

## SYNOPSIS

The first-person experience of training for and running the Iditarod, an annual race from Anchorage to Nome, Alaska, consumes Paulsen, the speaker, who describes in vignettes the experiences that unite him with his dogs and with the natural high that comes from blending with sky, earth, wind, and weather. The first lesson Paulsen learns is that hunting and killing or intervention in attacks of predators betray the rules of nature. He recalls a December morning when a doe accidentally sprang over his team while eluding a pack of brush wolves. Although Paulsen is an army veteran, he is unprepared for watching a living doe look into his eyes while seven wolves disembowel her. He accepts the fact that, from primitive times, blood has been a part of survival.

At age 40, Paulsen writes professionally and has supplemented his income by working construction, teaching, and tracking satellites. While living with his wife and son in a cabin in northern Minnesota, he takes a job trapping for the state to destroy a glut of destructive beavers. Operating a trapline is not profitable on foot, so he turns to sledding with a second-hand sled and four mature dogs. He adds three dogs and works his 60-mile line in three days. Against cold, wind, dark, and amateurish mistakes, he learns to trust his dog team, which he devotedly feeds, protects, and cares for.

To Paulsen, each dog has a uniqueness and character equal to a human spirit. From observing the integrity of dog instinct, he evolves a philosophy that precludes killing animals. To channel his love of sledding in a positive direction, he trains for the Iditarod, a grueling overland race that he reads about in *Alaska* magazine. Practice is grueling: he tears a kneecap; he suffers frostbite; his dogs endure the pain of digesting dry feed, which lacerates their intestines. Gradually, Paulsen learns the importance of proper nutrition as well as booties and foot care for the animals. He emerges himself in metaphysical experiences, such as the sighting of a "spirit doe." A run-in with Scarhead, the local garbage-eating bear, convinces Paulsen, "I am nothing more and nothing less than any other animal in the woods." Other episodes with Hawk, the spirited banty chicken, and Fred, the over-stuffed yard dog, add to Paulsen's whimsical animal lore. Less sanguine is the red squirrel's unwarranted attack on a chipmunk. On the supernatural side is the sighting of a frozen doe and a six-foot stump glowing bright with phosphorescence.

When enough experience with muskies, crappie, loons, moose, and dogs enters Paulsen's understanding of the woods, he readies himself in earnest for the Iditarod. Led by Storm, the young team practices with a sled in winter and wheeled wagon in summer. Before entering the race,

Paulsen experiences the first of a series of meetings with a mirage he calls the "Eskimo man," a benevolent, helpful presence in times of danger. At length, Paulsen determines that he is ready to leave Minnesota and take the challenge of the musher in more than 1100 miles of hard pulling "across the Alaskan wilderness, over mountain ranges, up the Yukon River, out to the coast of the Bering Sea, and up along the coast and across parts of the sea ice to Nome."

For ease of description, Paulsen numbers the days of his first race, which experienced mushers don't expect him to finish:

Day 1: From the Anchorage starting point, Paulsen's 15-dog sled departs as the 31st team out of 70. The beginning is high drama for the media; the real race begins 30 miles beyond town at Settler's Bay. Leading Paulsen's pack is Wilson, a somewhat dense runner who stops for a moose and later loses the team fifty miles from the trail. In his desperation for sleep, Paulsen dozes lightly and awakens to a visitor who offers him a chocolate chip cookie.

Day 2: At dawn, the team faces the rising sun and the beauties of Mt. McKinley and the Alaska Range. Paulsen carefully feeds the dogs, rests them, rubs their joints, and massages and covers their feet with booties. At the first of 20 checkpoints, the team is disrupted by noisy spectators and small planes. Sleep deprivation causes Paulsen to hallucinate and envision a man in a trench coat who bores him with a droning speech about education.

Day 3: Over the Alaska Range, the team completes three more checkpoints, climbs beyond the timberline, and enters the Rainy Pass checkpoint. The beauty of the run uplifts Paulsen, causing him to feel truly human.

Day 4: The gorge called the Gut or the Chute ends in near disaster. To steady himself, Paulsen ties his left arm to the sled. When it overturns, he is badly injured and spends valuable time recovering.

Day 5: At the Rhone River, he elects to take his day-long layover at a small island on a frozen river. Rumors of tragic injuries and deaths prove groundless. At the end of the fifth day, the dogs lunge out of control, breaking the rope securing his snowhook.

Day 6: The going seems roughest at the Burn, where a forest fire gutted a 90-mile stretch. The absence of snow places the sled in jeopardy from jutting saplings, which he must saw through. Paulsen's ruminations lead him to surmise that the "whole world is just a hallucination." By the end of the day, Wilson has lost his way again, but the Eskimo man, Paulsen's hallucinatory guardian angel, returns the team to the trail. They reach the end of the Burn.

Day 7: From Nicolai, Wilson develops a more bizarre run-

## WOODSONG

ning pattern. After Paulsen's canned sodas explode, the sticky liquid soaks Wilson's bootie, which he sucks while he runs on three legs. The team reaches the Yukon River with Paulsen imagining the applause of spectators.

Day 8: The tundra dims the senses with its monotony. Wilson falls asleep on the job. Paulsen calls to him to keep him moving.

Day 9: Through the remains of the town of Iditarod, Paulsen mushes on and stops by a river. The pilot of a small plane lands and asks to breed his 100-pound female wolf to one of the team; Paulsen, fearing the animal, declines. One dog refuses dog rations and eats Paulsen's meat patties. Paulsen gorges on moose chili at Shageluk and makes the run up the Yukon River in severe abdominal pain.

Day 10: The north wind slows the team; windchill endangers Paulsen's health. He and the team rest in the shelter of an island.

Day 11: Paulsen runs to raise his body temperature. The raw air freezes the lining of his throat, causing him to vomit and disgorge mucus. The team passes a graveyard at the south of a town near the Bering Sea.

Day 12: The mood lightens as the team makes a 90-mile downhill run. In a primitive state of consciousness, Paulsen feels assured of a finish. He spends the night at the home of an Eskimo.

Day 13: The dogs run well along the ocean and begin the last 200 miles across the ice of Norton Sound. Paulsen's audience consists of ptarmigans and arctic hares.

Day 14: Rumors of hard going and casualties cloud the way from Shaktolik over the Norton Sound.

Day 15: Over frozen seawater on the last leg, the dogs fly along. Thirty miles from Anchorage, a child leaps into the harness to lead the pack to his house for rest. Paulsen rescues him from possible danger from over-zealous dogs. A fellow musher rolls in the snow and squeezes a rubber duck to entertain his team.

Days 16-17: More days of bay ice precede Nome. When Paulsen catches sight of lights ahead, he tries to stop and remain in the singular bliss of running alone with his dogs. His wife's voice breaks the spell; he completes the run. Cookie shies at the crowd. Paulsen pulls her through the arch and weeps as he promises the mayor, "We'll be back to run it again."

## BIOGRAPHY

A man of unusual, character-molding experiences, Gary Paulsen (May 17, 1939- ) writes from honest reflection on hunting, trapping, tending animals, building cabins, and surviving. In defense of his choice of a career, he remarks, "It's much like being a slave, I suppose, and in slavery there is a kind of freedom that I find in writing: a perverse thing. I'm not 'motivated,' as you put it. Nor am I particularly driven. I write because it's all there is." A native of Minneapolis, Minnesota, he is the son of Eunice and Oscar Paulsen, a career military officer and alcoholic whose addiction caused the young Paulsen much grief. After World War II, Paulsen's father, who'd served under General George Patton, was assigned to the Philippines, where his son came to know him. The instability of alcoholic parents left Paulsen in need of shelter with relatives.

At age 15, Paulsen took charge of his own destiny and

paid his own way by working at odd jobs and delivering the *Grand Forks Herald*. The stress of poor school performance, disinterest, low self-esteem, and maladjustment to the expectations of his peers pushed him to the brink of suicide. To warm himself and avoid the misery of school and home, he took shelter in the library, where a staff member guided his reading. Gradually, he filled in gaps in his education with classics.

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 during the heady era of the Gemini space shots. Settling in California, he wormed his way into the post of editor and film extra and enjoyed woodcarving, which earned him a Best in Show at a Santa Barbara exhibit. 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 son James and wife Ruth, a painter and co-author of *Dogteam* (1993). When poverty threatened his family, he returned to home territory to trap beaver for the state of Minnesota to supplement a lagging income from writing. He farmed and ranched and, with sponsorship from Lands' End, joined the 1983 Iditarod, an annual Alaskan event covering 1,180 miles of rough, late-season ice and snow from Anchorage to Nome. His exhilaration approached a religious ecstasy, but hopes for returning to the course the following year were ended after Paulsen suffered a heart attack in Logan Airport in Boston.

Currently one of America's most prolific writers of young adult literature, Paulsen makes frequent guest appearances and readings and divides his time between residences in Leonard, Minnesota, and La Luz, New Mexico. 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 1993-1995 he published 25 books, most for young adult readers, his favorite audience. An outstanding departure from survival lore, *Nightjohn* (1993), a tribute to a teacher who risked a death penalty to bring literacy to a plantation, was purchased by Disney Studios.

## 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 for himself the voice that best expresses self and a work rhythm that accommodates bursts of energy that keep him reading, studying, and writing into the night. His most common themes — survival and coming-of-age — have brought him awards from the New York Public Library from 1980-1982 and the American Library Association in 1983, followed by Newbery Honors in 1986 and 1988. Other awards include the Dorothy Canfield Fisher award, William Allen White award, Midland Authors award, and a Child Study Association of America's Children award. The author himself sums up his rapport with young readers when he claims, "We have been passive. We have

## WOODSONG

been stupid. We have been lazy. We have done all the things we could do to destroy ourselves. If there is any hope at all for the human race, it has to come from young people. Not from adults."

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the significance and value of memoir
2. To comment on animals as characters
3. To contrast seasons as an influence on tone and atmosphere
4. To discuss the creation of supernatural visions out of nature
5. To account for the juxtaposition of human and animal reactions
6. To summarize the physical hardships of the far north
7. To note the balance of grim scenes with comic relief
8. To locate natural rhythms of language
9. To list and define musher jargon
10. To explain the trust that develops between musher and team

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explain why Paulsen kills beavers for money
2. To contrast the shining tree stump and frozen deer with the Eskimo man as examples of visions
3. To detail the rise and fall of belief in self during the race
4. To contrast Storm and Wilson as leaders
5. To explain the threat of whiteout, fall, bad ice, boredom, wet clothing, and loss of consciousness
6. To credit Paulsen for his courage and resilience
7. To note animals that teach him his place in nature, such as Hawk and Scarhead
8. To recount the death of the doe during an attack of bush wolves
9. To express the multiple causes of Paulsen's tears at the end of the race
10. To account for Paulsen's wish to enter the 1984 race

### MEANING STUDY

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

1. And I knew that it was wrong for me to have yelled, that I was interrupting something I did not understand, some ancient thing I did not know any more than I knew what it was like to live in the Ice Age. (Chapter 1, p. 7)  
*(Paulsen refers to identifiable periods of time when glaciers covered portions of the earth. During the Quaternary era, 2.5 million years ago, the mammals that survived were shaggy, wool-covered thick-hided oxen, bison, mammoths, and rhinoceros. Weaker and smaller animals — butterflies, fish, birds — disappeared; hardy, thickly carapaced beetles and mollusks survived by migrating to the rivers nearest the Equator. Human life did not appear until after the Quaternary age, when rising temperatures could sustain weaker, less protected mammals.)*
2. We left the yard and ran on a trail through the woods
3. and I thought all the Yukon King thoughts there are. . . . I expanded the trapline to nearly sixty miles over the next three months. By the middle of hard winter I thought I was Sergeant Preston — a Mountie on a radio show I had listened to as a child. (Chapter 2, p. 11)  
*(The exhilaration of Paulsen's first adventures with team and sled or wheeled wagon lead him through the stereotypes promulgated in the press and in the writings of adventurer Jack London (1876-1916), America's great spokesman for the Arctic wilds. Note that the Yukon Territory is the far northwestern corner of Canada.)*
3. When Captain Cook first saw Eskimos and their dogs in Alaska they did not have harnesses. The dogs pulled from crude collars. (Chapter 2, p. 18)  
*(James Cook (1728-1779), English explorer and navigator for the Royal Society, pushed his ship, the Resolution, on his third voyage from England, around the cape of Good Hope to New Zealand, then due north in search of the fabled Northwest Passage. He expended much effort in a study and charting of the Bering Sea and the Aleutian Islands. While calling in at the Sandwich Islands for repairs, Cook died during a battle with Polynesian islanders. His crew turned northward before returning to England via a simpler route down Asia's east coast.)*
4. She did not run and still did not run and I thought she must be a medicine doe sent to me; a spirit doe come in a dream to tell me something. (Chapter 4, p. 34)  
*(Paulsen uses "medicine" in the Native American sense of a supernatural or enigmatic happening inexplicable by scientific methods, such as dream or mirage. A medicine doe might carry warning, presage a future event, or bestow strong powers over enemies, sickness, or ill fortune. Many tribe members carry names from nature that recall an experience with a "medicine" animal or other unexplained contact with natural phenomena.)*
5. I do not understand why I was doing this either — I have never caught a muskie so I could let it go, though I have tried for several thousand casts, and have to a large degree stopped trying to catch a muskie so I can let it go. It seemed almost a vision quest for a time but it's fading now . . . (Chapter 6, p. 59)  
*(Native American worship extends to intense personal adventures into self. Among the plains Indians, teenage boys became men by vision quests — fasting alone in the wilds, cleansing their spirits and flesh in sweat lodges, and breathing steam from herbal or sweetgrass concoctions dropped onto hot rocks. The powerful forces of nature created supernatural visions proving that the spirit world had been in contact with the wanderer and had approved and fulfilled the mythic purpose of the quest. Returned from seclusion, the quester adopted a new, more symbolic name after detailing his vision to a shaman or interpreter.)*
6. I barely had time to fall backward and go into a tuck

## WOODSONG

before I hit the side of a nearly vertical incline and began to tumble. (Chapter 7, p. 68)

*(To ready himself for a severe blow, Paulsen prepares his body for punishment by launching himself back and away from the plunging sled and team. By tucking his arms and legs around his body and forming a ball, he protects the soft tissue of stomach, liver, bladder, and intestines from bruising and possible puncture wounds. The bonier part of the body on the outside of the sphere is more likely to tolerate the punishment wrought by momentum and concussion.)*

7. When I started to run long, moved from running a work team, a trapline team, to training for the Iditarod, Storm took it in stride . . . . (Chapter 7, p. 75)

*(Sledding for sport did not begin in North America until the late 1800s. The Iditarod, an overland commemoration of a medical mission of mercy to bring supplies to an isolated village beset by diphtheria, leaves Eagle River, outside of Anchorage, and zigzags to Wasilla, Knik, Big Lake, Skwentna, Finger Lake, Rainy Pass, Rohn Roadhouse, Nikolai, McGrath, Takotna, Ophir, Cripple, Sulatna Crossing, Ruby, Galena, Nulato, Kaltag, Unslakleet, Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Ellim, Golovin, White Mountain, Safety, and Nome. Most hazardous are frostbite from sub-zero temperatures, melting ice, accidents caused by misjudgment because of sleep deprivation, and moose.)*

8. Sometimes I would go to his house and sit next to it in the sun and he would lay his head in my lap with the stick in his mouth and I would think of things I had forgotten about; young things and old things, long runs and short runs, puppies and cold and wind, northern lights . . . and all with Storm. (Chapter 7, pp. 77-78)

*(Communing with the aging Storm allows Paulsen some time to reminisce about his own youth. A colorful image is the burst of northern lights in the Arctic, the aurora borealis, a phenomenon about 70 miles above Earth's surface and ranging in hue from yellow and green to red, orange, and violet. The shape can vary from patches and rays to shimmering curtains, crowns, and parallel lines. One proposed explanation of aurorae is the entrapment of particles from outer space in a magnetic field.)*

9. There had been a trail there when we went out but a logging crew had gone through with a skidder and the blade had taken the trail down to bare ice. (Chapter 8, p. 83)

*(The intervention of human earth-moving machines with box blades or scrapers endangers the musher by removing friction in the form of forest debris, rocks, and fresh snow. On the solid ice that is left, Paulsen and the others risk loss of control over a slippery grade. As he fears, "The sled began to creep up on the dogs and as it did, it lost steering and turned sideways and rolled over." Losing his load of dog food and finding his dogs tangled in the traces, he must restore himself to his senses and free the dogs before reloading the sled and pushing on.)*

10. We have the same flow across the tundra and I know then we will finish. (Day 12, p. 122)

*(The treeless horizon consisting of undrained bogs frozen into a sweeping ice plain spurs the team across the shallow soil that, in summer, produces a surprisingly varied display of grasses, moss, herbs, and shrubs. Common to this area are herds of caribou, bears, hares, and lemmings as well as flocks of migratory birds, ducks, and geese. However, in the winter, the view is desolate and mind-numbing.)*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

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

#### Questions 1 - 4 Literal Level

1. How does Paulsen get involved in dogsledding?  
*(While living in a "cabin in northern Minnesota with no plumbing, no electricity, and no real prospects," Paulsen, an out-of-luck writer who spends most of his life "in the forest or on the sea," works as a trapper to earn money to support his wife and son. The purpose of his job is to rid Minnesota of beavers, which endanger waterways and cities. To prove his kill, he collects a small bounty per pelt. A "one-man operation," Paulsen on skis can earn little until he extends his territory from twenty miles to sixty by running four sled dogs. Friends give him older dogs and a broken sled; he adds three more dogs for a total of seven. He must learn to harness and hook them to a gangline and to work them as a team in daylight and dark, warm weather and cold.)*
2. What errors does he make in learning the intricacies of dogsledding?  
*(Paulsen makes the classic errors of the beginning musher. He depends on daylight, daydreaming about the dashing Sergeant Preston, a fictional Mountie based in the Yukon. Eventually, daylight fails. Paulson must rely on his head lamp and on the sure-footedness of his team, who actually run better at night, perhaps because he interferes less and relies more on their sense of smell and knowledge of the trail. He also learns to appreciate the difficulties that slow his team from their usual seven miles per hour — new snow, heavy loads, a head wind, fatigue, windchill, and hunger. Most serious of Paulsen's errors is the diet he feeds them of dry dog food, which lacerates the dogs' intestines, causing serious rectal bleeding in Storm, his prized wheeler. Fortunately, Storm is too tough to let a bout of hemorrhaging kill him. He becomes Paulsen's tutor in the school for mushers.)*
3. How does the Iditarod focus Paulsen on life-or-death mushing?  
*(While covering the more than 1,100-mile run in seventeen days, Paulsen advances beyond casual or short-distance runs in Minnesota to treacherous terrain over bad ice and the climbs up and over the Alaska Range.)*

## WOODSONG

Along the way from Anchorage to Nome, he encounters fierce windchill and icy slopes that threaten life and health. Tumbles require recovery and rest. At regular intervals, he tends and feeds his dogs, checks for sore feet, warms his own body, and tries to overcome sleep deprivation, which causes potentially serious hallucinations. At checkpoints, he fills up on high-energy foods and continues toward the goal, even though he and others doubt that he is capable of completing the route. Even his wheeler, Wilson, collapses from boredom with the monotonous horizon. The final leg, over the tundra and the Norton Sound, tests his mettle and that of his dogs. Both Paulsen and the team show remarkable resilience in a grueling challenge to human and animal fortitude and determination.)

4. What value does the race have for someone with no hope of winning?

(Although Paulsen is a novice at mushing, he learns much about himself and about his place in nature by training a team of fifteen dogs for the assault. From the dogs, he learns to appreciate stamina and focus. From the Eskimos he receives hospitality and the joy of spectators who share his thrill in racing. During the most relaxed parts of the run, Paulsen becomes one with the team, taking in the diamond-clear atmosphere of intense cold, crisp air, brilliant sunlight, and the influx of ptarmigan and arctic hares, who become spectators to a man captivated by solitude.)

Near the end of his run, Paulsen shies from the light and noise of Nome and prefers to remain in the wild with his team. His wife's voice jolts him back to reality. Completing the final miles with ease, he lets the dogs have their head and nearly drags Cookie through the arch to the finish to overcome her fear of crowds. Less interested in adulation than in the love he shares with his dogs, he embraces first his wife and son, then the ranks of dogs, who are still tied by twos to the gangline. He hands the team over to mushers for bedding. Paulsen weeps, shakes hands with Nome's mayor, and promises to run the race the following year.)

### Questions 5 - 8 Interpretive Level

6. Why does Paulsen give up killing?

(The primal balance of animals in the wild carries a series of learning responses that guide Paulsen to an appreciation of his own position in nature. He sees cruel killing of a doe by a wolf pack, the terror of a deer that inadvertently crosses the path of his team, a deer frozen on its feet on the trail, and the attack of a red squirrel on a chipmunk. The most telling moment comes when Paulsen loads his rifle and prepares to squeeze the trigger against Scarhead, the bear that menaces him while scavenging for food.)

The logic of killing a four-hundred-pound bear eludes Paulsen. He lowers his rifle and empties the magazine, noting, "I hope Scarhead is still alive. For what he taught me, I hope he lives long and is very happy because I learned then—looking up at him while he made up his mind whether or not to end me — that when it is all boiled down I am nothing more and noth-

ing less than any other animal in the woods.")

7. How does Paulsen lighten the story to include other relationships besides life-or-death struggles?

(Paulsen arranges his episodes to include humor and whimsy. He discusses the tracks in the snow, the signs of an owl chasing a mouse, and "the intricate necklace-pattern of tracks made of a hunting ermine as it looks for mice, going down into the under-snow cities the mice have in the swamp grass during the winter, then exploding out the top again with the kill, and down again for another one." He studies the cedar waxwings, who line up for nibbles of sour, foul-odored high-bush cranberries; he contemplates the order of fish that approach his boat; he examines the camouflage spots on a young fawn. Blending in stories of Hawk, the belligerent banty hen; Fred, the obese yard warrior who successfully batters an electric fence, and the poignant demise of Storm, whose death comes at an inopportune time when he is unable to face east, yet leaves for his master a parting love gift, Paulsen manages to intertwine the moods and atmospheres of *Woodsong* with the nuances of a symphony.)

8. How does Paulsen incorporate first-person narrative to avoid an emphasis on self?

(Speaking from a first-person point of view, Paulsen departs as much as possible from memories of interactions with his wife, son, spectators, Eskimos, mushers, and the mayor of Nome to dwell on living among animals, especially his team members. He avoids the tedium of carefully naming each dog and delineating each animal's traits. Instead, he mentions names only when necessary. The remainder of the time, the dogs are just beasts, like William Faulkner's spirit-driven little fyce in "The Bear." The animals combine to power the sled where Paulsen needs to go or where he guides them during training, giving their all for a man who obviously loves and respects them.)

Significant to Paulsen's narrative method is the ability to transcend action by individual people or animals to dwell on his blending of self into nature. Through his empathy for dogs, he escapes the misery of solitude, yet taps into rivers of self that have before been obscured. The cathartic tears near the end are preceded by both vomit and mucus, which Paulsen sheds on the ground and watches his dogs ingest. The merging of man with animals approaches a sublime moment of bestiality, a sharing of instinctual behavior that uplifts Paulsen during an unpromising time in his life and career.)

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Why do Paulsen's books delight young adult and adult readers?

(Unlike authors who write young adult books just for "little people," Paulsen writes for himself. He pours honesty and gut reactions into his scenarios as a means of pleasing and relieving his spirit of difficulties that burden all souls. Without knowing their positions in the natural world, people with less soul and less honesty

## WOODSONG

*might have gone on trapping beaver without learning from their experiences or studying the relationship of humankind to nature. For Paulsen, learning is the most powerful part of his journey—certainly more valuable than the pittance he receives per pelt. Being human is less a matter of earning a living or finding a buyer for his writing than it is a required inward search of the soul. Almost like a taoist exegesis, Woodsong resembles the question that has not been asked and produces a satisfying answer that has no form, no words.)*

10. What sense impressions extend Paulsen's awareness of self in the universe?

*(Paulsen employs a sentient awareness of nature in every scene, whether pleasant or unpleasant. He allows the wolves chewing through the dog's intestines to speak his knowledge of nature's laws, just as he recoils from the red squirrel's attack on the chipmunk. During the race, he mentions his loss of perception during hallucinatory episodes, when he wonders if the Eskimo man is the vision and he the dreamer or whether the whole race is a mirage and his life a fourth-dimensional voyage beyond cold and snow, pounding miles, and the rhythm of dogs on the trail. The return to reality pulls him too strongly back into humankind and the face he must wear as a member of civilized society. Overcome with the nameless beauty that has ended, like a dreamer grasping after a wispy idyll, he weeps his thanks for an opportunity to discover one of the secrets of the universe.)*

### Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Write a journal entry from the point of view of a checkpoint staff member, Paulsen's wife or son, an Eskimo host, or a spectator. Comment on Paulsen's determination and his gentle good humor toward Wilson and Cookie.
12. Use color, shape, touch, sound, and passage of time to create an impressionistic verse about running a sled toward the northern lights, near Mt. McKinley, or along the Yukon River. Close with your own impressions of the world as it appears to you from the back of your sled.

## ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

### Business and Economics

1. Describe jobs performed by working animals, such as sled dogs, police trackers, airport and military security dogs, seeing-eye dogs, hearing dogs, pack mules and camels, transport elephants, television and movie entertainers, and rodeo and circus animals. What senses do animals possess that outperform parallel senses in human beings? Why do these animals deserve laws to protect them from exploitation? Why are laboratory animals exploited, tortured, and killed?
2. Explain why beginning the Iditarod in Anchorage is beneficial to the city. Why does the mayor of Nome welcome returning mushers?

3. Contrast the attitude of Paulsen as trapper to that of Paulsen as an animal trainer and musher. Why are beaver harmful to cities, roads, and waterways? Why does he give up trapping and killing animals?
4. What monetary gain would the pilot gain from breeding the she-wolf to a sled dog? Why is Paulsen skittish of the deal?

### Geography

1. Use topographical maps to describe the terrain around Norton Sound, the Bering Sea, Rainy Pass, the Yukon River, the Alaska Range, Anchorage, and Mt. McKinley.
2. Discuss the changes in terrain after a burn or passage of a logger's skidder. Why do these alterations of topography hinder the workings of nature? What is likely to happen to land that has been altered by fire or a change in curvature?
3. List and explain geographical details, particularly gorge, bay, ridge, mogul, gravel, and grade.

### Social Studies and Religion

1. Describe the response of Eskimos to the passage of mushers through their villages. How does Paulsen link Eskimo lore to the voyages of Captain James Cook?
2. Connect the history of the Yukon in the late 19th century with the gold rushes and rise in fame of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or Mounties. Why do these historical underpinnings thrill Paulsen as he learns to run dogs?
3. What does the Navajo prayer reveal about solitude and oneness with nature? In what ways is running a transcendental or out-of-body activity? How can extremely low temperature be "soul-cold"?

### Psychology

1. What experiences precede the release of tension in tears? Why does Paulsen hug the dogs one by one?
2. What does Storm's death suggest about the dog's perception of nature? Why does he honor Paulsen by holding a stick?
3. Why is finishing the Iditarod important to a first-time musher? What kind of athletes usually enter the race?
4. Why does Paulsen regret yelling at the bush wolves that devour the doe? Make a list of other episodes in which Paulsen is out of place among the private dealings of animals.

### Mathematics

Discuss the relationship between speed and such variables as head wind, new or soft snow, bad ice, hunger, and fatigue. What rate per hour does Paulsen verify? How fast must he travel to finish the Iditarod in seventeen days, minus a day for mandatory rest? What is

## WOODSONG

the purpose of twenty checkpoints?

### Science and Health

1. Explain why dry food shreds Storm's intestines. Why do exertion, struggling, and screaming exacerbate the situation?
2. Present a chart listing natural and instinctual qualities in a husky's body that protect it from extreme cold, wind, fatigue, frostbite, and joint injury. Explain why Paulsen bites the dogs' ears.
3. What natural phenomena account for frozen seawater, the northern lights, brittleness in steel, the monotony of tundra, the bird's search for gravel, and burst blood vessels in Paulsen's throat?
4. Apply the concept of imprinting to Hawk's attempt to raise chicks and young grouse. How does flight complicate her relationship to her adopted chicks?

### Language and Literature

1. Compare the book to George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant." Discuss the writers' shared distaste with needless suffering and the malicious waste of innocent animals. Make a similar comparison of Paulsen's *Dogsong* to Farley Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf*.
2. Discuss the types of humor that relieve the seriousness of Paulsen's book. Consider these phrases: Gidget-goes-to-Nome, being a *putz*; I believed Bambi always got out of the fire; he still growls at the wire; slide out of downtown Anchorage on my face; I thought I was going to die of gastric distress; went flying out into space; and a little rubber duck.
3. Compose an extended definition of first-person narrative. Discuss your unanswered questions about Paulsen's experiences. For example, did he win a prize for the race, did his dogs finish the race unharmed, was the Paulsen family pleased with his finish, and did Cookie live up to his expectations as wheeler?

### Art

1. Sketch a view of tundra, the arch in Nome, an Eskimo hut, the Burn, Norton Sound, Mt. McKinley, the Bering Sea, the ghost town of Iditarod, and the chute in Anchorage.
2. Select a natural scene that you think a professional artist would like to draw or photograph, perhaps a sketch of a frozen waterfall or a view of a forest and its creatures.
3. Make top, side, front, and back views of a sled. Emphasize essential supports in the frame that prevent torn rails and loss of goods. Detail places where loads are lashed into place. Make similar drawings of a parlor stove or wheeled wagon used for training puppies.

### Music, Video, Journalism

1. Select music to accompany a montage of video scenes taken of the Iditarod as a public television feature. Consider Native American flute and drum songs as well as orchestral works by Jean Sibelius or piano pieces by Edward McDowell or Clara Schumann. Compose captions for the most significant scenes.
2. Compose flap copy to accompany an illustrated edition of *Woodsong*. What facts about Paulsen's life will introduce the reader to a variety of aspects of his experiences, talents, and career?

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Compose a scene in which a skilled musher uses Storm, Obeah, or Wilson to train a new lead dog. Add details of foot care, feeding, timed rest periods, discipline, harnessing, and tracking.
2. Read Jack London's "To Build a Fire." Discuss how London's understanding of the difference between humans and animals reflects the same perception as in *Woodsong*. How do extremes of temperature point out human frailties?
3. Sketch a map highlighting the trail run by Paulsen's team, including detours, stops with friendly people for food and rest, landmarks such as the graveyard and Mt. McKinley, and the reunion with his wife before his passage under the arch.
4. Lead a discussion about the author's decision to end killing. Why might this philosophy be impractical on most people? How would the world economy alter if people stopped harming or killing animals? Why would the state of Minnesota disagree with a halt to the trapping of beavers?
5. Read aloud the rhythmic tribute to nature in "Day 3." How do fatigue and vulnerability to beauty bring out the best in the musher? Why does he assume that winning is a "futile dream"? Why does he run a team if he doesn't want to compete for top prizes?
6. Contrast animal personalities in the narrative, especially Fred, Yogi, Clarence, Scarhead, Hawk, Storm, Obeah, and Columbia. Why does Paulsen obscure his wife's personality in favor of emphasis on animals?
7. Contrast the first-person account of *Woodsong* with the fictional style of *Nightjohn*. What characteristics does Paulsen laud in both works? How can courage be a key element of works about such different subjects as mushing in the Iditarod and spreading literacy?
8. Create a glossary of terms necessary to an understanding of the story, e.g. snowhook, northern lights, mummy bag, tug, and paradox.
9. Write a theme in which you anticipate preparations for a

## WOODSONG

second run. What mishaps in the first race could Paulsen avoid in future races? What might the dogs learn from running a second time?

10. Make an oral report on supplies needed for running a dog team, for instance, high energy food. Comment on complaints from animal protection agencies that the Iditarod causes needless deaths of animals for the sake of competition.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List in chronological order significant events connected with the race and describe them. Mention training pups to pull a wheeled wagon, night running, hallucinations, straightening of ganglines, mandatory rest, departure from the chute, the arch, crossing Norton Sound, the first sighting of Eskimo man, use of the bow saw, recovery from a ripped kneecap, and calls to Willy.
2. Make a list of scenes that express appreciation of Native Americans, love of solitude, distaste for blood, respect for a dog's needs, family involvement in the project, the dangers of running a team, local hype of the Iditarod, deeply emotional transitions, and a reliance on animal instinct.
3. Compose a list of twenty questions to complete a sports interview of Paulsen. Stress his preparation and completion of the Iditarod.
4. Using Paulsen's experiences with animals and running a team in extremes of cold and wind, compose extended definitions of existentialism and impressionism.

### PAULSEN'S PUBLISHED WORKS

*The Special War* (1966)  
*Mr. Tucket* (1968)  
*Some Birds Don't Fly* (1969)  
*Communications* (1974)  
*Together-Apart* (1976)  
*The Building a New, Buying an Old, Remodeling a Used Comprehensive Home and Shelter Book* (1976)  
*The Man Who Climbed the Mountain* (Dan Theis, co-author) (1976)  
*The Small Ones* (1976)  
*The Grass Eaters: Real Animals* (1976)  
*Dribbling, Shooting, and Scoring Sometimes* (1976)  
*Hitting, Pitching, and Running Maybe* (1976)  
*The Implosion Effect* (1976)  
*The Death Specialists* (1976)  
*Martin Luther King: The Man Who Climbed the Mountain* (1976)  
*The Foxman* (1977)  
*Tackling, Running, and Kicking — Now and Again* (1977)  
*Riding, Roping, and Bulldogging — Almost* (1977)  
*The Golden Stick* (1977)  
*Winterkill* (1977)  
*Farm: A History and Celebration of the American Farmer* (1977)  
*Careers in an Airport* (1977)  
*The CB Radio Caper* (1977)

*The Curse of the Cobra* (1977)  
*Tiltawhirl John* (1977)  
*C. B. Jockey* (1977)  
*Hiking and Backpacking* (1978)  
*Successful Home Repair: When Not to Call the Contractor* (1978)  
*Running, Jumping and Throwing — If You Can* (1978)  
*Forehanding and Backhanding — If You're Lucky* (1978)  
*The Day the White Deer Died* (1978)  
*Hope and a Hatchet* (1978)  
*The Green Recruit* (1978)  
*Canoeing, Kayaking and Rafting* (1979)  
*Downhill, Hotdogging and Cross-Country — If the Snow Isn't Sticky* (1979)  
*Facing Off, Checking and Goaltending — Perhaps* (1979)  
*Going Very Fast in a Circle — If You Don't Run Out of Gas* (1979)  
*Launching, Floating High and Landing — If Your Pilot Light Doesn't Go Out* (1979)  
*Pummeling, Falling and Getting Up — Sometimes* (1979)  
*Track, Enduro and Motocross — Unless You Fall Over* (1979)  
*TV and Movie Animals* (1980)  
*The Spitball Gang* (1980)  
*The Sweeper* (1981)  
*Money Saving Home Repair Guide* (1981)  
*Sailing: From Jibs to Jibing* (1981)  
*Campkill* (1981)  
*Clutterball* (1982)  
*Beat the System: A Survival Guide* (1983)  
*Dancing Carl* (1983)  
*Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights* (1983)  
*Tracker* (1984)  
*Dogsong* (1985)  
*Sentries* (1986)  
*Murphy* (1987)  
*The Crossing* (1987)  
*Hatchet* (1987)  
*Island* (1988)  
*Murphy's Gold* (1988)  
*Murphy's Herd* (1989)  
*The Winter Room* (1989)  
*The Madonna Stories* (1989)  
*The Voyage of the Frog* (1989)  
*Night Rituals* (1989)  
*Kill Fee* (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)



## WOODSONG

*Nightjohn* (1993)  
*The Voyage of the Frog* (1993)  
*Dunc's Undercovered Christmas* (1993)  
*Full of Hot Air: Launching, Floating High, and Landing* (1993)  
*Dogteam* (Ruth Paulsen, co-author) (1993)  
*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)  
*Canyons* (1994)  
*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)

*Something About the Author*, Vol. 54. Detroit: Gale Research, 1988.  
Weidt, Maryann N., "Gary Paulsen: A Sentry for Peace." *Voice of Youth Advocates*, August/October 1986, 132, 148.

## RELATED READING

Robert Frost's "Birches"  
John Reynolds Gardiner's *Stone Fox*  
Jean Craighead George's *Julie of the Wolves*  
Robin Lee Graham's *Dove*  
Bret Harte's "The Luck of Roaring Camp"  
James Herriot's *All Things Bright and Beautiful*  
Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*, and "To Build a Fire"  
Harry Mazer's *Snowbound*  
Farley Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf*  
George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant"  
Wilson Rawls's *Where the Red Fern Grows*  
Chief Seattle's "This Sacred Soil"  
Henry David Thoreau's "Why I Went to the Woods"  
Gloria Whelan's *Silver*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bartky, Cheryl, "Write What You Are," *Writer's Digest*, July 1994, 32-44, 65.  
*Contemporary Authors*. New Revision Series, Vol. 30. Detroit: Gale Research, 1988.  
Devereaux, Elizabeth, "Gary Paulsen," *Publishers Weekly*, March 28, 1994, 70-71.  
Engelhardt, Tom, "Reading May Be Harmful to Your Kids," *Harper's* June 1991, 55-62.  
"Gary Paulsen." Publicity brochure from Dell/Delacorte Press, 1990.  
Handy, Alice Evans, "An Interview with Gary Paulsen." From a reprint of *The Book Report*, May/June 1991.  
"Paulsen Inks Long-Term Deal with HB," *Publishers Weekly*, February 8, 1993.  
Serdahely, Franz, "Prolific Paulsen," *Writer's Digest*, January 1980.  
Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. *Crossing Barriers: People Who Overcame*. Englewood, Col.: Libraries Unlimited, 1993.

## WOODSONG

### VOCABULARY TEST

Underline a word in parentheses to complete each of the following sentences.

1. Looking back on it I don't remember having one (visionary, muskie, tandem, coherent) thought when it was happening.
2. He was still there, (brooding, rummaging, keening, wheeling) through the trash.
3. One of them is a (skidder, tug, banty, rookie) hen we call hawk, since she is at least partially a creature of the woods it might be proper to tell about her here.
4. It is easy to find the holes they make when they (plummet, alleviate, carom, pillage) into the snow but very hard to catch them off guard because when they heard the sound of someone or something coming through the snow, they explode up and out in a white cloud.
5. "Cold," he says, the word a (windchill, benediction, contention, chagrin).
6. At Rhone River I take my twenty-four hour (mandatory, stultifying, stark, partial) layover.
7. The wind (abates, menaces, blusters, petrifies), the sun comes out, the trail across is flat — frozen seawater — and the dogs are well rested.
8. I had gone over some kind of line with the dogs, gone back into some primitive state of (tuck, exaltation, conduction, insulation) that I wanted to study.
9. Somehow the (pathological, robotic, brindle, phony) trapping gave me a purpose for running the dogs, and would until I began to train them for the Iditarod, a dogsled race across Alaska, which I had read about in Alaska magazine.
10. Once more it hammered him, but his (lope, mogul, momentum, truce) carried the day and he broke the wire.
11. Each time she persisted, (faltering, briefing, overriding, reconciling) my commands, I scolded her for fighting me, and each time I would find later that she was right.
12. They had more or less run (amuck, genetic, elemental, mellow) and were damming up rivers and flooding high ways, filling pastures, even beginning to invade the cities.
13. Perhaps the greatest (lobe, paradox, problem, predator) about understanding "the woods" is that so many who enjoy it, or seem to enjoy it, spend most of their time trying to kill parts of it.
14. The light had an (eerie, inorganic, obese, amiable) green-yellow glow.
15. But the cedar waxwings didn't just descend on the tree (abating, cantering, willy-nilly, cowering).

## COMPREHENSION TEST A

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

Name the locations described below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Rumors describe frozen eyeballs and nose, a musher torn from his sled and blown sideways thirty miles, and an insane person making circles on the ice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Paulsen promises the mayor that he will race again.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Someone gives Paulsen a soda.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Paulsen needs a bow saw to chop trunks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Beaver threaten rivers and towns by building dams.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Storm dies with a stick in his mouth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A fake start sends the mushers out of the chute to the cheers of crowds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A single towering mountain dazzles Paulsen with its enormity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. A shallow, endless grassland lulls Wilson into a stupor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Sergeant Preston's adventures with the Mounties are set in the frozen north in a radio program.

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

Complete each of the following lines with a term.

1. \_\_\_\_\_, who fears crowds, hesitates to pass under the arch.
2. Wilson sucks \_\_\_\_\_ off his foot.
3. A man shares an uncrumbled \_\_\_\_\_ with Paulsen, who sips hot tea.
4. The light from the eerie stump comes from \_\_\_\_\_ absorbed by its roots.
5. Paulsen has his rifle aimed at \_\_\_\_\_, but decides not to shoot.
6. To stay dry, he places the \_\_\_\_\_ from his shoepacs inside his sleeping bag.
7. Wilson's foot requires treatment and the wearing of a \_\_\_\_\_ after he receives a cut.
8. The man squeaking the \_\_\_\_\_ pleases Paulsen because of the joy he takes in his dogs.
9. After the dogs lunge and break the rope, the sled leaves the \_\_\_\_\_ behind at the check-point.
10. Columbia teases Olaf by pushing a \_\_\_\_\_ just out of Olaf's reach.
11. The leader's post is also called the \_\_\_\_\_ position, a term that derives from the stage coach era.
12. Duberry treats Paulsen's torn \_\_\_\_\_ by licking it gently.
13. The death song sounds like the \_\_\_\_\_ song.
14. The dead ruffed grouse may have come to gather \_\_\_\_\_ for her gizzard.
15. While traveling down a river in a canoe packed for a week's fishing trip, Paulsen gives up trying to catch a \_\_\_\_\_.

## WOODSONG

### Part III: True/False (20 points)

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Paulsen uses Wilson to save Cookie for the last of the run.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Paulsen's wife disapproves of hunting ruffed grouse or breeding mixed blood wolves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Animals avoid high-bush cranberries, which smell terrible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The sight of a boy leaping into the team's center moves Paulsen to tears.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Much of Anchorage attends the race and arrives at Nome to welcome the winners.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Storm disapproves of the loading of a parlor stove on the sled to be carried uphill to the house.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The Eskimo man lifts Columbia out of danger from an attack on Scarhead.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. It is foolhardy for a professional musher to run at night, even with a head lamp.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The ingestion of dry dog food causes Storm to bleed from the rectum, but does not kill him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The plane lands close to Paulsen and holds a 100-pound she-wolf.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

In a paragraph, discuss the significance of two of the following passages.

- 1. Beauty above me  
Beauty below me  
Beauty before me . . .
- 2. It is like going back ten, twelve thousand years, running over these mountains with a dog team. Like becoming a true human — a human before we became cluttered by civilization. Like going inside and becoming a cave painting.
- 3. I turned and could not keep from crying as I hugged my wife and son and then the dogs, starting from front to back, hugging each dog until two mushers took them away to put them on beds and I turned to the mayor of Nome who was there to greet me and said the one thing I never thought I would ever say.
- 4. On one very cold night — it must have been thirty or thirty-five below — I awakened in the morning with dogs all around me and three of them curled up on top of me; a living blanket.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

**Part I: Identifying Terms (20 points)**

Select terms from the list below to fit each description that follows. You will have answers left over when you finish:

- |                  |                       |            |          |
|------------------|-----------------------|------------|----------|
| banty            | gangline              | honest dog | rookie   |
| bolt             | gizzard               | Iditarod   | scratch  |
| bow saw          | glove liner           | layover    | snowhook |
| camouflage spots | head lamp             | mummy bag  | trapline |
| chute            | high-bush cranberries | parka      | tug      |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. an anchor to prevent the team leaving the musher
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. natural protection for a fawn
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. a connector from dog to harness
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. digestive organ
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. departure point for the race
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. place to dry felt liners
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. give up the race
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. beaver hunter's route
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. rest period
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. reliable sled dog

**Part II: Short Answer (30 points)**

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. How many days does it take Paulsen to run the Iditarod?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Who greets Paulsen for the city of Nome?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What kind of animal is Hawk?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What strip keeps the dogs working in tandem?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What part of his first sled is broken?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What soaks Wilson's bootie?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What type of prayer does Paulsen recite to himself?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What piece of gear is improperly wired?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Who leaps in the middle of Paulsen's team?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. From what magazine does Paulsen read about the race?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Who drags the team around a waterfall to rescue Paulsen?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. What song do the dogs sing when Paulsen leaves?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Who attacks an electric fence?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. What clothing does Paulsen recognize on the hallucination?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. What caused "The Chute"?

## WOODSONG

### Part III: Selecting Details (20 points)

Place an X beside any statement that is true of running a dogsled:

- 1. Dogs must be fed no heavy fats.
- 2. The leader must be paired with a wheeler.
- 3. Daily massages protect feet.
- 4. Dogs must receive an hourly snack.
- 5. Teams run best in the daylight.
- 6. Collars have been replaced by ganglines and tugs.
- 7. Soda and hot chocolate make useful drinks for weary dogs.
- 8. Puppies must be trained by experienced lead dogs.
- 9. Dogs can sleep in beds scooped out in the snow.
- 10. Chew bones are dangerous because they spark fights.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Explain the character roles of Obeah, Storm, Wilson, Cookie, Scarhead, Hawk, and Columbia.
- 2. Discuss evidence that Paulsen has learned to think like a dog.
- 3. Discuss the sequence of events that occur during the race.
- 4. Justify Paulsen's decision to stop killing animals.

**WOODSONG**

**ANSWER KEY**

**VOCABULARY TEST**

- |                |               |                 |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. coherent    | 6. mandatory  | 11. overriding  |
| 2. rummaging   | 7. abates     | 12. amuck       |
| 3. banty       | 8. exaltation | 13. paradox     |
| 4. plummet     | 9. phony      | 14. eerie       |
| 5. benediction | 10. momentum  | 15. willy-nilly |

**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

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

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Norton Sound | 6. his doghouse |
| 2. Nome         | 7. Anchorage    |
| 3. Nicolai      | 8. Mt. McKinley |
| 4. the Burn     | 9. tundra       |
| 5. Minnesota    | 10. Yukon       |

**Part II: Fill-in (20 points)**

- |                |                |             |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| 1. Cookie      | 6. felt liners | 11. wheeler |
| 2. soda        | 7. bootie      | 12. kneecap |
| 3. chocolate   | 8. rubber duck | 13. rain    |
| chip cookie    | 9. snowhook    | 14. gravel  |
| 4. phosphorous | 10. bone       | 15. muskie  |
| 5. Scarhead    |                |             |

**Part III: True/False (20 points)**

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

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

Answers will vary.

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Identifying Quotations (20 points)**

- |                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. snowhook         | 6. mummy bag   |
| 2. camouflage spots | 7. scratch     |
| 3. tug              | 8. trapline    |
| 4. gizzard          | 9. layover     |
| 5. chute            | 10. honest dog |

**Part II: Identification (20 points)**

- |              |              |                 |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. 17        | 6. soda      | 11. Obeah       |
| 2. the mayor | 7. Navajo    | 12. come back   |
| 3. banty hen | 8. head lamp | 13. Fred        |
| 4. gangline  | 9. boy       | 14. trench coat |
| 5. siderails | 10. Alaska   | 15. fire        |

**Part III: Selecting Details (20 points)**

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

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

Answers will vary.



Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650  
Toll free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169  
PERMA-BOUND CANADA • Box 517, Station A • Willowdale, Ontario M2N 5T1  
Toll free 1-800-461-1999 • Fax 1-705-876-9703