

## SYNOPSIS

The sequel to *Hatchet* returns to the home of fifteen-year-old Brian Robeson, who, the previous year, spent 54 days alone in the Canadian northwest with only a hatchet to help him survive. Brian, who was changed by the Time (his term for the ordeal), retains his heightened sensitivity to sights, sounds, and smells. He also carries the emotional pain of his mother's divorce, her dating, and his father's engagement.

Derek, a psychologist for a government survival school, asks Brian to duplicate his feat so others can be taught his style of survival. Brian's mother Katie considers the plan insane, but Brian agrees to the proposal. He and Derek travel by bush plane to a spot 100 miles east of the original crash that marooned Brian for nearly two months. The altitude, terrain, and forest reflect the original conditions. After the plane lands, Brian insists that Derek leave behind a pile of equipment and food. Derek agrees to let the pilot return with the equipment.

Brian eyes the clearing and locates hardwood for a bow and willow limbs for arrows. The first night, Brian turns to immediate needs—fire and shelter. There is no fire stone, and thus no way to smoke out mosquitoes. Brian and Derek build a lean-to. When the night cools, the mosquitoes disappear. That night, a downpour soaks them both. At dawn, mosquitoes assail them. Derek curls in a ball and pulls his jacket over his head.

As Brian sets out to find a fire stone, Derek studies his methods and prods him to "externalize" his thoughts. Brian recalls rule one—don't wander away from the lake. He ponders the fact that human life depends on food, which the earth's thin crust of topsoil produces. They pick and eat raspberries and chokecherries. In mid-afternoon, they locate a small cliff. When the bank collapses, Brian slides down the rubble to the beach. He finds flint from which he can strike sparks with his knife. They collect and crack hazelnuts.

A fallen tree provides a hole for shelter. Nearby is a spring. With pine boughs, they make beds. Brian makes a pit fire. On the third day, Brian makes a fish trap and concludes that their journey feels like one big camping trip. He demonstrates how to bow-fish and how to bait the trap with fish entrails. Derek agrees that the trip lacks tension; Brian doubts that survival can be taught.

During the night, a storm brings lightning, which explodes a huge pine and strikes both campers. Brian finds Derek in a coma. Tending to him puts new demands on Brian, who is unaccustomed to nursing duties. Brian studies Derek's map and determines that he must ferry his patient 100 miles south down the Necktie River to Brannock's Trading Post.

Brian builds an eight-foot long raft, ties Derek to it, and starts the journey. Within three hours, Brian's hands and back ache from the constant battle with pole and paddle. At night, Brian fights sleep and hallucinates. By the second

night, the battle against sleep becomes more difficult and the hallucinations more prevalent.

By noon, the raft gains speed. About the time that Brian realizes that the river may fall as it passes between tall hills, he hears a waterfall ahead. Rapidly careening toward it, Brian enters a chute between stone bluffs and heads toward a boulder. He throws himself on Derek, but is unable to hold on when the raft strikes a giant wave and knocks him upward. Stunned, he comes to in the shallows. The raft is nowhere in sight.

Brian slogs through mud and swims. He locates the raft and examines Derek, who is still alive. Brian makes a new paddle. For another day and a half, he forces himself to paddle toward the trading post. Crying with the pain in his hands and his fear for Derek, he arrives at the dock, where a man and woman rescue him.

Derek recovers from the coma. Brian's parents vow that he will never return to the wild, but relent when they realize that their son is an experienced woodsman. Seven months after the trip, a truck driver delivers a gift from Derek: a 16-foot Kevlar canoe with "THE RAFT" lettered on the bow.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A man who has undergone unusual, character-molding experiences, Gary Paulsen (May 17, 1939- ) writes from honest reflection. A native of Minneapolis, Minnesota, he is the son of Eunice and Oscar Paulsen, a career military officer and alcoholic whose addiction caused Paulsen much grief during his childhood. The instability of alcoholic parents left Paulsen in the care of relatives, some of whom entertained him with storytelling.

At age 15, Paulsen delivered the *Grand Forks Herald*. The stress of poor school performance and low self-esteem pushed him to the brink of suicide. To avoid the misery of school and home, he took shelter in the library, where a staff member handed him books to read. Gradually he filled in gaps in his education with science fiction, westerns, and classics. Paulsen reminisces, "When she handed me the card, she handed me the world."

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

In his second marriage, Paulsen found more opportunities to cherish a close relationship with wife Ruth, a painter and co-author of *Dogteam* (1993) and illustrator of *Father Water*,

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*Mother Woods* (1994), and their son James. When poverty brought on by a 1977 lawsuit for libel threatened his family, he returned to home territory to farm, ranch, and trap beaver for the state of Minnesota to supplement a lagging income from writing. While running a dog team, he thrilled to the bright star-filled skies and the rhythmic breathing of the team. With sponsorship from Lands' End clothiers, he made an unlikely attempt on the 1983 Iditarod, an annual Alaskan event covering 1,180 miles of rough, late-season ice and snow from Anchorage to Nome. Hopes for returning to the course the following year ended after Paulsen suffered a heart attack in Boston's Logan Airport.

Currently one of America's most prolific writers of young adult literature, Paulsen makes frequent guest appearances, school visits, and readings while dividing his time between residences in Leonard, Minnesota, and Tularosa, New Mexico. His current passion is sailing. When he returns to Minnesota, he enjoys public readings and storytelling at nearby town halls. He has written for over three decades. At times he grows discouraged with his work, but has accepted the fact that writing is his burden and that he must do it at his own pace, in his own style. From 1993-1996 he published 45 books, most for young adult readers, his favorite audience.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

Over the rough years of writing short stories, magazine articles, stage and screenplays, westerns, how-to books, and novels, Gary Paulsen had to find the voice that best expresses self and an erratic work rhythm that accommodates bursts of energy that keep him reading voraciously, studying the classics of Jack London and Herman Melville, perusing current fiction by writers like Alice Walker and Cynthia Rylant, and working into the night. His most common themes—survival and coming-of-age—have brought him praise from the New York Public Library and the American Library Association. He received Newbery Honors in 1986 for *Dogsong*, in 1988 for *Hatchet*, in 1992 for *Clabbered Dirt, Sweet Grass*, and in 1993 for *Eastern Sun, Winter Moon*. Other awards include the Dorothy Canfield Fisher award, William Allen White award, Midland Authors award, Western Writers of America Golden Spur award, Jeremiah Ludington award, Regina medal, Parent's Choice award, Tennessee Volunteer State Book award, Notable Children's Trade Book in Social Studies, American Booksellers Pick of the List, Iowa Children's Choice award, Wisconsin Golden Archer award, NCTE Notable Book, *Parenting Magazine* Reading-Magic award, ALA Notable Books for his historical *Nightjohn* and *Woodsong*, IRA/CBC Children's Choice, Booklist Editors' Choice, and a Child Study Association of America's Children award. Charles Kuralt featured him in an interview in December 1988 for CBS-TV.

Paulsen wrote the screenplay for the 1990 PG film version of *Hatchet*, entitled *A Cry in the Wild*. The screen story of the lost boy earned a good-to-very good rating from reviewers Mark Martin and Marsha Porter, but only an "okay" from Paulsen. The unabridged audio version, read by Peter Coyote and published in 1992, proved Paulsen's continued success with young readers. The author himself sums up his rapport with children when he claims, "We have been passive. We have been stupid. We have been lazy. We have done all the things we could do to destroy ourselves. If there is any hope at all for the human race, it has to come from

young people. Not from adults."

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

The unprecedented appeal of *Hatchet* (1987) served as an impetus to Gary Paulsen to respond to his fans with other novels about Brian Robeson. In 1991 he published *The River*, a story that returns Brian to the Canadian northwest and replicates the challenge of staying alive in the wilderness. As happened in the first account, Brian must manage against unforeseen events. Whereas the original novel shows Brian in a daily struggle to survive, the sequel moves beyond the introduction to woodcraft and places him in a position of authority. While demonstrating survival skills for a government project, his major challenge is rafting an injured adult to safety. The story develops at a steady pace toward resolution because Brian boards a raft and travels with the river's current, which he can neither slow nor stop. Consequently, the thrust of the story removes Brian from a static position by the lake toward a rapidly changing panorama of lakeside, bluffs, rock ledge, and falls. Instead of waiting for rescue, Brian seeks deliverance by seeking civilization.

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

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To comprehend the need for survival training
2. To prioritize the tasks of a camper
3. To describe symptoms of dehydration
4. To note the use of tools and natural resources
5. To contrast beauty and menace in the wild
6. To define and account for hallucinations and coma
7. To characterize moments of terror, despair, change, regret, and insecurity
8. To analyze elements of a *bildungsroman*
9. To locate examples of humanitarianism
10. To describe the trauma that accompanies divorce

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To compare Brian's expertise with Derek's book knowledge
2. To account for Brian's determination
3. To analyze Brian's methods of tending a man in a coma
4. To contrast Brian before and after the adventure
5. To explain how Brian's dangerous journey unites his parents
6. To describe Derek's role as teacher and psychologist
7. To comment on Brian's informal prayers

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8. To typify Brian's woods savvy
9. To project how Brian will react to future dangers and challenges
10. To recount intense moments when Brian nears defeat

### MEANING STUDY

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

1. It was strangely easy for him to get in the bush plane. (Chapter 4, p. 15)  
*(Derek and Brian fly to Canada on a small, maneuverable four-seater plane built to reach remote and difficult terrain inaccessible to land vehicles. Bush planes are used for emergency or humanitarian missions, such as delivering medicine or vaccine, locating and fighting forest fires, resettling wild animals in a new habitat, police investigations, weather study, or search and rescue.)*
2. Down and to the right he saw the amphibious float with the wheels on the side. (Chapter 4, p. 17)  
*(The wide-spaced amphibious floats below the fuselage stabilize the plane on water. Floats enable the pilot to land on the lake, deplane, load or unload supplies, and take off again without a need for a landing strip or electronic assistance.)*
3. "When you ate the chokecherries," he would say, "how long did it take you to get sick?" (Chapter 4, p. 18)  
They also found some chokecherries—what Brian had called gut cherries—but Brian shook his head. (Chapter 7, p. 42)  
*(The chokecherry or chokeberry, a member of the rose family which is native to the American wild, grows on a low bush and produces clusters of bitter red to purplish-black fruit. Native Americans used the berries to flavor pemmican and stew and as a base for jelly, sauce, and wine.)*
4. The pilot flared the plane out so that when it came down to the lake it seemed to be barely moving. (Chapter 5, p. 24)  
*(The pilot decreases the steepness of the glide path so that the plane is nearly level with the ground, altering its relative position from a downward-moving projectile to a flat body paralleling the earth. This change lessens the speed, prepares the plane to respond to gravity, and gives the pilot greater control of side-to-side or vertical pitching and yawing, which could jostle passengers and delicate equipment.)*
5. Derek came back ashore with the radio—a small unit with a weatherproof seal and fresh nicad batteries. (Chapter 5, p. 28)  
*(Derek packs rechargeable dry-cell batteries that contain a cadmium anode and nickel oxide cathode. The term, which was derived in 1965, is a neologism composed of the first syllables of nickel and cadmium and refers to a secondary storage battery used in space flight.)*
6. "Flint," Derek said. "I think it is." (Chapter 8, p. 45)  
*(A hard, dark-hued silica or fine-grained quartz, flint strikes sparks when hit against steel. In early times, fire-makers carried valuable supplies — pieces of flint and iron along with bits of tinder — in a water-proof box.)*
7. Plus, they had more clams stored and plenty of fish left in the trap and knew the locations of several ruffed grouse. (Chapter 9, p. 52)  
*(Grouse, which are medium- to large-sized game birds, are heavily camouflaged with feathers ranging from brown to buff or gray and marked with a ruffled neck back or ruff. Living on the ground and making their nest in sedge along the tundra or in thickets in the forest, grouse provide an easy target and good food for hunters.)*
8. Like a camera taking pictures by a strobe light, things would seem frozen in time, caught and frozen, and then there would be another flash and things would be different. (Chapter 10, p. 57)  
*(The strobe or stroboscope, invented in 1937, utilizes a gas-filled flashtube to provide brilliant flashes of light for photography. The alternation of light and dark gives the impression of slowing and separating actions by dividing them into brief, identifiable segments. The flickering sequences imitate the effect of early movie technology.)*
9. To get them breathing again, you had to give them C. P. R.—except that Derek was breathing already. (Chapter 11, p. 63)  
*(Cardiopulmonary resuscitation is a method of reviving a victim by artificially stimulating breathing and/or circulation. To restore respiration, the assistant clears the airway of mucus or debris, tilts the head, and blows into the mouth while pinching the nostrils closed. If the victim is a toddler or infant, the assistant places the mouth over both nose and mouth, puffs lightly into the lungs, and compresses the chest with two fingers. Heart stimulation requires a regular pattern of short, quick thrusts of the palms on the lower sternum.)*
10. There. That word came. He had been afraid of the word death before and now this word, coma. (Chapter 12, p. 66)  
*(A profound state of torpor or unconsciousness, a coma can result from drug overdose, tumor, diabetic reaction, electric shock, epilepsy, anoxia, concussion, or poison. The victim lacks reflexes and may remain limp and barely breathing. Recovery may be sudden or gradual and may deprive the brain of memory and learned behaviors, such as speech, walking, and manual dexterity with eating utensils, comb, toothbrush, or pen.)*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

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

#### Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. How does the map play a major role in the story?  
*(After Derek's injury and resultant coma, Brian has to act quickly to save him from dehydration and choking. He locates the map. According to the grids, the best way out of the wilderness lies over the 119-mile river that leads from the lake camp around a deep bend, south over a long lake, and through a waterfall between two towering bluffs. Brian realizes that if he can ferry Derek that distance, he can reach Brannock's Trading Post in*

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time to seek medical assistance to save Derek's life. When Brian ponders the alternatives, he has no choice but to make the raft and travel night and day toward help.)

2. What supplies does Brian take from nature?  
(On arrival in the Canadian northwest, Brian sizes up the clearing and notes downed wood for firebuilding and for a source of grubs. Immediately, he begins searching for a piece of flint to strike against his knife to start fires. He feeds himself and Derek on raspberries, plums, blueberries, and hazelnuts. For meat, Brian relies on clams and anticipates plenty of rabbits and squirrels. On the third day, he builds a stone fish trap in the lake and baits it with fish guts. He collects and shapes pulverized dried grass and shredded birch bark into a ball of tinder, which he hollows out and places in his fire pit. By striking a fire and keeping the shelter warm and dry, he anticipates living safely during the experiment.  
After Derek's injury, Brian hurries to build a raft to float a heavy, inert body and himself to rescue. He utilizes the fallen poplar logs at a beaver dam for pre-cut timber, slides them down a mud bank, and aligns them into a raft. By attaching cross-pieces with strips of his jacket, he strengthens the wood into a stable watercraft. He uses his knife to whittle a paddle and sharpens a pole for guiding the awkward wooden rectangle. When Derek is safely tied aboard the raft, Brian utilizes the mild current to power them down the lake and into the river.)
3. How does Brian relocate Derek after the raft capsizes?  
(The perpetual move downriver forces Brian into a chute, where a giant wave powers him into a boulder. Struck by a giant wave, the raft flips on a ledge. Brian is thrown free; the raft continues unguided along the swift current. Dazed by the crash, Brian walks along the shore and loses one of his sneakers in thick mud. He swims along in the shallows, forcing himself to continue the ordeal so that he can find the raft and rescue Derek.  
By sticking to his downriver swim, Brian eventually encounters the raft, boards it, and checks Derek's condition. The slight stir of breath assures him that Derek has survived the capsizing, but that his physical condition is not promising. Brian continues the push for the trading post, keeping an eye on Derek's condition and protecting him from sun and drowning.)
4. What effect does the second journey have on the Robeson family?  
(Upon his return to New York, Brian must undergo treatment for bacterial infection in his hands, which he contracted from tainted water. His parents, who have divorced and are making new lives for themselves, join in a unanimous vow to halt further trips to the wild. After a time, they relent because they realize that Brian has qualified himself as an expert woodsman.)
5. How does Derek express thanks for the rescue?  
(Brian returns to solitude in his mother's house. Seven months after the trip, he opens the door to a truck driver who delivers a package from Derek. The box contains a 16-foot Kevlar canoe complete with paddles. Derek's expression of thanks is both sincere and humorous. On the canoe, in gold lettering, is its name: THE RAFT.

The note taped inside the canoe says simply, "Next time . . . it won't be so hard to paddle. Thanks.")

### Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. Account for Brian's ambivalence toward returning to the woods.  
(Because Brian had lived a hard existence in his 54 days alone in the woods, he had changed. His attention to details causes him to use his senses to smell rain and to enjoy the beauty of the wild. The fear of starvation on the first trip alters his attitude toward abundant food, which seems unreal to him after nearly two months of deprivation. However, he overrides his mother's fear and accepts the challenge of the return trip because he wants to help other people learn survival skills. After his arrival at the lake, he expresses doubt that survival can be learned and blames Derek for playing a camping game that bears little resemblance to real danger.)
7. What does Brian learn about self-reliance?  
(As the adult of the two-man team, Brian accepts the role reversal that puts him in charge of the psychologist. Like a grade-school teacher, he imparts to Derek the information that a beginner needs to know about the wild, for example, staying alert, studying the terrain, anticipating danger, and attending to a fire, food, and shelter as soon as possible. Other aspects of preparedness cannot be verbalized. Withdrawing into memories of "the Time," Brian retreats from his civilized self into his wilderness self. He remembers the balance between natural beauty and survival needs.  
When disaster strikes during the thunder storm, Brian resurrects his former self-reliant persona and ponders the pros and cons of the situation. He realizes that he has no choice but to move Derek as soon as possible. Because Derek is unconscious and weighs too much for Brian to carry, a raft is the only alternative. By thinking for two, he asserts his readiness to face danger and accepts responsibility for a situation that was unforeseen and unavoidable.)
8. What does Brian teach Derek about food?  
(To Derek's distaste of a meal of grubs, Brian is forced to stress the importance of food, which he considers "everything." He supports his statement with something he read: "everything man has always been or will be, all the thoughts and dreams and sex and hate and every little and big thing is dependent on six inches of topsoil and rain when you need it to make a crop grow—food." The statement revives Brian's former experience with hunger, which taught him to study other animals and to learn from them that achieving a steady supply of food must come before all other interests and needs.)

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. How does the author picture Brian in the final episode on the river?  
(Although Brian has been stalwart and hard-working on the final leg of his journey to Brannock's Trading Post, his reconnection with civilization depicts a different behavior. At the sight of the roof and the sound of a dog barking, he pulls for the small dock. His mind is so attuned to his task, that he keeps up the rhythm of "Two left. Two right. Two. Two." When the raft bumps into the

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dock, the paddle drops from Brian's hands as though he were unable to pull another stroke.

The sight of another human face reduces Brian to dependence. He cries out "Help. Help me." in a voice that bears little resemblance to his former lecture tone that he took with Derek. By the time that a man and woman run to his aid, Brian is weeping, his hands inertly draped over the raft in the river. He is so near collapse that he doesn't identify his rescuers—they become only hands lifting him onto the dock.)

10. Why do students identify with Gary Paulsen's fiction? (Young readers love Paulsen's adventure stories because they stress reality and adaptation. Brian Robeson is a fairly ordinary teenager with no special talents and no experience in the wild during his first adventure. Paulsen indicates that, just as nature is brutal, life for young people can be equally capricious and brutal. The qualities that kept him alive on the first trip were an honest evaluation of the task and an ability to adapt to the wild. On the second journey, Brian is unable to play "camping out" and must face the wilderness on honest terms to demonstrate for Derek the skills that the government school must teach to help people survive the wild.

An additional strand of reality is Brian's internal turmoil over his parents' divorce. Like a majority of other children, living with a blended family or a new set of parental circumstances causes him to rethink his parents' choices and to evaluate how he can fit into two homes, one with a remarried father and one with his mother, Katie Robeson, who still dates "the man" who originally upset Brian's ideal mother-father homelife. For these reasons, students appreciate straightforward scenarios that paint life as it is.)

### Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Draw or construct on a computer graphics program internal and external schematic drawings of a bush plane. Include flotation devices, rudders, throttle, flaps, and radio. Indicate the seating arrangement for Brian, Derek, and a pilot and space for storing camping gear.
12. Using desktop publishing or other media, write a brochure introducing students to a survival school. Explain the challenge of living in the wild with little equipment and insufficient food, tools, weapons, and clothing. Name aspects of weather, cold, plants, insects, and animals that challenge survival, for example, lightning, mosquitoes, and berries that cause illness. Formulate a curriculum that will teach students about making a fire, eating, sleeping, making weapons, protecting the body from the elements, and adaptation to solitude.

### LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

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

**Bildungsroman** is a novel that describes the coming-of-age of an untried or naive youth. Paulsen uses the challenge of a survival study and passage down the river as illustrative examples of growing up. Brian is appalled that he must clean Derek's body and keep him comfortable, safe, and shaded from the sun. The responsibility tempts Brian to wish that Derek were

dead, but he reminds himself throughout the ordeal that rescuing Derek is his only alternative. By the time that Brian returns home and recovers from the long paddle to the trading post, he is more mature and more in touch with his capabilities than he was before he accepted the challenge of a return to the Canadian northwest.

**Third-person narrative** is a story or series of actions told from the vantage point of an observer who stands outside the scope of the story and knows what will happen and how actions will affect the characters. *The River* examines Brian's agreement to go on the journey to reenact survival skills, his attention to Derek's injury after lightning strikes the shelter, and the flight down the Necktie River to rescue. Because the observer is not a character in the story, he can observe the roof of Brannock's Trading Post in the distance, hear the dog barking, see the child on the dock, and predict that the unnamed man and woman at the dock will get Derek to a doctor and treat Brian's hands.

A **symbol** is a concrete object that stands for a complex or abstract idea or relationship. In *The River*, the title poses a strong focus on one aspect of the landscape, which becomes the sole vehicle for escape and rescue. Because the novel and its predecessor, *Hatchet*, stress logic, the river becomes an answer to Brian's need for transportation for a heavy comatose camper and escape from the Canadian northwest after radio contact is destroyed. However, Paulsen indicates that the river is not an easy source of escape. As with other examples of the demands of nature, the river exacts a toll from Brian's body—worn hands, sleepless nights, and attention to detail in building a raft and keeping it moving toward his destination.

## ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

### Art

1. Sketch a frieze depicting the initial tasks of building a fire, collecting tinder and wood, cooking fish at the fire pit, and shaping a shelter and bedding from pine boughs. Highlight the menace of swarms of mosquitoes, wolves, and bears.
2. Create sketches or watercolor pictures of contrasting stretches of smooth and turbulent waters. Indicate a variety of terrain along the shore, from pebbly beach to boulders, tall stone bluffs, trees, and beaver dams in the inlets. Stress the types of birds and wildlife that populate the Canadian wild.

### Geography

1. Indicate on a wall map how the bush plane would have traveled from northern New York to the Canadian northwest. Locate sections that contain a lake and curving river similar to the one that Brian navigates. Using the scale of miles, estimate the distance from the New York airport.
2. Work with a small group to create a fictional downriver journey in another wilderness setting, for example, along the Amazon River, in the Australian outback, along the Congo River in Zaire, or in the Himalayan Mountains of Nepal. Make a list of new challenges, for example, language difficulties, alligators, piranhas, hostile tribes, cold, ice travel, and jungle fever.

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### Social Studies

1. Discuss the purpose of survival training. Research the history of Outward Bound, a training ground for rescue teams established on the North Sea at Moray Firth, Scotland, in 1941. Express the educational philosophy of the school's founder, Kurt Hahn, who intended to help sailors survive sea disaster.
2. Present a demonstration, slides, or audiotape detailing the task of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Discuss how Mounties protect people like Derek and Brian. Provide a time line of the force since its inception. How do radios, bush planes, EMTs, snowmobiles, night-vision glasses, lightweight snow gear, and homing devices simplify the Mounties's work?

### Mathematics and Logic

1. Draw a time-and-distance chart of Brian's erratic journey down the Necktie River. Show where the rapid current and quickened pace of the raft hurry him toward the trading post.
2. Explain why the increase in waterlogging alters the way that the raft floats and increases the amount of pressure Brian must exert to turn his craft from the shore or from boulders.

### Health

1. Explain why dehydration is a greater threat to Derek and Brian than hunger, choking, or shock.
2. Discuss with a research team the types of coma and their physical symptoms. What first-aid treatment is necessary to keep the patient alive? How do cold, hunger, dehydration, and breathing problems lessen the patient's chances of survival? What can cause low-grade coma like Derek's condition?
3. Write a report on the dangers of mosquitoes to human health. Include diseases that Brian might contract, especially inflammation of the eyes and nose. Propose simple solutions to insect infestation, such as smoke, oil on standing water, and mud packs.

### Science

1. Explain why flint is different from other minerals and why Brian searches for a piece to strike with his knife over a ball of tinder.
2. Make a model of a nicad battery. Explain how it differs from other types of batteries.

### Language Arts

1. How do Derek's notes capture Brian's "externalized" thoughts? Why does Brian consider this style of learning artificial? Determine whether Derek is really learning anything worth teaching to students at the survival school.
2. Explain the importance of speech to human behavior. Why did Brian miss human communication during his 54 days in the wild? How would conversation have eased the burden of fear, solitude, and confusion? Why is he unwilling to chatter freely with Derek?

### Economics

Create a budget for Derek's project. Locate current prices for the type of equipment that Derek packs along on the journey. Figure the cost of flying a small plane from northern New York to the Canadian northwest. Contrast the figure with the cost of Brian's first journey, for which he carried only a hatchet.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Compose a list of selling points for Brian Robeson Survival Jeans, for example, sturdy seams and belt loops, deep pockets, stretch fabric, and jam-proof zippers. Create an ad campaign that will show the jeans standing up to hard hiking or hunting.
2. Compare Brian's attitude toward survival with that of the psychologist. Explain why Brian is more likely to survive against unexpected events, such as meeting a bear or a wolf pack.
3. Improvise a telephone conversation between Brian and the Brannocks. Express appreciation for rescue, food, first-aid, and transportation to a hospital. Suggest ways that Brian can demonstrate his appreciation for the Brannocks' quick work.
4. Contrast the lifestyle and work experience of these figures: trapper, psychologist, hunter, Mr. Robeson, camper, realtor, television reporter, trading post operator, radio mechanic, truck driver, Katie, and bush pilot. Which is likely to need survival training? Which is unlikely to experience the change that Brian undergoes after his 54 days in the wild?
5. With a small group, discuss Brian's ambivalence toward the changes in his family's life after the divorce. Discuss how his father's remarriage and his mother's continued relationship with "the man" will affect Brian during his late teens. Account for Brian's visions of his mother and father while he is hallucinating.
6. Compose a letter, telegram, fax, email message, or phone call to Gary Paulsen asking about *The Hatchet* and *The River*. Indicate your interest in survival lore and in his decision to write a sequel. Ask Paulsen how a female camper such as Deborah McKenzie or Katie Robeson might have been added to the story.
7. Draw a web of life showing the interrelation of fish, mosquitoes, birds, humans, bears, wolves, grubworms, and other creatures. How would the season of the year influence Brian's dependence on local food supplies and his need to alter hunting and gathering methods? Why would he be more vulnerable in deep snow?
8. View the film *The River Wild*, starring Meryl Streep. Discuss why the issue of tying people into a canoe is significant to the paddler? How does Brian face the same problem of protecting Derek from falling off the raft and drowning?
9. Write a theme on self-reliance. Include details from the novel, particularly Brian's sweep of the clearing and his visual, aural, and olfactory study of the land and weather. Suggest ways that Brian could avoid other mishaps, such as bee sting, drowning, falls, getting lost, or burns.
10. Write the memoir of a colonial fire watcher. Explain the type of person chosen for the job, daily chores, and methods of stoking, damping, and transporting coals to keep them from going out.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List examples of cold, hard work, memories, confusion, terror, relaxation, notation, radio contact, planning, first aid, discomfort, and admiration in the camp.
2. Compile lines that express Brian's love-hate relationship with the wilderness.

## THE RIVER

3. Compose a scene in which Brian returns to the woods as an adult guide or survival instructor and lectures on his past experiences.
4. Make a list of names and characters from the novel and explain the relationship of each to the journey. Include the man and woman, the boy, Mannerly, Derek, Deborah, Ballard, Katie, Brian's father, the camera crew, Brian, Jake, the young pilot, and Huckleberry Finn. What service does the dog perform?

### OTHER WORKS BY GARY PAULSEN

*Mr. Tucket* (1968)  
*Tiltawhirl John* (1977)  
*Dancing Carl* (1983)  
*Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights* (1983)  
*Tracker* (1984)  
*Dogsong* (1985)  
*Sentries* (1986)  
*The Crossing* (1987)  
*Hatchet* (1987)  
*Island* (1988)  
*The Winter Room* (1989)  
*The Madonna Stories* (1989)  
*The Voyage of the Frog* (1989)  
*Canyons* (1990)  
*Woodsong* (1990)  
*The Night the White Deer Died* (1990)  
*Boy Who Owned the School* (1990)  
*A Christmas Sonata* (1991)  
*Cookcamp* (1991)  
*The River* (1991)  
*Haymeadow* (1992)  
*Dunc's Doll* (1992)  
*Dunc's Halloween* (1992)  
*Dunc and the Flaming Ghost* (1992)  
*Culpepper's Cannon* (1992)  
*Dunc Breaks the Record* (1992)  
*Dunc Gets Tweaked* (1992)  
*Monument* (1993)  
*Sisters = Hermanas* (1993)  
*Dunc's Dump* (1993)  
*The Voyage of the Frog* (1993)  
*Dunc's Undercovered Christmas* (1993)  
*Dogteam* (1993) (Ruth Paulsen, co-author)  
*Dunc and Amos Hit the Big Top* (1993)  
*Harris and Me: A Summer Remembered* (1993)  
*Eastern Sun, Winter Moon* (1993)  
*Murphy's Stand* (1993)  
*Wild Culpepper Cruise* (1993)  
*Clabbered Dirt, Sweet Grass* (1993)  
*Amos and the Alien* (1994)  
*Amos Gets Famous* (1994)  
*Car* (1994)  
*Case of the Dirty Bird* (1994)  
*Coach Amos* (1994)  
*Cowpokes and Desperadoes* (1994)  
*Dunc and Amos and the Red Tattoos* (1994)  
*Dunc and the Haunted Castle* (1994)  
*Dunc and the Scam Artists* (1994)  
*Prince Amos* (1994)  
*Winterdance* (1994)  
*Call Me Francis Tucket* (1995)

*The Tent* (1995)  
*The Rifle* (1995)  
*The Tortilla Factory (La Tortilleria)* (1995)  
*Murphy's Ambush* (1995)  
*Rock Jockeys* (1995)  
*Hook 'Em, Snotty!* (1995)  
*The Gorgon Slayer* (1995)  
*Escape from Fire Mountain* (1995)  
*Captive!* (1995)  
*Amos's Killer Concert Caper* (1995)  
*Amos Gets Married* (1995)  
*Puppies, Dogs, and Blue Northers: A Tribute to Cookie* (1996)  
*Sarny: A Life Remembered* (1996)  
*The White Fox Chronicles* (1996)  
*Tucket's Ride* (1996)  
*Canoe Days* (1996)  
*Worksong* (1996)

### RELATED READING

Richard Adams's *Watership Down*  
Avi's *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*  
Robert Frost's "Birches"  
John Reynolds Gardner's *Stone Fox*  
Jean Craighead George's *Julie of the Wolves*  
William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies*  
Robin Lee Graham's *Dove*  
Bret Harte's "The Luck of Roaring Camp"  
Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*  
Will Hobbs's *Downriver*  
Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*, and "To Build a Fire"  
Walter Lord's *A Night to Remember*  
Harry Mazer's *Snowbound*  
Farley Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf*  
Scott O'Dell's *Sing Down the Moon* and *Streams to the River, River to the Sea*  
Wilson Rawls's *Where the Red Fern Grows*  
Chief Seattle's "This Sacred Soil"  
Theodore Taylor's *The Cay* and *Timothy of the Cay*  
Henry David Thoreau's "Why I Went to the Woods"  
J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*  
Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*  
James Vance Walker's *Walkabout*  
Yoko Kawashima Watkins's *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*  
Gloria Whelan's *Silver*  
Robb White's *Deathwatch*

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## THE RIVER

### VOCABULARY TEST

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

1. (thwart) The Kevlar canoe arrives in a box and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. (dehydration) While paddling on the river, Brian \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. (bluff) As indicated on Derek's map, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. (rapids) The speed of the raft \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. (chute) The pressure of the water through \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. (poling) To avoid trapping the raft on shore \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. (seaworthy) By joining poplar poles \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. (fire-hardened) The points of the arrows \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. (grids) To determine the length of the river \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. (ethics) Derek makes notes about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. (banked) To assure the camp of heat \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. (tension) Derek needs a study of survival \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. (tinder) The hollowed ball of grass and birch bark \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. (topsoil) The survival of life on earth \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. (repellent) Mosquitoes will attack \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**THE RIVER**

**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Matching (20 points)**

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

- |             |                   |                              |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| A. Deborah  | E. Brian          | H. woman at the trading post |
| B. pilot    | F. Brian's father | I. man at the trading post   |
| C. Mannerly | G. Katie          | J. truck driver              |
| D. Derek    |                   |                              |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. pulls a Kevlar canoe out of a truck
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. intends to marry
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. vows that Brian may not return to the wild
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. hurls a stick into the briefcase
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. unties Derek from the raft
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. sleep in a rainstorm
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. listens to a cassette recorder
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. eats grubworms by wrapping them in leaves and swallowing them
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. jokes about the inaccurate prediction of rain in seven hours
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. accompanies a camera crew to the lake

**Part II: Fact/Opinion (20 points)**

Mark each statement either **F** for fact or **O** for opinion. Justify your answer on the line that follows.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Brian briefly wishes that he did not have the responsibility of Derek.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The people at the trading post are expecting the raft.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Brian's mother insists on a radio report.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The map shows the exact location of the stone bluffs.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Brian tells Derek how to challenge a bear.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The lightning travels down the pine and into Derek's body.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Brian will have to readjust to living at home.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The government pays for the trip to the Canadian northwest.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Brian requires treatment for bacterial infection in his hands.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Without poplars felled by beavers, Brian could not have built a raft.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## THE RIVER

### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Uncertain about Derek's survival, A. the government sends him to a hospital for six months.  
B. Brian prays, "Please God." C. doctors treat him for bacterial infection.  
D. the survival school replaces him with Mannerly and Ballard.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. After losing the raft, A. Brian has to swim. B. Derek kicks off his sneakers in the muck.  
C. the trading post owners reach their hands down to Brian. D. the trappers call for help.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Brian uses his nose to A. locate hazelnuts. B. avoid a bear. C. find the source of lightning.  
D. predict rain.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. In a straight line, A. the river is slow and steady. B. the trading post is 85 kilometers away.  
C. the lake lies due north of the New York airport. D. mosquitoes hover over the chute.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Brian cuts Derek A. while trying to clean him. B. while lashing him to a crosspiece.  
C. to test his reflexes. D. with the tip of his flint.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Rafting feels like A. paddling a brushpile. B. riding a huge wave. C. a hallucination.  
D. rolling over a boulder.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Fish guts are handy for A. a temporary source of water. B. distracting mosquitoes.  
C. baiting the fish trap. D. wrapping in leaves for a quick meal.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Derek admires A. the government's survival plan. B. the use of psychology in externalizing language.  
C. the pilot's decision to return the gear to headquarters. D. Brian's ethics.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The loud splashing may have been A. an underwater boulder.  
B. the lightning's strobe effect on the pine tree. C. the raft rolling over. D. a moose.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Brian decides that, because Derek is breathing, A. the raft will get to the trading post in time.  
B. he hasn't been hit by lightning. C. he doesn't need C. P. R.  
D. he is sleeping soundly in spite of the rain.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Explain the significance of the following quotations:

1. He could smell rain coming, but that should pose no problem.
2. Like something out of *Huckleberry Finn*, he thought.
3. "Thank you," he whispered, and realized when he said it that it was another kind of prayer and that he was grateful not just for the river, the current, the movement—but the other thing as well.
4. The stern kicked off the ledge, slapped him up and away, clear of the raft, completely in the air.
5. He became used to the city again.

**THE RIVER**

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Setting Identification (20 points)**

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

- |                         |                 |                         |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| airport                 | clearing        | low brush               |
| beach                   | cliff           | Mr. Robeson's apartment |
| Brian's home            | Deborah's house | plane                   |
| bush-plane headquarters | dock            | raft                    |
| canoe                   | lake            | survival school         |
| city                    | lean-to         | trading post            |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. A dog barks at Brian.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Brian checks for natural resources and danger.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Brian cooks potatoes and pork chops.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Current moves about 3 miles per hour toward the river.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5. A cassette player is held in place with duct tape.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Letters spell out THE RAFT.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Brian's fall ends on small pebbles.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Rule one restricts Derek's wanderings.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Derek and Brian gather hazelnuts.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 10. A radio stays on around the clock.

**Part II: Fill-in (30 points)**

Fill in the blanks with answers that complete each statement.

- Each man had a knife in a \_\_\_\_\_.
- Derek asks whether eating \_\_\_\_\_ affected Brian's bowel function.
- Strips of Brian's \_\_\_\_\_ attach the cross-pieces to the raft.
- Brian makes a paddle from Derek's pantleg and a \_\_\_\_\_.
- Without fire to create smoke, the two campers suffer an onslaught of \_\_\_\_\_.
- The unusual shape gives a name to the \_\_\_\_\_ River.
- In the \_\_\_\_\_ under the cliff, Brian aims the flame cup upward.
- Brian identifies himself as \_\_\_\_\_ to the radio receiver.
- More than hunger, Brian must worry about Derek dying of \_\_\_\_\_ or dehydration.
- A small stick separates the twin \_\_\_\_\_ on the fish spear.
- The total journey took the raft \_\_\_\_\_ miles.
- To save Derek from sunburn, Brian builds an \_\_\_\_\_.
- Feeling like a parent, Brian ponders his unusual role \_\_\_\_\_.
- The bolt of lightning causes the pine to \_\_\_\_\_.
- To set the plane onto the lake, the pilot eases the \_\_\_\_\_.

## THE RIVER

### Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain the significance of the following details:

1. pitch
2. flint
3. Survival Jeans
4. cross-pieces
5. nicad batteries

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Account for Brian's ambivalence toward his parents.
2. List ways that Brian demonstrates caution.
3. Describe Brian's parental role toward Derek.
4. Summarize ways that the downriver journey threatens Derek and Brian.

## THE RIVER

## ANSWER KEY

### VOCABULARY TEST

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

#### Part II: Fact/Opinion (30 points)

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

#### Part III: Identification (10 points)

1. the forward tilt of the airplane
2. hard mineral with which Brian strikes sparks
3. product named for Brian's first adventure in the Canadian northwest
4. horizontal stabilizers that secure the poplar logs into a raft
5. rechargeable power for Derek's radio

#### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Setting Identification (20 points)

- |                 |                             |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. dock         | 6. canoe                    |
| 2. clearing     | 7. beach                    |
| 3. Brian's home | 8. beach/lake               |
| 4. lake         | 9. low brush                |
| 5. plane        | 10. bush-plane headquarters |

#### Part II: Fill-in (30 points)

- |                  |              |              |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. leather case  | 6. Necktie   | 11. 119      |
| 2. chokecherries | 7. fire pit  | 12. awning   |
| 3. jacket        | 8. Katie Two | 13. reversal |
| 4. forked stick  | 9. choking   | 14. explode  |
| 5. mosquitoes    | 10. tines    | 15. throttle |

#### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

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

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

**THE RIVER**

**TEACHER'S NOTES**



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