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Hatchet Gary Paulsen

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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

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Chapter One

- 1. Brian is keeping a secret from his father. Many people find it difficult to keep secrets from the people they love. In a similar situation, how good are you at keeping secrets? Do you believe that keeping secrets is ever justified?
- 2. Brian receives a hatchet as a gift from his mother. He thinks it is "hokey." Can you think of a time when you pretended to like a totally inappropriate gift? If you didn't pretend to like it, what did you do?
- 3. Write a letter to the pilot's wife from Brian. In the letter, express Brian's regret at her husband's death. Do you think expressing your sorrow helps the grieving person?

Chapter Two

4. Most students in today's schools learn CPR in a health class. Assume the pilot is out of the plane lying on the runway. What steps would you take in a situation like this to help revive the pilot?

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10. Brian's head injury makes it difficult for him to keep track of time. Have you ever suffered an injury that disoriented you in time or place? What was it? How long did it take you to return to normal? Describe what the confusion felt like.

Chapter Five

- Brian tries to think positively and stay motivated. Football coaches often stress the importance of a winning attitude and the competitive spirit. Write about a sports event you observed or participated in when staying positive and motivated contributed to winning the game.
- 12. Do you think it is believable that the search planes are unable to find Brian? Are there any wildernesses left that were empty of human life? Where are they? Would you like to be in a place that has no other humans around?

Chapter Six

- 13. If you could have only one friend with you in a life-and-death survival situation like the one Brian faces, which of your friends would you want with you? Write about the qualities this person has that would make him or her a valuable companion.
- 14. Brian is lucky to have survived the plane crash. How much of an element do you think luck plays in one's life? Describe a time in your life in which luck, not skill, helped you.

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Chapter Eight

- 22. Brian soon learns that self-pity is a waste of time. Suppose you have classmates who constantly complain because they feel sorry for themselves over small problems. Write one of these people an advice letter similar to the kind a "Dear Abby" columnist would write.
- 23. By remembering his dream, Brian figures out a way to make fire. Describe a dream you remember. Did you learn anything from it? Do you think dreams can predict the future? Can they help you solve today's problems? Or do you think dreams do none of the above?
- 24. From the first chapter, Brian wishes for a fire and finally gets one. Do you see any point in wishing for things? Have any of your wishes come true? What were they?

Chapter Nine

- 25. Brian uses the scientific knowledge he has learned in school to start the fire. How practical do you feel the things are that you learn in school?
- 26. Fire is Brian's friend, guard, and protector. Some people feel comforted by fire; others fear it. What are your feelings about fire?

Response Journal

Chapter Fourteen

- 41. Brian is upset when a skunk steals his turtle eggs. Write an entry in a diary that you think Brian would have written that night.
- 42. After he works hard to improve his shelter, it is now "home" for Brian. What do you suppose makes a building or structure a home? What elements are necessary to make a "house" a "home"?
- 43. In the story, Brian's survival depends on his ability to learn from his mistakes. Can you think of an instance when you or someone you know learned from mistakes or failed to learn from them? Explain.
- 44. By trapping live fish, Brian is keeping food for the future. How good are you at planning for future needs? If you're not good at it, can you think of ways to get better?