

Brian's Winter Study Guide

Brian's Winter by Gary Paulsen

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Brian's Winter Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Part 1, Fall: Chapters 1-2.....	5
Part 1, Fall: Chapters 3-4.....	7
Part 1, Fall: Chapters 5-7.....	9
Part 2, Winter: Chapters 8-10.....	11
Part 2, Winter: Chapters 11-14.....	12
Part 2, Winter: Chapters 15-17 and Epilogue.....	13
Characters.....	14
Objects/Places.....	17
Themes.....	19
Style.....	21
Quotes.....	23
Topics for Discussion.....	24



Plot Summary

Brian's Winter is a novel by award winning writer Gary Paulsen. As a result of many letters sent to Mr. Paulsen by fans of Hatchet and The River, Mr. Paulsen writes this novel in which he pretends Brian is not rescued after fifty-four days lost in the woods with only a hatchet. Instead, Brian must face the winter alone. Brian discovers flint and makes arrowheads so he can kill larger prey, uses rabbit and moose skin to make himself warm clothing and even finds a way to make snowshoes so he will not sink in the snow while hunting. Brian's Winter is a "what if" scenario that takes a beloved character back to the woods and shows readers why he survives the woods in the first place.

The shooting pin on the gun Brian finds in the survival kit on the plane breaks, forcing him to return to his reliance on his bow and arrows. Brian lives on rabbit, foolbird, and fish stew for weeks as fall comes on. Brian misses the signs until it is nearly too late. A week long rain storm leaves Brian only too aware of the coming winter and the difficulties he is about to face.

One morning Brian sees two wolves mark their territory on a log near his camp. Brian decides to mark the same log in the hopes of keeping the wolves out of his camp. A short time later, Brian wakes to find a bear in his camp searching for an easy meal. Brian hits the bear to make it move, causing it to become angry. The bear knocks down the wall of Brian's shelter and knocks him down to the river and steals his fish bait and some of his fish.

Brian continues to survive on his own, hunting each day for rabbit or foolbird. One night, Brian hears the wolves again. In the morning, Brian goes to remark the log and sees two wolves walking away with fresh meat. When he is sure they are gone, Brian searches for their kill. Brian finds a deer that still has most of the meat on its shoulders. Brian cuts it away and takes it back to his camp. Brian finds that he has enough meat to last weeks, making it possible for him to concentrate on winterizing his camp.

Drawn by the smell of the meat, a skunk shows up at Brian's door. Brian feeds it and discovers that it has built itself a home under a rock that forms a wall of his shelter. Brian befriends the skunk and names it Betty. One night, also drawn by the smell of the meat, the bear returns. Just as it looks like the bear might kill Brian, the skunk arrives and sprays the bear. Afterward, Brian decides he must find a better way to protect himself than his bow and arrow. Brian makes a spear using the same flint he used for the arrowheads on his larger bow and arrows.

Brian goes hunting shortly afterward and comes across a moose. Brian shoots an arrow at the moose, but this only makes her angry. The moose charges Brian twice and he manages to kill it with his spear. Brian takes the moose meat back to his camp and leaves it out in the snow where it freezes. The meat lasts Brian a long time.



As winter grows colder, Brian makes himself snowshoes and begins exploring the woods further away from his camp. One night Brian hears gunshots. The next morning, Brian goes to explore the area where the shots came from. Brian stumbles upon the camp of a Cree trapping family. Brian stays with them for three weeks until their supply plane comes. Finally Brian goes home.



Part 1, Fall: Chapters 1-2

Part 1, Fall: Chapters 1-2 Summary

Gary Paulsen writes a novel called *Hatchet* in which his character, Brian Robeson, survives a plane crash only to be forced to survive for fifty-four days in the woods with only a hatchet. Many of Paulsen's fans write to him and complain that the experience should have been more difficult for Brian. In response to these letters, Paulsen writes *Brian's Winter*, a book that pretends Brian is not rescued after fifty-four days, but has to face winter alone in the woods.

In chapter 1, Brian has been lost in the woods for more than fifty days. The hunger bothers him the most, causing him to have dreams of all the food he would like to be eating. This hunger comes back after Brian uses up all the freeze-dried food he finds in the emergency pack on the plane. Also in the emergency pack is a .22 rifle that Brian has been using to hunt. However, when Brian goes out to hunt one day, he discovers the firing pin in the gun has broken. Brian goes back to his small bow and arrow to kill a rabbit that he boils for his evening meal. Brian then busies himself checking his fish supply and cleaning up his shelter. That night he sleeps like a baby.

In chapter 2, two weeks pass. Brian notices a wolf that passes his camp on a regular basis. The wolf marks a log above Brian's camp so Brian goes and marks it himself to let the wolf know his boundaries. A short time later, Brian wakes one morning and finds a bear sitting in the entrance to his shelter, searching for the food Brian cooked the night before. Brian hits the bear to scare it away, but instead the bear becomes enraged and pushes Brian down toward the river. Then the bear steals the bait Brian has been keeping and a few fish before moving on.

Part 1, Fall: Chapters 1-2 Analysis

In these first two chapters, the reader learns that Brian has been lost in the woods for fifty-four days, the result of a plane crash. At first Brian only has a hatchet with him, but later he finds an emergency pack on the plane that contains a .22 rifle, fishing gear, a knife, and freeze-dried food. Brian utilizes each of these things for his own survival. However, the rifle breaks and Brian is left once again with the small bow and arrow he built to hunt with. This primitive weapon makes it possible for Brian to kill small animals for his meals, but is too small to protect him from larger predators. This fact becomes obvious when Brian finds himself face to face with bear. Now the reader wonders what Brian might do to protect himself in the future.

Winter is coming on, but Brian has repeatedly missed the signs. The reader who has read the previous novels featuring Brian has watched him survive in the sun, fighting mosquitoes and skunks. However, winter changes a place and it creates new

challenges for a child lost on his own, leaving the reader wondering what will happen to Brian as winter comes on, especially since it appears he is not prepared for it.



Part 1, Fall: Chapters 3-4

Part 1, Fall: Chapters 3-4 Summary

In chapter 3, Brian decides he needs a strong weapon, so he begins to build a larger, stronger bow and arrows. After several days, Brian becomes aware that it is growing colder and he realizes winter is coming. Brian turns his eye to the shelter, attempting to figure out how he can make it winterproof. Brian considers finding a way to place a fire inside the shelter. At the same time, a storm appears to be blowing in. As Brian continues to work on his arrows and think about all these small problems, he realizes he will need a sharper point on his arrow to kill larger prey. Brian remembers seeing some arrowheads in a sporting goods store back home. Brian draws an outline of the designs he remembers and thinks about making arrow heads of his own out of stone. The next day, Brian goes hunting with his old bow and arrow and manages to kill both a foolbird and a rabbit with the same arrow.

In chapter 4, the rainstorm begins and lasts much longer than Brian is prepared for. During the summer the rain often lasts a full day, but no longer. This storm lasts eight days. In the middle of it, Brian is forced to go hunting or starve. The rain penetrates Brian's clothes, but the wood is so wet that the little Brian has only burns long enough to dry his clothing. Brian's sleeping bag is also wet, forcing him to sleep in moisture all night long. When the rain finally ends, Brian again turns his attention to winter-proofing the shelter. Brian cuts a hole in the roof of the shelter so that he can place a fire inside. Brian also presses mud and leaves into the wood wall to keep the moisture out.

Brian turns to finding stones to make arrowheads. As Brian searches, he remembers the fire rock that sparked when his hatchet hit it, allowing him to make a fire. Brian thinks this rock might be flint. Brian strikes the stone with his hatchet and is happy when flakes fall off that are sharp and the right size for arrowheads. Brian makes nine arrowheads for his new, larger arrows. Brian then thinks about his clothing. Brian has only a pair of jeans and a thin t-shirt. Brian decides to use the rabbit skins he has always saved, sew them together, and see what that will make.

Part 1, Fall: Chapters 3-4 Analysis

Brian decides to make a larger bow and arrow as protection against large animals like the bear. Brian clearly has a clear head and knows what his priorities should be. After building the bow and arrows, a rainstorm hits, forcing Brian to finally come to terms with the idea that winter is coming. Brian finds ways to winterize his shelter, suggesting to the reader that he is in for the long haul as far as winter is concerned. Brian is determined to survive and his every action proves that he has the strength and mentality to survive.



Brian finds a flint rock and begins making arrowheads out of it like the Indians did many years before. The way Brian creates a place for his fire in the shelter also comes from the Indians. The connections between Brian and the Indians grow stronger the longer he is alone in the woods, showing the reader how smart both Brian and those ancient peoples were and how those tried and true methods will help Brian survive.



Part 1, Fall: Chapters 5-7

Part 1, Fall: Chapters 5-7 Summary

In chapter 5, Brian turns the sewed rabbit skins into a vest he can wear over his shirt. When he is done, Brian goes to mark the stump above his camp again, afraid the rain washed away his scent. Brian sees a wolf with fresh meat in its mouth. Another appears, also with fresh meat. Brian thinks the wolves made a kill nearby, so he goes in search of it. Quickly Brian finds a dead deer that still has usable meat on its shoulders. Brian quickly drags, then carries, the deer to his campsite and carves the meat away. When Brian is done, he discovers he has more than thirty pounds of meat, enough to last him weeks. That night, while enjoying this new meat, Brian puts feathers on his new arrows with string from his old windbreaker and sap from a tree.

Brian discovers a skunk outside his tent. To keep it from spraying him, as happens earlier in his adventure, Brian throws the skunk some meat. The skunk takes the meat and disappears.

In chapter 6, Brian searches his camp for signs of the skunk, but cannot find any and thinks the skunk has gone. Instead, it turns out the skunk has burrowed under one of the rocks that make up Brian's shelter. The skunk appears every morning for a new hunk of meat. Later that day, Brian takes his new bow and arrows out for a test run and finds that they shoot much further than his smaller arrows. As he uses it, Brian realizes the larger bow would not be good for protection, but with it he can hunt much larger animals.

In chapter 7, Brian wakes in the night to find a bear attempting to get at the remaining deer meat in Brian's shelter. Brian is pushed out of the way by the bear and then the bear comes after him again. However, the skunk comes out of its burrow and it sprays the bear in the face. The bear runs off, angry. The next morning, Brian spends some time repairing his shelter. Then he decides to build a lance with a larger point than the arrowheads for protection.

Part 1, Fall: Chapters 5-7 Analysis

Brian uses his newly learned skills to make a vest to wear over his shirt when the weather grows colder. Brian also finds a new source of meat in the kill of two wolves. This provides a great deal of meat, more than Brian can get from a rabbit or foolbird. However, it also attracts a skunk, causing the reader to wonder what else might be attracted by the smell of the meat.

Brian creates a larger bow and arrow that he originally thinks he can use to protect himself from bears. However, Brian decides to use the bow and arrow to bring down larger prey. This kind of kill could feed Brian for weeks, making it easier both on his level of energy and his conscious, which is bothered by having to kill at all. However, there



are problems with killing larger prey that leaves the reader wondering if Brian might not be biting off more than he can chew. Tension is added to the plot when the bear attacks in the middle of the night, leaving the reader even more concerned for Brian's safety. However, Brian again shows great strength when he decides to build a lance, or spear, for protection.



Part 2, Winter: Chapters 8-10

Part 2, Winter: Chapters 8-10 Summary

In chapter 8, still concerned about his clothing situation, Brian makes sleeves for his vest. Brian then spends a day making boots to fit over his quickly disintegrating tennis shoes. The next morning, when he wakes, Brian discovers that it has snowed. The woods look completely different in the snow. As Brian walks around in the snow in his new boots, he realizes that the snow makes it possible for him to see the tracks of every animal in the woods, and to follow them.

In chapter 9, Brian goes hunting. At first he thinks he will kill rabbits, but soon Brian finds himself looking for larger prey. When Brian finds moose prints, he follows until he comes upon a female moose like the one that attacked him months before. Brian hides in a small opening in the ground until the moose comes close enough and he fires an arrow into her chest. The moose sees him and charges, knocking him over. When the moose comes back, Brian is ready with the lance, jamming it into the moose's chest. The moose falls on Brian, knocking him out.

In chapter 10, Brian wakes to find himself under a dead moose. Brian begins dissecting the moose by first removing the skin on its right side. Brian then removes the hindleg and drags it to camp. Brian returns, removes the front leg and drags it to camp. Finally, Brian removes some of the meat from the moose's hip and shoulder. Now Brian can turn the moose over and he repeats the procedure on the other side. Eating some of the meat as he works, Brian carefully makes multiple trips back to camp until he has all the meat he could possibly need.

Part 2, Winter: Chapters 8-10 Analysis

The weather changes significantly in these chapters, showing Brian once and for all that winter has arrived. Brian makes himself more clothing, hoping to stay warm during hunts. Brian then goes hunting, using fresh fallen snow as a tool to help him find his prey. Brian targets a large moose and manages to kill it, barely escaping death. Taking it back to camp proves to be a problem, but once again Brian shows his intelligence by taking it back a little at a time. Brian is truly an intelligent young man who uses both instinct and knowledge to survive.

Part 2, Winter: Chapters 11-14

Part 2, Winter: Chapters 11-14 Summary

In chapter 11, the rains come again. It rains for eight days straight, but this time Brian is warm and snug inside his shelter. The only time he has to leave is to get firewood. After the rain comes more snow. This time it is not a soft snow, but a snow driven into everything by the wind. Brian decides to make a coat out of the moose skin. It is very tough when it dries, but Brian rubs it against wood to soften it.

In chapter 12, Brian realizes it is after Thanksgiving and he decides to make a Thanksgiving feast for himself. Brian picks some small red berries and boils them into a sauce, serving them with a moose roast. During his meal, Brian stops to give thanks for all he has that has helped him to survive this ordeal.

In chapter 13, Brian hears gunshots in the middle of the night. The next morning, Brian goes in search of the source of the gunshots, but when he sees a tree explode in front of him, he realizes what he hears is the sound of trees blowing up as the frozen sap inside them attempts to expand.

In chapter 14, when he goes looking for wood, Brian becomes frustrated that the snow comes over the top of his boots and causes his feet to get wet. Brian decides to make a pair of snow shoes, but it takes him a while to figure out how. Finally Brian takes two pieces of wood shaped like bows and ties them together. Brian then weaves strips of hide between the pieces of wood and makes the webbing. Then Brian uses a single strip of hide to bind the shoes to his feet. After experimenting for a time, Brian is able to walk in the shoes and stay above the snow.

Part 2, Winter: Chapters 11-14 Analysis

Brian discovers that winter is much less active than summer, especially since he has begun killing bigger animals. Now Brian's day is filled with making clothing and eating, rather than all the chores he had to do in the summer. When Brian hears gunshots, he thinks he has been found, but it turns out to be trees exploding in the cold. This warns the reader again that Brian is in a very difficult position and could very much find himself freezing to death in the right circumstances. However, Brian once again proves his intelligence in his design and manufacturing of snowshoes. Every time Brian has a problem, he quickly finds a solution.



Part 2, Winter: Chapters 15-17 and Epilogue

Part 2, Winter: Chapters 15-17 and Epilogue Summary

In chapter 15, Brian is beginning to run out of moose meat, so he goes in search of another animal. Brian follows the track of a deer and comes across a young buck. Brian shoots the buck with an arrow and it slowly dies. Brian feels guilty, but would feel worse if he just left it without taking the meat. This time when Brian carves up the buck, he is able to drag all the meat back to camp on the buck's hide.

In chapter 16, the weather is beginning to grow warmer. Brian begins walking all around the woods, once going so far that he spends the night away from his camp. On one of these treks, Brian sees wolves take down a moose and eat it. Brian slowly walks away and returns to camp, where he hears gunshots in the distance. Brian at first believes it is trees exploding again, but realizes it is too warm for trees to explode.

In chapter 17, Brian decides to check out the sounds he heard the night before. Brian walks past the dead moose and promises to come back for the leftover meat. Brian continues on for miles when he sees a line in the snow. Brian investigates and believes that it is a person following a wolf trail. Brian follows the marks only to discover a small shack outside of which are malamutes, sledding dogs. A man comes to the door and invites him inside.

Epilogue. Brian learns that the man and his family are Cree trappers who live there trapping all types of animals in the winter. The family is supplied by a plane that comes every six weeks. Brian stays with the family until the plane comes three weeks later.

Part 2, Winter: Chapters 15-17 and Epilogue Analysis

Brian has become quite self-sufficient. If necessary, Brian could more than likely survive for years out in the woods now that he has learned to kill bigger prey and to defend himself. However, dangers still lurk as Brian himself points out when he sees the wolves. Therefore, it is a relief for the reader when Brian finds humans out in the woods and a way back to civilization. The sound of gunshots, once mistaken for exploding trees, is a welcome sound to Brian even though he cautions himself that it could be something from nature. However, few things in nature can imitate that sound outside of the exploding trees. Brian is rescued, but the reader will note his hesitation. Brian has already come to love and respect nature and is reluctant to leave it.



Characters

Brian Robeson

Brian Robeson is on his way to visit his father in Canada when the pilot of the single engine plane dies of a heart attack. Brian manages to keep the plane in the air until the engine dies, causing them to crash into a lake. Brian survives with only the hatchet his mother gave him as a gift before he boarded the plane. In the original novel, *Hatchet*, Brian survives by using his wits and his hatchet. Also in the original novel, Brian is rescued after activating an emergency beacon in the plane after a tornado brings it to the surface of the lake. However, in response to hundreds of letters from fans of the novel, the author writes this book, *Brian's Winter*, to show what might have happened if Brian had not activated the emergency beacon.

Brian finds the emergency pack, but the firing pin of the gun quickly breaks and Brian is left once again to shooting a bow and arrow for his food. Brian survives on foolbirds and rabbits, as well as fish. However, when he comes across the remains of a wolf kill, Brian discovers the benefits of larger prey. Brian makes a bigger bow and arrow, originally for protection, and kills a moose and a large buck with it. This makes getting food much easier for Brian because these larger animals can feed him for weeks, especially when winter comes on and the meat freezes in the cold.

Brian survives a long winter, in part because he remembers some of the techniques of the Indians and is able to provide himself with warm shelter, clothing, and food. However, there are still animals in the woods that might one day turn on Brian, such as the wolves he has watched at the end of their hunt every few days and the bear who has twice invaded Brian's camp. Therefore, when Brian stumbles upon a Cree trapping family, he jumps at the chance to live with other humans. However, the return to civilization is a little harder than Brian imagined it would be.

Brian's Mother

Brian can remember his mother watching him as he climbs on board the single engine plane for his trip to see his father. Brian knows a terrible secret about his mother, but he cannot make himself tell his father. As Brian lives out his winter alone in the woods, he finds himself often dreaming of his mother. Brian holds no grudge against his mother, but his dreams focus on a time when he, his mother, and father were still a family. This shows the reader how deeply affected by his parents' divorce Brian is and how his need to survive has helped him block out some of the resentment and simply focus on the good memories.



Pilot

Brian is in the woods this winter because the pilot with whom he flies into Canada from New York dies of a heart attack. The pilot shows Brian how to fly the plane in the moments before his death, helping Brian fly the plane for several hours before crashing into the lake. As the winter unfolds, Brian thinks of the pilot only once, giving thanks that he survived the crash and is not in a watery grave in the lake like the pilot.

David Smallhorn

David Smallhorn is a Cree trapper who spends his winters in the woods several miles from the lake where Brian's plane crashes. David becomes aware of Brian almost from the moment he and his family arrive in the woods, but they give him space because many bush people prefer to be left alone. When Brian hears David firing his gun in the woods, he thinks it might be trees exploding from the cold, but then realizes it is too warm for the trees to explode from frozen sap. Brian goes in search of the sound and stumbles onto David's small home. It is through this meeting with David that Brian is rescued.

Bushplane Pilot

David Smallhorn is resupplied every six weeks by a bushplane that brings perishable food and other supplies. When the plane comes three weeks after Brian finds David and his family, he is given his chance to return to civilization. The bush pilot rushes Brian to leave so that he can avoid approaching weather. Brian hesitates, but finally he returns to civilization with the bush pilot.

Smallhorn Children

David Smallhorn's children are very curious about Brian. Brian begins to tell his story and has so much to say that the children grow drowsy before the story is over. Brian finishes the story the next day. The children quickly become a big part of Brian's life, helping him forget his loneliness and struggle to survive.

Bear

A bear comes twice to Brian's campsite. The first time, the bear is hungry and in search of the meal Brian ate the night before. Brian finishes the meal and washes the pot, but the smell lingers in the air. The bear attempts to kill Brian when he pushes at him, reminding Brian of the dangers of living alone in the woods. The bear then takes some of Brian's fish bait and fish. Later, another bear comes to the camp. The reader is not clear if this is the same or a different bear. This bear can smell the deer meat Brian has in his shelter and he attempts to steal it. However, a skunk living near Brian scares it



away by spraying the bear. These attacks encourage Brian to make the larger bow and arrows and later the spear.

Wolves

There is a wolf that often passes Brian's camp as it circles its hunting grounds. This wolf begins bringing a young wolf with it as winter approaches. Brian sees the wolves mark their territory just above his camp and he marks the same place to warn the wolves to stay away. Brian believes that this is going to keep him safe. Later, Brian sees the wolves shortly after they have killed a deer and taken all the meat they can from it. Brian salvages the rest of the deer and provides meals for himself for weeks. Toward the end of winter, Brian witnesses a couple of wolves take down and eat a moose while it continues to live, reminding him how savage the animals are and the danger they pose to his safety.

Deer

Brian begins to think in terms of larger prey when he salvages meat from a deer killed by wolves. Later Brian will kill a buck himself, taking from it everything he could use. Brian feels guilty about both kills, leaving the head of the original deer in a tree so it can overlook the woods, while apologizing to both deer. Brian can only assuage his guilt by telling himself that everyone needs to eat, humans and deer alike.

Betty the Skunk

Betty the Skunk is a skunk who comes into Brian's campsite and makes a home for itself under a rock that makes up part of his shelter. The skunk comes out every morning and threatens to spray Brian if he does not offer up a piece of meat. Brian calls the skunk Betty because it reminds him of an aunt who walks basically the same way. When the bear comes into Brian's camp to steal the deer meat, the skunk saves Brian's life by appearing out of nowhere and spraying the bear in the face. Not long after this, Betty disappears and Brian does not see her again.



Objects/Places

Hatchet

Brian has a hatchet his mother gave him that he uses to survive until he finds the emergency packet on the plane.

Knife

Brian finds a knife in the emergency pack on the plane and uses it as a tool to make clothing, bows and arrows, and to carve up meat.

.22 Rifle

Brian finds a .22 rifle in the emergency pack on the plane, but its firing pin breaks in the beginning of this novel.

Fire Rock

There is a dark rock in Brian's shelter that he calls fire rock because he begins making fires with sparks that emit from this rock when he hits it with his hatchet. Brian later realizes this rock is flint and he uses it to make arrowheads and a point for his spear.

Large Bow and Arrow

Brian creates a large bow and arrow out of hard wood with the intention of having something to protect himself with, but later uses it to hunt large animals.

Spear

Brian makes a spear to protect himself from any animal that might try to get into his shelter. Brian uses this spear to kill a moose.

Rabbit Hide Shirt

Brian makes himself a rabbit hide shirt by sewing together more than a dozen rabbit hides he dries after eating the rabbits.



Moose Hide Jacket

Brian makes himself a jacket out of a moose hide taken from the female moose he kills for food.

Boots

Brian makes a pair of boots out of deer hide to wear over his quickly disintegrating tennis shoes.

Shelter

Brian creates a shelter out of three rocks that sit close together and a single wooden wall. Brian weatherproofs this shelter by placing lake mud in the wooden wall and fashioning doors out of wood and mud.

Bushplane

Brian goes home on a bushplane that arrives to resupply the Smallhorn family.

Lake

Brian makes his camp on the shore of the same lake where his plane crashes months before.

Themes

Survival

Brian has already survived fifty-four days alone in the woods after a plane crash when this novel begins. In a prior novel, Brian is rescued at this point, but the author rewrites his story in order to satisfy his reader's curiosity. In this novel, Brian must survive winter before he can be rescued. Brian finds a gun, two lighters, fishing gear, and other survival items in the plane on which he crashed. Brian uses the gun exclusively for a time, but when the firing pin breaks, Brian finds himself once more reliant on a bow and arrow. Brian survives by eating rabbits and foolbirds, but eventually realizes that winter is coming on and he must think bigger.

By the time winter comes, Brian has learned to survive. Now what Brian must do is learn to survive better. Brian winterizes his shelter and discovers the benefits of larger animals for food. Brian takes leftover meat from a wolf kill and finds it so much more beneficial than rabbits. Brian creates a larger bow and arrow and uses it to first bring down a moose and then a large buck. Brian uses the animal hides to make clothing and uses old Indian tricks to keep his shelter warm with the use of fire.

Brian is an intelligent child and the fact that he has survived the summer proves this fact. Winter is a whole different animal, a situation that Brian's summer has only marginally prepared him for. This winter Brian must find bigger and better ways to survive. Brian does that. When help arrives, Brian discovers that he has survived so long, he is almost unwilling to return to the real world.

Loneliness

When the novel first opens, Brian has recently finished eating the freeze-dried food he found in the emergency pack. This brings back Brian's thoughts and dreams of the food he left behind in civilization. These dreams bring a longing in Brian for the girls he liked before and the girls he will not be able to date in the future. Brian also dreams of his parents, of the time before the divorce, and of normal things in the real world. Brian is lonely.

Brian befriends a skunk even though he was previously sprayed by a skunk and suffered the difficulty of dealing with that situation. Brian also finds himself grieving for the animals he kills, most notably the deer. Brian still has a great deal of humanity inside of him and this is revealed in his guilt and his desperation, revealing a loneliness that very few people will ever truly understand. Being alone in the wilderness is not just about survival, but about staving off the ill effects of loneliness, making this a theme of the novel.



Ancient People

When Brian makes the larger bow and arrow, he realizes he must give the arrows a point that is sharper than the fire hardened points on his smaller arrows. Brian thinks of the arrowheads he saw in a sporting goods store back home and comes to realize that the Indians knew this already. The Indians recognized the problem and they created different arrowheads for different types of prey. Brian uses this memory to design the types of arrowheads he wants to make. However, finding the right material proves to be a problem until Brian recalls the flint rock in his shelter that helped him create the first fire he had upon his arrival in the woods. From these, Brian is able to replicate what the Indians did hundreds of years before.

Brian needs to make his shelter warm. Brian investigates different possibilities until he recalls the movies he saw about Indians and he cuts a hole in the top of his shelter. Brian realizes that many of the problems he is having are problems the ancient people before him had and worked out in different ways. Brian feels a connection with these ancient people that makes him feel less alone and more capable of surviving. Therefore, ancient people are a theme of the novel.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third person point of view. Brian Robeson is the main character. Brian is in a plane crash more than two months before the novel opens, one in which he is left to survive alone in the woods with only a hatchet. The point of view follows Brian as he prepares for winter and learns to adapt to his surroundings using his intelligence and his instincts.

The point of view of this novel makes sense because for the majority of the novel there is only one character. However, if the reader were to be too close to that character, if the point of view was first person, the reader might be confused by Brian's quickly moving mind and the confusion he often feels under new circumstances. The author of this novel often inserts information into the narration that the character cannot possibly know, building tension while keeping the character in the dark as to his possible future. This makes the novel suspenseful while keeping the reader close enough to the main character to care about what happens to him.

Setting

The novel is set in an unknown range of woods in Canada. The main character came to this place because of a plane crash in which he flew off course for more than three hours. Even the main character does not know for sure where he is. The woods border on a large lake, with several other lakes and ponds dotting the area. The woods are filled with wild animals, but there does not appear to be any type of civilization in the area.

The setting is perfect for this novel's plot. The plot centers around a young boy who is forced to survive alone in the woods with only a few survival articles to help him. The young boy is in the woods, next to a lake. This setting provides both shelter and water for the young boy, but also wild animals that could prove dangerous to the boy. In this way, the setting presents the perfect number of aids and obstacles to make the boy's survival a uncertainty.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written for young children, therefore the language tends toward simplicity. The novel is written in a language that does not talk down to the young audience, but seems to speak to them on their own level. This creates a language that lacks slang, foreign phrases, and any other type of language that might confuse the very young, but creates a story that is both exciting and easily understood.



The language of the novel fits with the target audience as well as the age of the main character. The main character is only fourteen years old, too young to be highly educated or to speak with a language that is confusing to the reader. For this reason, the language of this novel works perfectly not only with the characters, but with the intended audience as well.

Structure

The novel is divided in two parts, Fall and Winter. These parts divide the story by the two seasons through which Brian finds himself having to survive on his own in the woods. The novel is also divided into seventeen chapters and an epilogue. Each chapter takes the reader through the various events that cause Brian to first recognize the winter coming and to take steps to protect himself through that winter.

The novel has only one plot. The plot follows Brian as he discovers winter is coming on and he begins to make plans to protect himself throughout the winter. Brian meets up with wolves who have killed a deer and this takes Brian down the path of killing and eating larger prey. Brian is also attacked by a bear and this takes him down the path to the creation of a spear that will save his life when he is charged by a female moose. The plot comes to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.

Quotes

"Fall came on with a softness, so that Brian didn't realize what was in store—a hard-spined north woods winter—until it was nearly too late." Part 1, Fall: Chapter 1, pg. 5.

"Brian took foolbirds or rabbits every day and on one single day he took three foolbirds." Part 1, Fall: Chapter 2, pg. 15.

"But still worse, with the rain he did not think he could hunt and so had no food." Part 1, Fall: Chapter 4, pg. 33.

"And Brian was alone." Part 1, Fall: Chapter 5, pg. 45.

"He would hunt big tomorrow, he thought. He would try to get a deer." Part 1, Fall: Chapter 6, pg. 58.

"Time seemed to stop." Part 2, Winter: Chapter 9, pg. 77.

"A good—no, he thought, his brain closing down, a great day. A meat day. A moose day." Part 2, Winter: Chapter 10, pg. 85.

"He could do that. Have a Thanksgiving meal." Part 2, Winter: Chapter 12, pg. 92.

"By the third shot he was on his feet and had pushed the door away and was standing in the opening." Part 2, Winter: Chapter 13, pg. 97.

"That night the temperature dropped like a stone, so that he heard trees exploding again, but he slept hard and down and tight in his shelter and dreamed of walking on white clouds..." Part 2, Winter: Chapter 14, pg. 111.

"Brian had discovered there are almost no straight lines in nature." Part 2, Winter: Chapter 17, pg. 126.

"And Brian turned and stepped up into the plane." Epilogue, pg. 133.



Topics for Discussion

Who is Brian Robeson? What does the reader who comes to this book without reading the prior books know about Brian Robeson? What does the forward tell the reader about the book? About Brian? Is it possible for a new reader to come to this book without prior knowledge of the other books and not become confused? Explain.

Why is Brian in the woods alone? What brings him there? Why does it take Brian so long to recognize the coming winter? What does Brian do to prepare for winter? How does this preparation make it possible for Brian to survive the winter easier? Should Brian have moved from his campsite? Should Brian have tried harder to find rescue? How might Brian have found rescue at that point in the story?

Why does Brian take the carcass of the deer the wolves killed? What does Brian do with it? Why does Brian put the leftover meat in his shelter with him? What problem does this cause? What does the eating of the deer meat lead Brian to do for future meals? For what reason? How is this dangerous for Brian?

Why does Brian make the larger bow and arrow? What is his original intention with the bow and arrow? Why does Brian adjust his thinking about the bow and arrow? What does Brian then use the larger bow and arrow for? Is this successful? How does making the arrows for the larger bow and arrow lead Brian to discover the true nature of the fire rock? What does he use the fire rock for? Does it work? Who uses this rock for this type of thing before Brian?

Why does the bear come into Brian's camp the first time? What does it want? What mistake does Brian make with the bear? Why does the bear come into Brian's camp the second time? Why does Brian think the bear is going to kill him? Would it have? What stops it? For what reason? Why is Brian not bothered by bears the rest of the winter?

Where does Brian see wolves attacking a moose? What does he feel when he sees that attack? What about this attack causes Brian to feel fear? Is Brian afraid for his own life or the life of the moose? Why does Brian return to the moose the following day? Why does Brian prefer to take the meat from the wolves' kills than to kill himself? What does Brian feel each time he commits a kill during the hunt? For what reason? What does this say about Brian?

Who is David Smallhorn? Why does he not tell Brian he had seen him when he first came to the woods? Why does he expect Brian will come to him eventually? Why does he wonder at how long it takes Brian to come? Why does David ask Brian about his clothing? How does David finally arrange for Brian to return home to his family? What might Brian's family have thought when he disappeared? When he is rescued? How does this book fit in with the other Brian books?