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Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Into the Wild

by Jon Krakauer

written by Carrie Thiel

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To The Teacher

In order to allow the teacher maximum flexibility in his or her approach, we have grouped the prompts by sections. The teacher may, therefore, assign specific prompts or allow the students to select one or more prompts from each section

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To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Class Record Sheet

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Into the Wild

Note to the Teacher

The teacher should be advised that there are instances of profanity and vulgarity in *Into the Wild*. This should be taken into account when determining what grade level is appropriate for teaching the novel.

Author's Note

1. Something about the Alaskan wilderness draws Chris McCandless to it, even to the point of giving up everything he owns so can go there to pursue a more independent life—one in which he lives off of the land and apart from society.

Based on what you've seen in movies, on television, in books and magazines, or on the Internet, free write for several minutes describing everything you know about Alaska and/or wilderness areas in general. Be as descriptive as you can, and include as many facts and details as you can recall.

2. Shortly after his college graduation, and without telling his family or friends, Chris gives up everything—family, friends, money, college, his given name, his possessions—in search of a transcendent experience. He feels as though something important is missing from his life, some deeper meaning to his existence. Look up the word “transcendent” in a dictionary.

Think about what it means, and then write a paragraph or two to explain why you think people might believe they could have a transcendent experience in a place like the Alaskan wilderness.

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3. Chris had studied the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy and had come to see him as a role model of how one should live. Tolstoy's simple life and views of asceticism particularly spoke to Chris and played a part in why he left his comfortable life behind to search for a different lifestyle. Research Tolstoy's life, looking specifically for information about his ascetic lifestyle and why he lived that way.

Once you've found the information about Tolstoy, write an essay in which you explain what he believed and how he lived out his beliefs. Then discuss whether you would like to live that way, and give reasons for your opinion.

Chapter One: The Alaska Interior

4. Imagine you are going to spend time in an Alaskan wilderness area in the middle of spring just as Chris does, when winter-like weather could still be an issue. Make a list of all the necessities you would want to take with you so that you could be as prepared as possible for your trip. Now, keeping in mind that you only have one backpack in which to carry your supplies, refine your list even further, carefully considering which items you absolutely must have, and those you will be forced to leave behind. Estimate how long you think you could safely stay in the wilderness area based on your supplies and the cold Alaskan climate. Write that estimate and explain your reasons for it at the bottom of your list.
5. Chris begins his Alaskan adventure near the Denali National Park. Research the Denali National Park region, writing down facts about its weather, geography, and facilities during April. Use that information to write an email that a park communications person might write in response to someone planning a backpacking trip into the Denali region, who has inquired about such things. Be specific in explaining to the backpacker what conditions to expect as well as what one should bring to be prepared and safe out in the wilderness.

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6. As part of his attempt to leave his former life behind, Chris changes his name to Alex. Imagine you have decided to change your name as a way to reflect a change of lifestyle, attitude, or beliefs.

Write a journal entry in which you state what your new name will be and why you chose it. Also, write about changes in your life this new name signifies. Express why you have decided to make these changes. Describe what about your old way of thinking or living wasn't working and what you hope will be changing in your life besides your name.

7. Chris feels confident he will be able to handle any situation that might arise in the Alaskan wilderness, even though Jim Gallien tries to warn him otherwise. In an essay, describe a time you didn't listen to advice from someone who seemed to know better than you. Tell what the situation was—describe the circumstances, the person, and the setting. Explain how it all turned out and whether you now believe you did the right thing by ignoring the advice you were given. Cite specific examples from your experience to illustrate your explanation and opinions.

Chapter Two: The Stampede Trail

8. Several people come upon Chris's dead body in the abandoned bus before someone finally contacts the authorities to investigate what happened to him.

Imagine you are a newspaper reporter who hears about the discovery of a mysterious dead body, and you have been assigned to cover the story. Write a newspaper article using the journalistic approach of telling the who, what, where, when, why and how of a story. Using only the facts as they are given in this chapter, write as detailed an account as you can.

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9. From *White Fang* by Jack London:

Dark spruce forest frowned on either side the frozen waterway. The trees had been stripped by a recent wind of their white covering of frost, and they seemed to lean toward each other, black and ominous, in the fading light. A vast silence reigned over the land. The land itself was a desolation, lifeless, without movement, so lone and cold that the spirit of it was not even that of sadness. There was a hint in it of laughter, but of a laughter more terrible than any sadness—a laughter that was mirthless as the smile of the Sphinx, a laughter cold as the frost and partaking of the grimness of infallibility. It was the masterful and incommunicable wisdom of eternity laughing at the futility of life and the effort of life. It was the Wild, the savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild.

Imagine you are left alone for days in the place described in the above passage from London's novel. Write a journal entry in which you describe what it feels like physically and emotionally to be alone in such a place. Use descriptive details that relate to your five senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. Explain how these sensory experiences affect your emotions, mood, and state of mind in such a harsh landscape.

10. The couple from Anchorage who first stumble upon Chris's body find a note from him that says:

S.O.S. I NEED YOUR HELP. I AM INJURED, NEAR DEATH AND TOO WEAK TO HIKE OUT OF HERE. I AM ALL ALONE, THIS IS NO JOKE. IN THE NAME OF GOD, PLEASE REMAIN TO SAVE ME. I AM OUT COLLECTING BERRIES CLOSE BY AND SHALL RETURN THIS EVENING. THANK YOU, CHRIS MCCANDLESS. AUGUST?

Write a hypothetical transcript of the conversation these two people might have had upon finding this note, and in trying to decide what to do. Include important details about the surroundings, weather, and situation as well as their emotions as part of your narration of this dialogue. Be sure to include the reasons each person gives for wanting to handle the situation a certain way. You can make up names for the characters to make it easier to write as dialogue.

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Chapter Three: Carthage

11. Look again in the book for descriptions of Chris, Wayne Westerberg, Walt McCandless, and Billie McCandless. In a separate paragraph for each character, describe the attributes of each character including appearance, age, personality, background, and anything else you can find. Then, for each character, list an actor or actress to play this person in a movie, if a new one were to be made from this book. Explain why you think each actor or actress would be perfect for each role.
12. Adopt the persona of Chris's father Walt, his mother Billie, or his sister Carine, and write a letter to an advice columnist explaining that you have learned that Chris has given away \$24,000 he had saved for law school, moved without telling anyone, and hasn't been heard from in three months. In your letter, describe not only the facts about what has happened, but your feelings about what Alex has done, too. Include your worries, fears, doubts, and hopes for him and for your family. End your letter by asking a specific question for some advice.

Then, as the advice columnist, write a response to this letter and explain why you offer the advice you do. Give a full, clear explanation of your reasoning.

13. Chris gave away 24,000 dollars he had saved for law school to a charitable organization called OXFAM America, which helps fight hunger. If you had \$24,000 to donate to a charity, which would you choose and why?

Write a letter to the charity you have chosen and in the letter, announce your decision to donate this large sum of money. State the reasons you have chosen this particular charity to which to contribute your money. Explain to the organization what you hope they will use your contribution for. If you can't think of any charitable organizations to which you would like to contribute, do some research on the Internet and find an organization whose mission you would support, if you had the money.

Chapter Four: Detrital Wash

14. Krakauer opens Chapter Four with a quote from Paul Shepard about the desert:

“To the desert go prophets and hermits; through deserts go pilgrims and exiles. Here the leaders of the great religions have sought the therapeutic and spiritual values at retreat, not to escape but to find reality.”

Write a couple of paragraphs explaining what kind of reality Shepard refers to in the above passage. Explain what it is about the desert that might make it a good place to focus on spiritual values. In your description, explain what you consider to be spiritual values.

15. Chris has certainly done many drastic things in order to make for himself a new life. He’s left family, friends, material possessions, money, a secure future, and even his name behind in an attempt to find what he considers a more meaningful life.

Write about a time you wanted to just pick up and run away from your life, to simply leave your old self and life behind. Be specific in describing the circumstances and how you felt about it all. Also include why you *didn’t* run away from it all, and explain how satisfied you are today with your decision to stay. Or, if you actually *did* run away, describe that experience in detail, including how everything turned out.

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16. Find a copy of Henry David Thoreau's essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" in the library or on the Internet. While reading it, or afterwards, make a list of the important ideas contained in it that might have inspired Chris to take the actions he takes in seeking a new life. Set your list up in two-column note format where the left hand column on your paper is headed Thoreau Ideas and the right hand column is headed as Chris's Actions or Words. In the first column, write down each important idea you read in Thoreau's essay that seems connected to things Chris says and does; in the second column write the actions Chris takes or words he speaks that appear to be inspired by the idea you wrote in the first column. Do this for as many ideas as you can find.

After looking at the evidence in your two-column notes, decide if you think Chris is successfully applying Thoreau's philosophy to his life. Write at least one paragraph stating your opinion and explaining your reasoning.

Chapter Five: Bullhead City

17. Chris worked as a cook in a McDonald's restaurant in Bullhead City, Arizona, for several months in 1991. He quit three weeks after some of the employees expressed concern about his lack of personal hygiene.

As Chris, write a journal entry describing what it is like working at McDonald's before the employees mention anything about your appearance. In addition to describing the work, explain how you feel about working there.

Write a second journal entry after your fellow employees have talked to you about their feelings regarding your lack of personal hygiene. How do you feel? What are you planning to do? Be specific.

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18. Jan Burres is a woman who befriends Chris in a motherly way. She asks him if his parents know where he is and that he is planning to go to Alaska. As Jan, write a letter to Chris's mother expressing your impressions of Chris as well as your feelings and concerns about his plans to go north. Give your letter a kind and caring tone, and be specific in explaining what you are worried about regarding his trip.
19. In his travels and journeys, Chris has met and befriended many people. Among those he has met are Wayne Westerberg, Jan Burres, Charlie, and George Dreeszen. From the descriptions of each in the book, whom do you find most trustworthy and likeable? In an essay, rate each character on trustworthiness and likeability. Be sure to give specific reasons from the text to back up your opinions.
20. Jack London's books greatly inspired Chris to go to Alaska and try to live in the wild. Have you ever read a book that made you want to go somewhere so that you could experience the places and things in that book?

Write a letter to a friend describing the place you want to visit because of reading a certain book. Explain exactly how and why the book has so inspired you. Be sure to tell the name and author of the inspirational book—or books.

Chapter Six: Anza-Borrego

21. Chris meets many people during the years he travels around the country enjoying his nomadic lifestyle. One of those people is Ralph Franz, the elderly man who takes him under his wing in Salton City, California. Ralph has lived alone for many, many years after having lost his wife and only son in an automobile accident. He regards Chris as a sort of foster son and feels a strong connection to him.

As Ralph, write a letter in response to the long letter Chris sends him from Carthage in early April 1992. Explain how you feel about Chris, and how you feel since he left. Also, respond to the advice Chris gives you about changing your lifestyle to be more like his. Tell him whether you will be following his advice, and give your reasons for your plans. Include in your letter your hopes for a future relationship with Chris. Be sure to tell him why you do or do not want to stay in touch with him in the future. In addition, explain to him your feelings about his upcoming trip to Alaska.

22. Re-read Chris's long letter to Ralph in this chapter, and write a poem in which you express Chris's ideas, emotions, philosophies and plans. As you re-read the letter, write down vivid descriptive words or phrases, powerful feelings or emotions, strong ideas and beliefs, and anything else that jumps out at you as being interesting, unique, or unusual.

Then, looking at your notes, start to shape the things you've written into a poem. Be sure to write with poetic styling, making use of things such as metaphors, similes, comparisons, careful word choice, artful arrangement of the words on the page, stanzas, rhythm, and rhyme. It's not necessary to rhyme the poem, but you may if you like. Be sure to give your poem a fitting title, also.

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23. By the end of this chapter, Ralph, previously a devout Christian, has turned his back on God and the church and is living in the desert much like Chris had. He has also experimented with going back to drinking alcohol to help him forget his sorrow and loss. Now in his nineties, Ralph seems lost.

Based on what you know about his past life and the choices he has made, predict how you think he will spend the rest of his life. Will he live in the desert? Will he continue drinking? Will he return to his faith? Will he make any new friends? Explain what you think will happen to him by answering these questions, and include any other predictions about Ralph's future that you can think of.

Chapter Seven: Carthage

24. Chris seems to be able to find odd jobs whenever he needs money. Over the course of the book he has worked at McDonald's and on a farm, hitchhiked all over the country, hopped freight trains, lived in the desert, and camped in an abandoned bus. He also has a college degree in history and anthropology, and while attending college, he worked as a writer. With all of this life experience, work experience and education, if he needed to, Chris would be able to write an interesting resumé at this point in his life. Write that resumé for him. If you don't know how to properly format a resumé, either go to the library for a book on resumé writing, or look for information on the Internet.

Keep in mind that the point of a resumé is to "sell" oneself to a prospective employer by highlighting one's strengths, interests, skills, and goals. In addition to writing Chris's resumé, select a position in a specific type of business he would be likely to apply for if he needed the money to further his traveling goals. Write the resumé with that position and business in mind.

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25. Chris worked for his college newspaper *The Emory Wheel* during the end of his college education. Even though he appeared to be pursuing the typical American dream of obtaining a good education, a good career, a happy family, and a nice home, inside he was planning to rebel against it all and against his parents' wishes for him.

Write a letter to Chris's college newspaper as Chris and reveal your true thoughts about the typical American dream, your father's wishes for your life, and your thoughts about what you really believe to be important. Include in your letter a summary of your experiences since you left college, and explain how those experiences have helped shape your current beliefs, goals, and dreams. Write this letter as if you are writing it from Alaska, just before you enter the wilderness.

26. Chris becomes close to Mary Westerberg, Wayne's mother, when he is working for Wayne in Carthage during April of 1992. She recalls that when she had him over for dinner one night, he questioned her about her beliefs and ideas and seemed very interested in why she believed the things she did.

Write a script in which Mary, Chris, and Wayne are seated around her dining room table during the dinner she fixed for Chris before he left for Alaska. Along with the characters' dialogue, include a detailed description of Mary's house, what they ate, how they were all dressed, and their appearances. Include in their conversation the names of the books they might have discussed, the topics they would have enjoyed trading thoughts about, and their compliments to one another about the meal. Be sure the dialogue you write fits the characters as you imagine them. Use specific words and phrases that suit their ages, genders, and personalities.

Chapter Eight: Alaska

27. Gene Rosellini, John Waterman, Carl McCunn, and Chris McCandless were four men who took on the Alaskan wilderness felt they had something to prove, and who also died trying. Many people who live in Alaska see them as reckless, arrogant, naïve, and perhaps insane for trying to survive in the extreme setting of the northern wilderness while being vastly under-prepared for the reality of the harsh climate.

Choose two of the four men and write an essay in which you compare them and their attempts to make it in the wild. Explain their backgrounds, personalities, what they hoped to accomplish, the difficulties they faced, and the results of choices they made. Decide if you think they were crazy, as many Alaskans do, or whether, instead, you see them as simply unlucky in the circumstances life threw at them. Explain clearly the reasons for your opinion.

28. Carl McCunn's friend Mark Stoppel says that part of Carl's problem was that his imagination would carry him away. One of Carl's fantasies, when planning his trip into the wilderness, was that he would find a woman to accompany him and live with him as his girlfriend during his months in the Alaska's backcountry.

If Carl had contacted an online dating service looking for a girlfriend, they would have asked him to write a description of himself and of his ideal woman. Write that description for Carl. Include details about his personality, appearance, goals, dreams, hopes, and desires.

Also explain what he is looking for in a companion, including what the woman of his dreams will be able to take away from this extended camping trip with him, such as experiences she will have, ways she will feel, and new insights about life she will gain. Be persuasive in your writing; you're trying to get a new romance going!

Into the Wild

29. Sometimes all it takes to get a good feel for what a person is like is spending one day with him or her. Imagine you have just spent one entire day in the Alaskan wilderness with one of these men, towards the beginning of one of their adventures: Chris McCandless, Gene Rosellini, John Waterman, or Carl McCunn.

Write a diary entry detailing everything you did during your day and how you felt about it. Also, describe the person you spent the day with. Explain what he looked like, acted like, talked like, etc. Decide if, given the chance, you would want to spend another day with this person, and tell why. Be specific.

Chapter Nine: Davis Gulch

30. Everett Ruess and Chris McCandless seem to be kindred spirits; they seem to share the same ideas about living in the wilderness and getting by on their own with very few supplies or equipment. They both left behind families in search of a deeper connection to nature and to their own inner lives. It seems if they had met, they might have become good friends.

Imagine that the two lived at the same time, and that Chris had heard of Everett's explorations of the Utah desert. As Chris, write a letter to Everett. In your letter, express your admiration of Everett's life and adventures and tell him about yours. Invite him to visit you in Alaska and describe to him what it is like there, and what adventures the two of you might have there. Then, as Everett, reply to Chris. Decide whether or not you want to join him, and explain the reasons behind your decision.

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31. Everett Ruess, Chris McCandless, and the Irish monks known as the *papars* all leave behind the civilized world in search of the beauty and isolation found only in the uninhabited, wild places of the world. Everett and Chris, in their journals and letters, express how the beauty and solitude they find in the wild deepens their connection to the world, to their inner lives, and to their individual ideas of the Divine, or God.

Free write about your reaction to this idea of escaping civilization to attain a higher degree of spiritual enlightenment. Given the high physical and emotional price paid by Chris, Everett, and the others mentioned in the book, do you think their adventures were worth it? Do you think *they* thought it was worth it as they faced their deaths? Would you like to try a wilderness retreat from civilization similar to what these men did? Respond to these questions in your free writing, and add anything else that is on your mind at this point in the story. Be sure to explain why you feel as you do.

Chapter Ten: Fairbanks

32. At this point, you are about halfway through the book. With each chapter, you have learned a little bit more about how a young college graduate named Chris McCandless transformed himself into a vagabond adventurer who had renamed himself Alex Supertramp. Construct a flow chart of events in the story, arranging them in chronological order. The top of the chart should be the earliest event you want to include on your chart, and the bottom should end with the most recent event you want to include. Write a short explanation with some specific details for each event you include in the chart and note the date it occurred, as near as you can, based on information in the book. Include at least ten events.

Chapter Eleven: Chesapeake Beach

33. Gordy Cucullu, Eric Hathaway, and Kris Maxie Gillmer were all friends and fellow runners with Chris during high school. In this chapter, they share their memories of him as a young man. Write the transcript of an online conversation these three people might have had after hearing the news about Chris. Include in your transcript memories, emotions, and opinions about what ultimately happened to Chris, and why. Give each friend a unique writing style. Refer back to the book for help in doing so, if needed.

As these friends sort out their feelings, they will naturally try to trace Chris's odd, final years back to when they knew him in high school, looking for signs that might have foretold that something like Chris's disappearance and death would eventually happen. Since you are writing the transcript of an online conversation, write it as recorded dialogue with just the names and words each person spoke—no narration. You may use some Internet shorthand, but please be sure it is understandable to any reader, even one who doesn't chat online.

34. In this chapter, we learn a lot about Chris's family: Walt, his dad; Billie, his mom; Carine, his sister, and his half-siblings (Sam, Stacy, Shawna, Shelly, and Shannon). We learn of Chris's seemingly love-hate relationship with his parents, and his similarities to his maternal grandfather Loren Johnson. Family dynamics play an important role in how peoples' personalities develop. Each family is different and affects its family members in unique ways. In a few paragraphs, describe your parents, siblings, and grandparents. Explain what each is like and how you feel about each person. Describe the manner in which you have been raised—the values, discipline methods, and family traditions present in your life. Explain which members of your family have had the strongest influence on you as you've grown up. Describe that influence, and tell why you think these people have had an effect on you that was stronger than any others'.

Once you've described your family and upbringing in detail, compare your childhood to Chris's. Explain how your family dynamics are similar or different from his.

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35. A ballad is a long poem that tells a story about a person's life. It has a beginning, middle, and end, with something dramatic happening as the high point of the story. Ballads usually rhyme and are structured with stanzas. Each stanza focuses on a different aspect of the person, or on one of the person's experiences.

If you have never read a ballad, find one in the library or online. Once you have a good idea of what ballads are like, write one about Chris's life. Include what you know so far about his family, personality, experiences, strengths, weaknesses, beliefs, etc. Make your ballad rhyme, make sure it tells a story, with a beginning, middle, and end, and include a dramatic high point. Give your ballad a title.

Chapter Twelve: Annandale

36. Chapter twelve of the book opens with this quote by G. K. Chesterton:

"For children are innocent and love justice, while most of us are wicked and naturally prefer mercy."

Write a definition the words "justice" and "mercy" using your own words. Now, check in a dictionary to see how close you were in your definitions. If you need to, revise your definition to make it closer to the dictionary definition.

Write a paragraph in which you explain one or more examples of justice in the world. Your examples can be taken from your own life, from history, from literature, movies, or your imagination.

Next, write a paragraph in which you give examples of mercy. Again, your examples can come from your life, the larger world, literature, or movies. Be specific in explaining how each example demonstrates the idea of either justice or mercy.

Finally, write a paragraph whether you believe Walt McCandless deserved justice or mercy from Chris. Be sure to give specific reasons for your opinion.

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37. Chris felt a great deal of anger towards his father for the way he handled the break up of his first marriage and his subsequent marriage to Chris's mother. Though he was furious about his father's actions, he didn't tell him. Instead, he kept his feelings inside and became cold towards his father and mother. Perhaps if Chris had written his feelings in a letter to Walt, he would have been able to release his anger and initiate a conversation with his father about the end of his first marriage.

As Chris, write that letter as if you have just returned from your trip to El Segundo, where you found out the truth of what happened: your father actually kept ties with two families for two years, even fathering another child with the wife he was supposedly divorcing.

Describe how you feel having learned the truth about these events. Explain why you feel this way. State what you think your father should have done and how you think your parents should have handled the truth with you and your sister. Ask your father any questions you have, and tell him why you need and deserve answers.

When writing, use a style and tone that matches what you know about Chris and the way he expresses himself. Refer to the book for details and information you need to make this letter sound authentic.

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38. As children, we look to our parents for moral guidance, security, and the truth about who we are. Children tend to hold their parents to an extremely high standard, wanting them to be perfect in every way, so that they know they can count on their parents. When we find out that our parents are *not* perfect, it can be difficult to accept, particularly if their imperfections are important ones, such as Chris's parents' deception about their past.

How would you react if you discovered a similar truth about your parents' past? Would you feel angry and betrayed? Would you sympathize with the difficult position your parents were in? Would you want to yell at them or hug them? What kinds of questions would you have? What would it take for you to forgive them for not telling the truth?

This situation is difficult to imagine taking place in one's family, but if it were to happen to you, imagine what you would do and the effect your actions would have on everyone, including yourself. Be as specific as possible as you free write your thoughts on this topic.

Chapter Thirteen: Virginia Beach

39. In this chapter, Krakauer describes the grief of Chris's mother, father, and sister. He describes how their emotions affect their ability to eat, with Chris's mother and sister losing weight and his father gaining weight. Changes in eating habits are often one manifestation of grief.

Using the library, Internet, or both, research the stages of grief that people experience after the death of a loved one. Explain those stages in a report, including details about the affects of each stage. Describe how a person moves through the stages, in what order, and why.

Explain how people begin to recover from grief. Cite what can help a person move through grief, and what does not. In your report, include advice that might help people know how to best help a friend move through such a difficult time.

Chapter Fourteen: The Stikine Ice Cap

40. Jon Krakauer says he understands Chris because, as a young man, he had similar feelings about the wilderness and conquering certain elements of it. He attempted some dangerous feats not because he was insane, but because it excited him in ways nothing else did. From the persona of the twenty-three-year-old Krakauer we meet in this chapter, or as Chris, write a letter to the other man in which you explain why you want to go “into the wild” alone. Describe the intense emotions you feel when thinking about, and having, your adventures. Explain why you feel these adventures make the everyday happenings of life seem insignificant, what you hope to accomplish, and how you feel it will change you and/or affect your life after your adventure. In your letter, try to capture the voice and style of each man by paying careful attention to word choice and phrasing. Use quotes from the book and/or from the men’s favorite authors, if you’d like.
41. By going onto the Stikine Ice Cap and attempting to climb the Devil’s Thumb alone, Jon Krakauer took a huge risk. Write a letter to Krakauer urging him not to attempt the climb alone. In your letter, give several reasons for your opinion, explaining each fully and clearly.

If you need to research the area or climbing guidelines before writing, do so. You could, however, write the letter based only on your gut feelings and the descriptions of the Stikine Ice Cap and the Devil’s Thumb from the book. Use your best persuasive skills as you try to talk Krakauer out of pursuing this dangerous undertaking.

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42. Research the Devil's Thumb and the Stikine Ice Cap. Take note of the geographical facts about the area: average temperature, rainfall, snowfall, hours of daylight, etc. Also look for descriptions of other climbers' attempts to reach the summit of the Devil's Thumb. In a report, describe the area, summarize one or two other climbers' experiences, and then decide whether or not you think people ought to be allowed to attempt this dangerous climb. Give specific reasons to support your opinion.

If your opinion is that people should be allowed to try to climb the Devil's Thumb, explain what a climber should do to be as safe and prepared as possible. Discuss equipment, clothing, time of year, whether it is safe to go alone, nutritional requirements, etc. Be specific in your suggestions.

Chapter Fifteen: The Stikine Ice Cap

43. Jon Krakauer believes that one thing he and Chris had in common was poor relationships with their fathers. He thinks both men sought out dangerous adventures with such passion and intensity because those very adventures were acts of rebellion against demanding fathers they couldn't understand or relate to very well. By committing such reckless acts in the wild, they showed their fathers they didn't need their approval or respect.

Compare Lewis Krakauer to Walt McCandless. Point out their similarities and differences. Explain each man's relationship with his son, and tell exactly what each son rebelled against. Also include, as much as you can determine from the book, how each father reacted to his son's rebelliousness. Then, express your opinion as to whether or not each son got the reaction from his father that he hoped to get by performing such outlandish tasks. Be sure to explain the reasons for your opinion.

Into the Wild

44. Krakauer tells us that after his successful ascent of the Devil's Thumb, he soon lived life very much as before: working as a carpenter building town-houses. He had expected the experience to change his life and to change the way others saw him. This didn't happen; most people he told about his success weren't all that impressed. After coming down from the mountain and returning to his home, he still had to work a regular job to pay the bills.

As Krakauer, write a diary entry one month after your return from the Devil's Thumb climb. In the entry, describe your feelings about people's reactions to your climbing success. Also, talk about how you feel being back at work at the same job you had before the climb. Explain how it feels to work nine hours a day hammering nails compared to trying to survive on a cold and snowy mountain. How this experience changed the way you view yourself and your life? Explain why you will or will not make another climb like the Devil's Thumb. Be detailed and specific in your writing. Try to write from Krakauer's perspective.

45. Toward the end of this chapter, Krakauer writes:

"It is easy, when you are young, to believe that what you desire is no less than what you deserve, to assume that if you want something badly enough, it is your God-given right to have it... I was a raw youth who mistook passion for insight and acted according to an obscure, gap-ridden logic."

What is your reaction to Krakauer's ideas about youthful passion and beliefs? Write a response letter to him in which you either agree or disagree with his ideas. Explain the reasoning behind your opinion, and back support it with examples from your own life, people you know, or from the larger world and throughout history. Be sure to explain how each example illustrates your point.

Chapter Sixteen: The Alaska Interior

46. In one of this chapter's opening quotes, Roderick Nash says:

"The solitude and total freedom of the wilderness created a perfect setting for either melancholy or exultation."

Look up the definitions of the words "melancholy" and "exultation" in the dictionary. Write down the definitions. Thinking of the things we learn about Chris's experience in the Alaska Interior in this chapter, describe a time when he experiences melancholy and a time when he experiences exultation.

Look at the quotes from his journal entries in this chapter, and use them when you are explaining his experiences. State why you believe one experience could be described as melancholy. Then explain why you believe a different experience could be described as exultation. Overall, since his "great Alaskan odyssey" began, which do you think Chris has experienced more frequently—melancholy or exultation? Explain your opinion using examples from the book.

47. Chris spent a great deal of time at a university library while in Fairbanks learning about the Alaskan wilderness. Using the Internet, locate information about the book Chris used to learn about edible plants in Alaska, *Tanaina Plantlore/Dena'ina K'et'una: An Ethnobotany of the Dena'ina Indians of Southcentral Alaska*, by Priscilla Russell Kari. See if you can view sections of it, or passages from it online. If not, a local library might have a copy of it that you can borrow. If you can't locate the book, search online or in the library for other resources about the region's edible plants. Make a list of several of those plants, noting both their scientific and common names. Describe what the plants look like, taste like, where they can be found, how plentiful they are, and when they can be harvested. If possible, draw pictures of the plants near your descriptions of them.

Into the Wild

48. Chris planned to hunt, kill, and eat animals he found while in the Alaskan bush. At one point in this chapter, he kills a moose, and before he can properly butcher and process it, it becomes inedible.

Use the library or Internet or interview a seasoned hunter to find out the best way to properly deal with a large game animal so that the meat is not wasted. Then, write a report detailing how a hunter should treat a dead animal and how the meat should be processed. Because Chris was far from civilization, refrigeration was not possible, and he had crude tools to work with.

Using this knowledge, write a paragraph explaining whether you think Chris could have successfully dealt with the meat from the moose if he had more information, or whether he should not have even shot the moose due to his living circumstances. Be specific in stating your reasons and opinions.

Chapter Seventeen: The Stampede Trail

49. In this chapter, Jon Krakauer and his friends Roman Dial, Dan Solie, and Andrew Liske retrace Chris's trek into the Alaskan bush following the Stampede Trail, just as Chris had done. At the end of a long day of hard hiking, the men sit around a campfire near Fairbanks bus 142, where Chris died. They talk late into the night, trying to figure out just what drove Chris to try to live completely off the land in such a remote area.

As Krakauer recounts their discussion and the thoughts he has had since that conversation, his becomes more philosophical, and his words become more sophisticated. To fully understand what he is saying about Chris, a reader needs to have a good understanding of Krakauer's writing style.

Using a dictionary, look up the underlined words in the following passage and write down the meaning of each, using words and terms you understand. If necessary, use more than one dictionary and/or the Internet so that you gain a full understanding of what the words mean.

"It would be easy to stereotype Christopher McCandless as another boy who felt too much, a loopy young man who read too many books and lacked even a modicum of common sense. But the stereotype isn't a good fit. McCandless wasn't some feckless slacker, adrift and confused, racked by existential despair. To the contrary: His life hummed with meaning and purpose. But the meaning he wrested from existence lay beyond the comfortable path: McCandless distrusted the value of things that came easily... Trying to explain McCandless's unorthodox behavior, some people have made much of the fact that like John Waterman, he was small in stature and may have suffered from a 'short man's complex,' a fundamental insecurity that drove him to prove his manhood by means of extreme physical challenges. Others have posited that an unresolved Oedipal conflict was at the root of his fatal odyssey. Although there may be some truth in both hypotheses, this sort of posthumous off-the-rack psychoanalysis is a dubious, highly speculative enterprise that inevitably demeans and trivializes the absent analysand. It is not clear that much of value is learned by reducing Chris McCandless's strange spiritual quest to a list of pat psychological disorders."

Into the Wild

50. Now that you have an understanding of the words Krakauer uses to describe people's theories about Chris and how helpful they are to understanding the choices Chris made in his life, explain your reaction to what Krakauer says in the above passage. State whether you agree or disagree with him about trying to understand Chris's psychological state and explain why.
51. One of the topics Krakauer writes about in this chapter is youthful risk-taking. He says that it is common among young people to want to test themselves and their limits by attempting physically risky activities. He believes this tendency might help explain Chris's wilderness adventure.

Write a note to a classmate describing in detail either the riskiest thing you have ever done, or something risky you would like to do. After describing the activity, explain your reasons for wanting to do this, or for why you did do it. What did it prove to you about yourself, or what might it prove, if you haven't yet done it? Also tell what your parents' reactions either were or would be, and why.

Chapter Eighteen: The Stampede Trail

52. Jon Krakauer describes the theories people have developed to explain Chris's death. One explanation is that he ate the seed potatoes he may have brought with him from South Dakota. Another is that he ate the seeds from the wild sweet pea plant, mistaking them for seeds from the wild potato plant. The theory that Krakauer proposes is that McCandless ate seeds from the wild potato plant, which had gotten moldy, and that the mold, not the seeds themselves, proved toxic to Chris.

Do a little research in the library or on the Internet on these topics: seed potatoes, wild sweet pea plant seeds, and potato plant seed mold. After your research, decide which theory you find most probable as the cause of Chris's death, citing specific evidence from the book that you find most credible. Explain why you find these facts so persuasive.

Into the Wild

53. One of the last notes Chris writes before he dies says:

“S.O.S. I NEED YOUR HELP. I AM INJURED, NEAR DEATH, AND TOO WEAK TO HIKE OUT OF HERE. I AM ALL ALONE. THIS IS NO JOKE. IN THE NAME OF GOD, PLEASE REMAIN TO SAVE ME. I AM OUT COLLECTING BERRIES CLOSE BY AND SHALL RETURN THIS EVENING. THANK YOU. CHRIS MCCLANDLESS. AUGUST?”

By this note, Chris would seem to be dropping his Alex Supertramp identity and reclaiming his Chris McCandless identity. Write a journal entry as Chris in which you explain why you have decided to drop the name Alex and take back your birth name. Be detailed and specific in describing what this name change signifies. Use events and ideas from the entire book to explain why you want to go back to being Chris.

Epilogue

54. Chris’s parents want to see where their son died. They fly into the area near Fairbanks bus 142 by helicopter. Jon Krakauer is with them as they walk through the bus and take a look at the surrounding landscape. The fact that it is so beautiful near the bus seems to give them some comfort and understanding about why their son wanted to be there. Before they leave, Krakauer says that Walt “installs a memorial just inside the door, a simple brass plaque inscribed with a few words.”

Write the words you think Walt may have inscribed on that brass plaque. Explain why you think these are words Walt may have wanted to use to permanently mark the place where his son died.

Wrap-Up

55. Now that you have read the book, write an essay in which you explain why you think Jon Krakauer titled this book *Into the Wild*. Next, state whether you think it is a fitting title. Explain the reasons for your opinion. If you think it is not a very good title, suggest a better one, and explain why you feel this way.

Into the Wild

56. It is up to you as a reporter for Chris's hometown newspaper, write his obituary. An obituary may include any or all of the following: full name, biographical information about family, where one was born and lived, a list of major life events and accomplishments, cause of death, and final fond thoughts about the person from family or loved ones. Funeral or memorial services are also usually announced in an obituary. It is up to you to decide when this obituary will run—shortly after Chris's death, or a few weeks later. Use what was known about his death at the time you choose to run the obituary. Consult the book for accuracy, if necessary.
57. Write a letter to Jon Krakauer expressing your opinion of the book. Explain your reasons for liking or not liking it. State what life lessons you've learned from this book. Explain how the book conveyed those lessons to you. Describe how you feel about Chris McCandless's life choices. Tell whether you would have done anything differently had you been in his shoes. If you have any lingering questions about the story, or about Krakauer's life or motives for writing the book, ask those questions in your letter. Explain why you are curious about these things. Include any other information or thoughts you'd like to express to Krakauer in your letter.
58. Most authors write books with an underlying message to the reader about life, people, values, beliefs, etc. What message—or messages—do you think Jon Krakauer wants to convey in *Into the Wild*? Think carefully about the events, people, and ideas Krakauer included in his book. Also, consider the quotes he uses to open each chapter.

Once you have formed an opinion, write an essay in which you explain what that message is and how Krakauer illustrates it in his book. Be specific in your references to the ideas, characters, and events in the story you believe support your opinion of Krakauer's message. End your essay by stating whether you agree or disagree with his message, and explain why.

Into the Wild

59. As an author who has heard about Chris McCandless's story and who has decided to write a fiction book inspired by it, create an outline for a new version of the story. What would you change to make it a more upbeat story? What would you leave the same? Explain your reasons for both the changes and the things you wouldn't change. In addition, describe the message you would want to impart to your readers in your version of the story. Explain why.
60. As Chris, who knows he is most likely going to die in Fairbanks bus 142 in the Alaskan wilderness, write a last will and testament. Knowing Chris was not materialistic and had no "things" to leave to people, find other ways he could leave something behind to those he loves, things that are not tangible. Be creative, and come up with at least five people mentioned in the book who Chris would leave something symbolic to. As Chris, explain why you are leaving each of these items to the people chosen to receive them. Then, conclude your will with a final statement about what you have come to believe is the most important lesson you have learned in your life.

Into the Wild

Test

1. Chris McCandless grew up in a suburb of
 - A. Washington, D.C.
 - B. New York City.
 - C. Los Angeles.
 - D. Chicago.
 - E. Philadelphia.
 2. McCandless attended college at
 - A. Amherst College.
 - B. The College of William and Mary.
 - C. Emory University.
 - D. Columbia University.
 - E. New York University.
 3. Jon Krakauer first wrote about McCandless's death in an article for
 - A. National Geographic.
 - B. Discover.
 - C. Outside.
 - D. Sierra Club.
 - E. Alaska.
 4. Jim Gallien drops McCandless off near
 - A. the Mt. McKinley Trail.
 - B. the Stampede Trail.
 - C. the Alaskan Ice Cap.
 - D. the Stikine Ice Cap.
 - E. the Yukon Trail.
 5. McCandless spends some time in Carthage, South Dakota, working for Wayne Westerberg as a
 - A. farmhand.
 - B. waiter.
 - C. plumber.
 - D. lumberjack.
 - E. miner.
-

Into the Wild

6. In order to symbolize a break from his old life, McCandless adopts the name
 - A. Andrew.
 - B. Augustus.
 - C. Adrian.
 - D. Arthur.
 - E. Alexander.
7. A writer and philosophical role model for McCandless was
 - A. Leo Tolstoy.
 - B. Anton Chekov.
 - C. Ayn Rand.
 - D. Leonid Brezhnev.
 - E. Fyodor Dostoevsky
8. Another writer who inspired McCandless was
 - A. Henry David Thoreau.
 - B. Walt Whitman.
 - C. Emily Dickinson.
 - D. Edgar Allan Poe.
 - E. Nathaniel Hawthorn.
9. As a testament to his conviction to live a non-materialistic life, McCandless
 - A. buries the last of his money in the California desert.
 - B. gives his car to a homeless man.
 - C. burns the last of his money in the Nevada desert.
 - D. pushes his car over the edge of a cliff.
 - E. cuts up his credit cards.
10. In Bullhead City, Arizona, McCandless works for a while at
 - A. Taco Bell.
 - B. Burger King.
 - C. McDonald's.
 - D. Wendy's.
 - E. Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Into the Wild

11. Ronald Franz, who forms a fatherly attachment to McCandless, gives him
 - A. a gun.
 - B. a machete.
 - C. a camera.
 - D. a plane ticket.
 - E. a train ticket.
12. The only person listed below to whom Jon Krakauer does not compare McCandless's outdoor risk-taking is
 - A. Jon Krakauer.
 - B. John Mallon Waterman.
 - C. Carl McCunn.
 - D. Everett Ruess.
 - E. Boris Pasternak.
13. The information about McCandless's father's past that angers McCandless is
 - A. his father cheated on his taxes and had spent time in prison.
 - B. his father had made money by using slave labor to manufacture goods.
 - C. his father had maintained marital relations and a family with his first wife for two years, even while living with and having a child by McCandless's mother.
 - D. his father had lied to cover up his status as an illegal immigrant.
 - E. his father had lied about an addiction.
14. In college, McCandless works for the school
 - A. radio station.
 - B. television station.
 - C. book store.
 - D. cafeteria.
 - E. newspaper.

Into the Wild

15. Jon Krakauer writes about the time he spent near
- A. the Stampede Trail.
 - B. the Alaskan Ice Cap.
 - C. the Stikine Ice Cap.
 - D. the Yukon Trail.
 - E. Dawson Creek.
16. The only food McCandless takes with him into the Alaskan wilderness is
- A. a bag of flour.
 - B. a bag of beans.
 - C. a bag of rice.
 - D. a bag of corn.
 - E. a bag of jerky.
17. The large animal McCandless shoots, and later wishes he hadn't, is
- A. a grizzly bear.
 - B. a moose.
 - C. a caribou.
 - D. an elk.
 - E. a whitetail deer.
18. The toxin that Krakauer believes killed McCandless is from
- A. rotten potatoes.
 - B. a poisonous flower.
 - C. mold on wild potato seeds.
 - D. decaying meat.
 - E. a poisonous mushroom.

Into the Wild

19. McCandless leaves a final note which says
- A. "I HAVE HAD A HAPPY LIFE AND THANK THE LORD. GOODBYE AND MAY GOD BLESS ALL!"
 - B. "I HAVE LED AN HONORABLE LIFE IN THE WILD. REMEMBER ME ALWAYS AS A FREE MAN!"
 - C. "I FORGIVE MY FATHER AND MOTHER FOR THE LIES THEY TOLD. I LOVE THEM AND MY SISTER. FAREWELL!"
 - D. "I HAVE HAD AN EXCITING LIFE AND THANK GOD. I ONLY WISH EVERYONE COULD LIVE IN THE WILD!"
 - E. "GOODBYE, WILDERNESS. I HAVE RECEIVED A LIFETIME OF WISDOM FROM YOU!"
20. McCandless's parents visit the place their son died, leaving behind
- A. a tree they plant in his honor.
 - B. a brass plaque with some words on it.
 - C. a marble headstone with his name on it.
 - D. a picture of the whole family in happier times.
 - E. An American flag.

Into the Wild

Test

Student Answer Sheet

Name: _____

1. _____

11. _____

2. _____

12. _____

3. _____

13. _____

4. _____

14. _____

5. _____

15. _____

6. _____

16. _____

7. _____

17. _____

8. _____

18. _____

9. _____

19. _____

10. _____

20. _____

Into the Wild

Test

Answer Key

1.	A	6.	E	11.	B	16.	C
2.	C	7.	A	12.	E	17.	B
3.	C	8.	A	13.	C	18.	C
4.	B	9.	C	14.	E	19.	A
5.	A	10.	C	15.	C	20.	B

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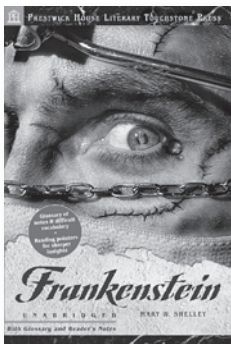
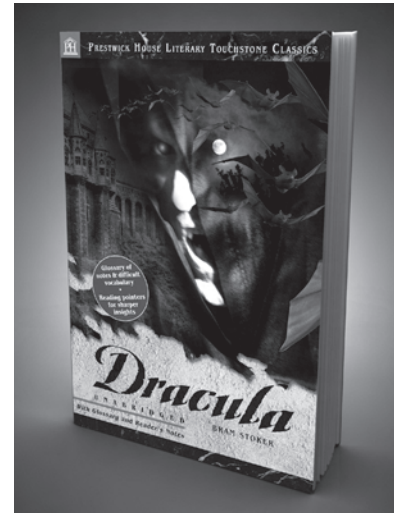
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