

On the Far Side of the Mountain

by Jean Craighead George

Published by: Puffin Books, New York
170 pages

Copyright 1990



A book unit

by Rachel Snell

12-10-99

When using this book unit to teach...

Jean Craighead George's book *My Side of the Mountain*, is the first book in the duo of books written about Sam Gibley. It might be a good idea for the students to read the first book as a prerequisite to this book. However, it isn't necessary. We get a good feel for who Sam is just by reading the first few chapters in the second book, so it really wouldn't matter what order these books were read in, or even if only one was read. However, the first book is very interesting and lets us know why Sam is on the mountain and how he established himself there.

This book focuses on the loss of Frightful, who was one of the main characters in the first book. It also focuses on survival without needing civilization, and giving to others. Although this book never mentions God once, its many references to different aspects of nature can be used to show the students how wonderful the world is that the Lord has created for us.

The questions provided on the pages are meant to focus on grades 5-8. This doesn't mean that they can't be simplified for younger grades. The reading can also be done chapter by chapter instead of two chapters at once. The questions are in chronological order, as are the vocabulary words. The vocabulary is meant to be looked up as the students read the assignment. Some of the words can be defined just by looking at the context in the book. For other words, a dictionary will be needed.

I personally enjoyed this book a lot. It is very far-fetched at times because of all the different inventions Sam is able to make and also because everything just naturally falls into place without any mention of God's control in our lives. However, it is interesting and entertaining and can be used to effectively teach students about nature and survival. I hope you find it as enjoyable as I did!

Discussion Topics

Lesson 1: Ask the students if they would like living on a mountain by themselves or with one of their siblings. Is Sam and Alice's situation similar or different to what the early settlers went through in this same region? How is it the same or different?

Lesson 2: Talk about loss in people's lives. Sam lost his pet and companion, Frightful. Have any of the students lost a pet or a person who were important to him or her in their lives? A reading of Romans 8:28 would be useful here. Frightful was also Sam's way of getting meat for himself and Alice. What different ways could Sam get food? Do you think the way that Sam chose to get food was the best way? Which way would the students have chosen for themselves?

Lesson 3: Discuss the building Sam did after his parents left. Could he realistically have built all that he did? Look at the diagrams in the book. Do the students understand how the millhouse and waterwheel worked? What about the dam and saw? Sam was particularly gifted in building things mechanically. What gifts has the Lord given to you and to others?

Lesson 4: Discuss the various ways in which it really wasn't safe for Alice to leave like she did. Why do the students think that she left? Was Alice smart to take her pig with her, or not?

Lesson 5: These chapters have a lot to do with finding clues in order for Sam and Bando to stay on Alice's trail. Stress the importance of knowing a lot of different kinds of information to understand the clues, and also that you can learn a lot just by looking!

Lesson 6: Alice told a lie to Hanni's family in these chapters. Read John 8:44 to the class, and then ask them if they think it was wrong for Alice to lie like she did even though she was just giving Sam a clue to her whereabouts. Possibly discuss Sam's like for Hanni. How do we know that Sam like her?

Lesson 7: Sam found himself in a rather dangerous situation in these chapters. Ask the class if Sam was very smart in going into the cave by himself and trying to reach the hackers by himself. Also discuss how the students would feel if they thought someone had killed their favorite pet.

Lesson 8: Alice was in a dangerous situation in this chapter. But we find out that she put herself in danger for Sam. Discuss whether or not she really should have done this. Was she putting herself in danger for a good reason? Also discuss whether or not the students would have let Frightful go if they were in Sam's place. Was it good for Sam to let Frightful be free? Why do you think so?

General Discussion:

- This book really focuses on nature and the many different aspects of it. Have the students read Genesis 1 and then talk about how this book really shows us many of the glories of God's creation.
- Discuss the theme of this book. What do the students think the theme of this book is?

Activities

- Sam kept a very detailed journal. Write some journal entries for the days and nights that Sam spent by himself in the woods after Frightful was confiscated.
- There are many different kinds of animals mentioned in this book (i.e. peregrine falcon, racoon, blue heron, coyote, pig, snake). Choose one of the animals mentioned in the book and write a report on it.
- Draw a picture of what you think Alice's treehouse or Bando's cabin looked like on the inside. Read the description in the book and try to include whatever is mentioned.

- Find out what state this book is set in, and then find a short description of the mountains in this state. Compare the description you find to what is written in the book and decide whether or not the author was being accurate in her description of the terrain.
- Pretend that Sam did not find Alice at the Helderberg Escarpment, and he could not find her trail again. Write a page story about what you think happened to Alice.
- Pretend that Sam did not set Frightful free. Write what you think happens when he takes Frightful back to his side of the mountain.
- Pretend that you are Alice. Write a description of one part of your trip to the other side of the mountain from her point of view.

On the Far Side of the Mountain

Lesson 1

Chapters 1 and 2

pages 1-22

Questions

1. Which one of Sam's relatives lives with him on the mountain? Which animal do we meet in the first chapter?

2. What happens to the animal? How does Sam feel about this? How do you think you would feel if someone took your pet from you?

3. How does Sam try to forget what happened with Mr. Longbridge? Sam kept a very detailed journal. What was your favorite journal entry and why was it your favorite?

4. What kind of house did Alice want? Would you have liked living where Alice did? Explain.

Vocabulary

hack -

plumping mill -

water mill -

mountain laurel -

On the Far Side of the Mountain

Lesson 2

Chapters 3 and 4

pages 22-41

Questions

1. What town do Alice and Sam live near? What preparations does Sam make for going into town? How does Sam tell Alice about Frightful?
2. What does Sam find out when he goes into town? What ideas does Sam think of to get food for himself and Alice? Come up with one idea for getting food that isn't mentioned in the book.
3. What idea did Sam finally decide to use to get food? Was he very successful?
4. Who visits Sam on the mountain? What business is this visitor trying to start?
5. How is Sam feeling about losing Frightful? Do you think Alice knows about Frightful being gone? Where do you think Alice is?

Vocabulary

confiscate -

cataracts -

sling -

thrive -

facetiousness -

On the Far Side of the Mountain

Lesson 3

Chapters 5 and 6

pages 41-63

Questions

1. What did Sam begin building after his parents left? Which animals did he watch to learn how to build the dam better? What were the results of having the dam?
2. How long did it take to completely finish the millhouse (including the water wheel and saw)? The millhouse ended up being very helpful to Sam, Alice, and their friends. What would you have built that would also have been helpful, and how would you have built it?
3. What did Sam and Alice have to eat on Thanksgiving? Was this the same or different from what you eat on Thanksgiving? How?
4. Who did Sam suspect had been in the root cellar? How did Sam find out where Alice was? What does Bando bring to Sam?
5. What did Alice take with her on her trip?

Vocabulary

upstream -

downstream -

Industrial Revolution -

amble -

envious -

On the Far Side of the Mountain

Lesson 4

Chapters 7 and 8

pages 63-81

Questions

1. Who is Slats? What does it mean when a horse paws the ground?
2. What information does Sam find out about Alice from Mrs. Strawberry? What game do Alice and Sam play? Who did Alice take on her trip with her?
3. What does Sam find that Alice made? Which direction is she traveling? Where does Sam go to find out exactly where Alice is going?
4. What does Zella tell Sam about Alice? Where do Sam and Bando think Alice went? How will Alice's traveling companion help her on her trip?
5. What do Sam and Bando decide to do? What does Zella think about their decision?

Vocabulary

rookery -

compass -

embankment -

goshawk -

bobolinks -

On the Far Side of the Mountain

Lesson 5

Chapters 9 and 10

pages 81-101

Questions

1. Where do Sam and Bando find pig tracks? How can they tell that they're pig tracks and not the tracks of another animal? Which animal can pigs kill?
2. How did Sam find Alice's campsite? Sam is learning that he has to think like a pig. What signs does he have to look for?
3. How do Sam and Bando know which direction Alice is going now? How did she make her second compass?
4. Why do Sam and Bando walk down by the power lines? What do they find when they walk there? Where did Alice drag Crystal?
5. What does Bando call the capital of Adirondack furniture? Whose grave is there? What fair is being advertised?

Vocabulary

geneticists -

mew -

incubation -

pristine -

savory -

On the Far Side of the Mountain

Lesson 6

Chapters 11 and 12

pages 101-121

Questions

1. Is Alice at Manorkill Falls? Why does Sam conclude that Alice and Crystal never were at the falls?

2. What does Sam find out about Alice at the farm? Who did Alice go to the fair with? What was the significance of the name that Alice used when she stayed at the farm?

3. What town do Sam and Bando come to next? What does the personal column that Bando reads to Sam say?

4. What does Sam finally realize about the name Alice used?

5. Who does Sam meet at Monroe Farm? Who was left at the farm? What question does Sam forget to ask? Why does he forget to ask it?

Vocabulary

pitons -

bushwhack -

chide -

lilting -

On the Far Side of the Mountain

Lesson 7

Chapters 13 and 14

pages 121-151

Questions

1. What problems does Bando have with the hacking talked about in the paper? Where does Sam find Alice's hideaway? What animal does Sam watch as he waits for Alice?
2. What does Sam see as he backtracks the coyote's tracks? What does the librarian say about hacking? How does Sam find out that the man who took Frightful wasn't Leon Longbridge?
3. What does Alice's note tell Sam? What does Sam find in the stream? What does Sam think happened?
4. Why does Sam head to Beaver's Corners? What does he find at the old water mill?
5. What does Sam find in the cave? How does he save the prairie falcon? Does he get Frightful back? What is Sam feeling after the hackers are caught? How do you think you would feel?

Vocabulary

aristocracy -

patroon -

sundial -

On the Far Side of the Mountain

Lesson 8

Chapter 15

pages 152-170

Questions

1. Who is climbing a tree as Sam reaches the Helderberg Escarpment? What does Sam do to fend off the attack of the goshawks?
2. What happened to Alice in the tree? What was her gift to Sam? How did Sam boil the lamb's quarters?
3. What does Sam decide to do with the goshawk? Why does he decide to do this?
4. Who does Sam hear calling him? What good news does Alice tell Sam?
5. Who does Sam set free? Why does he do this? Do you think you would have done the same thing if you were in Sam's place? Explain.

Vocabulary

tercel -

veer -

lamb's quarters -

escarpment -