



Into the Wild

by Jon Krakauer

Teacher's Guide

Written By Mary Ellen Snodgrass



LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

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Synopsis

Author's Note

In April 1992, Christopher Johnson McCandless abandoned his ties to family and middle-class life by hitchhiking to south central Alaska to rough it in the wild. In July, hunters found his remains two weeks after he starved to death in an abandoned bus. For *Outside* magazine, Jon Krakauer researched McCandless' life—his graduation from Emory University and the leave-takings from family and money and name that preceded a risky odyssey across western North America. He named himself Alex Supertramp.

1. The Alaska Interior

On April 28, 1992, Jim Gallien met Chris/Alex near Fairbanks and drove him to the eastern edge of Denali National Park. Chris/Alex intended to follow the Stampede Trail, even though Gallien feared Chris/Alex was ill-prepared to survive alone in the Alaska Range.

2. The Stampede Trail

The abandoned city bus that Chris/Alex chose for a shelter derived from a mining project begun in 1961. On September 6, 1992, Ken Thompson, Gordon Samel, and Ferdie Swanson trekked into the wild and found Chris/Alex's body some 18 days after his death. Film and a diary and note recorded his final weeks. After evacuation by helicopter, the body underwent an autopsy that disclosed death by starvation. There was no identification.

3. Carthage

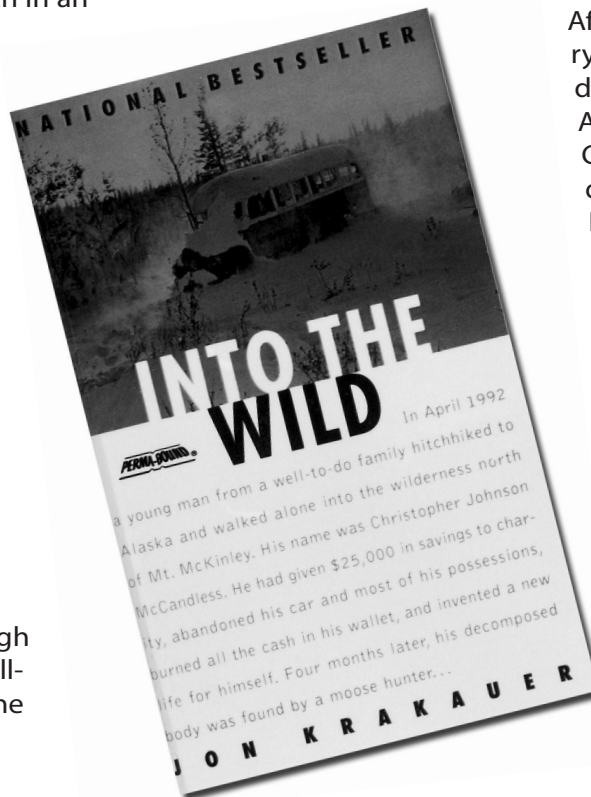
Two months later, Wayne Westerberg discussed Chris/Alex with author Jon Krakauer. Chris/Alex had made a home for himself in Carthage, South Dakota, in fall 1990. Estranged from his family, he chose Westerberg as a surrogate parent. On October 10, 1990, Westerberg went to prison in Sioux Falls for selling satellite TV descramblers. He learned that Chris/Alex was really Chris

McCandless of Annandale, Virginia, son of a space engineer. After obtaining a degree in history and anthropology, Chris/Alex donated \$24,000 to OXFAM America and, under the name Chris/Alexander Supertramp, drove his vintage Datsun west. His parents learned of his disappearance in August.

4. Detrital Wash

In October 1990, park ranger Bud Walsh located Chris/Alex's Datsun near Lake Mead, Nevada. Covered by a tarp, it had sustained mud and water damage from a flood. A journal recorded Chris/Alex's tramp around the West and his survival on edible plants. On August 10, he joined Jan Burres and Bob. An arrest for hitchhiking alerted Chris/Alex's parents to his whereabouts. They hired detective Peter Kalitka to locate their son.

On October 28, Chris/Alex bought a canoe and paddled down the Colorado River to Mexico. In December, he reaches a swamp, where a duck hunter offers to drive Chris/Alex to the Gulf of California. On January 11, 1991, he paddled into storm-tossed waves and panicked that he would drown. After his recovery, he returned to the United States. By early February, he had lost 25 pounds. On February 27, he trekked to Las Vegas and lived with tramps.



5. Bullhead City

After ruining his camera by burying it, Chris/Alex stopped keeping his photo-journal. He spent mid-summer in Oregon and pressed on to Arizona. At Bullhead City, he settled for two months to camp in the desert and live in a trailer while reading the works of Jack London. Chris/Alex worked at McDonald's until a clash over his body odor caused him to quit. In mid-December, he rejoined Jan Burres and Bob at the Slabs, a hobo settlement outside Niland, California, where he sold used books.

6. Anza-Borrego

On January 4, 1993, *Outside* magazine featured Chris McCandless on the cover. Ronald A. Franz requested a copy because of his meeting with the wayfarer in January 1992. A father figure for Chris/Alex, Franz taught him to make a leather belt featuring events of Chris/Alex's long journey. Franz drove him to San Diego where Chris/Alex lived on the street. In March he had reached Seattle by rail, but returned to Franz because of unemployment and brushes with the law. Franz wanted to adopt Chris/Alex as his grandson. In April, Chris/Alex returned to Westerberg to work at the grain elevator. Infused with a passion for adventure he anticipated his odyssey in Alaska. At his urging, Franz bought a camper, settled in the desert, and awaited Chris/Alex's return. Franz learned from a hitchhiker of Chris/Alex's death.

7. Carthage

During four weeks of work in Carthage, Chris/Alex saved for his journey. He met Westerberg's girlfriend, Gail Borah, and told her about his sister Carine. Gail discovered that Chris/Alex was seriously alienated from his father, Walt McCandless. After a farewell bash, he departed on April 15, leaving Gail with the fear that they would never see him again. On April 25, 1992, he reached Fairbanks.

8. Alaska

After Chris/Alex's death, some people thought him insane; others blamed him for worrying his family. Krakauer compared him to Victor Rosellini, who lived in the wild before killing himself with a knife through the heart. Another eccentric, John Waterman, climbed Denali in March 1978. In April 1981, he disappeared on another assault on Denali. Another hapless wilderness trekker, photographer Carl McCunn, traveled to the Alaska Range in

spring 1981, but neglected to ask the pilot to pick him up in late summer. Dying from starvation and frostbite, he shot himself.

9. Davis Gulch

One desert visitor, Everett Ruess, renamed himself Lan Rameau and disappeared in southern Utah in November 1934.

10. Fairbanks

On September 13, 1992, the *New York Times* reported an unidentified corpse in the Alaskan wild. Jim Gallien assumed the man was Chris/Alex. A photo in a recovered camera showed Chris/Alex's self-portrait. Westerberg heard of the death on the radio. By tracing Chris/Alex's Social Security number, the police located his half-brother, Sam McCandless, who informed their parents.

11. Chesapeake Beach

Krakauer interviewed Walt McCandless, a temperamental scientist who regretted Chris/Alex's death. Walt's second wife, Billie McCandless, was the daughter of Loren Johnson, a misfit who couldn't hold a job. Walt remembered Chris/Alex's impatience with refining his sports skills. In his teens, he worried about world hunger and Apartheid. His parents forced him to attend college. He had a knack for sales, but was ashamed of the family's wealth.

12. Annandale

In 1986, Chris/Alex graduated from Woodson High School and drove to the Pacific coast. He returned emaciated after getting lost and dehydrated in the Mojave Desert. He returned in time for college, made the dean's list, and considered going to Harvard Law School. He became withdrawn and angry that his father had maintained two families at the same time through lies and deceit. In spring 1989, he drove to Fairbanks.

13. Virginia Beach

Carine recalled that Chris/Alex wanted to take his dog Buck with him his last summer. She grieved almost daily for her brother. The family retrieved his body from Fairbanks. Billie and Carine lost weight.

14. The Stikine Ice Cap

Krakauer compares his own teen angst to that of Chris/Alex. In 1977, Krakauer quit a carpentry job to climb the Devil's Thumb across the bay from Petersburg, Alaska. After crossing the Stikine Ice

Cap, he awaited an airdrop of supplies. On his climb, he encountered rock under ice and had to descend once more.

15. The Stikine Ice Cap

For three days, Krakauer contemplates the climb. He accidentally burnes one side of the tent. He thinks about his father, Lewis Krakauer, who introduced him to climbing in Oregon when Jon was eight years old. Lewis was disappointed in his rebellious son, who refused to go to Harvard. Drug addiction from post-polio syndrome drove Lewis to madness. After a failed assault on the north face and a blizzard, Jon starts up the south face. His trek ends successfully after 20 days. The drive to succeed convinces Jon that neither his younger self nor Chris/Alex was suicidal.

16. The Alaska Interior

On the way from Carthage on April 15, 1992, Chris/Alex headed straight to the Yukon. He traveled with Gaylord Stuckey to Fairbanks and stopped at the University of Alaska to study edible plants. He bought post cards, a used Remington .22, and shells. He crossed the Teklanika River before it swelled with snow melt. On May 1, he located the abandoned bus on the Sushana River. He shot a grouse and ate rose hips and lingonberries.

Chris/Alex moved west in search of game. On May 19, he returned over soggy muskeg to the bus. Throughout May, he recorded his kill, which concluded on June 9 with a moose. The meat turned maggotty. In early July, he considered returning home. On his arrival at camp, he found the range flooded in by the raging Teklanika River. He had to wait out the thaw in the bus.

17. The Stampede Trail

With two companions, Krakauer traverses the area that Chris/Alex last walked and locates items left behind when the body was removed. Krakauer compares the tragic death to the failure of Sir John Franklin, who led an expedition into Canada in 1819. Starvation drove them to cannibalism. Métis rescued the survivors. In 1845, Franklin made a third trip to the Arctic and disappeared. Krakauer concludes that Chris/Alex was not stupid or careless—just unlucky.

18. The Stampede Trail

Chris/Alex returned to the bus on July 8 and continued hunting for food. On July 30, he reported advanced malnutrition. He died on August 19 after trying to subsist on wild potatoes. Krakauer surmises that Chris/Alex ate the poisonous seed pods, which contain a powerful alkaloid called swainsonine.

Epilogue

Ten months after Chris/Alex's death, Krakauer flies over the Stampede Trail with Billie and Walt McCandless. Billie muses on her son's courage and strength in not committing suicide. Walt installs a memorial plaque; Billie leaves survival supplies and a note telling the next survivalist to call home.

Author Sketch

Self-taught journalist Jon Krakauer amazed the adventure-reading public with investigative reporting of a bizarre death in the Alaska wild and with a detailed account of a 1996 expedition to the top of Mount Everest. Born April 12, 1954, in Brookline, Massachusetts, he grew up in the rugged terrain of Corvallis, Oregon. In the company of his father, Lewis Krakauer, he began scaling peaks at age eight with a 10,000-foot climb of South Sister. He developed hero worship for Willi Unsoeld, who conquered Everest when Krakauer was nine years old. As a student at Hampshire College, he learned about the sport of climbing from writer David Roberts.

Krakauer pursued summits while supporting himself with woodworking jobs and commercial salmon fishing in Boulder, Colorado. After marrying fellow climber Linda Moore, he promised to give up his avocation, but was unable to suppress a compulsion for more scaling adventures. His list of conquered slopes include Alaska's Arrigetch Peaks, the impetus to his sport writing for American Alpine Club journal. He followed with an ascent of Alaska's Stikine Ice Cap and of Devil's Thumb on the border of British Columbia, which he described for *Mountain* magazine. By age 29, he was adept enough at freelance writing to give up carpentry and fishing to write fulltime, including articles for *Architectural Digest*, *Playboy*, *Rolling Stone*, *Smithsonian*, and *Outside*, which financed the Everest climb.



In 1990, Krakauer issued his first book, an anthology of twelve articles, *Eiger Dreams: Ventures among Men and Mountains*, which included adventures on Mount McKinley and, in 1984, his attack on the Eiger in Switzerland, an ascent that nearly ended his marriage. Two years later, he followed with *Into the Wild*, a psycho-biography of Christopher Johnson McCandless, a transcendental philosopher who roughed it at Denali National Park, where he died of a bizarre form of unintentional self-poisoning. The consummate adventure, a climb with Rob Hall's 1996 expedition up Everest, initiated Krakauer's admiration for the Sherpa, who make possible the stream of traffic from would-be summitters up the Nepalese access to the world's highest peak.

After submitting a 17,000-word article to *Outside* on the journey after returning to his home in Seattle, Washington, Krakauer was still haunted by eight deaths on the day of his successful trek. He extended his interviews and correspondence and wrote *Into Thin Air*, a complex work comprised of the joy and commercialization of climbing and acknowledgement of nature's quirks and human wrongheadedness. His well researched, but judgmental work topped the nonfiction charts for months. Depressed and angry at himself for not rescuing more people, he swore off Everest, but returned to climbing in Antarctica for an article published in *National Geographic*.

Critic's Corner

Largely self-taught, Krakauer began earning honors with *Into the Wild*, a *New York Times* bestseller and the 1996 *Entertainment Weekly* Book of the Year. One critic doubted the author's ability to delve into the psyche of a man he never met or to contrast the foibles of other failed adventurers on such thin evidence. The author's next work, *Into Thin Air*, also a *Times* bestseller, garnered a mix of positive and negative remarks. After Krakauer earned a nomination for the National Magazine Award for the original article, *Into Thin Air* returned to prominence in other forms. In 1997, ABC-TV aired TriStar's adapted version of *Into Thin Air*. That same year, Krakauer narrated an unabridged audio version.

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Krakauer's Published Works

- Eiger Dreams: Ventures among Men and Mountains*, 1990
- Iceland: Land of the Sagas* (photographer), 1990
- "Death of an Innocent: How Christopher McCandless Lost His Way in the Wilds," *Outside*, January 1993
- "A Hog Is still a Hog, But the 'Wild Ones' Are Tamer," *Smithsonian*, November 1993
- Into the Wild*, 1996
- "Into Thin Air," *Outside*, September 1996
- "Summit Journal 1996: Jon Krakauer on Everest," *Outside Online*, May 23, 1997
- Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mount Everest Disaster*, 1997
- The Last Place on Earth: Scott and Amundsen's Race to the South Pole* (editor), 1999

Starlight and Storm: The Conquest for the Great North Faces of the Alps (editor) 1999.

Francis Parkman, *La Salle, and the Discovery of the Great West* (editor), 1999

High Exposure: An Enduring Passion for Everest and Unforgiving Places (co-author), 2000

The Brendan Voyage (editor), 2000

Chauncey Loomis, *Weird and Tragic Shores* (editor), 2000

The Shameless Diary of an Explorer (editor), 2001

Under the Banner of Heaven, 2003

Media Versions

Audio Cassette (abridged)

Into the Wild, Random House Audio, 1996

Into the Wild, Books on Tape, 1999

A Timeline of Events

1961	On the Stampede Trail, an abandoned bus was a leftover of a mining project.
1977	Jon Krakauer climbed the Devil's Thumb across the bay from Petersburg, Alaska.
summer 1986	Chris/Alex graduated from Woodson High School and drove to the Pacific coast.
spring 1989	He drove to Fairbanks, Alaska.
May 1990	He graduated from Emory University.
June	He donated \$24,000 to OXFAM America.
August	His parents learned of his disappearance and hired detective Peter Kalitka to locate Chris/Alex.
August 10	He joined Jan Burres and Bob.
fall	In Carthage, South Dakota, Chris/Alex chose Wayne Westerberg as a surrogate parent.
October	Park ranger Bud Walsh located Chris/Alex's Datsun near Lake Mead, Nevada.
October 10	Westerberg went to prison in Sioux Falls.
October 28	Chris/Alex began paddling a canoe down the Colorado River to Mexico.
December	A Mexican duck hunter drove him to the Gulf of California.
January 11, 1991	He nearly drowned in a storm at sea.
February 27	He trekked to Las Vegas and lived with tramps.

summer	He stayed in Oregon.
early winter	He worked at McDonalds at Bullhead City, Arizona.
ca. December 15	He rejoined Jan Burres and Bob near Niland, California.
January 1992	Chris/Alex befriended Ronald A. Franz.
March	Chris/Alex found no work in Seattle.
April	After four weeks' work for Westerberg, Chris/Alex hitchhiked to south central Alaska to rough it in the wild.
April 15	Chris/Alex traveled with Gaylord Stuckey to Alaska.
April 25	Chris/Alex reached Fairbanks, Alaska.
April 28	Jim Gallien drove him to Denali National Park.
May 1	Chris/Alex located the abandoned bus on the Sushana River.
May 19	He returned over soggy muskeg to the bus.
June 9	He bagged a moose.
early July	He considered returning home.
July 30	He reported advanced malnutrition.
ca. August 19	He died from eating poisonous pods of the wild potato.
September 6	Ken Thompson, Gordon Samel, and Ferdie Swanson found Chris/Alex's body.
September 13	The <i>New York Times</i> reported an unidentified corpse in the Alaskan wild.
December	Wayne Westerberg discussed Chris/Alex with author Jon Krakauer.
January 4, 1993	<i>Outside</i> magazine featured Chris McCandless on the cover.
June 1993	Krakauer flew over the Stampede Trail with Billie and Walt McCandless.

General Objectives

1. To experience and read aloud adventure stories
2. To identify and explain subjective point of view
3. To picture events in a wilderness setting
4. To envision a life-and-death struggle
5. To enumerate significant errors in judgment
6. To list an individualist's priorities
7. To account for youthful angst and rebellion

8. To comprehend solitude as a motivator
9. To evaluate everyday compromises
10. To discuss sources of food and water in the wild

Specific Objectives

1. To determine why Jon Krakauer identifies with Chris McCandless
2. To analyze alternate versions of Chris/Alex's mental state and death
3. To explain the difficulties of canoeing south on the Colorado River
4. To account for Chris/Alex's friendships with Mrs. Westerberg, Ronald Franz, Jan Burres, Gaylord Stuckey, Jim Gillien, Gail Borah, and Wayne Westerberg
5. To discuss a pathologist's methods of determining cause of death in the bus
6. To analyze long-hidden resentments at Walt McCandless' dissolute life and Lewis Krakauer's arrogance
7. To summarize references to the writings of Jack London and Henry David Thoreau
8. To contrast life in Annandale, Virginia, with freedom in the Datsun
9. To justify the severing of family ties to rid Chris/Alex of emotional anguish
10. To retrace Chris/Alex's multiple flights from civilization

The Importance of Setting

To depict the final odyssey of Christopher Johnson McCandless, journalist-adventure writer Jon Krakauer examines evidence of rebellion against society and the need for solitude in bizarre temporary dwellings. Through meticulous research, Jon Krakauer reconstructs the discontent of Chris McCandless, son of an autocratic space engineer. At the heart of father/son alienation was Chris/Alex's disdain for city life and affluence and for his father's duplicity in maintaining parallel households. In 1986, Chris/Alex graduated from Woodson High School and drove to the Mojave Desert. He returned home to Annandale, Virginia, in time to attend Emory University in Atlanta. In spring 1989, he began testing his dream of solitude by traveling to Fairbanks, Alaska.

The final loosening of ties to civilization began in June 1990, when Chris/Alex fled his monkish off-campus room in Atlanta, Georgia, to survey the West. After obtaining a degree in history and anthropology at Emory University, he eagerly divested himself of \$24,000 and drove his vintage Datsun to Lake Mead, an austere desert setting in southern Nevada. He camouflaged the car under a tarp, but failed to protect it from mud and water damage from a flash flood. To extend his odyssey, he bought an aluminum canoe and paddled down the Colorado River to Mexico with the intent of reaching the Pacific Ocean.

Chris/Alex exhibited a need to live on the outer fringe of respectability. After Mexican duck hunters drove him to the Gulf of California, he survived while canoeing storm-tossed ocean waters and trekked to Las Vegas, where he resided with tramps. At Bullhead City, Arizona, he continued limiting his place of residence by camping for two months in the desert while working at McDonald's. His next sojourn with Jan Burres and Bob at the Slabs placed him among bums outside Niland, California. From brief episodes of permanence, Chris/Alex exulted in riding the rails and plotting his fantasy adventure in Alaska.

The final journey required a conventional lifestyle in Carthage, South Dakota. With a surrogate father, Wayne Westerberg, a borderline outlaw who went to prison in Sioux Falls for selling satellite TV descramblers, Chris/Alex felt comfortable while he earned enough cash to pay for travel to Alaska. Before his death in Denali National Park in the wilds of south central Alaska, he made friends with another woodsman, Jim Gallien, who drove Chris/Alex from Fairbanks to the eastern edge of the Alaska Range. In Gallien's opinion, Chris/Alex was unprepared for roughing it on the Stampede Trail, but the adventurer's anticipation and impatience overrode his willingness to prepare for so rigorous a test of survivalism. In an abandoned city bus on the Sushana River, he recorded his delight in feeding himself on game. By film and a journal written in a field guide, he achieved the ideals of his favorite writers, who also chose solitude and self-reliance over urbanism.

Note: See map of McCandless' journey on the title page verso and detailed maps of Alaska on pp. 2 and 8, as well as a map of southwestern U.S. on pp. 24 and 86 of the book.

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Jon Krakauer's style, present the following terms and applications to the book:

Dilemma: a plot that depicts human characters in dire predicaments which they must resolve by making some sacrifice. At the tense conclusion of Chris/Alex's sojourn in the abandoned bus on the Stampede Trail, he realized that he misgauged his ability to survive. Panic gripped him as he composed an SOS note and recorded in his journal and on film a dwindling of physical reserve that preceded his death.

Foil: a character whose presence in a literary work offsets or enhances the contrasting traits of another character. By juxtaposing Chris/Alex with Jim Gallien, Mexican duck hunters, and the Alaskan moose hunters, Krakauer divulges faulty logic and reasoning that endangered a would-be survivalist. By grasping at infantile notions of independence, Chris/Alex violated the essentials of living in the wild.

Related Reading

Richard Adams, *Watership Down*
 Mary Hunter Austin, *The Land of Little Rain* or *Stories from the Country of Lost Borders*
 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*
 Margaret Craven, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*
 Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa* or *Shadows on the Grass*
 Marjory Stoneman Douglas, *The Everglades: River of Grass*
 Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*
 Jean Craighead George, *My Side of the Mountain*
 Robin Graham, *Dove*
 Joy Harjo, "Eagle Poem"
 Sarah Orne Jewett, *A White Heron and Other Stories*
 Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams* or *Last Stand: America's Virgin Lands*
 Linda Hogan and Brenda Peterson, *The Sweet Breathing of Plants: Women Writing on the Green World*
 Jack London, *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*
 Yann Martel, *The Life of Pi*
 Ben Mikaelson, *Touching Spirit Bear*
 Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf*
 Gary Paulsen, *Dogsong* and *Hatchet*
 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*
 Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*

Cross-Curricular Sources

For related reading and more information about survivalism, climbing, Jon Krakauer, Chris McCandless, Denali, solitude, self-reliance, Devil's Thumb, and the Alaskan wild, consult these sources:

Articles

Hewitt, Bill, and Johnny Dodd. "End of the Trail," *People* 38, no. 14 (5 October 1992), 48-51.
 McNamee, Thomas. "Adventures of Alexander Supertramp," *New York Times Book Review*, 145 (3 March 1996): 29.

Audiobook

The Call of the Wild, Naxos, 1995

Audiocassette

Hatchet, Listening Library, 1992
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Spoken Arts, 1979

Books

The Call of the Wild, Jack London
Dove, Robin Lee Graham
Life on the Mississippi, Mark Twain
Nights of Ice, Spike Walker
Robinson Crusoe, Daniel Defoe
White Fang, Jack London

Essays

"Civil Disobedience," by Henry David Thoreau
 "Self-Reliance," by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Internet

"Denali National Park and Preserve,"
<http://www.nps.gov/dena/>.
 "Devil's Thumb,"
<http://naclassics.com/climbs/devilthm/beta.htm>

Map

"Alaska," National Geographic

Poems

"Birdfoot's Grandpa," Joseph Bruchac
 "Eagle Poem," Joy Harjo
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Samuel Taylor Coleridge
 "The Cremation of Sam McGee" and "The Shooting of Dan McGrew," Robert Service

Reference Books

Encyclopedia of Frontier Literature, Oxford Press
World Shores and Beaches, McFarland

Short Stories

“Big Two-Hearted River,” Ernest Hemingway
“Stickeen,” John Muir
“The White Heron,” Sarah Orne Jewett
“To Build a Fire,” Jack London

Video/DVD

The Call of the Wild
Life on the Mississippi
Never Cry Wolf
The Old Man and the Sea
Out of Africa
The River
Watership Down

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* should include these aspects:

Themes

- independence
- rebellion
- daring
- solitude
- reading
- immaturity
- regret
- survival
- logic
- loss

Motifs

- living outside the social order
- physical and emotional hardship
- developing ascetic values
- losing a wayfaring son

Words in Context

Below are significant words, phrases, or sentences from the book. Explain each in context. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint each entry so you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. Instead, his innocent mistakes turned out to be pivotal and irreversible, his name became

the stuff of tabloid headlines, and his bewildered family was left clutching the shards of a fierce and painful love. (Author’s Note, n. p.)
(Krakauer distances himself from less dignified, unprofessional writers who value Chris McCandless’ story for its sensational elements. By proving that McCandless may have poisoned himself on wild potato pods, Krakauer strips the account of its lurid end and replaces it with a more fitting tragic conclusion.)

2. As they rolled down from the forested ridges above the Tanana River, Alex gazed across the expanse of windswept muskeg stretching to the south. (Chap. 1, p. 4)
(In the spring thaw, the frozen tundra reverts to muskeg, a wetland, fen, or peat bog common to the arctic. Across the mucky plain lie moldering leaves and plants, sphagnum moss, and sedge peat. Humus soaks up liquid to create a spongy habitat unsuited to trees. The ground saturation supports grasses and mushrooms and the bacteria and destructive fungi that further decomposition. At the same time, muskeg inhibits transportation and endangers wildlife by swallowing them up.)
3. He set pretty high standards for himself. (Chap. 3, p. 18)
(Chris McCandless exhibited complex motives and skewed logic that allowed him to live with derelicts and social misfits while absorbing the wisdom of Leo Tolstoy, Henry David Thoreau, James Joyce, Mark Twain, John Muir, Boris Pasternak, and Jack London. Chris’ standards included self-reliance and solitude while ignoring the human need for sanitation, nutrition, safety, and human company. His aims to shuck off the civilized world forced him to test the limits of endurance, from canoeing down the Colorado River to Baja to retreating into the Alaska Range without rations, an axe, or a system of communication.)
4. If McCandless felt estranged from his parents and siblings, he found a surrogate family in Westerberg and his employees, most of whom lived in Westerberg’s Carthage home. (Chap. 3, p. 18)
(Crucial to Chris/Alex’s comfort in a social setting was an absence of structure or of arbitrary demands from authority figures like school officials or police. Unlike his autocratic father, Wayne Westerberg maintains a loose relationship with his associates and an even looser obedience to the law. For his independence and bravado, he earned Chris/Alex’s trust, respect, and admiration.)
5. Westerberg had been drawn into a scheme to build and sell “black boxes,” which illegally unscramble satellite-television transmissions, allowing people to watch encrypted cable

programming without paying for it. (Chap. 3, p. 19)

(Wayne Westerberg drifted into the type of crime that appeared to have no victims. By formatting scrambled satellite signals for home viewing, he enabled people to bypass payment to the television broadcasting system. Because of the interstate nature of signal theft, he came under the scrutiny of the FBI and the federal court system, which committed him to the Sioux Falls prison for four months.)

6. What Walt, Billie, and Carine didn't know when they flew down to Atlanta to attend Chris's commencement—what nobody knew—was that he would shortly donate all the money in his college fund to OXFAM America, a charity dedicated to fighting hunger. (Chap. 3, p. 20)
(A privately-funded anti-poverty relief agency, OXFAM America strengthens communities by supporting social justice and providing food, training, and housing for the poor. The international organization operates in 26 countries and extends aid during disasters and crises, for example, the tsunami that swamped southeast Asia in 2005.)
7. "A freebie from the road gods—a car like this will make a great undercover vehicle for drug interdiction." (Chap. 4, p. 27)
(Chris/Alex's Datsun is low-key and old enough to escape suspicion as a police vehicle. The authorities relish another unobtrusive junker car for use by surveillance teams tracking methamphetamine dealers near Bullhead City, Arizona.)
8. McCandless could endeavor to explain that he answered to statutes of a higher order—that as a latter-day adherent of Henry David Thoreau, he took as gospel the essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" and thus considered it his moral responsibility to flout the laws of the state. (Chap. 4, p. 28)
(Civil disobedience demonstrates overt defiance of unconscionable and inhumane laws. Like the noble slave conductors of the Underground Railroad, followers of temperance leader Carrie Nation and insurrectionist John Brown, and suffragists challenging sexist voting restrictions, Chris/Alex defied laws regarding land and vehicle use, border restrictions, gun purchase, and hunting and squatters' rights. His doctrine derived from Thoreau's 1849 essay, which demands that moral people take action against injustice by risking penalties, incarceration, ridicule, and social ostracism.)
9. Although the tone of the journal—written in the third person in a stilted, self-conscious

voice—often veers toward melodrama, the available evidence indicates that McCandless did not misrepresent the facts; telling the truth was a credo he took seriously. (Chap. 4, p. 29)

(Krakauer analyzes Chris/Alex's journal entries for evidence of psychological and emotional imbalance. The journalist determines that Chris/Alex tended to dramatize his actions, but that he was scrupulous about admitting his faults and foibles.)

10. *It is the experiences, the memories, the great triumphant joy of living to the fullest extent in which real meaning is found. God it's great to be alive! Thank you. Thank you.* (Chap. 4 p. 37)
(In one of Chris/Alex's euphoric mood swings, he rejoices in living his fantasy of surviving without adhering to the middle-class lifestyle that require a conventional lifestyle based on money and false personal values.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important. Be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Plot

1. Why did Chris/Alex abandon his family?
(Chris/Alex gave up his family, siblings, expensive home, graduate school, and birth name out of resentment at his father. The family secrets of Walt McCandless' double life with Marcia and the birth of Quinn McCandless overwhelmed Chris, who was unable to forgive his father for immorality and deception. After pretending to want a college education, Chris allowed his family to think that he changed his attitude toward conventionality while he earned top grades. In secret, he plotted an odyssey out West in his Datsun. To Wayne Westerberg, Chris/Alex revealed roiling emotions that caused him to refer to himself as Alexander Supertramp and to break all ties with his affluent parents in Annandale, Virginia.)

Theme

2. Why is independence a focal theme?
(The importance of independence derives from Chris/Alex's post-adolescent need to establish his own values and to live by scrupulous ideals. He saturated his mind with the absolutes of Henry David Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience and with the credos of Boris Pasternak, Leo Tolstoy, Mark Twain, and Jack London. Drawn to the untrammelled wilderness as the only place in which to live a pristine life, Chris/Alex rejected conventional homes and friendships to press on toward the Alaska Range to live in solitude and self-reliance. In total independ-

ence, he exulted in shooting game to feed himself and in living apart from an economy that demands a job, Social Security, identification, a hunting license, and currency.)

Motif

3. Why does a survival motif pervade the text? (To Chris/Alex, his fastidious conscience disallowed living in an affluent society under the roof of his father, who violated family values by leading a double life. Survival required disowning civilization for its falseness and embracing nature, a pure environment undefiled by human weaknesses. In his journal entries, Chris/Alex reached an emotional high in the solitude of the Alaskan wild and in the satisfactions of shooting game for food and reading inspiring authors. In fending off the shortcomings of human society, he identified survival in the wild with a clean conscience and an idea life.)

Conflict

4. What caused father/son conflicts? (Both Jon Krakauer and Chris McCandless suffered under the dictates of autocratic fathers. Krakauer witnessed the decline of Lewis Krakauer from post-polio syndrome and drug abuse; similarly, Chris McCandless lived through a re-alignment of family relationships after his mother and siblings discovered that Walt McCandless maintained a relationship with Marcia McCandless and fathered Quinn McCandless, a sibling that Chris and Carine knew nothing about. Both Krakauer and McCandless harbored resentment that impeded normal ego development during adolescence. For both, daring and adventure offered tests of manhood and self-fulfillment to fill the void left by all-too-human fathers.)

Character

5. How did Chris/Alex set impossible goals for himself? (As revelations of worthiness, Chris/Alex validated himself and his aims by setting unattainable goals. Burning his cash and giving away his savings implied estrangement from the economic system, although he continued to earn cash by working at McDonald's, the used book store, and the grain elevator. He chose physical tests of courage by paddling an aluminum canoe down the Colorado River and living alone on the Alaska Range. In both cases, he needed outside assistance from the Mexican duck hunters, Gaylord Stuckey, and Jim Gillien before he could complete his goals. In the wild, he camped in an abandoned city bus, an ironic shelter left over from the urban world that became both his hermitage and grave.)

Motivation

6. Why does Jon Krakauer identify with Chris McCandless? (After writing the initial article on Chris McCandless for

Outside magazine, Jon Krakauer obsessed over the reasons for the young man's apparent starvation in the wild. By depicting Chris/Alex as an alter ego survivalist, Krakauer retraced the trip West and the trekker's self-immurement on the Stampede Trail. Insights into Chris/Alex's father/son antipathies and the need to pose challenges revealed to Krakauer some of his own motivations for forcing himself to defy his father and climb the Devil's Thumb. In the end of his text on Chris, Krakauer exonerates the victim of carelessness, stupidity, or a death wish. The likelihood that Chris died of accidental poisoning ennobles his hermitage and frees him of social ridicule.)

Character Responses

7. How did Chris/Alex respond to control? (Chris McCandless' behaviors reflected two strands of normal adolescent behavior—exhibitionism and rebellion against authority. He revolted against his father by pretending to accept the challenge of college and post-graduate study at Harvard Law School. In a plot to hold his mail at his off-campus room until August, Chris covered his tracks as he moved west in his Datsun. After abandoning the car and his birth name, he became Alexander Supertramp, the ultimate hippie and dropout from conventional society. Rebelling against government intrusion in total freedom, Chris/Alex bought no hunting or gun permits, entered Mexico and the United States illegally, and went to great lengths to avoid self-identity on Social Security forms. While living in the wild, he felt liberated from control by home and state and answerable only to a self-generated credo.)

Interpretation

8. Why did this book become a bestseller? (Chris/Alex's late-adolescent bloom appeals to young readers, who enjoy assessing a life lived for self. The intrusion of Jon Krakauer's revolt against family validates Chris/Alex's odyssey across the West. The quest story satisfies the reader's armchair wanderlust without requiring a personal confrontation with controlling parents or authorities. Students revel in Chris/Alex's euphoric states and applaud Krakauer's attempts to rid him of blame for being foolish, ill-prepared, ignorant, or willfully reckless.)

Comparative Literature

9. How does *Into the Wild* compare with other adventure quests? (Jon Krakauer's unusual book reflects careful thought about serious literature and about life in the wild. He challenges the reader to compare Chris/Alex's expedition to the undersea plunge of Captain Nemo in Jules Verne's sci-fi thriller *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and to the denial of society in Henry David Thoreau's memoir *Walden*. Krakauer lists a number of relevant adventure stories, including the autobiographical writings of Leo Tolstoy and Mark Twain. He obviously

admires Jack London's fictional "To Build a Fire," White Fang, and The Call of the Wild, perhaps North America's most-read quest novel. Farther afield, Krakauer's psychological study compares favorably with Ben Mikaelson's YA novel Touching Spirit Bear, first person testimony in Gary Paulsen's Dogsong and Robin Lee Graham's Dove, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's romantic poem The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Richard Adams' epic beast fable, Watership Down, and Farley Mowat's field study Never Cry Wolf. For the female equivalent of these quest tales, girls might find more appealing Isak Dinesen's memoir Out of Africa, Marjory Stoneman Douglas' ecofeminism in The Everglades: River of Grass, or Mary Hunter Austin's evocative tone poem The Land of Little Rain.)

Structure

10. Why does the book end with an epilogue? (By reconnecting the McCandless family in the final scenes, Krakauer adds dignity and pathos to Chris McCandless' alienation from society and his trek to the Alaskan outback. The touching scenes of Billie McCandless sitting on the mattress where Chris died and Walt McCandless' memorial plaque suggest a chastened family that may have learned something from their son's embrace of self-denial and suffering. The parents' return to the bus also exonerates Krakauer of identifying with Chris solely to cleanse himself of adolescent recklessness committed for the sake of proving manhood.)

How Language Works

Jon Krakauer is skilled at clear, evocative language that broadens the reader's vocabulary with explicit terms about adventure and the outdoors:

1. In picturing a spring thaw and the rising of flood waters, Krakauer comments, "As I stare into the Teklanika, I can hear rocks the size of bowling balls grinding along the bottom, rolled downstream by the powerful current."
2. He describes his own wonder at challenging summits: "In Miller's aerial photo the mountain looked particularly sinister: a huge fin of exfoliated stone, dark and smeared with ice."
3. Krakauer subjects his own father to serious analysis: "My father was a volatile, extremely complicated person, possessed of a brash demeanor that masked deep insecurities. If he ever in his entire life admitted to being wrong, I wasn't there to witness it."

4. Krakauer allows himself enough lyricism to ward off the cold exterior of subjective analysis of a fellow human being: "He was ready, perhaps to shed a little of the armor he wore around his heart, that upon returning to civilization, he intended to abandon the life of a solitary vagabond, stop running so hard from intimacy, and become a member of the human community."

Across the Curriculum

Psychology

1. Contrast the following aberrant personalities: sociopath, ascetic, narcissist, rebel, and hermit. Determine what behaviors are most prominent in Chris/Alex. Why do unresolved father/son issues nag at him long after he parts with his family?
2. Account for Chris/Alex's need to burn his cash, abandon coins, and donate \$24,000 to OXFAM America. Why does the rejection of money parallel his embarrassment at his parents' affluence?
3. Chart differences between Alexander Supertramp and Christopher Johnson McCandless. Account for Alex's return to his birth name in his final days.

Education

1. Compose an introduction to a branch of literature that depicts the human co-existence with nature. Explain why most illustrative and cautionary stories and dilemma tales are short, uncomplicated, but meaningful, such as Jack London's "To Build a Fire."
2. Create episodes in which Chris/Alex learns useful information about packing for an expedition, studying maps, corresponding with rangers and his parents, smoking or drying moose meat, choosing nourishing plants for food, and carrying sufficient emergency rations.
3. List additional coursework to accompany Chris/Alex's education in history and anthropology at Emory University in Atlanta. Suggest zoology, botany, geology, meteorology, photography, cross-country skiing, and swimming.

Religion

1. Propose realistic fables that set human actions on the Stampede Trail. Explain why Chris/Alex shuts out his parents and conventional society and relies entirely on self. Account for his final thanks to God for a happy life.

Geography

1. List topics that might suit a manual on survivalism, such as protecting the skin from flies and mosquitoes, surveying Alaskan topography, and avoiding spring thaws, mush ice, mucky muskeg, and flooding. Name beneficial plants, birds, fish, and mammals, particularly the wild potato, ptarmigan, duck, ferns, squirrel, lingonberries, and porcupine. Prioritize the tasks of a survivor like Chris/Alex to ensure water, food, shelter, warmth, safety, and communication with the outside world.
2. Chart the world's most appealing climbs. Note the ones that have claimed the most lives. Determine whether Devil's Thumb compares in height and danger to the Matterhorn, Everest, Eiger, or Denali.
3. Using map software, generate a map covering places mentioned in the story: Emory University, Denali National Park, Stampede Trail, Alaska Range, Sioux Falls, Mexico, Stampede Trail, Colorado River, Baja, Mojave Desert, Gulf of Mexico, Las Vegas, Stikine Ice Cap, Yukon, Gulf of California, and the Devil's Thumb. Also, identify Carthage, South Dakota; Annandale, Virginia; Lake Mead, Nevada; Bullhead City, Arizona; Niland and San Diego, California; and Fairbanks, Petersburg, Anchorage, and Healy, Alaska.
4. Illustrate flash cards explaining these specifics: muskeg, permafrost, oxidized, cordillera, gorge, white water, cumulonimbus, Precambrian stone, alkali flats, escarpment, diorite, spillway, portage, spindrift, hummock, sink, arroyo, cholla, creosote, geothermal well, bajada, prickly pear, bight, tidal pool, Athapaskan, hanging glacier, ice cap, crevasse, tundra, gulch, petroglyph, pictograph, defile, wash, gypsum soil, convection current, miasma, rapids, taiga, massif, coppice, fireweed, thunderhead, confluence, tributary, aspen, maxillae, métis, boulder, sierra, forage, *Dend'ina*,

alkaloid, atavism, toxin, spectrographic analysis, glycoprotein metabolism, vapor lock, glucose, amino acid, sandstone, thatch, stone arch, Anasazi, cliff dweller, stratum, precipice-gale, matrix, wicker, curragh, sheer wall, sub-arctic, turf, tor, halogen, lichen, exfoliated, devil's club, sound, crag, carapace, swell, labyrinth, whiteout, cul-de-sac, ice pillar, snow bridge, headland, ice field, powder snow, bergschrund, prow, meltwater, cirque, abyss, diorite, rime, avalanche, nordwand, flying buttress, cirrus, squall, cleft, verglas, frost feather, Tyrolean traverse, ethnobotany, hydrology, and *terra incognita*.

Research

1. Take notes on the equipment that a climber uses, particularly ice ax, crampons, goggles, insulated tent, camp stove, snow suit, and climbing boots. Make a schematic drawing of Krakauer's two assaults on the Devil's Thumb and explain why he failed on the first try.
2. Outline the dangers of alkaloids, particularly those occurring in nature in mushrooms and seeds. Explain why the world's deadliest poisons belong to the alkyl family.

Journalism

1. Dramatize an online or on-camera interview with Billie, Marcia, Sam, Quinn, Carine, and Walt McCandless. List questions concerning Chris' boyhood and family relations that shed light on his obsession with independence, moral probity, and reliance on nature.

Law

1. Locate print and online sources of hunting and fishing law in Alaska, particularly on game preserves. List penalties and fines that Chris/Alex might have incurred for ignoring the need for a hunting license or handgun permit.
2. What aspects of apartheid dismayed Chris/Alex? How did the extreme racial situation in South Africa come to an end?

Cinema

1. Make a list of dramatic scenes from the story that would require intense use of lighting, costume, makeup, music, props, and advance preparation, particularly posting an SOS note, raising a flag on a curtain rod, erecting a

memorial plaque in an abandoned bus, fighting a storm in the Pacific, sneaking into and out of Mexico, cleaning a grain elevator, sitting out a blizzard on the Stikine Ice Cap, flying over the Alaska Range in a helicopter, living in one room in Atlanta, learning of the birth of Quinn McCandless, and composing a journal on blank pages in a field guide.

2. Describe aspects of the book that are more suited to radio, film, or tableau than to stage, for example, dropping supplies on the Stikine Ice Cap, putting out a tent fire, dressing a moose carcass and smoking the meat, living on a bag of rice, wading over an Alaskan river, playing honky-tonk tunes on a piano, and waving one arm at a passing plane. Explain why moments of laughter, camaraderie, storytelling, piano playing, and book discussion relieve the character study of hermitism, anger, narcissism, and resentment.

Science and Health

1. Explain the dangers to human health from accidents and exposure to extreme cold, sun, wind, and wetness. Design a poster to be displayed throughout Alaska warning newcomers of unpredictable weather, mosquitoes, glare, soggy muskeg, maggotty meat, falls into crevasses, wild animal attack, and spring flooding.
2. Compose a brochure on the causes and treatment of alkaloid poisoning. Explain why the loss of body fat and muscle limit Chris/Alex's ability to rebound from ingestion of swainsonine in wild potato pods.

Literature

1. State in your own words the source of the title. Discuss how the writings of Jack London, Boris Pasternak, Leo Tolstoy, Mark Twain, and Henry David Thoreau impact Chris/Alex's journal entries and thoughts.
2. Discuss the communication of Chris/Alex with Carine. Contrast their relationship with that of Holden and Phoebe Caulfield in J. D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye* or with Huck and Jim in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.
3. Compose an extended definition of objectivity. Use events from the story that express the

value of keeping an open mind, for example, about taking the advice and cautions of others about living alone in the wild or about interpreting Chris/Alex's resentments toward his father.

4. Discuss the draw of action writing like that of Jon Krakauer. Compare his description of roughing it with that of Jack London's "To Build a Fire", *The Call of the Wild* or *White Fang*, Farley Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf*, Robin Lee Graham's *Dove*, Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa*, or Gary Paulsen's *Dogsong* or *Hatchet*.
5. Compose a character sketch of Jules Verne's Captain Nemo, the protagonist of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Explain the Latin meaning of the character's name.

Art, Costume Design, and Music

1. Use desktop publishing, plaster of paris, masks, puppets, collage, fabric banners, mural, pen-and-ink sketch, or sculptor's clay to create a gallery dramatizing Chris/Alex's many moods. Include his responses to encountering wild animals, hitchhiking, eluding parental control, refusing to wear socks, abandoning the Datsun, paddling down confusing canals in Mexico, graduating from Emory, coming to work without bathing, living with bums, operating a copying service, playing the piano, accepting the approach of death, reuniting with Wayne Westerberg, rejecting an offer of adoption, and avoiding preachers.
2. Design a setting for a study of the moose, caribou, ptarmigan, grouse, porcupine, duck, grizzly bear, or squirrel. Use background information on behaviors, nesting grounds, dens, feeding, and natural predators to explain seasonal changes in wildlife that threaten Chris/Alex with starvation. Why does he eat no fish?

Drama and Speech

1. Corroborate Chris/Alex's private musings with commentary by Jack London, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Henry David Thoreau on solitude, self-reliance, nature, progress, endurance, and survival. Explain to a small group how each successful experience in the wild bolsters Chris/Alex's delight in living on his own on the Stampede Trail.

2. Improvise a reunion between Chris/Alex and Carine, Sam McCandless, Jim Gillien, Jan Burres, Wayne Westerberg, Gaylord Stuckey, Gail Borah, Loren Johnson, the manager of McDonald's, bums at the Slabs, or Ronald A. Franz. Compose Chris/Alex's welcoming words and a summary of his adventures in the Alaska Range.
3. Roleplay contrasting conversations—Chris/Alex's interview at McDonald's, Elizabeth Dole's congratulations to graduates of Emory University, arrangements for mail to be delivered to Annandale in August, book discussions with customers, gratitude to Mexican duck hunters in Baja, Jim Gallien's offer of a bag lunch and boots, arguments with Walt McCandless about Harvard Law School, teasing Jan Burres and her puppies, and a farewell party in Carthage, South Dakota.

Composition

1. Write a journal entry describing the inside of an abandoned city bus. Note Chris/Alex's most pressing needs and the value of the bus as a refuge. Comment on his need to scribble graffiti and to collect bird feathers.
2. Compose a scene in which Jon Krakauer answers reporters' questions about his return to Alaska with Billie and Walt McCandless to view Chris/Alex's place of death. In commentary on the tragedy, cite Darwinian laws about natural selection and survival of the fittest.
3. Outline a biography of Grey Owl, a Canadian explorer, orator, writer, and ecologist who concealed his real identity, Englishman Archie Belaney. Account for the need of real and fictional adventurers to alter birth names.

Literature

1. Read aloud from other outdoor lore significant passages about living in solitude. Consider these examples: Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi*, Mary Hunter Austin's *The Land of Little Rain* or *Stories from the Country of Lost Borders*, Johan Bojer's *The Emigrants*, Joy Harjo's "Eagle Poem," Linda Hogan and Brenda Peterson's *The Sweet Breathing of Plants: Women Writing on the Green World*, O. E. Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes' *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams* or *Last Stand: America's Virgin Lands*, Richard Adams' *Watership Down*, Margaret

Craven's *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*, Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa* or *Shadows on the Grass*, Marjory Stoneman Douglas' *The Everglades: River of Grass*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Jean Craighead George's *My Side of the Mountain*, Kate Wilhelm's *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang*, John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* and *Of Mice and Men*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*, or Sarah Orne Jewett's *A White Heron* and *Other Stories*.

Alternate Assessment

1. List chronologically and describe significant events connected with the summer in the wild. Mention working at the grain elevator, purchasing a .38, reading adventure lore, writing post cards, locating an abandoned bus, accepting tuna-and-cheese sandwiches, keeping a journal, wading over the Sushana, discarding a map, writing graffiti, buying rice, abandoning a birth name, riding with Gaylord Stuckey, eating ptarmigan and wild potatoes, and fearing death.
2. List events from the book that express strong attitudes toward law, wild animals, fear, college, bureaucracy, Leo Tolstoy, solitude, God, aims, wealth, self-reliance, and survival. Summarize the author's views on each subject.
3. Compose brief definitions of anecdote, journal, and aphorism as they apply to *Into the Wild*. What changes in the story would reduce the amount of personal commentary in favor of straightforward journalism? advice on survival? emotional discontent? delight? love of freedom? adventure? regret? self-improvement?
4. Summarize scenes that depict conflict, particularly attending graduation in Atlanta, rejecting Ron's preaching, admiring Loren Johnson, climbing down the nordwand, sneaking over the Mexican border, interviewing people about the young man's death, visiting a father in an asylum, informing Carine of Chris' death, identifying the moose carcass, jailing Wayne Westerberg, experiencing a flash flood, writing an SOS note, hearing a distress call in a dream, and returning to the bus to leave a plaque.

Vocabulary Extender

Underline synonyms for each word in boldface.

1. **ambivalence:** irresolution, indecision, unsettlement, uncertainty, instability, inconstancy, changeableness, vacillation, fluctuation, wavering
2. **forgo:** embrace, indulge, abstain, debauch, refrain, shun, dissipate, avoid, eschew, carouse, squander, exceed, renounce, abandon, discontinue
3. **enticement:** allure, blandishment, inducement, temptation, seduction, beguiling, fascination, enthrallment, dissuasion, entrapping, charm, appeal
4. **purport:** deflect, intend, damper, deflect, propose, resolve, divert, quench, determine, design, contemplate, quell, deter, envisage, remonstrate
5. **anchorite:** glutton, wanton, puritan, ascetic, orgiast, hermit, roué, exceder, rioter, abstainer, prodigal, epicurean, eremite, sensualist, sybarite
6. **pilgrim:** malcontent, whiner, seeker, expeditioner, crank, sorehead, crab, quester, adventurer, reactionary, faultfinder, explorer, murmurer
7. **opprobrium:** plaudit, abuse, endorsement, acclamation, invective, commendation, respect, vituperation, vilification, execration, blame, kudos
8. **hubris:** brashness, canniness, heed, incaution, imprudence, solicitude, indiscretion, unwariness, chariness, forethought, impudence, insolence
9. **transient:** trekker, homebody, wayfarer, excursionist, fogy, conservative, pathfinder, rambler, stick-in-the-mud, bedrock, voyager
10. **posit:** theorize, conjecture, surmise, infer, deduce, deem, postulate, assume, conclude, divine, reckon, opine, venture, advance, propound, assert

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Identification (20 points)

Identify the following characters.

- _____ 1. hired fall workers
- _____ 2. maintained two families
- _____ 3. gave up tuna-and-cheese sandwiches
- _____ 4. sold used books for Jan
- _____ 5. left a first aid kit in the bus
- _____ 6. wrote *War and Peace*
- _____ 7. published an essay on civil disobedience
- _____ 8. became an atheist
- _____ 9. tried to smoke meat
- _____ 10. donated boots to Chris/Alex

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

- _____ 1. The spread of disease caused the bulldozing of the hot springs.
- _____ 2. Carine admired her brother for seeking his dream.
- _____ 3. Chris/Alex was able to swim the Sushana at the height of the thaw.
- _____ 4. The burned tent caused Krakauer to return home without climbing Devil's Thumb.
- _____ 5. Chris/Alex loved riding the rails to Oregon.
- _____ 6. The Colorado River veers away from the Mexican border.
- _____ 7. Krakauer disputes the contention that Chris/Alex starved to death.
- _____ 8. Chris/Alex excused the theft of a Swiss army knife.
- _____ 9. The bus was a relic of an antimony mining project.
- _____ 10. Lewis suffered from post-polio syndrome and drug addiction.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Name the character who speaks each of these lines. On the line below, explain the significance of each citation.

_____ 1. Some days are better than others, but it's going to be hard every day for the rest of my life.

_____ 2. I asked Alex if I could adopt him.

_____ 3. He lived on the streets with bums, tramps, and winos for several weeks.

_____ 4. Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth.

_____ 5. I was a raw youth who mistook passion for insight and acted according to an obscure, gap-ridden logic.

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. Account for Chris/Alex's need for independence.
2. Defend Chris/Alex's donation to OXFAM America.
3. Compare the daring of Chris/Alex and Jon Krakauer.
4. Express the importance of the field guide to Chris/Alex.
5. Describe the circumstances that require an SOS note.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Choose the answer that best completes each statement below. Place the letter of your response in the blank at left.

- _____ 1. Chris/Alex must abandon his
A. bus.
B. Remington rifle.
C. Datsun.
D. camera.
- _____ 2. Chris/Alex surprises guests at the farewell party by
A. getting drunk.
B. dancing with Mrs. Westerberg.
C. playing the piano.
D. tossing aside his map.
- _____ 3. Physical weakness derives from alkaloids in the
A. seed pods.
B. unsmoked moose meat.
C. 25-pound bag of rice.
D. drugs that Walt carried with him.
- _____ 4. Outside of Healy,
A. the Anza-Borrego was still frozen.
B. Krakauer studied the Stikine Ice Cap.
C. the helicopter banked low over Denali.
D. Chris/Alex entered the Stampede Trail.
- _____ 5. The photos pictured
A. a young man fearing for his life.
B. severe weight loss.
C. a dead caribou by the bus.
D. vandalism to the cabins.
- _____ 6. Jon Krakauer tried not to
A. look at the abyss.
B. move the corpse in the sleeping bag.
C. disappoint Loren Johnson.
D. reveal his Social Security number.
- _____ 7. Chris/Alex disapproved of the
A. laws requiring Virginia license plates.
B. graffiti on the bus wall.
C. hippies living at the Slabs.
D. conception of Quinn.

- _____ 8. Customers in Kito's Kave
A. recognized the photos of Chris McCandless.
B. cared nothing about the successful climb.
C. took an interest in hobos from Fairbanks.
D. offered directions to Billie and Walt McCandless.
- _____ 9. Ronald A. Franz requested
A. nine or ten paperback books for the rucksack.
B. the Datsun from the shores of Lake Mead.
C. a copy of *Outside* magazine.
D. that his old friend be cremated.
- _____ 10. Below the border,
A. the canals were confusing.
B. a storm raged over the bajada.
C. authorities discovered an aluminum canoe hidden in the sand.
D. a squall fogged in Denali's summit.
- _____ 11. The pods
A. kept Chris/Alex from starving.
B. sheltered climbers during the blizzard.
C. of whales drew tourists to Lower California.
D. contained swainsonine.
- _____ 12. Chris/Alex lost all respect for
A. women.
B. Walt.
C. Emory.
D. park rangers.
- _____ 13. At age eight,
A. Jon climbed his first Alaskan summit.
B. Carine joined her brother on his drive to the Pacific coast.
C. Lewis taught Jon to climb.
D. Ronald Franz's son was killed by a drunk driver.
- _____ 14. In his final message, Chris
A. abandoned his alias.
B. called out to Billie.
C. still felt exhilarated by rebelling against his father.
D. thanked God for a happy life.
- _____ 15. Waving with both arms indicates
A. distress.
B. welcome.
C. a request from a hitchhiker.
D. the location of an airdrop.

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part II: Identification (20 points)

Identify these places.

- | | |
|-------|--|
| _____ | 1. abandoned concrete pads |
| _____ | 2. workers wear socks |
| _____ | 3. dead rats and muck litter the bottom |
| _____ | 4. usually called Mt. McKinley |
| _____ | 5. contained coins and the residue of burned money |
| _____ | 6. carried Chris/Alex down the Colorado River |
| _____ | 7. featured a dead man on the front |
| _____ | 8. held toenail clippers and a bag of feathers |
| _____ | 9. was too hard to admit an ice ax |
| _____ | 10. was Walt's school of choice for his son |

Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

Fill in the word that completes each blank in the statements below.

- On October 10, 1990, Westerberg went to prison in _____ for selling satellite TV _____.
- Chris/Alex was really Chris McCandless of Annandale, _____, son of a _____ engineer.
- Park ranger Bud Walsh located Chris/Alex's Datsun under a _____ near Lake _____, Nevada.
- In Arizona at _____ City, Chris/Alex settled for two months to camp in the desert and live in a trailer while reading the works of _____.
- _____ realized that _____ had little experience operating machinery.

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- Detail some of the analyses of Chris/Alex's behavior.
- Discuss why the author denies that Chris/Alex wanted to die.
- Contrast Jon Krakauer before and after the assault on the Devil's Thumb.
- Describe the types of transportation that Chris/Alex relied on.
- Account for Carine's close relationship with her brother.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY EXTENDER

1. irresolution, indecision, unsettlement, uncertainty, instability, inconstancy, changeableness, vacillation, fluctuation, wavering
2. abstain, refrain, shun, avoid, eschew, renounce, abandon, discontinue
3. allure, blandishment, inducement, temptation, seduction, beguiling, fascination, enthrallment, entrapping, charm, appeal
4. intend, propose, resolve, determine, design, contemplate, envisage
5. puritan, ascetic, hermit, abstainer, eremite
6. seeker, expeditioner, quester, adventurer, explorer
7. abuse, invective, vituperation, vilification, execration, blame
8. brashness, incaution, imprudence, indiscretion, unwariness, impudence, insolence
9. trekker, wayfarer, excursionist, pathfinder, rambler, voyager
10. theorize, conjecture, surmise, infer, deduce, deem, postulate, assume, conclude, divine, reckon, opine, venture, advance, propound, assert

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Wayne Westerberg | 6. Leo Tolstoy |
| 2. Walt McCandless | 7. Henry David Thoreau |
| 3. Jim Gillien | 8. Ronald A. Franz |
| 4. Chris/Alex | 9. Chris/Alex |
| 5. Billie McCandless | 10. Jim Gillien |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

1. Billie McCandless
2. Ronald A. Franz
3. Chris/Alex
4. Henry David Thoreau
5. Jon Krakauer

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. A | 11. D |
| 2. C | 7. D | 12. B |
| 3. A | 8. B | 13. C |
| 4. D | 9. C | 14. D |
| 5. B | 10. A | 15. A |

Part II: Identification (20 points)

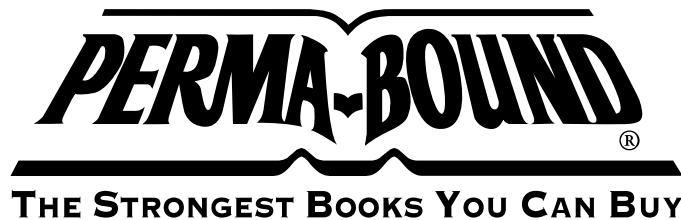
- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. the Slabs | 6. aluminum canoe |
| 2. McDonald's | 7. <i>Outside</i> magazine |
| 3. grain elevator | 8. bus |
| 4. Denali | 9. diorite on the Devil's Thumb |
| 5. Datsun | 10. Harvard |

Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

1. Sioux Falls, descramblers
2. Virginia, space
3. tarp, Mead
4. Bullhead, Jack London
5. Wayne Westerburg, Chris/Alex

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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