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 **Prestwick House**
Response Journal
Reflections: A Student Response Journal



Into the Wild
Jon Krakauer



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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.

Into the Wild

Note to the Teacher

The teacher should be advised that there are instances of profanity and vulgarity in *Into the Wild*. This should be taken into account when determining what grade level is appropriate for teaching the novel.

Author's Note

1. Something about the Alaskan wilderness draws Chris McCandless to it, even to the point of giving up everything he owns so can go there to pursue a more independent life—one in which he lives off of the land and apart from society.

Based on what you've seen in movies, on television, in books and magazines, or on the Internet, free write for several minutes describing everything you know about Alaska and/or wilderness areas in general. Be as descriptive as you can, and include as many facts and details as you can recall.

2. Shortly after his college graduation, and without telling his family or friends, Chris gives up everything—family, friends, money, college, his given name, his possessions—in search of a transcendent experience. He feels as though something important is missing from his life, some deeper meaning to his existence. Look up the word “transcendent” in a dictionary.

Think about what it means, and then write a paragraph or two to explain why you think people might believe they could have a transcendent experience in a place like the Alaskan wilderness.

Into the Wild

6. As part of his attempt to leave his former life behind, Chris changes his name to Alex. Imagine you have decided to change your name as a way to reflect a change of lifestyle, attitude, or beliefs.

Write a journal entry in which you state what your new name will be and why you chose it. Also, write about changes in your life this new name signifies. Express why you have decided to make these changes. Describe what about your old way of thinking or living wasn't working and what you hope will be changing in your life besides your name.

7. Chris feels confident he will be able to handle any situation that might arise in the Alaskan wilderness, even though Jim Gallien tries to warn him otherwise. In an essay, describe a time you didn't listen to advice from someone who seemed to know better than you. Tell what the situation was—describe the circumstances, the person, and the setting. Explain how it all turned out and whether you now believe you did the right thing by ignoring the advice you were given. Cite specific examples from your experience to illustrate your explanation and opinions.

Chapter Two: The Stampede Trail

8. Several people come upon Chris's dead body in the abandoned bus before someone finally contacts the authorities to investigate what happened to him.

Imagine you are a newspaper reporter who hears about the discovery of a mysterious dead body, and you have been assigned to cover the story. Write a newspaper article using the journalistic approach of telling the who, what, where, when, why and how of a story. Using only the facts as they are given in this chapter, write as detailed an account as you can.

Into the Wild

23. By the end of this chapter, Ralph, previously a devout Christian, has turned his back on God and the church and is living in the desert much like Chris had. He has also experimented with going back to drinking alcohol to help him forget his sorrow and loss. Now in his nineties, Ralph seems lost.

Based on what you know about his past life and the choices he has made, predict how you think he will spend the rest of his life. Will he live in the desert? Will he continue drinking? Will he return to his faith? Will he make any new friends? Explain what you think will happen to him by answering these questions, and include any other predictions about Ralph's future that you can think of.

Chapter Seven: Carthage

24. Chris seems to be able to find odd jobs whenever he needs money. Over the course of the book he has worked at McDonald's and on a farm, hitchhiked all over the country, hopped freight trains, lived in the desert, and camped in an abandoned bus. He also has a college degree in history and anthropology, and while attending college, he worked as a writer. With all of this life experience, work experience and education, if he needed to, Chris would be able to write an interesting resumé at this point in his life. Write that resumé for him. If you don't know how to properly format a resumé, either go to the library for a book on resumé writing, or look for information on the Internet.

Keep in mind that the point of a resumé is to "sell" oneself to a prospective employer by highlighting one's strengths, interests, skills, and goals. In addition to writing Chris's resumé, select a position in a specific type of business he would be likely to apply for if he needed the money to further his traveling goals. Write the resumé with that position and business in mind.

Into the Wild

29. Sometimes all it takes to get a good feel for what a person is like is spending one day with him or her. Imagine you have just spent one entire day in the Alaskan wilderness with one of these men, towards the beginning of one of their adventures: Chris McCandless, Gene Rosellini, John Waterman, or Carl McCunn.

Write a diary entry detailing everything you did during your day and how you felt about it. Also, describe the person you spent the day with. Explain what he looked like, acted like, talked like, etc. Decide if, given the chance, you would want to spend another day with this person, and tell why. Be specific.

Chapter Nine: Davis Gulch

30. Everett Reuss and Chris McCandless seem to be kindred spirits; they seem to share the same ideas about living in the wilderness and getting by on their own with very few supplies or equipment. They both left behind families in search of a deeper connection to nature and to their own inner lives. It seems if they had met, they might have become good friends.

Imagine that the two lived at the same time, and that Chris had heard of Everett's explorations of the Utah desert. As Chris, write a letter to Everett. In your letter, express your admiration of Everett's life and adventures and tell him about yours. Invite him to visit you in Alaska and describe to him what it is like there, and what adventures the two of you might have there. Then, as Everett, reply to Chris. Decide whether or not you want to join him, and explain the reasons behind your decision.