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The Sign of the Beaver
Elizabeth George Speare



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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.

The Sign of the Beaver

CHAPTER ONE

1. Matt helps his father build their log cabin. Can you remember helping a relative or someone else build something? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not?
2. Matt's father gives him his grandfather's watch to keep him company. It is a family heirloom. Are there any heirlooms in your family? What do you think of them?
3. It is inconceivable in today's world for a boy of thirteen to be left alone for six or seven weeks. Can you think of any reason today that a father might do so? What do you think would be the most difficult part of being left alone at your home for seven weeks?
4. After Matt is alone, he can't resist shooting his father's gun. He knows he shouldn't waste the bullet, but the temptation is too great. Have you ever been told by your parents not to do something, but then you were tempted to do it?

CHAPTER SIX

14. Matt realizes the Indians have been watching him all along. Have you ever experienced a violation of your privacy? How did it make you feel?
15. Matt tries to repay Saknis by giving him a book. When he discovers Saknis can't read, Matt is worried he has offended the old man. Have you ever said or done something, with good intentions, that turned out to be offensive?
16. Saknis cleverly devises a plan that will benefit both Matt and Attean. Matt really has no choice and agrees to the terms. Did you ever make a bargain with a friend or family member? How did you negotiate the terms of the agreement? Did both sides honor the agreement?

CHAPTER SEVEN

17. In trying to teach Attean to read, Matt experiences some frustrations. Have you ever tried to teach someone something? How did it go?
18. Attean, unhappy that the lessons will take a year or more, knocks the book on the floor and leaves. Have you ever been discouraged when trying to learn a new skill?
19. Most people, when in a situation in which they try to be nice to someone who doesn't like them, usually say, "The heck with it!" and walk off. Matt, however, can't do that. What do you think he should do?

The Sign of the Beaver

CHAPTER ELEVEN

28. Matt is jealous of Attean's dog. He thinks it would be good company. Unfortunately, most of us also feel jealous over a friend's possessions or achievements. What do you suppose someone could do who had these jealous feelings but didn't want them?
29. Matt "wished that it were possible for him to win Attean's respect." In life there is always someone whose respect is important to us. Children sometimes think parents never respect or acknowledge their accomplishments; when told this, though, parents think the child is missing the point or saying it to avoid responsibility. What's your opinion on respect?
30. Attean is clearly the leader. Matt follows him in the forest and learns to survive from the Indian's lessons. Do you know someone who is a natural leader? What qualities does this person have that most of us don't seem to possess?

CHAPTER TWELVE

31. Attean demonstrates the value of patience in making a bow. In our modern, instantaneous world, it is difficult to learn patience. Suppose you have a friend who is very impatient. This person can't even wait for you to finish your sentences but interrupts and finishes them for you. Write a letter of advice to your friend on the value of patience.
32. While Matt practices with his new bow, Attean doesn't give him any advice on how to hit the target. It is, he says, something learned only through experience and practice. That's an interesting thought. How much of that do you suppose might apply to your life?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

37. The danger from the bear comes suddenly and without warning. We don't usually encounter bears in our daily lives, but there are dangers. Write this incident as it would happen in modern times. The boys are in the city instead of the forest. What kind of danger can they face? How will they overcome it?
38. Attean is very sexist, because he refuses to do woman's (squaw's) work. How is the work divided in your household? Are there both jobs for boys and for girls? Do you think the division is fair?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

39. Write a newspaper story about the big Indian celebration. Be sure to include the essential elements of who, what, when, where, why, and how.
40. The Indian children are curious about Matt and try to touch him, much the way fans might try to touch a superstar. Write a dialogue between two Indian children bragging about getting near the white boy.