hoods in the Woods," she and the others laugh at the witticisms and posturing of Adam, a born clown and attention seeker. One of his favorite poses is the ultra-romantic Ninja warrior, a meticulously trained Japanese assassin during ancient times. The use of arcane martial arts, surreptitious movements, and peculiar weapons and self-defense makes the Ninja a favorite in adventure literature and movies.)

7. I sat up. "Tarot cards? I've heard of them, but I've never seen them. (Chapter 4, p. 38)

(Star, a severely traumatized young woman whose mother abandoned her at a shelter for the homeless, makes up for the inequalities and exigencies of life by trusting crystal power, imaging, karma, and Tarot cards. The use of 22 pictorial Tarot cards — e.g., the Grim Reaper, Five of Swords, King of Cups, Nine of Pentacles, Celtic Cross — as a means of divining the future dates to Italy in the early fourteenth century, when gypsy fortune tellers introduced Tarot decks from the east. The significance of the pictures requires a comprehensive study of location and juxtaposition to other cards.)

8. "It's my karma," Star said. "I can't feel sorry for myself." (Chapter 8, p. 81)

(Star's interpretation of her fate rests on her belief that the future is predetermined, as in the Hindu system of karma, a force based on human actions in one life that determines what form the being will take after reincarnation in a future life.)

9. Rock art like this was quite common, the work of Anasazi cliff dwellers from about a thousand years ago. (Chapter 9, p. 88)

(The Anasazi were an influential prehistoric tribe of wanderers, basket weavers, and cliff dwellers who inhabited parts of the American Southwest from 100 B.C. to A.D. 1400. Around A.D. 400, they colonized the banks of the San Juan and Virgin rivers and populated the Glen Canyon of Colorado and the Grand Canyon. As shelter for 100 residents, between A.D. 1200 and 1276, they built the 114 rooms and 8 kivas of Spruce Tree House at Mesa Verde, Colorado. The ruins of this ancient condominium were rediscovered by ranchers in 1888. Similar architecture exists at Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, and Mummy Cave in Canyon de Chelly, Arizona. The Anasazi hunted with darts, spears, nets, and snares, grew maize and squash, lived in pit houses; wove sandals and rope from yucca and rushes, and pioneered the use of adobe in construction. The Pueblo and Hopi nations are direct descendents of this tribe.)

10. "This is a shrine," he said. "It's called the *sipapuni*. And this is a *paho*," he added, holding up the little bundle I'd almost stepped on. "A prayer stick." (Chapter 10, p. 101)

(Freddy, whose mother is a Hopi Indian, understands

the significance of the ritual items he and Jessie locate. The Hopi have traditionally been a tribe of desert farmers native to Arizona and parts of the Southwest. They succeeded the ancient Anasazi and carved pueblos in remote canyons, where they battled drought as they eked a living from corn, bean, and squash gardens and raised cotton for weaving. Their numerous festivals, involving kachina dolls and live snakes, sought help from the gods for a good harvest. The individual worshipper's use of a prayer stick — a ceremonial baton, dowel, reed, or wand the size of a pencil or slightly larger — resembles prayer beads or religious medals and serves as a reminder of the order and importance of ritual chants.)

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 - 4 Literal Level

1. What is Al's role in helping troubled teens?
(At Discovery Unlimited, Al, a low-key, fortyish Vietnam veteran, inspires young delinquents to challenge themselves and learn to rely on their instincts. His methods require delegation of duties, subtle observations about personal strengths and needs, and the development of compromise, mediation, and leadership. While teaching young climbers and whitewater rafters how to work together, he implies that the lessons they learn will improve their relations with others when they return to normal life. By bolstering their friendships, he encourages compassion and understanding of other people's backgrounds and problems.)
2. What events have caused Jessie familial grief?
*(Jessie's rebellion against her father and potential step-mother appear to stem from Jessie's mother's death from cancer nine years earlier. The novel implies that Jessie and her mother spent time apart from Jessie's father, who engaged in anthropological field work in the Amazon. When Jessie came to depend on him alone, she tested the limits of his authority by skipping school and getting involved with reckless drivers.
At the beginning of the novel, Jessie's father sells their home and builds the Hacienda. Jessie is so devastated by the loss of familiar surroundings that she shatters a photograph of her father and blames his girlfriend, Madeline, for suggesting to the school counselor that Jessie might get control of her unruly behavior after a stint at Discovery Unlimited. In a turmoil of negative emotions, Jessie departs for the commuter plane without acknowledging her father's profession of love for her.)*
3. What does Jessie have in common with other Hoods in the Woods?
(At the Colorado camp, Jessie shares rock-climbing experiences with seven other troubled or wayward teens. Star, her cabin mate, was abandoned by her mother at a shelter and lives a surreal existence of such occult practices as crystal power, imaging, and interpre-

DOWNRIVER

tation of Tarot cards. Like Jessie, she misses her mother and wonders if the fetus her mother was carrying might have been a sister.

Rita, who dishes out salty language and rough vengeance, grew up as a thief in New York. A tough street savvy sets her apart from Freddy, whose Hopi-Basque heritage brought him in contact with sheep herding and outdoor living. Jessie reflects some of Rita's defiance and a bit of Freddy's need to unravel for himself the problem of where he fits in.

Less like Pug and Troy, who share a dependence on swagger and implied menace, Jessie is at times given to putting up a bold front. Like Heather and Adam, however, she retains enough balance and sense of humor to allow contact with her father and to impel her to find good in the others. Overall, Jessie stands out in intelligence, trust, resilience, and the ability to learn from mistakes, a quality that benefits Heather, Adam, Star, Rita, and Freddy, but fails to rescue Troy or Pug.)

4. How do the seven rafters demonstrate adaptability?
(On the tempestuous ride down the Colorado, the seven escapees from Discovery Unlimited share responsibilities, discuss alternatives, and follow a unified plan of action in meeting challenges as they arise. They learn to value and care for equipment, to ration food, to take time out for relaxation and appreciation of nature, and to meet medical crises with sensible first aid procedures, as with the treatment of Adam's punctured arch, Rita's torn scalp, and Pug's poison ivy. After they lose Star, they continue searching until they find her and work to rebuild the group loyalty that has sustained them on the long ride downriver.)

Questions 5 - 8 Interpretive Level

5. How and why do the rafters lose their group mentality?
(Odd moments of unexplained hostility in Troy indicate that his perception of a leadership role is really a desire for control. Unpleasant exchanges over Freddy and Jessie's walk up Clear Creek and over delays in departure result in angry outbursts. When Al reappears and joins the group, the threat to Troy's perception of group control pushes him to rebel. At the ambush, Troy is eager to push on down the Colorado River and to avoid intervention by the authorities, even though Al holds legal claim to the stolen boats and supplies.
After medical emergencies deter plans to continue the adventure to Lake Mead, Troy runs away. He and Pug remain at large after Star, Rita, Jessie, Adam, and Freddy are taken into custody. The five detainees distance themselves from Pug and Troy's more violent behavior. Months later, Jessie is not surprised to learn about Troy's behavior after he returns to Los Angeles or that Rita has dropped out of their lives. Because Pug, Troy, and Rita never bonded as fully with the group, their departures seem plausible.)
6. How does the author balance the pace of the novel?
(Will Hobbs provides varied moments of humor, play, group solidarity, flirtation, pranks, and nature appreciation among the grimmer moments of challenge and near-death experiences. The beauty of the River of Blue, the allure of ancient Anasazi handprints on cave

walls, a wallow in the mud, the pounding of Thunder River, and the trill of the canyon wren break the nerve-wrenching terror of whitewater rapids and near-misses. The quiet moment of meditation that follows Freddy's stitching of Rita's scalp wound validates Star's notion of peace and compliance with the universe. The fun of the lasagna supper and the stolen bath water indicate that the central characters of Downriver are essentially normal teens caught in unpleasant circumstances at a difficult point in their maturity.)

7. What does Jessie learn about herself?
(By March, Jessie discovers that her father is right — teenagers do live by extremes. Madeline's threat to family love proves groundless after Jessie accepts her father's remarriage. Hacienda, their new home, becomes a refuge to Jessie, her father, Madeline, and Star, the most appreciative, home-needy character.
During the year's probation and the ban on a driver's license, Jessie has an opportunity to negotiate human whitewater in close quarters with her father, stepmother, and new-found sister. Having discovered that she is capable of facing terrible situations, such as running the Colorado River in the dark and treating a bleeding head wound, she calms former tensions and frustrations with a more mature outlook. To acknowledge her love of Freddy, her confidante, Jessie encourages Star to consider a second hike to the Grand Canyon and Thunder River.)
8. What is the purpose of Hobbs's epigraph?
(Opposite Chapter 1 appears a citation by Theodore Roosevelt following a 1903 visit to the Grand Canyon. The former U.S. president's enthusiasm for wild water echoes the novel's characters and their delight in the challenge of nature. As Roosevelt notes, "You cannot improve on it. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it." Roosevelt proposes that the Grand Canyon is a national legacy, to be preserved for the use and enjoyment of "your children, your children's children, and for all who come after you.")

Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. What does Downriver suggest about the collapse of the American family?
(The pressures that push the teenagers into unacceptable behaviors mirror the stresses that Americans acknowledge are tearing apart moral fiber and stability. The family, which is the human institution most vulnerable to change and crisis, loses its hold on children when vital structures collapse. To Rita, coping means stealing; for Pug, physical aggression realigns his lost link with security and acceptance; and Adam laughs at reality by donning Ninja garb and climbing trees to peer into other people's lives. Freddy, a product of bi-racial, bi-cultural mother and father, vacillates between the traditions of his Hopi mother and the rhythms and requirements of a Basque shepherd's lifestyle. After his father is killed by authorities, Freddy withdraws into the dark corners of self and a leather pouch of power objects to debate how he can enter adulthood and maintain the cultures of both his parents.
Other family situations deplete the individual's will to

DOWNRIVER

interact. In Troy, whose parents travel and leave him to fend for himself, the absence of honesty and the give and take of normal relationships highlight the void left by globe-trotting parents. Similarly, Heather runs away or falls back on exhibitionism as a means of getting attention. Star withdraws into New Age superstitions as a way of justifying her belief that fate cannot be controlled or even influenced. For Star, disaster lurks at the turn of the Tarot card and the appearance of the Grim Reaper.

In contrast to the others, Jessie loses her center of gravity after Madeline upsets dependence on a stable, dependable father. As with the tumble from Storm King Peak, Jessie dangles over an inner turmoil that bears the added freight of unresolved grief for her mother. Unable to clasp the cocky philosophy of Freddy, Jessie can't just "whistle through your teeth and spit." She must rebuild the family structure to suit her mid-teen needs and nest outside Boulder at her father's new Hacienda, a house constructed to please two women.)

10. What do students stand to gain from reading about delinquents?

(Young readers can gain valuable insights into themselves and their peers by studying the contrasting coping mechanisms of Hoods in the Woods. By countering the limits of nature with the artificial limits set by society, students may learn to appreciate authority as a defense rather than a deterrent. A study of the group's hasty downriver plunge may call to mind that planning, strategy, and a modicum of compromise accompany any endeavor.

The sense of accomplishment the whitewater rafters acquire is a worthy reward, even for a venture that begins with a stolen van and rafting equipment. By paying a debt to juvenile authorities, Adam sees himself in a different role — as leader of other troubled youth in wilderness settings. Jessie and Star exult in sisterhood and joyously acknowledge that Freddy has returned to home territory for rehabilitation. To Star, the sum of the daredevil experiences is oneness — the family that she has longed for.)

Questions 11-13 Creative Level

11. Compose a letter to the park rangers requesting a river guide for a group that intends to retrace the explorations of Major Powell. Give dates of your expedition and places you intend to camp. Request information about emergency services.
12. Using a series of character webs, depict shifting loyalties and centers of power and influence in the novel. Stress Jessie's relationship with her father as well as with Al, Troy, and Freddy.
13. Outline a method of helping troubled youth cope with dysfunctional families and peer pressure. Include group therapy for all personalities — shy, forceful, deceptive, mischievous, and outgoing.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Math and Economics

1. Discuss ways of computing the number of miles rafters

cover on water, side trails, and portages, for example, by pedometer for travel on foot or by estimating the route on a river guide.

2. Explain how Troy is caught while using credit cards. Discuss the meaning of the term "paper trail."

Social Studies

1. Create a poster encouraging parents to send troubled youth to Discovery Unlimited. State the organization's purpose in upbeat, positive terms. Contrast the program with state-mandated centers for juvenile delinquents. Include the role of judges, law enforcement, and probation officers in rehabilitating participants.
2. Compose a brief history of eighteenth-century exploration of the Grand Canyon, especially that of Major John Powell in 1875. Mention archeological finds, particularly evidence of the Anasazi and Hopi. Include geological studies that link the area to an ancient sea.

Psychology

1. Compose a paragraph in which you define group solidarity. Explain why Star needs security, Freddy needs friends, Troy needs to control others, Adam needs attention, and Jessie needs to believe in herself. Discuss the self-fulfilling prophecy of labeling wayward teens as losers.
2. Discuss Al's methods of teaching self-reliance. Why does Troy fail in the role of navigator? Why is Adam drawn to a job at Discovery Unlimited? What does he have to contribute to Al's leadership and skills?
3. Account for Troy's placing the deadly scorpion in Freddy's sleeping bag. What does this incident suggest about Troy's personality and motivation?

Science and Health

1. Make an oral report on teenage behaviors as they relate to self-esteem and mental health. Stress the role of projects, exercise, shared meals and entertainment, and supportive friendships.
2. Compose and illustrate a guide to first aid for poison ivy, dislocated shoulder, scorpion sting, cuts, exposure, and contusions.

Language and Literature

1. Write a diary entry describing Star's beliefs in crystal power, imaging, and Tarot cards. Explain why she panics at sight of the Grim Reaper.
2. Work with a partner to create a series of analogies based on terms from the novel. For example: Jessie : rebellion :: Star : rootlessness.
3. Compose an extended explanation of maturity. Contrast Jessie's outlook in October with her improved attitude in March.
4. Read aloud from Judy Blume's *Tiger Eyes*, Paul Zindel's *Pigman*, Jean Craighead George's *Julie of the Wolves*, Susan Pfeffer's *The Year Without Michael*, Cynthia Rylant's *Missing May*, S. E. Hinton's *Rumblefish*, and Paula Danziger's *Divorce Express*. Compare the authors' abilities to that of Will Hobbs in composing realistic teenage language and behavior, particularly rebellion against authority.

DOWNRIVER

5. Summarize scenes in which dialogue indicates a shift of mood. Account for highs and lows in the rafters' ability to get along and to make rational decisions concerning warmth, nutrition, first aid, group solidarity, direction, and safety.

Art

1. Draw a cartoon strip depicting Al's role in *Downriver*. Indicate what he stands to lose if the whitewater rafters die as a result of their ill-planned adventure in stolen equipment.
2. Make a mural of significant scenes from the novel, particularly the girls serving lunch to Jessie's father, the arrival of rangers at the footbridge, quiet moments in calm waters, righting the overturned boat, Jessie's fall from Storm King Peak after the lightning flash, stealing the van and leaving Al at Bluff, discovering Anasazi handprints, looking for Star, treating Rita's head wound, and laughing at Adam's ninja costume.

Music

1. Listen to recorded music that suggests the many moods that assail Jessie, especially apprehension, hope, frustration, doubt, affection, and acceptance. Some possibilities include Grofe's "On the Trail," Debussy's "L'Après-midi d'une Faune," Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King," and Copland's "Appalachian Spring" and "Fanfare for the Common Man."
2. Compose a jolly tune for "river pirates" to sing while rowing, beaching, and steering. Mention famous brigands, especially Edward Teach, Jose Gaspar, and Mike Fink.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Relate the following literary terms to *Downriver*: simile, contrast, milieu, flat and round characters, setting, dialogue, conflict, atmosphere, mood, motivation, rising action, climax, falling action, faulty logic, epistle, theme, dilemma, flashback, and tone.
2. Lead a discussion of adult responsibilities to teenagers, particularly those suffering from abandonment, criminal peers, death of parents, stepparents, uprooting, and low self-esteem.
3. Contrast Jessie's daring with similar situations in other young adult novels, particularly Avi's *Nothing But the Truth* and *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, Harry Mazer's *Snowbound*, Lois Duncan's *Killing Mr. Griffin*, and Robert Cormier's *Chocolate War*, *After the First Death*, and *Fade*.
4. Record student reactions to Troy's decision to traverse the Grand Canyon without a map. Discuss the difference between taking personal risks and endangering a group by imposing unnecessary risks. Differentiate between courage and foolhardiness.
5. Create a scenario in which Freddy, Adam, Star, and Jessie vacation together. Suggest ways that they will display greater maturity and self-assurance.
6. Write a televised interview with a park ranger. Indicate the role of authorities in supervising recreation, camping, and nature study. List the dangers of tackling

whitewater rafting without proper gear, supplies, guidance, and experience.

7. Role-play Jessie's part in her father's remarriage. Reveal her ambivalence toward living at the Hacienda and learning to share her father's attention with a female rival.
8. Lead a debate concerning the difference between troubled or wayward youth and criminals. How do Pug and Troy demonstrate an inability to function like normal teens? What punishment would you impose for threats with a knife or placing a scorpion in a sleeping bag?
9. Create a database of information about wildlife, weather, and history as explained in *Downriver*. Work with a group and add more details about the beauties of the Grand Canyon and its role in bringing water to desert areas.
10. Compose a letter from Al to one of the rafters' parents. Explain how the group stole the van at Bluff and left on their own down the Colorado River. Discuss why Al summons the authorities to airlift the rafters from the Grand Canyon.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Make a list of scenes from the novel that express contrasting attitudes toward guilt, control, friendship, self-esteem, loss, responsibility, understanding, justice, professionalism, mental unrest, family love, parenthood, insecurity, and individuality. Next to each, indicate what you think is the author's personal philosophy.
2. Compose brief definitions of group loyalty as they apply to Al, Heather, Troy, Freddy, Star, and Jessie.
3. List and describe scenes that depict conflict, particularly Al's explanation of Jessie's fall on Storm King Peak, the theft of the hot bath water, Rita's head wound, the death of Freddy's father, Pug's need to punch people, the rangers' ambush, and the incidents with the knife and the bottle of tequila.
4. Compose a scene in which Star, Troy, Adam, Heather, Pug, Rita, or Freddy reunites with a parent.
5. Make a thorough list of items essential to a movie version of the novel, for instance pitons, rope, boats, oars, tequila, knife, scorpion, tin box, rice, waterproof supply bags, prayer sticks, suture kit, lasagna, boiler, tents, cabin, junk food, life jackets, river guide, canyon wrens, telephone, helicopters, and Ninja costume.

HOBBS'S PUBLISHED WORKS

Changes in Latitudes, 1988
Bearstone, 1989
Downriver, 1991
The Big Wander, 1992
Beardance, 1993

RELATED READING

Avi's *Nothing But the Truth* and *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*
Judy Blume's *Tiger Eyes*
Robert Cormier's *After the First Death*, *The Chocolate War*, and *Fade*
Paula Danziger's *Divorce Express*
Lois Duncan's *Killing Mr. Griffin*

DOWNRIVER

S. E. Hinton's *Tex*, *Rumblefish*, and *The Outsiders*
Ron Jones's *Acorn People*
Harry Mazer's *Snowbound*
Carson McCuller's *Member of the Wedding*
Susan Pfeffer's *Year Without Michael*
Cynthia Rylant's *Missing May*
William Sleator's *Oddballs*
Paul Zindel's *Pigman*

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DOWNRIVER**VOCABULARY TEST**

From the list that follows, select a word to fill in the blank in each sentence. Use capital letters for proper nouns and adjectives or words beginning a sentence. You will have answers left over when you finish.

anasazi	braid	gazelles	pigment	stifled
anesthetic	casual	handspun	practitioner	subtle
assassin	caverns	meditation	propane	suture
banter	compress	otter	ritual	uncannily
basque	deft	peroxide	scorpion	zen

1. It wasn't Carlsbad _____, but then we never got to the end of it either.
2. There were dozens of them, a deep red, some apparently made by pressing a hand dipped in _____ against the wall. . . .
3. Rock art like this was quite common, the work of _____ cliff dwellers from about a thousand years ago.
4. "Check out the _____," Troy said, discovering a parade of horned animals farther down the wall.
5. On the way down from the mouth of the cave, Adam, in his _____ manner, got a little careless and kicked a rock loose, a small but hardly harmless rock.
6. "I need something — I need a _____," I told Troy, and he mumbled, "I can't stand the sight of blood."
7. " _____ kit," I called out, and started hunting for it. "Now where does that get us? I've never done stitches."
8. Apparently Al wasn't a _____ of painless surgery.
9. Adam had recovered enough to hang around and _____ with Rita, who was starting to enjoy being the center of attention, now that she could see she wasn't going to drop dead.
10. Up close, I watched Freddy sew as Rita _____ the screams.
11. Freddy's fingers were quick and _____.
12. Rita fought her way free of Pug's embrace and ran after Adam, who was blating at her in an _____ sheeplike manner.
13. The way the three of us were, it was almost as if we were performing a _____, and Rita felt very soothed by it all.
14. As I was braiding Rita's hair, the wildwoman closed her eyes, faced the sun, and discovered the power of _____ for what I would guess was the first time in her life.
15. The guys were beating the _____ bottle with the crescent wrench, our dinner bell as it were, and Pug was hollering at us for good measure in the voice of a little boy who's discovered himself doing something good and was anxious to have admiration heaped upon him.

DOWNRIVER

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Character Identification (20 points)

Identify the characters described below.

- _____ 1. is a friend of Jessie's counselor.
- _____ 2. punches people on the shoulder as a way of demonstrating toughness.
- _____ 3. gave up field work in the Amazon.
- _____ 4. returns to L.A. and uses credit cards liberally.
- _____ 5. loses enthusiasm for whitewater rafting after a scary incident in a circular pool.
- _____ 6. daubs mud on poison ivy welts.
- _____ 7. meets the teenage rafters at Hance Rapid.
- _____ 8. died of cancer nine years before the story opens.
- _____ 9. fears she will die before reaching the end of the canyon.
- _____ 10. knows how to suture sheep.

Part II: True/False (30 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Al indicates that he saw the rafters from the vantage point of a ranger tower.
- _____ 2. The tequila belongs to a dozen adult rafters the teenagers encounter along the way down the Colorado River.
- _____ 3. According to the printed guide, all six types of scorpions can cause death.
- _____ 4. Jessie recovers her nerve while scaling a cliff to a cave once inhabited by prehistoric Anasazis.
- _____ 5. Loss of a boat and its supplies mean that the rafters must rely on rice as their only food.
- _____ 6. To protect his foot from gangrene, Troy soaks it in peroxide.
- _____ 7. The hike up Lava Falls to Clear Creek restores Star's enjoyment of canyon wrens.
- _____ 8. Rangers begin limiting rafting permits in October.
- _____ 9. Rafters avoid reaching for the chicken line, to which their oars are attached.
- _____ 10. The warning at the base of Storm King Peak indicates that three people have died while climbing it.
- _____ 11. Al picks Troy as navigator, then allows him free rein to make errors and suffer the consequences.
- _____ 12. Rita stops at the Colorado state line to send a post card to her mother.
- _____ 13. On her last day in her room, Jessie hurls her father's photograph to the floor and shatters the glass.
- _____ 14. The Hacienda is a rehabilitation center for troubled youth.
- _____ 15. While staying at the Hacienda, Jessie reestablishes her relationship with her father.

DOWNRIVER

Part III: Completion (20 points)

Complete each quotation below with a word or phrase.

1. Adam looks ridiculous in his _____ costume.
2. Al reaches gingerly into a tamarisk bush to avoid a _____.
3. In anger at losing control of the group, Troy hurls the printed _____ into the river.
4. While searching for a _____ kit, Freddy has difficulty reading the list Al made out.
5. Jessie's father is a professor of _____ and at one time a field researcher in the Amazon regions.
6. Jessie is punished for truancy and rolling a _____.
7. The _____ sticks of the Hopi are decorated with feathers.
8. After sneaking away from Al, the Hoods in the Woods drive onto the _____ reservation.
9. In traditional style, the gang drinks _____ from glasses with salt on the rims.
10. For one year, _____ loses her right to drive.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Select two to answer in paragraph form.

1. Explain why Jessie changes her attitude toward Troy.
2. Discuss how Al disciplines and educates by example.
3. Describe times when the Hoods in the Woods must improvise or compromise for lost supplies.
4. Compare Freddy and Adam in their methods of resolving a problem.

DOWNRIVER

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Short Answer (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to the following questions.

- _____ 1. What does Pug rub on his poison ivy to soothe the itch?
- _____ 2. Who sets up the ambush on the footbridge?
- _____ 3. What body of water awaits the rafters at the end of the Colorado River?
- _____ 4. What animals has Freddy sutured in the past?
- _____ 5. In what month is Jessie apprehended and taken to a juvenile center?
- _____ 6. What does Rita use to ruin the boys' lasagna?
- _____ 7. What device provides hand- and footholds up a rock face?
- _____ 8. Who claims that Al likes to be in control?
- _____ 9. What does Troy put in Freddy's sleeping bag?
- _____ 10. In what city is Troy apprehended?
- _____ 11. How old is Jessie at the end of the story?
- _____ 12. Who turns up the Grim Reaper?
- _____ 13. What costume does Adam put on?
- _____ 14. Where does Al catch sight of the group on the stolen equipment?
- _____ 15. What food remains plentiful in the rafters' supplies?

Part II: Character Analysis (20 points)

Place an X beside each statement that is true of Jessie.

- _____ 1. believes that Tarot cards predict disaster at Lava Falls.
- _____ 2. likes to cook for the boys.
- _____ 3. develops a reputation for swearing.
- _____ 4. is at first suspicious of Madeline's motives.
- _____ 5. accepts Star as though she were family.
- _____ 6. suggests that Freddy return to the Hopi tribe.
- _____ 7. helps shampoo Rita's blood-soaked hair.
- _____ 8. knows first aid procedures for a dislocated shoulder.
- _____ 9. insults Al after he declares his faith in her.
- _____ 10. informs her father that the group is "going to do something."

DOWNRIVER

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the word or phrase which will complete each statement below.

1. Heather loses her nerve at (Lava Falls, the River of Blue, the Skull, Hance Rapid).
2. Al's work list includes instructions for (laying a ground cloth, setting up a latrine, keeping out ants with honey, keel-hauling).
3. While Freddy digs in the first aid kit, (he indicates that he doesn't read well, Adam fantasizes over a copy of *Soldier of Fortune*, Troy pretends that Rita's wound was an accident, Star braids Rita's hair to keep it out of the blood).
4. A second helicopter searches for Troy and Pug at (Flagstaff, Tapeats Creek, Kingman, Westwater).
5. Major Powell (leads the rangers to the footbridge, refuses to give permits to rafters in late October, worked with Jessie's father in the Amazon, led explorers down the Colorado River).
6. Al explains (how to use a carabiner, which type of scorpion is deadly, how to signal the ranger tower, what to expect on the final drop-off at Lava Falls).
7. Horn Creek is rated an eight or nine (during the fall months, after a storm, except at low water, according to the adult rafters).
8. In tight passages, the group resorts to (portage, inflating the rubber raft, signaling for help, swimming through deep pools).
9. Star reports that (Freddy carries a poisonous scorpion in a tin box, Troy lost an oar, Jessie called for her mother during a bad dream, her mother took her little sister and abandoned Star at a shelter).
10. Troy insists that Jessie (hold down the front end of the boat, shake the tamarisk bush to dislodge rattlesnakes, cook the rice with cheese, spent too much time with Adam at the *sipapuni*).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Select two to answer in paragraph form.

1. Account for Jessie's father's exasperation with his daughter.
2. Describe the group's first taste of whitewater rafting.
3. Discuss why Al insists that participants take responsibility for their actions.
4. Describe how Jessie changes from October to March.

DOWNRIVER

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Caverns | 9. banter |
| 2. pigment | 10. stifled |
| 3. Anasazi | 11. deft |
| 4. gazelles | 12. uncannily |
| 5. casual | 13. ritual |
| 6. compress | 14. meditation |
| 7. Suture | 15. propane |
| 8. practitioner | |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Madeline | 6. Pug |
| 2. Pug | 7. Al |
| 3. Jessie's father | 8. Jessie's mother |
| 4. Troy | 9. Star |
| 5. Heather | 10. Freddy |

Part II: True/False (30 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 9. F |
| 2. T | 10. T |
| 3. F | 11. T |
| 4. T | 12. F |
| 5. F | 13. T |
| 6. F | 14. F |
| 7. F | 15. T |
| 8. T | |

Part III: Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------------|------------|
| 1. Ninja | 6. car |
| 2. rattlesnake | 7. prayer |
| 3. guide | 8. Navajo |
| 4. suture | 9. tequila |
| 5. anthropology | 10. Jessie |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Short Answer (30 points)

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1. mud | 9. scorpion |
| 2. Al | 10. Los Angeles |
| 3. Lake Mead | 11. 16 |
| 4. sheep | 12. Star |
| 5. November | 13. Ninja |
| 6. garlic | 14. ranger tower |
| 7. piton | 15. rice |
| 8. Troy | |

Part II: Completion (20 points)

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

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

1. the skull
2. setting up a latrine
3. he indicates that he doesn't read well
4. Tapeats Creek
5. led explorers of the Colorado River
6. which type of scorpion is deadly
7. except at low water
8. portage
9. Jessie called for her mother during a bad dream
10. hold down the front end of the boat

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

TEACHER'S NOTES

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