

Brian's Hunt

by Gary Paulsen

While camping alone in the Canadian wilderness, Brian finds a wounded dog and he senses danger. As Brian cares for his new companion, he begins to worry about his Cree friends who live north of his camp. With his new companion at his side, and with a terrible, growing sense of unease, he sets out to learn what happened.

THEMES

courage, animals, adventure, wilderness, problem-solving, friendship, responsibility

Young Listener Unabridged Audio

I. PRE-TEACHING

A. Have the class define and discuss these terms:

careening, evade, inordinate, scurried, covert, scenarios, furor, appalled, horrendous, saturation, discordant, predator, refraction, spasmodic, buoyancy, vulnerable, scavenger, meticulous, composite, laminate, mukluks, anorak, grapnel, implicitly, superficial, hygienic, winced, bewildered, mauled, slack, camouflage, stance, entrails, carnivore, cliché, sparse, submissive, meandering, nimbly, silhouette, rogue, wary, godsend, virtually, profound, girth, dubious, radar, terrain, edifying

B. Before beginning the story, discuss with the class the following questions:

1. Have you read *Hatchet* and the other stories about Brian? What do you like about these stories? Why does Brian feel he belongs in the wilderness?
2. Do you have a dog? Why do you like having a dog? Can you imagine your life without a dog? Why or why not?
3. Why do some wild animals kill other animals? Why do they kill humans?
4. How do you feel about hunting? What are some circumstances when hunting is necessary?

II. PRESENTATION

A. Understanding the Story:

1. Begin with Chapters 1 - 4: What does Brian remember every time he makes a fire? What does he hear in the underbrush? What does he think it is? Why is it illegal to hunt from a canoe? Why does he decide not to kill the moose? What does Kay-gwa-daush's name mean? Why had her family given it to her? Why does Brian decide to head north? What had his wilderness experience taught him about studying? What can't he stand about the civilized world? What had he learned from seeing Inuits hunting seal? How does he kill the pike? Why must he eat the whole fish? In what ways has Brian prepared for his trip? What awakens him? What does he realize it is?
2. Advance to Chapters 5 - 8: What makes Brian hesitate to approach the dog? What makes him decide to help?

How does the dog react? What possible explanations for the dog's being there does Brian come up with? What odd feeling does he have about the need to move on? What about the way Brian hunts made the Cree respect him? What does Brian like about having a dog? What makes him decide to pack up and head north the next day? How does he feel as he travels? How does he know he's getting close to man? How is the dog acting?

3. Complete the story with Chapters 9 - Afterword: Where does Brian find Susan's father? What does he believe has happened? What do the prints he finds tell him? What does he decide Susan has done? Where does he find her? Why do the Mounties say they can't kill the bear? What does Brian determine to do? What does Susan warn him about? What does he learn about the bear as he goes after him? Why does he decide to stay in the camping area? How does the dog help him find the bear? What does he realize the bear is doing? What happens when the bear finds him? How does he kill the bear? How does he feel about the bear after it's dead?

B. For Discussion:

1. Why does Brian reject civilization? Why does he find it impossible to live in both the civilized world and the wilderness?
2. Compare Brian's attitude toward killing for food with that of hunters who hunt for "sport." Why does he thank the animal after he kills it?
3. What does Brian discover about his life when the dog joins him? What does he decide about having a dog in his life from then on?
4. Why is Brian amazed when the Mounties say they wouldn't be able to identify the killer bear? How does having all the right gadgets keep them from having the kind of knowledge Brian has?
5. Why doesn't Brian feel a sense of triumph when he kills the bear?
6. In what ways does Gary Paulsen feel bears have been romanticized? In what ways are we as much a part of nature as other animals?

III. EXTENDING THE LESSON

Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:

A. Language Arts:

1. Have students keep a diary that Brian might have kept of his days in the wilderness.
2. Have students write a pamphlet about what is needed to prepare for a trip like Brian's.
3. Have students read some short stories by Jack London and compare them with *Brian's Hunt*. Why does Brian think much of what Jack London says is "nonsense"?
4. Have students write a tribute to a dog they have known. What is special about having the companionship of a dog?

B. Art and Music:

1. Have students select background music that is appropriate to some of the scenes. Have them find impressionistic music for Brian's journey, such as compositions by Debussy.
2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They could cover the board with white and paint the green trees, add pictures of the different animals Brian encounters, show the Cree camp where the bear attacked, the bear when Brian kills him, the dog, and other scenes in the story. They could add prints of different animals that Brian tracks.
3. Have students paint a watercolor of one of the scenes, such as Brian on the lake in his canoe, finding and helping the dog, or tracking the bear.

C. Social Studies:

1. Have students trace Brian's journey on a map of Canada. Why is so much of Canada still wilderness? Have them find Hudson's Bay and other features.
2. Brian feels that the civilized world is too noisy. Have students sit quietly and listen during the evening at home and list everything they hear. Do they agree that the world is too noisy? What can we do about noise pollution?
3. When Brian is getting ready to shoot the deer, he feels he's gotten into a "Zen" state which helps direct the arrow. Have students learn more about Zen and what

a Zen state is. How does this feeling help us do better at sports?

4. Hold a debate about hunting. Why do some people hunt for "sport"? How is this different from hunting for food as Brian does?
5. Have students learn about the Royal Canadian Mounties. How were they formed? What are their duties?

D. Science and Math:

1. Have students learn about the animals mentioned in the story, like loons, coyotes, frogs, wolves, bears, beavers, lynx, deer, rabbits, and moose.
2. Have students study how a bow and arrow works. What skills are needed to hunt with a bow and arrow?
3. Have students find out what causes food poisoning and why we need to be careful about eating fish or meat.
4. Have students find out how the glaciers carved out the lakes in Canada. They might study the different ice ages and how they changed the land.
5. When he first finds the dog, Brian is concerned about rabies. Have students find out about this disease. What causes it? What animals can be infected by it? How does it infect us? What is the cure?

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