

Vanessa Bernthal
Unit for Kid Lit
November 19, 1997

HATCHET

By Gary Paulsen
Grades 6-8

Bradbury Press
New York
c1987
195 pages

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING

This novel is a story of courage, determination, and survival. It presents many topics for discussion, some of them controversial, but all of them applicable to today's students and to the world in which we all live.

This unit is nine lessons long, each lesson is a reading assignment of two or three chapters. Vocabulary and questions are included for student use. **THE QUESTIONS ARE NOT INTENDED TO BE "ANSWER AFTER READING" ONLY QUESTIONS.** They may be used as a quiz following a discussion of that day's reading assignment. They may be used as discussion starters for class time. They may be expanded or extended to research papers, essay topics, art projects, anything that fits the situation in which you and your students find yourselves while studying this novel. Vocab words can be boring and always having the students look them up on their own can be repetitive. Some suggestions would be to have a contest at school before the students have read a section and have students provide possible definitions for the vocab words. Each student gets a turn to look up the right meaning and you can keep a score of correct guesses or just do it for fun. **BE CREATIVE and HAVE FUN!**

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR EACH LESSON

Lesson #1: Discuss with students the cruel realities of divorce and help them learn to be sensitive to those whose parents have gone through a divorce. Be sure to warn the students about the misuse of God's name in the first few chapters and let them know that you feel it is unfortunate that the author had to use language like that in his book.

Lesson #2: Discuss with students the importance of thinking carefully and deeply when faced with difficult situations. Use Brian's situation as an example, but ask for others from the students own experiences. Give some from your own, and show what a wonderful blessing our minds are.

Lesson #3: Read Romans 8:28 to the class. Discuss Brian's lack of faith and his trust in luck in the light of this comforting passage for us Christians. Help students realize that God has a purpose for all bad things in our lives, including divorce, or death of a loved one, or losing friendships or moving to a new town.

Lesson #4: Have students predict the theme of this book from what they have read so far. Focus their attention on what the author wants us to feel as we read. Remind the students to pay attention to the plot, the sequence of events throughout the rest of the book as the author leads us to the climax.

Lesson #5: Discuss the characteristics of Brian that have emerged so far in the book. See if the students can see how these characteristics shape the way Brian looks at his situation and how he reacts to it.

Lesson #6: Lead a discussion of suicide pointing to as many passages that you can find that talk about murder and harming one's body. Provide advice for what to do when depressed, and hand out

lists of passages to turn to in distressing situations. Show the students that Jesus' love will always be greater than any depressing situation, and encourage them to encourage others to always turn to Jesus in the day of trouble.

Lesson #7: Ask the students what change they have seen in Brian so far in the story. Discuss his feelings about being rescued and compare them to what he felt at the beginning of the book.

Lesson #8: Have students give examples of the dangerous situations that Brian experienced so far. Determine which they think would be the worst or most dangerous and which were the most painful and disastrous. Have students defend the position that these experiences were good for Brian or that they were bad for Brian from what they have seen already.

Lesson #9: Discuss the author's choice of the title for this book. Students should recognize that Brian's attitude about the hatchet his mother gave him changed drastically from the beginning of the book to the end. Have students write about what they think Brian will feel about his hatchet after he has returned home and no longer needs it to survive.

SUGGESTED PROJECTS

Construct a model of the lake and the shore and the shelter where Brian lived while stranded in the woods.

Draw or paint a series of events in the order that they happened in one chapter of the novel.

Using the information given in the epilogue, write three entries in a journal that Brian keeps when he returns home.

Make a list of all the animals that Brian encountered or hunted and choose one to research and report to the class on.

Find pictures in geographic magazines or encyclopedias that portray the forests of Canada near where Brian was stranded.

Write three days entries in a journal that either Brian's mother or father keeps after Brian's plane does not arrive.

A MESSAGE TO THE STUDENTS

We will be reading the novel *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen for our literature class. Each day you will have a reading assignment of two or three chapters. You will also have vocabulary assignments and questions. LOOK UP THE VOCAB WORDS BEFORE READING THE SELECTION and answer any questions for those chapters. Please feel free to make suggestions about different ways to approach the vocab words, and ALWAYS bring any questions you may have about the sections you are reading. There will be space provided for you to write these questions down so that we can discuss them during class time the next day. I enjoyed this book very much and I think you will too, so keep up with the reading and do your best.

Vocabulary

extension-

rudder pedal-

hatchet-

audible-

hesitation-

transmissions-

Questions

1. Why is Brian flying north to Canada? What feelings do we see Brian trying to deal with? Notice all the one word sentences that the author uses. What do you think he is trying to do by using one word sentences?
2. At the end of the first chapter Brian is almost paralyzed by fear. Why? Briefly explain how you would feel if you were in the same situation.
3. Brian knows he has to fly the plane by himself and he begins to remember things he's read about planes in books that might help him out. Name one thing that he remembered reading that could be helpful to him in this situation.
4. Why did Brian decide to wait for the fuel to run out before taking the plane down? Would you have done the same? What advantages can you think of for Brian's choice and what advantages can you think of for taking the plane down right away?
5. Why did Brian hope to crash the plane on a lake?

Write any questions you have here

Vocabulary

spiraling-

abated-

cramped-

keening-

desperation-

naturalist-

hummocks-

Questions

1. Describe the crash in your own words. Remember to use good describing words that will paint a picture of the crash.
2. What is the setting of this story?
3. Brian thought at first that the area where he crashed was silent. But when he took the time to listen, what did he hear?
4. What annoying and painful creature in nature was Brian not prepared for?
5. Imagine yourself in Brian's place, stranded in a forest with no one to help you. What would you do? Write a paragraph or two discussing any plans you have.

Write any questions you have here

Vocabulary

extensive-

amphibious plane-

motivation-

pulverized-

Questions

1. Brian is very good about using past experiences to help him work through what he should do in the present. His English teacher always told him to think positively, get motivated, and value what he had. What would he say was Brian's most valuable possession there in the woods? Describe Brian and list his characteristics and tell how you feel about him so far.
2. Why does Brian decide that no one will find him that day or even the next?
3. After finding shelter Brian **needs** to find food. What did he do?
4. Brian wishes that he could start a fire but he has no matches. Write down some ideas that you think might work.
5. Brian feels that he is lucky to have survived the crash and lucky to have found shelter. As Christians, we know that there is no such thing as luck. Pretend that Brian is a Christian and write what he should have said instead of talking about luck.

Write any questions you have here

Vocabulary

weathertight-

granite-

imbedded-

Questions

1. What kept Brian awake all night that first night in his shelter? What did he do about it the next day?
2. When Brian found the sweet raspberries he also met an animal. Which? Draw a picture of this scene from the book as you imagined it in your mind.
3. Brian woke up that night to a slithering noise by his feet. What was making the noise? What did the visitor do to Brian?
4. Who did Brian dream about that night? What were they trying to tell him? Do you think Brian's idea will work?
5. All books have themes which are the main ideas that the authors try to get us to see in their books. What do you think the theme of this book is going to be? What feelings has the author been trying to get us to feel?

Write any questions you have here

Vocabulary

quantity-

dormant-

intensity-

convulsive-

depression-

kingfisher-

emerged-

curiosity-

Questions

1. Instead of feeling sorry for himself, in chapter nine Brian tries to stay active. He begins by trying to light a fire. Explain the process he went through and list the materials he tried using.
2. Throughout this story Brian has referred to things he had learned in school that were helping him out. Make a list of as many different subjects as you can find that have helped Brian so far.
3. Brian's fire served him in many good ways. Name 3 ways in which the fire was helping him.
4. What food did Brian find the morning he made his fire? What is he planning to catch at the end of the chapter?
5. What new aspects have you found out about Brian these last few chapters? Does he remind you of anyone that you know? What do you admire most about Brian? Write your answer to these questions in one or two paragraphs.

Write any questions you have here

Reading Assignment #6 Chapters 12 & 13 pages 110 - 127

Vocabulary

swiveling-

persistent-

smolder-

infuriating-

refracts-

Questions

1. Brian spends a lot of time making his fish spear, only to find that he can't make it work. Do you think he felt that the time he spent making it was wasted time? Why or why not? Provide facts from the story to support your answer.
2. Brian finally hears a plane for the first time since he's been stranded. Describe what he does and tell what happened.
3. At the end of chapter 12 how does Brian feel? What has changed between the end of chapter 12 and the beginning of chapter 13 that allows Brian to be out trying to catch fish with a bow and arrow?
4. Why did Brian actually cut himself? Why did he feel that he wanted to die? What does the Bible say about that? Discuss why this was the biggest mistake that Brian made from your Christian perspective.
5. How many days have gone by since Brian crashed? The author does not tell us everything that happened during that time, but he uses a literary technique called flashback to tell us some of the events that happened during some of those days. Use flashback to write a short story about your own life. Begin the story in the present and then flashback to some event in the past. Possible topics could be pretending it is now Christmas, or your birthday, and you can bring up some event that happened on a different Christmas or birthday. Summer vacations, or another major event in your life could be used. Write at least six paragraphs on another sheet of paper.

Write any questions you have here

Vocabulary

rectify-

seared-

sulfurous-

corrosive-

impaired-

intent-

exasperated-

camouflage-

insulting-

sarcasm-

Questions

1. Brian realizes he's made mistakes so far in trying to deal with nature. He's already been stung by a porcupine and he's seen a bear. Now what happens to him and to his precious turtle eggs?
2. What does Brian learn is the most important thing in nature that all animals are always searching for? What does Brian do to improve his chances of being fed and staying safe?
3. Why haven't we heard Brian say anything about going home lately? Do you think he has totally given up hope about it? Does he want to go home? Provide clues from the book to support your answer.
4. How does Brian keep track of time? Be sure to name both the ways he does this.
5. Living in the wild has taught Brian how to see, smell, and hear in a different way than he had in the city. What did he learn to do to be able to kill the foolbirds? If he ever gets back home, do you think these sharpened senses will still be necessary to him?
6. Brian has learned many things from nature and he has changed in many ways. Explain what this statement means to Brian. "So much of all this, so much of all living was patience and thinking."

Write any questions you have on the back of this sheet

Reading Assignment #8 Chapters 16 & 17 pages 147 - 172

Vocabulary

insane-

stymied-

sputtered-

eddy-

stabilizer-

fuselage-

ruefully-

Questions

1. Describe the two major disasters that happened on Brian's insane day.
2. After the tornado Brian felt that he had nothing again, just like he had right after the crash. But even he knew there was a difference this time. What was that difference?
3. Why does Brian build a raft? What is he trying to find and why?
4. Who does Brian think about while watching the sunset the day after the tornado? When he thinks about being at home, what does he think he might be doing? Would you feel the same way? Why or why not?
5. Think about a frustrating situation you have been in. How did you deal with it? Did you make the most of it or did you give in to self-pity and be upset the whole time? Write three paragraphs describing what you did and add some thoughts as to what you should have done if you feel that you didn't handle it very well at the time.

Write any questions you have here

Reading Assignment #9 Chapters 18, 19, & Epilogue pgs 173-195

Vocabulary

wheeze-

capacity-

instinctive-

oblivious-

butane-

Questions

1. What surprising fact about the plane helped Brian to get to the survival pack? What accidentally happened while he was trying to get to the survival pack?
2. When Brian finally drags the pack to shore he slowly goes through its contents. Make a list of what he found in the pack and arrange it in three columns; Important to Brian, Unimportant to Brian, and Brian's Favorite Items.
3. When Brian uses the lighter to start a fire he says that he feels separated from nature. What does he mean? Imagine that Brian had been able to use the items in the pack right after his crash. Write down as many things about the new Brian that would be different.
4. When Brian's mother gave him the hatchet, what did he think about it? What does he feel about it now? Why did it become so significant for him?
5. Brian is finally rescued after 54 days alone in the forest. Do you think he had a hard time getting used to being at home? Cite clues from the epilogue to prove your point.
6. Do you admire Brian more at the end of the story than you did at the beginning? Write a brief essay about the two most important characteristics you think Brian possessed. Use events from his story to show that he had these characteristics.

Write any questions you have here

Additional Questions

What was the theme of this book? Did the author keep the plot consistent with the theme? Were the characters believable? Did they contribute in a positive way towards the theme?

Did the author do a good job making you believe that this story could have happened? Why or why not?

Were there any parts of the book that you did not like? Any that you felt were inappropriate?

Do you think Brian will be able to handle the problems of his normal life better now that he has gone through these experiences? Try to find at least two parts from the book to support your opinion.