

INTO THE WILD BY JON KRAKAUER**GETTING READY TO READ: ABOUT THE AUTHOR*****DIRECTIONS: SHOW EVIDENCE OF A CLOSE READING FOR THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE:***

Jon Krakauer (pictured left) is the author of *Eiger Dreams*, *Into the Wild*, and *Into Thin Air*, as well as numerous magazine articles. Born in 1954, Jon Krakauer grew up in Corvallis, Oregon, where his father introduced him to mountaineering as an 8-year-old. After graduating from Hampshire College in 1976, Krakauer divided his time between Colorado, Alaska, and the Pacific Northwest, earning his living primarily as a carpenter and commercial salmon fisherman, spending most of his free moments in the mountains. In 1977, he traveled alone to the remote Stikine Icecap in Southeast Alaska, went three weeks without encountering another person, and climbed a new route on a graceful, intimidating peak called the Devil's Thumb.

For the past twenty years, Krakauer's writing has been published in *Outside Magazine*, *Geo*, *Architectural Digest*, *Rolling Stone*, *TIME*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *National Geographic*. His 1996 book, *Into the Wild*, about Christopher McCandless, a young college graduate who went off to Alaska and died in the woods, spent more than two years on *The New York Times* bestseller list. Krakauer's original article resulted in a huge amount of mail to the *Outside Magazine*, and so he decided to write a book about this interesting character. Chris McCandless is a young, idealistic man who forms a life philosophy based on his experience and his reading in college. His idealism, ironically, led to his death by starvation. He makes choices that seem foolish as we look at them now.

But McCandless genuinely loved the outdoors and wanted to live in the world without all of the trappings of money and his middle-class upbringing. *Into the Wild* is, in a way, a mystery story. We're unsure as to why McCandless rejects his family, why he's so angry with them, and why he chooses to head for Alaska.

THEMES

Use the list of themes below to help during your reading as well as during our Socratic Seminars.

- **The impracticality of complete freedom**

What does this mean?

- **The difficulty of forgiveness**

What does this mean?

- **Finding meaning and self-identity**

What does this mean?

- **The conflict between beliefs and people**

What does this mean?

- **The hold that nature takes over people**

What does this mean?

QUICK-WRITES

1. Think about your experience hiking, backpacking, and/or existing in the wild. Do you think that there are benefits to any of these activities?

2. Think about some alternative plans you might have instead of beginning college immediately after high school. What might you do? Why would you do it, and how long do you see yourself in this activity?

3. Think about an experience you have had when you were alone and made some misjudgments that could have led to disaster but didn't (it doesn't have to be in the outdoors). What miscalculations did you make and how did you avert disaster?

PERSONAL SURVEY

Answer the following questions based on your preferences.

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1. I have lots of friends and enjoy socializing.	1	2	3	4	5	
2. I am self sufficient. I could live on my own.	1	2	3	4	5	
3. I prefer backpacking with few necessities rather than car camping with lots of "extras"	1	2	3	4	5	
4. I enjoy new experiences. I like learning new things.		1	2	3	4	5
5. I enjoy my family and hope I never live far away from them		1	2	3	4	5
6. I like being prepared; I dislike going into situations where I feel unprepared.	1	2	3	4	5	
7. I am never bored when I am by myself. I can always find ways to entertain myself.	1	2	3	4	5	
8. I like to travel. I want to see the world.	1	2	3	4	5	
9. I hold a grudge a long time. I don't easily forgive.	1	2	3	4	5	
10. I think about running away from everyone I know and starting a new life somewhere else.	1	2	3	4	5	

In the boxes below, write how many answers you chose with that number.

How many 1's	2's	3's	4's	5's

What conclusions could someone else draw about you based on your answers to this survey?

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions thoroughly and thoughtfully. All questions are fair game for class discussions, so be prepared!

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Most people skip these few pages that begin a book, but this note by Krakauer is particularly interesting and will guide your reading of his book.

1. What might have Chris's motives been for his behavior?
2. How difficult would it be to invent a new life?
3. In paragraph 4, Krakauer introduces the themes of the book. What are they?
4. In paragraph 5, Krakauer warns us that he will not be an impartial biographer. What does this mean? Are all biographers impartial? What might we then expect from him?
5. What does Krakauer think might have made a difference in Chris's survival?
6. Near what famous landmark did Chris die?

Answer the following question later:

7. In the last paragraph, Krakauer introduces the complexity of Chris McCandless.
 - **Should we admire Chris for his courage and noble ideas? Why or why not?**
 - **Was Chris a reckless idiot? Why or why not?**
 - **Was Chris crazy?**
 - **Was Chris an arrogant and stupid narcissist?**

CHAPTERS 1-2: THE BEGINNING AND THE END

Note the epigraphs that begin each of these chapters. One is by a friend of Chris McCandless and the other is by both McCandless and then a quotation by Jack London from *White Fang*. As you read, don't forget to analyze the importance of these epigraphs.



CHAPTER 1: THE ALASKA INTERIOR

1. Where does Jim Gallien first encounter Chris?
2. Where does Chris intend to hike?
3. After dropping off the boy who calls himself Alex, why does Gallien decide **not** to notify the authorities?

CHAPTER 2: THE STAMPEDE TRAIL

4. What is the origin of the Stampede Trail? Why is it still in use?
5. What is Krakauer's **thesis** about Chris McCandless?
6. What message did Chris leave taped to the door of the bus?
7. How long did Chris survive in that hostile environment? What was the official verdict on the cause of death?
8. What problem did the authorities have after removing the body?

CHAPTER 3: HOME

CHAPTER 3: CARTHAGE

9. How had Chris already been separating himself from his family as seen in this chapter?
10. What do Walt and Billie McCandless discover when they drive to Chris' apartment in Atlanta?
11. What was Westerberg like? What sort of character did he have?
12. What was Chris McCandless like? What kind of character did he have? Would you have liked to know him?