

BRIAN'S WINTER - A Novel Study: OVERVIEW

This novel study is designed with flexibility for the teacher in mind. The first section, "For The Teacher", contains useful information about the novel, suggested teaching strategies, possible pre-reading activities, post-reading activities, and an answer key. The second section, "For The Student", consists of reproducible worksheets and activities for students. Vocabulary activities followed by comprehension questions, encouraging students to answer in complete sentences, form the core of this section. As well, more open-ended "optional" activities such as discussion questions, research assignments, cloze activities, literary devices, independent investigations, and creative writing assignments have been included to build flexibility into the unit.

Table of Contents

For The Teacher

Synopsis

Author Biography

Pre-Reading Activities

Post-Reading Activities

Suggestions for Further Reading

Other Books By Gary Paulsen.

Answer Key

For The Students

Chapters 1 - 2

Chapters 3 - 4

Chapters 5 - 7

Chapters 8 - 10.

Chapters 11 - 13

Chapters 14 - 15

Chapters 16 - Epilogue

Synopsis

Brian's Winter is the exciting sequel to Gary Paulsen's award winning novel, **Hatchet**. The novel's premise offers readers an intriguing alternative to **Hatchet's** dramatic conclusion - *What if* Brian had not been rescued? *What if* he had been forced to survive an entire winter in the Canadian wilderness?

A Canadian winter is unrelenting and merciless and Brian quickly realizes that to have any chance of survival, he must be ever-vigilant and innovative. Larger, more powerful hunting implements are needed - a war bow, a lance, and larger arrows tipped with flint heads - weapons Brian uses to bring down both a moose and a deer. Warmer clothes and a warm, dry shelter become desperate priorities, as well as a way of getting around in the deep snow so that he can gather wood and hunt for food.

Each and every challenge proves Brian to be a determined and creative survivor. He learns to cope with loneliness and co-exist with a pack of wolves and a skunk, whom he nicknames, *Betty*.

When Brian hears an unusual popping sound one cold winter morning, he sets out to investigate. He is amazed to find human tracks not far from his camp. The tracks, he discovers, were made by a Cree family who are trapping the area. With his rescue now imminent, Brian is torn emotionally. He is overjoyed at the prospect of being reunited with his family, but already feels a tremendous attachment to the scene of his greatest adventure. These conflicting emotions set the stage for the next installment in Brian Robeson's adventures - **Brian's Return**.

Author Biography

Gary Paulsen was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 17, 1939. He was an "army brat" and his family moved from base to base, never staying more than a few months in any one place. As a consequence, Paulsen did not excel in school, either academically or socially. He embraced books and reading at an early age thanks to the kindness and support of a friendly librarian. "When she handed me a library card, she handed me the world!"

Paulsen has lived an adventurous life, but one filled with many hardships, addictions, bitterness, and health problems. His life has been tumultuous and sometimes miserable. He ran away from home at age 14. During his life he has been a carnival worker, farm labourer, soldier, ranch hand, carpenter, truck driver, sailor, trapper, and satellite technician. He has entered the demanding Alaskan Iditarod dogsled race twice. Paulsen worked as a magazine proofreader in Hollywood before moving to northern Minnesota, where his career as an author began. His diverse life adventures and experiences have provided ample inspiration from which he weaves his amazing tales.

Paulsen takes his writing seriously and due to this dedication, he has written almost 200 books and short stories. His strong desire to engage young adult readers to embrace and observe the world around them has earned him numerous literary awards and much recognition of his work.

Pre-Reading Activities

1. **Survival** is a major theme of **Brian's Winter**. Imagine you have been stranded in the northern wilderness without modern tools or conveniences. Describe how you would go about accomplishing one or more of the following tasks. Make sure your description contains enough detail so that someone would be able to follow your instructions if trapped in the wilderness like Brian.

- ⇒ building a fire
- ⇒ making warm clothing for winter
- ⇒ finding ways to kill animals (i.e. fashioning weapons, building traps)
- ⇒ making a secure, warm and dry shelter
- ⇒ making essential tools or instruments such as needles for sewing, fish hooks, traps, snares, snowshoes, etc.
- ⇒ investigate which berries, leaves, roots, etc. you might find in northern Canada which are edible



2. **Brian's Winter** is a story of surviving a winter with little in the way of modern conveniences (no house, winter clothing, food, tools, etc.). Describe three major problems that you think Brian will encounter? Describe how he might overcome these difficulties.

Post-Reading Activities

1. Gary Paulsen's sequel to **Brian's Winter**, **Brian's Return**, tells the exciting story of Brian's return to the scene of his adventures. What do you think would draw Brian back to the area? What misgivings might he have about a return visit?
2. Choose your favourite scene from the novel and work with a small group of your classmates to write a theater script for it. Be careful about including a scene which involves any animal life, as this would be difficult to include in a play. Select a few props to help the audience identify with the scene and perform it for the rest of the class.
3. View the video, **A Cry in the Wild** (the film adaptation of **Hatchet**), then view the following chart:

How Brian's character was different than what I expected -	How he was the same as what I imagined him to be -
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

4. Imagine you are a newspaper reporter from Brian's hometown. Write an article for your readers describing Brian's adventure. Make sure you include an exciting headline.

CHAPTERS 1-2



Vocabulary

Synonyms are words with similar meanings. Use the context to determine the synonym for the underlined word in each sentence. Circle the best answer.

- For a week or two he was in torment.
a) deep b) agony c) trouble d) seclusion
- He could visualize her face.
a) imagine b) admire c) draw d) mimic
- He stopped and shot several times into a hummock.
a) puddle b) stump c) tree d) hill
- Birds had taken on a special significance for him.
a) mission b) importance c) colouring d) memory
- He was literally awakened to the facts one morning during the two-week warm spell.
a) almost b) surprisingly c) precisely d) carelessly
- No, he thought with a clinical logic that surprised him.
a) objective b) sly c) comical d) painful
- The thinking evolved into what Brian thought of as an understanding between himself and the wolves.
a) slipped b) vanished c) turned d) developed

Questions

(Please answer in complete sentences where possible.)

- What were two signs which showed Brian that autumn had arrived?

- What ratio of *shots to hits* did Brian achieve for:
a) rabbits? _____ b) foolbirds? _____
- Describe Brian's "clean reflexive shot" that killed the foolbird in Chapter 3.

- Describe the circumstances that led Brian to dub one special arrow his "medicine arrow".

- Why do you think Brian found the hunting better during the rain?

- What caused Brian to wake up unexpectedly in the middle of the night?

Cloze Exercise

Complete the following Cloze Exercise from Chapter 7.

Brian awakened suddenly in the middle of the _____. The whole wall of his shelter suddenly peeled away and Brian was looking up at an enormous _____. He had smelled _____ and had come for it. The problem for Brian was that he was in the way. The blow took Brian in the upper _____.

Just then, Brian sensed another sell - rank and sulfurous _____ had arrived. Brian threw the skunk a piece of _____ to make her lower her tail.

The shelter was a _____ and the stink of _____ was everywhere. He was able to patch the seems with _____ from the lake.

Brian realized that his war bow wouldn't help as a _____ device. Perhaps a lance would serve as protection - a _____ lance.

In order to fashion a lance Brian knew the weapon would need a wider, longer _____. It took him _____ tries with the back of the hatchet before he came away with a piece almost as wide as his _____.

He then tied the head into place with a thin strip of _____ which proved to be much tougher than _____ skin. Finally, he had to burn the _____ off when he was done.

If nothing else, it gave him a feeling of _____.

Chapters 3 - 4



Vocabulary

Complete the crossword puzzle by using the crossword clues and selecting the correct word from the Word Box.



Wordsearch Puzzle

Find the following twenty-five words connected with the chapters you have just read. The words are all in a straight line horizontally, vertically, or diagonally - they can be forward or even backward!

D O O W E R I F F J F C B R Y
 E H G S N O W S T O R M I T R
 P I I N S A N I T Y K Z S A G
 Y S G N I V I G S K N A H T R
 R S P W U T C T R P O M K R A
 U I C A T C A O D T S D A D T
 O N Z I R L W N E L J Z E M E
 P G N I L K C A R C T Q H B F
 N C H I C K A D E E U D Y O U
 W E Z O H A E B T A B R R U L
 O E L D I S T I T C H I N G Z
 D C F E O Y M E A M D Z H H B
 T Y D O G U N S H O T Z P S N
 R Y M I T T E N S I H L E R O
 W T A T X N Y H O W L E D K K

Wordsearch Puzzle - Answer Key

O O W E R I F F J F C B R Y
 H G S N O W S T O R M I T R
 I I N S A N I T Y K Z S A G
 S G N I V I G S K N A H T R
 S P W U T C T R P O M K R A
 I C A T C A O D T S D A D T
 N Z I R L W N E L J Z E M E
 G N I L K C A R C T Q H B F
 C H I C K A D E E U D Y O U
 E Z O H A E B T A B R R U L
 L D I S T I T C H I N G Z
 C F E O Y M E A M D Z H H B
 Y D O G U N S H O T Z P S N
 Y M I T T E N S I H L E R O
 T A T X N Y H O W L E D K K

ANSWER KEY

- | | | | | |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| adequate | crystallized | gunshot | insanity | snowstorm |
| boughs | downpour | hibernating | mittens | stitching |
| chickadee | drizzle | hissing | moose | Thanksgiving |
| clockwork | firewood | howled | parka | toasty |
| crackling | grateful | idle | shattered | wisps |