



Activity One

News Article

There's a wild boy living alone in the Catskill Mountains! In *My Side of the Mountain*, Sam's decision to live alone in the woods begins to attract a lot of attention. Word of him spreads through the nearby town of Delhi. Through newspapers, it spreads to the rest of the country.

You are the reporter whose job it is to track down this wild boy. Your editor wants you to find out where the wild boy comes from, and why he is living alone. You should have interviews with people who have met the wild boy. You will use your imagination to come up with some things these people might have to say about Sam.

You could also imagine that you've tracked down Sam's family. Ask them what may have led to his decision to live in the woods. The story should focus on the wild boy's motivation for living alone. What reasons would he have to want to stay by himself in the woods?

Your interview with the wild boy should have the following:

- A description of him.
- His daily routines or activities.
- Interactions with animals.
- How he came to know all he does about plants, animals and survival.

Your newspaper article should have:

- An interview with the wild boy (Sam).
- An interview with a person from the town of Delhi.
- An interview with a friend or family member.
- A beginning sentence that tells the reader the who, what, when where and why of the story.
- Any rumors that people in town might have heard about the boy.

You can get some ideas on how to write in newspaper style from your own local newspaper. The finished product should be about 500 words.



Activity Two

Mountain View



In *My Side of the Mountain*, Sam Gibley sets off in search of his great-grandfather's abandoned farm in the Catskill Mountains. Sam had lived in his New York City apartment with his parents and eight siblings. Throughout his time alone, Sam faces several challenges. He spends his first night alone and without fire. He snatches a young peregrine falcon from its nest to train.

There are also many times Sam enjoys the beauty of his new natural home. He describes in detail the area around the old Gibley house. He draws a picture of the mountain meadow and the gorge. He spends time detailing his hollowed-out tree home. When Sam spends his first winter in the woods, he describes the shimmering ice-covered forest blanketed in deep white snow.

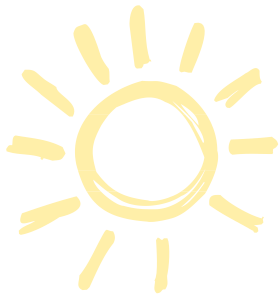
Make a detailed drawing of one of your favorite scenes from the book. This can be any scene you like. It can involve any character, human or animal. Use what you have learned from the book and descriptions from Sam. Use photographs of the Catskill Mountains, plants and animals as a reference for your drawing.

When you are done your drawing, write a paragraph that describes the scene. This paragraph should include the page number and the chapter where your scene takes place. The paragraph should also explain what you like about the scene. It should tell why you chose it to be your favorite.



Catskill Mountains and freshwater marsh

NAME: _____



Activity Three

Research and Report



The Catskill Mountains as shown in *My Side of the Mountain* play a very important role in the story. The mountains are Sam's home, his playground and his refrigerator. The mountains provide Sam with everything he wants. They also present some danger and many challenges. The Catskills are almost a character themselves in the book.

Use a computer or visit the library to read about the Catskill Mountains. You will be describing the Catskills in detail. You will need to research all about these mountains. Where are they on a map? How do they compare to other mountain ranges in the United States? What is the surrounding area like? Are there cities surrounding the mountains today? Is the wilderness shown in the book similar to the wilderness as it exists today? What kinds of plants, animals, and insects are found in the Catskills? What is the climate like? Your report should answer all of these questions.

Divide your report into the following categories:

Overview

A brief outline of where the mountains are found. A little bit about the area that surrounds them.

Natural Features

How big are the Catskills? What sorts of rock can be found there? Describe what the land is like. Compare the mountains to other mountain ranges.

Plants

What are some of the plants found on the mountains? Are the Catskills covered with forest or are they bare?

Animals

What are some of the animals and insects found on the mountains? What are the biggest natural predators?

Climate

What is the climate like? What are the usual weather patterns and seasons?

NAME: _____



Activity Four

Study Sam



Sam Gribley is very unhappy living in his cramped apartment in New York City. He wants to have some time and space to himself. He knows his great-grandfather had a farm in the Catskill Mountains. He knows his family still owns the property.

Like many 12-year-old boys, Sam wants to run away and live on his own. When he tells his father, he says Sam should try it—that every boy should. However, Sam’s father doesn’t really believe his son will be gone long. Many young people will run away, only to come back a short time later. Sam is different.

He takes a penknife, a ball of cord, some flint and steel, and the clothes he’s wearing. Even when Sam can’t get a fire started on the first night, he doesn’t change his mind. He catches himself five fish to eat and continues his journey.

Sam is clearly very smart. He is able to learn a lot about plants, animals and survival through visits to the local library. Sam has the ability to improvise and be creative. He uses this ability and what he has learned from books and experience to make it through an entire year alone. That’s not something many people could do.

Your task in this activity is to complete a character study of Sam Gribley. You will need to collect information from the book to report on the following:

Appearance

How old is Sam? What does he look like? What is he wearing?

Personality

Is Sam smart? Is he outgoing or shy? Describe what Sam is like.

Motivation

What is making Sam do what he does?

Thoughts and Actions

How does Sam feel about the world? How does this affect his actions?

NAME: _____



Activity Five

Alternate Ending



At the end of *My Side of the Mountain*, Sam's family comes to his tree house. Sam is thrilled at first to see them all. He spends time sharing stories about what he has done and things he has made for himself. However, Sam soon realizes that his family means to stay.

Sam is upset at this realization. He knows that his piece of forest will never be just his. While in the wilderness, Sam struggled to balance his need to be with people with his need to be alone. Sam's father tells him that there were suggestions in newspaper stories that Sam's parents had neglected him. As a result, Sam's mother tells him that he will have to wait until he is 18 if he wants to live on his own. This is where the novel ends.

Now, imagine this never happened. Sam's family didn't show up at the end. What if Sam's father visited alone again and let Sam be. What if the newspaper stories about the wild boy living in the mountains didn't create the amount of curiosity they did in the story? Use these ideas as a starting point and come up with your own ending to *My Side of the Mountain*. You don't have to use these ideas if you don't want to. Just use your imagination to come up with a different ending to the story.

Your ending can include new settings, new characters or anything else you want. You should keep the new ending in the same first-person style that is used in the book. Also, try to copy the tone of the book.

Your final product should be two typed, double-spaced pages in length. Your ending should finish Sam's story in your own way. It should comment on how Sam has changed or been affected by his experiences.

NAME: _____



Activity Six

Reality Shift



Sam feels trapped in his parents New York City apartment. He wants a life without the need for electricity, coal, oil or cars. He doesn't want all the things that go along with living in a big city.

Sam would rather dig tubers, fish, and forage for other edible woodland plants to eat. Sam doesn't need fancy clothing. He crafts himself a fine deerskin suit. Sam Gribley isn't a typical 12-year-old. His need to be alone and be free leads him to the Catskill Mountains.

In the mountains he lives alone with few visitors for an entire year. Along the way he makes friends with a peregrine falcon, an unpredictable weasel and a roaming raccoon.

Now, imagine all these things were reversed completely. What if Sam had grown up alone in the woods where he struggled every day to find food? What if Sam craved the company of other humans and hated to be alone?

Use this idea to write an "alternate reality" version of *My Side of the Mountain*. Your version will see a wild boy arrive in New York City after growing up alone in the Catskill Mountains. Your version should include interactions with people Sam meets in New York and what he does for food.

Your version of the story should include some discussion between Sam and another character about some of the main themes of the book. Sam's thoughts and actions should reflect how he feels to be away from home. They should reflect how he feels about his surroundings.

The finished product should be about three typed, double-spaced pages. It should start using the same winter storm used at the beginning of the book.