*Into the Wild* Unit Materials

Essential Questions

* What is the relationship between nature and the American identity?
* What does it mean to be a rebel?
* What is the relationship between self and society?
* To what extent is community essential to happiness?

Vocabulary Used in This Unit

* Fiction
* Non-fiction
* Protagonist
* Epigram
* Context clues
* Authorial intent
* Paraphrase
* Figurative language
* Textual evidence
* Close reading
* Analysis
* Feminism
* Connotation
* Embedded quote
* Synthesis
* Thesis
* Foreshadowing
* Narrator, unreliable narrator
* Vignette
* Imagery
* Parody
* Allusion
* Hyperbole
* Anaphora

Reading Schedule

Thursday, May 4: Author’s Note – Page 46

Friday, May12: Page 47 – Page 116

Friday, May 19: Page 117- Page 156

Friday, May 26: Page 157- End

Study Guide Questions

1. What do you think caused Chris to embark on his journey? (beginning of the novel)
2. What mistakes, if any, did Chris make before going to Alaska?
3. In a review of the book by Library Journal, one complaint about it was that Krakauer “never satisfactorily answers the question of whether McCandless was a noble, if misguided, idealist or a reckless narcissist who brought pain to his family.”  Which, in your opinion, was he?  Was he both?
4. McCandless was also greatly influenced by Henry David Thoreau. What did he borrow from Thoreau’s interaction with nature? How did he differ from Thoreau?
5. The author claims that Into the Wild is very much a story about a son’s relationship with his father. What conclusions did you make regarding McCandless’s response to his family? What did you learn about parental relationships from the narrative?
6. One Alaskan Park Ranger has made [some comparisons](http://nmge.gmu.edu/textandcommunity/2006/Peter_Christian_Response.pdf) between himself and Chris.  He wrote:

*“Essentially, Chris McCandless committed suicide while I apprenticed myself to a career and a life that I wanted more badly than I can possibly describe in so short an essay. In the end I believe that the difference between us was that I wanted to live and Chris McCandless wanted to die (whether he realized it or not). The fact that he died in a compelling way doesn’t change that outcome. He might have made it work if he had respected the wilderness he was purported to have loved. But it is my belief that surviving in the wilderness is not what he had in mind.*

*I did not start this essay to trash poor Chris McCandless. Not intentionally. It is sad that the boy had to die. The tragedy is that McCandless more than likely was suffering from mental illness and didn’t have to end his life the way he did. The fact that he chose Alaska’s wildlands to do it in speaks more to the fact that it makes a good story than to the fact that McCandless was heroic or somehow extraordinary. In the end, he was sadly ordinary in his disrespect for the land, the animals, the history, and the self-sufficiency ethos of Alaska, the Last Frontier.”*

Do you feel that McCandless was either mentally ill or suicidal? Use evidence from the text.

1. What is Truth? Where did you get your sense of Truth? What is McCandless’s sense of Truth? How do you know?
2. What significance, if any, do you attach to the note Chris left in the margins of Dr. Zhivago:  “Happiness only real when shared” as he neared the end of his life? (end of book, pg. 189)
3. Interview your parents/ guardian about something they always wished they would have done. Find out why they haven’t done it? What stopped them?
4.  At the end of the reading, Krakauer asserts that one reason adults have so much difficulty understanding McCandless’s actions is that they struggle “to recall how forcefully [they] were once buffeted by the passions and longings of youth.” To understand this observation, one must be able to define what “the passions and longings of youth” are. What do these passions and longings have to do with escape? With the natural world? And if one can recall such passions and longings, how might this change the way one looks at McCandless’s death?

**Plot**

Jim Gallien – *Gentleman who drove Chris into Alaska to Stampede Trail. He tried to talk Chris out of the odyssey, but Chris didn’t listen. Gallien described himself as having issues with people like Chris because they think that they can survive the dangers of the wild.*

Alexander/Alex –

April 28, 1992 –

Fairbanks City Transit System: bus 142 –

Thompson, Samel, and Swanson –

Wayne Westerberg –

Annadale, Virgina –

OXFAM –

Old yellow Datsun –

Connection made about Henry David Thoreau (Civil Disobedience) –

McDonalds -

Jan and Bob Burres –

Ronald Franz –

The leather belt –

Relationship with his parents –

Gene Rosellini –

John Mallon Waterman –

Carl McCunn –

Davis Gulch –

Everett Ruess –

“NEMO 1934” –

Anchorage Daily News/*Time*/The Washington Post article on dead hiker –

Jim Gallien (reaction to article) -

Wayne Westerberg (reaction to article) -

Sam McCandless (reaction to article) –

Walt McCandless (characterize him) –

Marcia McCandless –

Billie (Wilhelmina) McCandless –

“Chris marches to a different drummer” (pg. 107) –

Loren Johnson –

Disappointment in sports (how does this connect?) –

“McCandless took life’s inequities to heart.” (pg. 113) –

Chris’s trip southwest after high school graduation –

Secret relationship with Marcia McCandless –

Carine McCandless (characterization) –

The Devil’s Thumb –

Lewis Krakauer –

Importance of this story on story of McCandless –

“I knew that people sometimes died climbing mountains. But at the age of twenty-three, personal mortality – the idea of my own death – was still largely outside my conceptual grasp.” (pg. 151). –

McCandless’s declaration of independence –

“Deliberate living” –

“He was right in saying that the only certain happiness in life is to live for others…” (pg. 169) –

The mistakes he made (Chapter 17 – End) –

Identification of moose –

Pot. Seed (potato seed) –