

# **Woods Runner Study Guide**

## **Woods Runner by Gary Paulsen**

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## Plot Summary

"Woods Runner" is the story of Samuel Smith, a thirteen-year-old boy living on the western frontier of Pennsylvania in 1776. Samuel lives with his parents, Olin and Abigail, in a settlement of small cabins surrounded by thick woods. Samuel's parents are newcomers to the frontier, having been raised and educated in eastern cities. Samuel, however, has grown up on the frontier and is most at home walking and hunting in the deep forest. His skills have far outpaced those of his parents and he has become the provider for his family.

While on a solitary hunting excursion several miles from home, Samuel sights a plume of smoke rising from his settlement. He rushes back to find that the small group of cabins has been burned to the ground and several settlers brutally killed. Using his tracking skills, he determines that his parents survived the attack and were carried away as captives. Later Samuel learns the attackers were British soldiers assisted by Iroquois Indians and that the attacks were part of the larger Revolutionary War that was now in its early days.

As Samuel follows the trail of his parents' captors, he rescues an eight-year-old girl named Annie Clark whose parents are killed by Hessian mercenaries fighting for the British. Moving through the woods and underbrush to avoid detection, they make their way to New York City where Samuel believes his parents are being held as prisoners of war. On the road to the city, they are helped by a Scottish tinker named Abner McDougal who turns out to be actively engaged in spying against the British.

With Abner's help, Samuel makes his way to British-controlled New York City, locates his parents, and rescues them in a daring escape across the Hudson River to New Jersey. Led by Samuel, the family, which now includes Annie as an adopted daughter, makes its way cross country toward Philadelphia, which is held by colonial forces. Samuel narrowly escapes death when he stumbles onto a British detachment in the woods, but is saved by rebel soldiers who fire on the unit and escort his family to safety. Samuel later returns to the fighting in support of a group of riflemen.

"Woods Runner" also contains brief historical notes which are alternated between the narrative passages and which provide factual information about life in wartime in eighteenth-century America. These sections, the author explains, are to provide as realistic a backdrop as possible for the narrative elements of the story. They serve to accentuate the challenges endured by the main character and depict the sometimes ugly reality faced by children during wartime.



# Chapter 1 and Communication

## Chapter 1 and Communication Summary

Samuel Lehi Smith is 13 years old and lives with his parents in a cabin in western Pennsylvania in 1776. It is a wilderness frontier area with very thick woods filled with deer, bear, panthers and other wild creatures. As Chapter 1 opens, Samuel is hunting for deer with his rifle. He is alone, and moves quietly through the forest. Unlike his city-raised parents, Samuel has grown up in the forest and has an intimate knowledge of the woods around his home.

He stands stock still, waiting for a deer to appear. As he waits, he thinks over the two worlds he and his family seem to inhabit. His parents have moved to the frontier to escape city life, which he knows about from their stories. They are avid readers, and he has learned a great deal about the "east" from the books the family reads aloud to one another in the evenings.

Then there is the dark, thick forest where very few people live. Samuel has learned a respect for the woods where men are not always the top predator. In his journeys along the narrow paths of the forest he has come across the bodies of men who have been killed by bears or Indians. He recognizes and respects the dangers.

A deer appears and Samuel holds his breath as he slowly raises his rifle and prepares to fire it. He levels his sights on the deer, aiming at its heart. He nearly fires, but hesitates. He realizes he was not concentrating on the shot, but thinking about his family and home and recent news that had just arrived. The deer turns and sees him and bounds into the forest.

Samuel lowers his gun and makes his way back to the cabin. He thinks over the news that had arrived the night before when a man had come to the cabin with a piece of paper. The supposedly civilized people in the East were now engaged in war.

A section entitled "Communication" explains that in the 1776 the fastest form of communication was by ship. Communication over land, however, was carried by horse, by coach or by foot. A horse could cover 30 to 40 miles a day. A coach could cover up to 100 miles in a day with regular fresh horses and good roads, but good roads were scarce. On foot, news could travel up to 15 miles a day at the fastest, and often it took news several days to travel even a few miles.

## Chapter 1 and Communication Analysis

The main character of Samuel Smith is introduced in the first chapter and his considerable skills as a "woods runner" are described. These skills will make it possible for Samuel to survive his journey to the east while tracking his parents' captors and avoiding enemy troops. His success in this adventure is made more believable by



establishing that he has above average abilities compared to other boys his age. Paulsen also demonstrates the Samuel is not squeamish about death. In his forays into the woods he has come across the bodies of those who have been killed by animals or Indians. He is familiar with death and recognizes death as a possibility in his own life.

in the section called "Communication," Paulsen also sets the stage for the adventure ahead by explaining the relatively slow pace of life on the frontier where traveling long distances may take several days rather than the minutes or hours it takes now.



# Chapter 2, Frontier Life and Chapter 3

## Chapter 2, Frontier Life and Chapter 3 Summary

Chapter 2 opens the following day. A man named Isaac has come to the Smith house in the frontier settlement with a worn piece of printed paper that tells of a battle at the Massachusetts towns of Lexington and Concord where militia forces defeated British troops. The battle had happened several months before. As Olin Smith, Samuel's father, reads the news the other families in the settlement crowd into the cabin to hear what Olin thinks. The settlers are skeptical that anyone would be so bold as to challenge the British army, which is the largest in the world. They decide they should wait for more news before taking any kind of action.

In a section called "Frontier Life," the author explains that settlers on the frontier found a ready supply of land, but it had to be cleared before it could be settled and farmed. The forest was very thick in places, and trees had to be felled and the stumps dug out by hand. It was very hard work.

In Chapter 3, Samuel is hunting bear and has travelled about 8 miles through the woods away from his cabin. He comes to the top of a ridge he has not seen before and sees a large open area of meadow that would make good ground for settling. Behind him he hears a noise and he turns to see a brown bear digging at a stump. He raises his rifle but again does not fire. He is distracted by smoke rising up from the direction of the settlement. At first he thinks someone is only burning brush, but the smoke is too heavy. It suddenly occurs to him that there may have been some kind of attack on the settlement. He is far from home and it will be dark before he can reach his cabin, but he hurries off in an urgent rush, worried about his parents.

## Chapter 2, Frontier Life and Chapter 3 Analysis

The underlying cause of Samuel's adventure is the Revolutionary War. Chapter 2 introduces this cause in the form of news carried from far away to the east. Samuel does not understand the root meaning of the war, or which side he is or ought to be on. He understands killing, however, and sees no sense in killing other people. He will have opportunity to examine his own thoughts on killing later in the story.

Samuel's adventure is set into motion in Chapter 3 as he is far from home hunting bear. His almost supernatural senses alert him to the strange nature of the heavy smoke he sees rising above the woods and he acts almost before he has fully understood why. This quick-acting trait of his will be displayed several more times when he is suddenly confronted with surprising situations.



# Weapons, Chapter 4 and The Americans

## Weapons, Chapter 4 and The Americans Summary

In a section called "Weapons," Paulsen describes the essential rifle needed by every frontier family for hunting. These were relatively expensive items, but absolutely necessary. The British army at this time carried a musket called the "Brown Bess" It shot a ball that was not very accurate. The Brown Bess muskets were also fitted with bayonets, which were blades that fastened to the end of the barrel to act as a weapon.

In Chapter 4, Samuel is still hurrying as fast as possible to the settlement. As he nears it, he smells what he knows is the smell of death amid the smoke. The settlement has been burned down. He does not rush straight into the settlement in case the attacker are still present, but after he is sure nobody is still around he goes to his cabin to look for his parents. He does not find their bodies, but as he looks around the settlement he finds the bodies of some of the other settlers, apparently hacked to death with blades. One of the men is scalped, and three of the dead are young children. He does not find his parents. After dark, Samuel quickly digs shallow graves for each of the dead settlers, then falls asleep with some difficulty.

In a chapter called "The Americans," Paulsen describes the American military at the time of the Revolution. There were militia, which were largely untrained and loosely organized groups who sometimes fled in battle. The Continental Army was the regular army of trained and drilled soldiers. There were also smaller groups of Rangers who used guerrilla tactics and carried technically superior rifles that shot much more accurately than muskets.

## Weapons, Chapter 4 and The Americans Analysis

Although he is desperate to learn what has happened to his parents, Samuel approaches the burned-out settlement cautiously, like a hunter who is stalking. He is able to focus sharply in the face of potential danger, a trait that will serve him well on his adventure. Despite his young age, Samuel takes a practical and methodical approach in looking for survivors and taking care of the dead.

In the historical notes, Paulsen provides factual information about the military capabilities of the British and American forces. Although Samuel does not yet know it for certain, British soldiers were responsible for the attack on the settlement. Paulsen foreshadow's Samuel's discovery by describing the weaponry of the redcoats.

# Chapter 5, The British and Chapter 6

## Chapter 5, The British and Chapter 6 Summary

Samuel's skill from growing up in the woods are on display in Chapter 5 as he examines the evidence left at the settlement by the attackers. Using his tracking skills he spots the tracks of his parents' moccasins showing that they were moving quickly and pushed or dragged for a time. He finds the tracks of larger, flatter feet in moccasins, but also the tracks of men wearing hard-soled shoes, which were unusual among frontier settlers. From his tracking, he is able to tell that several settlers, including his parents, were captured unhurt and were led away by men on horses, possibly tied together and made to walk behind. Guessing the time of the attack and the speed they were moving he estimates how far the attackers have probably gone. His estimate proves incorrect he is to find out later, as the attackers stop at another settlement and destroy it as well.

In a section called "The British," Paulsen describes the generally poorly trained soldiers of the British army. Despite their poor organization, they were still the most successful army in the world at that time.

In Chapter 6, Samuel is moving along the trail of the attackers, learning what he can from the signs they leave behind. He can tell that the prisoners have been tied together and are being pulled along, forced to move more quickly. He imagines his mother as one of the prisoners and begins to grow angry, but calms himself so he can focus on his tracking. Widening his range, he discovers that several scouts in moccasins are walking alongside the men on horses who are pulling the prisoners. He finds the body of a man on the side of the trail, scalped.

As Samuel approaches a settlement named Draper's Crossing, he sees that the cabins there have been burned as well. There is an old man who calls himself Old Bobby at the settlement burying some of the victims. He has been spared, possibly because he seems to be insane. From Old Bobby Samuel learns that the attackers had come early that dawn. He is gaining on them.

## Chapter 5, The British and Chapter 6 Analysis

The drama is heightened when Samuel, using his tracking skills, follows the trail of the attackers to another settlement that has been burned. Although he finds only one apparently crazed old man, he is able to piece together information that lets him know he is gaining on the attackers.

Samuel has no plan for what he will do once he catches up with the group that has captured his parents, but he is compelled to help them in some way. His ability to focus and use his tracking skills for the short term goal of finding his parents also serve to distract him from thinking too much about the probable danger that they are in.





# The World, Chapter 7 and Warfare

## The World, Chapter 7 and Warfare Summary

In a section called "The World," Paulsen explains that other countries such as Spain, Germany and France became involved in the American Revolutionary War. Native Americans also fought, on both sides.

In Chapter 7, Samuel moves on from Draper's Crossing. He has been moving for forty hours without food or water, and when he comes to a creek he moves away from the trail and crouches down for a drink. As he is crouched, he realizes there are two men standing nearby, but they do not see him because he crouched at just the right time. He sees they are Native Americans who have fresh scalps hanging from their weapons. He has the urge to kill them, but his rifle will fire only one shot and leave him to defend himself against the other man with only a knife. He waits for them to leave, then moves along the trail.

Soon he comes to a large clearing where there is a British camp. Quickly, he ducks into thick brush where he cannot be seen and tries to reconstruct the brief image of the camp he glimpsed before hiding. He recalls seeing a few British soldiers, some horses and cows, nine or ten Native Americans and, huddled near a large fire, a group of captives. He does not see his parents, but imagined they must be among them. He sits and waits for dark and is beginning to think of a plan when "the whole world blew up." (p. 43)

In "Warfare," Paulsen describes the fighting method of the British army, who lined up in three rows, with the front row firing their muskets then falling behind to reload while the next line moved forward and fired. As the ranks grew closer to the enemies, the British soldiers surged forward with their bayonets in a terrifying rush.

## The World, Chapter 7 and Warfare Analysis

Events unfold rapidly in Chapter 7 as Samuel finally catches up with his parents' captors. In one of several strokes of luck he will have over the course of his adventure, Samuel narrowly escapes being detected by two of the Iroquois who are taking part in the British-led raid of the settlements. Aware that he is getting close to his goal, he is especially cautious.

At the end of Chapter 7, Paulsen leaves the action hanging temporarily unexplained. Something ominously surprising has happened, but exactly what is not explained. This technique increases the suspense in the narrative and drives the reader forward to learn what has happened next. Paulson uses this technique in some later chapters as well. The alternating between suspenseful narrative and factual historical notes heightens the suspense.



# Chapter 8, Wounds and Chapter 9

## Chapter 8, Wounds and Chapter 9 Summary

Samuel is surprised by the sudden sounds of muskets being fired and whooping from the Native Americans in the camp. They are dancing around the large campfire and firing their guns in celebration. Through the din he hears another sound, the sound of rifles being fired from beyond the camp. He sees a British soldier and an Indian fall down shot and realizes someone is attacking the camp. Raising his own gun and training it on a British soldier, Samuel is surprised by a sound behind him. He turns to see the two Indians that nearly spotted him earlier rushing toward him. He quickly fires his rifle and sees that he has hit one of them in the chest, but he cannot defend himself from the blow of the second one. He falls unconscious after being hit in the head by the side of a tomahawk.

In a section called "Wounds," Paulsen explains that without antibiotics, infection was a common result of battle injuries. Gangrene frequently set in, where the flesh rotted and emitted a terrible smell. Amputation was often the only resort.

In Chapter 9, Samuel drifts in and out of confusing dreams. He seems to see his mother talking to him and giving him some food, but she has long stringy black hair and is chewing and spitting tobacco. He has the sensation of being bumped around, but has lost sense of time. Finally, he awakes to realize he is lying on a wooden frame near a campfire. A man with long black hair is nearby, spitting tobacco and tending the fire.

The man's name is John Cooper and he tells Samuel he is called Coop. He has been tending Samuel's wound, which appeared to be healing well. Samuel struggles to ask what has happened, and Coop tells him he has been unconscious for nearly a week. They are about 12 miles from the encampment where Coop and some others attacked the soldiers and Indians. Samuel asks about the captives, and Coop tells him they were quickly loaded into wagons by the British, who got away quickly while the Indians disappeared into the woods. They had found Samuel unconscious and determined he was not with the camp. He had been dragged on a frame.

Coop gives Samuel some broth and tells him his clothes and rifle are safe. As he drinks the broth, Samuel thinks of many more questions he has for Coop, but before he can ask them he falls into a deep sleep.

## Chapter 8, Wounds and Chapter 9 Analysis

The suspense from Chapter 7 is resolved at the beginning of Chapter 8. The surprise was the sudden celebration of the Iroquois in their encampment. The celebration soon changes tone, however, when rifle fire from outside the camp interrupts. Samuel quickly seizes on the opportunity, although he does not yet understand what is happening. His

efforts are thwarted when he himself is attacked by the very two iroquois he had eluded earlier.

In this episode, Samuel kills the first of two men he will kill in the novel. In both cases the situation is the same. He is taken by surprise and is in a life-or-death situation. He fires his rifle automatically without thinking, but accurately. Although he was apparently prepared to shoot at one of the British soldiers in the camp, he is never shown intentionally killing another person. Later, when Samuel joins the American fighters as a young man, he does not join the combat but supports the fighters in other ways.

Once again Paulsen ends a chapter with a suspenseful situation that is resolved in the next chapter. Samuel receives a bad wound on the head. In a historical note, Paulsen explains how being wounded was often just as deadly as being killed in action because of the probability of infection. Samuel is saved by John Cooper and a small group of riflemen who are on their way to Boston to join the fighting. Samuel will part ways with the slow-moving group, but as Paulsen describes in the epilogue to the story that Samuel will rejoin them later in his life.



# American Spirit, Chapter 10, The Hessians and Chapter 11

## American Spirit, Chapter 10, The Hessians and Chapter 11 Summary

"American Spirit" explains that the American colonists had an advantage over the British troops because they were fighting on their home ground in defense of their own homes. The British soldiers were often sickly and were fighting far from their homes.

In Chapter 10, Samuel wakes, dresses and eats with the small group of men who saved him. Without speaking, the men load up their gear and put it on a skid pulled behind an ox, then begin walking in a line down the path. Samuel is still weak and has trouble keeping up, but he hangs behind with the ox, holding onto its yoke at times to be pulled along. He has not asked the men what they are doing and since nobody is speaking he does not feel he can say anything. Finally, Coop comes back to walk with him. He explains they are all going to Boston to join with Morgan's Rifles, a fighting unit, to battle against the British. Samuel admits he knows nothing about the war or whose side he is supposed to be on. Coop points out that he ought to be against the side that captured his parents.

After another day, Samuel regains his strength and splits away from the men, who are moving slowly with their gear. Coop gives him some meat and warns him to stay out of sight, as there will be people who want to kill him.

In a section called "The Hessians," Paulsen describes the German troops who were hired by the British during the war. The Hessians had a reputation for brutally slaughtering civilians and looting wherever they went.

In Chapter 11, Samuel moves more quickly on his own and soon comes to a farm. He knows the soldiers have passed by the farm and since they have left it alone he concludes the resident must be sympathetic to the British. He is very hungry and spots some chickens near the barn. Creeping through the woods, he comes out near the barn and is about to grab a chicken when a girl's voice calls out that she has seen him.

A girl of 8 years old is looking down at him from the loft of the barn. She tells him to go ahead and take a chicken. She does not care because she does not like them. Samuel grabs one of the chickens, but the squawking brings a man around the side of the barn. He is holding his gun on Samuel.

Seeing at once that the boy is hungry, the man invites him to come inside to eat. Samuel washes up at the pump and goes in. The house is not a cabin, but a house made of milled lumber, with wood floors. The family is named Clark. The man's name is



Caleb, and he calls his wife Ma. The supper that Ma has prepared is the largest feast Samuel has ever seen. He eats a great deal, with rhubarb pie for dessert.

From Caleb he learns that the British soldiers had been past the farm a few days before, headed to New York City. With them were captives in a wagon. Caleb had seen one of the captives who looked much like Samuel, and Samuel tells him it was his father. Caleb also tells Samuel that he saw one of the British officers take a small chess set and play chess with his father. He had overheard the officer say that he had spared the man's life when he saw the chessboard in his cabin because he wanted someone to play with.

Samuel is eager to move on. He thanks the Clark family and they give him some food to carry with him. He moves along away from the path. Not far from the farm, he encounters a group of soldiers coming in the opposite direction. He hides and watches them pass. They are wearing brown uniforms and he decides they must be Hessian mercenaries from Germany, fighting for the British. They are marching toward the farm. He decides to follow them.

As the Hessians reach the farm they spread out. When Caleb and Ma Clark come out onto the porch, they are immediately shot down. Samuel sees Annie run onto the woods from the house. The soldiers fire at her, but miss. Samuel watches as the Hessians loot the house then burn it down. He decides that he must find Annie.

## **American Spirit, Chapter 10, The Hessians and Chapter 11 Analysis**

The motivation for Cooper and his group is partly explained by Paulsen in a note about the "American Spirit" of the colonists who were roused to fight in defense of their homeland. Samuel learns more about the causes of the conflict from Cooper but is still unclear on the complexities of what has caused the war. Cooper is able to put it in clear context for him. The political and social reasons do not matter as much as the fact that one side has captured Samuel's parents and is holding them captive. This hardens Samuel's motivation to find his parents and he soon splits from the riflemen.

In the note about the German mercenaries known as Hessians, Paulsen sets the stage for the awful slaughter at the Clark farm that is to take place in Chapter 11.

Samuel's wariness is tested when he comes across the Clark farm. He can see that the attackers had stopped there and possibly received food. He concludes that the household must then be friendly to the British. The reality turns out to be more complicated as the farm is inhabited by a pleasant couple who offer Samuel sympathy, information, food and help. The sides are not as clearly drawn as they might have seemed, Samuel learns. He learns that his father was spared death because a British officer had seen a chessboard in his cabin and wanted someone to play with. The British, it seemed, were sometimes capable of compassion.



Paulsen does not portray the Hessians as having any such compassion, however. He describes them as merciless killers and illustrates the point in the episode where they thoughtlessly gun down Caleb and Ma Clark on the porch of their house and try to kill Annie Clark as she runs into the woods.



# War Orphans, Chapter 12 and Civilian Deaths

## War Orphans, Chapter 12 and Civilian Deaths Summary

Part 3, entitled "Green. New York - 1776" begins with a section called "War Orphans." Children who lose their parents during war often suffer psychologically, Paulsen explains. If they are provided a safe and supportive environment they can bounce back, but at the time of the Revolutionary War, most war orphans were not later adopted and many grew up in institutions.

In Chapter 12, Samuel finds Annie hiding in the woods, crying. Despite having no shoes, she is able to keep up with him as he moves through the woods. For three days, she cries and does not eat, then finally has some of the food that Ma had given Samuel. Samuel is wary of everyone, and he avoids houses and settlements, which becomes harder and harder as the path becomes a road and the area becomes more populated. He is moving toward New York, although he knows nothing about cities or how he might get into the city to find his parents.

In the section "Civilian Deaths," Paulsen explains that the deaths of civilians are often not well known in warfare. Vital records are often destroyed in combat, and both sides sometimes keep the number of civilian deaths secret. As fighting technology improved to include cannons and larger guns, more civilians were killed in fighting.

## War Orphans, Chapter 12 and Civilian Deaths Analysis

The brutality of war, especially on children, is one of the central themes of Paulsen's story and he illustrates it at the beginning of the third part of the book. Annie Clark is clearly traumatized after witnessing her parents' murder by the Hessians. Samuel, understanding her situation, rescues her and takes her along with him.

The introduction of Annie into the story provides an extra motivation for Samuel, who now has another person relying on him. He is shown to have a protective side. The two characters share something in common in the loss of their parents and this creates a bond between them.



# Chapter 13, New York City and Chapter 14

## Chapter 13, New York City and Chapter 14 Summary

As Chapter 13 opens, Samuel and Annie are looking at two signs nailed to a tree. One points south to Philadelphia and is marked 41 miles. The other points east to New York City and is marked 38 miles. They duck back into the brush to discuss what to do. Samuel thinks he ought to take Annie to Philadelphia which is held by the Americans and where she will be safe. Annie insists that she stay with Samuel and go to New York. "We go to New York to get our ma and pa," she says (p. 74) and Samuel realizes she has started to think of his parents as her own. Thinking of what she has been through, he decides he is proud to have her as a sister.

They set off in the brush along the road to New York. After a while they hear a clanking sound of something coming down the road and they stop and take cover. Two dogs come running through the brush and begin nudging them toward the road. From the road they hear a voice telling them to come out.

The voice belongs to an old Scottish man named Abner McDougal, a tinker and merchant sitting on a large freight wagon pulled by mules. As soon as he has introduced himself, he perks up and tells Samuel and Annie someone is coming and to get in the back of his wagon and be quiet. They get in the wagon, and soon some British redcoats appear coming down the path. They interrogate Abner about what he is doing and he presents them with a signed pass saying he has permission to trade along the road to New York. The soldiers see Samuel and Annie in the wagon and Abner tells the soldiers they are his grandchildren. The soldiers leave and warn Abner to watch for Americans trying to leave New York for Philadelphia.

Samuel is puzzled as to why Abner would help them or how he knew they were avoiding the British. Abner responds that if they were hiding along a British road he assumed they were avoiding the soldiers. Abner asks Samuel to tell him how he came to be there, and Samuel tells him.

New York City is a large city of 25,000 people Paulsen explains in the section called "New York City," and was where the British kept some 5 thousand prisoners of war. Many of the prisoner were kept in overcrowded conditions on ships in the New York Harbor where death was common from illness.

In Chapter 14, Abner sits quietly after hearing Samuel's story. He asks what Samuel's plan is to free his parents, since there are thousands of British troops in the city. Samuel answers that he does not yet know, only that he must find his parents. Abner offers to help, but Samuel is skeptical and partly distrustful of Abner. He asks why he would want





to help. Abner answers that he hates the British but is too old to fight in the war, so he finds other ways he can help the cause. This satisfies Samuel.

## **Chapter 13, New York City and Chapter 14 Analysis**

Samuel appears to be nearing his goal as he finds signposts pointing to New York City, where he believes his parents have been taken. His protective instincts tell him to take Annie to Philadelphia where she will be safe, but this conflict is quickly resolved when she insists on coming with him. In another stroke of luck, the pair meet Abner McDougal, who offers to help Samuel after learning his story. Abner turns out to be more resourceful than he first appears, a fact that is not only unknown to Samuel but is also only revealed to the reader gradually over the last chapters of the book. Paulsen creates interest in the character by only partly revealing his motivations.

The final scene of Samuel's rescue of his parents is set up with historical notes about New York City, his final destination.



# Covert Communication, Chapter 15 and Civilian Intelligence

## Covert Communication, Chapter 15 and Civilian Intelligence Summary

In "Covert Communications," Paulsen describes some of the ways that British and American forces used secret codes and writing to pass along information on the enemy's movements.

Chapter 15 sees Samuel, Annie, and Abner approaching New York City on the main road. As they travel, they see more and more refugees and American soldiers, some wounded, making their way in the opposite direction. When all of the soldiers seem to disappear into the brush, Abner senses that British troops are on their way. Soon, a unit of redcoats comes marching down the road from the direction of New York City, followed by several supply wagons. The soldiers do not stop, but march through.

After a while, the wagon approaches a farm and Abner says they will stop for a good meal. He pulls his wagon into the yard of the farm and offers to sharpen any tools the farmer has in exchange for a good meal. The farmer seems reluctant, but Samuel sees a glint of recognition in his eye when he looks at Abner.

The farmer begins to bring out several tools and Abner tells Samuel to get the sharpening wheel from the back of the wagon. As he is pulling the wheel out, he notices deep in the wagon is a cage with some live pigeons in it. He wonders why they are hidden away.

After the sharpening, the farmer, who is named Micah, and his wife, Martha, feed the three travelers. It becomes clear that Micah and Abner do know each other, as they discuss the news from New York and Philadelphia. Micah tells Abner that he hears that civilian prisoners are being held in New York in a warehouse and in a sugar mill. Abner tells Micah about the troops moving along the road, and he takes the pigeons from his wagon and gives them to Micah. Writing a message on a small piece of paper, he ties it to the leg of one of the birds and sets it free.

"Civilian Intelligence" is a section that explains how civilians passed along important information to the American fighting forces secretly. Some even pretended to be on the side of the British in order to learn information they could pass along.



## Covert Communication, Chapter 15 and Civilian Intelligence Analysis

Sameel learns that Abner is in reality a kind of spy for the colonial forces, as are some of the farmers along the road to New York. Paulsen describes some of the activities that people like Abner engaged in during the Revolutionary War to pass along information about enemy troops and to undermine the British.

In one scene Abner releases a homing pigeon with a message about British troop movement. He marvels that the bird can fly as fast as forty miles in an hour. This is a nearly unimaginable speed to him and others during this time, accentuating the different pace of life between the eighteenth century and today.



# Chapter 16, Prisoners of the British, Chapter 17 and Treatment of Prisoners of War

## Chapter 16, Prisoners of the British, Chapter 17 and Treatment of Prisoners of War Summary

In Chapter 16, the travelers reach the shore of the Hudson River in New Jersey, across from New York City. The muddy bank of the river is crowded with men and boats, and Abner takes them to a friend named Matthew who will take Samuel and Abner across to the city. Annie is made to stay behind with Matthew's men, although she makes Samuel promise to return.

Matthew lets Abner and Samuel out on the New York side. He tells them he will return every night at midnight for three days, but if they do not return he will assume they have been caught or killed. He tells Abner he will take care of Annie if this happens.

Samuel is amazed at the busy city, where red-coated British soldiers seem to be everywhere, treating the civilians roughly. They are stopped by a soldier and Abner tells him they are on business to bring food to the prisoners. The soldier laughs and tells him not to waste his time, as the prisoners have been "marked for the box." Samuel wonders what this phrase means. He dislikes the sound of it.

Abner hurries through the streets and Samuel rushes to keep up with him. As he is rushing along, he suddenly runs directly into his mother. She is emptying a pail into the street. They are both astonished, she even more so as she had assumed he was killed. She tells Samuel and Abner that she has been made to work for the family in the house where she is emptying the pail, and where she lives. The male prisoners, including Samuel's father, are being held in the sugar mill. The mill is guarded by two guards at the front door, she tells them. Abner asks if she can get a message to her husband to be hiding near the front door of the mill at midnight. She says she can. He also tells her to come down to the street from the house where she is staying at midnight.

"Prisoners of the British" describes further the several British ships that were used as floating prisons for captives. Several men die on each of these ships every day, their bodies thrown overboard.

It is about 7:30 in the evening when Chapter 17 opens. Abner and Samuel walk past the sugar mill and look at the guards. Abner sees some bricks on the ground near the door and formulates a plan. At midnight, he will distract the guard and Samuel will hit him on the head with a brick. Then they will grab Samuel's father, rush as fast as they can to get his mother, and meet Matthew on the river with the boat.



This is nearly exactly how the plan is carried out, with a few differences. After knocking out the guard, they find the front door is locked. They get the key from the unconscious guard, however and open the door. Not only is Samuel's father there, but dozens of other prisoners who all rush out when the door is opened.

Half-dragging his father, Samuel and Abner catch up with his mother and go to the river. Matthew is not there, but they soon hear him approaching. They pile into the small boat and push away as the alarm rises back on the streets. Matthew has brought food for the captives, and as Samuel's father gratefully eats, Samuel tells them about Annie and how he came to find them.

In "Treatment of Prisoners of War," Paulsen explains that it was the responsibility of the families of the prisoners to bring them any supplies or extra food. The British gave them only half the rations they gave regular troops and the food was often old and spoiled.

## **Chapter 16, Prisoners of the British, Chapter 17 and Treatment of Prisoners of War Analysis**

Samuel reaches New York City with Abner's help and in almost impossible stroke of luck literally runs into his mother in the street. This chance meeting provides him and Abner with the information they need to plan their rescue. The urgency of the rescue is heightened by Paulsen's historical accounts of the poor treatment of prisoners by the British and the appalling conditions in which the prisoners are kept.

The plan goes smoothly, but with a few unexpected turns that add suspense to the rapidly moving events. Samuel's parents are greatly surprised and deeply moved that their son has survived to rescue them. They realize that he has really become an adult in most ways and that they owe their lives to him.



# Chapter 18, British Behavior and Chapter 19

## Chapter 18, British Behavior and Chapter 19 Summary

Abner carries the family in the back of his wagon through the dark with Samuel riding in front with him. He tells Samuel they must split up to be safe. He gives him directions to travel west until he reaches a swamp, then to turn southwest and make his way toward Philadelphia. He warns Samuel that there is news of a British defensive line in the area and he may stumble through it. He gives Samuel a compass. Samuel is grateful and thanks Abner repeatedly.

Samuel and his family leave the road toward the swamp before dawn. His father is still weak and cannot move quickly, but Samuel insists they keep moving. He leads the way with Annie following at the rear listening for anything unusual. They reach the swamp and turn to the southwest. Finally they stop and camp, without a fire. Samuel's mother remarks how much he has changed. He is like a different person, she says, and she is proud of him.

"British Behavior" describes the policy of the British troops to terrorize and brutalize the enemy rebels rather than try to compromise to find peace. They often killed indiscriminately and burned homes and farms.

In Chapter 19, the family continues to move along slowly toward the southwest. As their food dwindles, Samuel shoots a raccoon to provide fatty meat for his father's recovery. He makes a very small fire to cook it, afraid that they might give themselves away. After a few days they begin to see more signs of civilization. There are cross paths in the woods and they have to walk wide of farms. Samuel is very careful crossing the paths, looking both ways and sending his family scurrying across so they will not be spotted. Without thinking, however, he steps out of the brush onto a path and finds he is standing just a few feet from a group of British soldiers on horseback.

The soldiers are peering into the woods, listening, and for a moment they do not see Samuel. Suddenly he is spotted and one of the soldiers raises his gun while another wheels around on his horse. Samuel raises his rifle and as he is knocked over by the horse he fires it, killing an officer. All of a sudden, gunfire breaks out from across the path and several of the soldiers and horses are killed while others run off.

From out of the woods step several American soldiers. They ask Samuel what he is doing in the woods, and Samuel's father steps forward to explain they are refugees from New York where he and his wife were held prisoner. The soldier offers to let them ride with them to the safety of Philadelphia in exchange for any information they can give about the British in New York. They agree, of course, and soon they are on their way to safety. Samuel lags behind the group, thankful that his adventure is finally over.



## Chapter 18, British Behavior and Chapter 19 Analysis

The dramatic rescue of Samuel's parents is only the beginning of their escape to safety. In the final chapters Samuel has the added challenge to lead them away from British-held territory to Philadelphia. On his own once again after leaving the company of Abner, Samuel knows he must use his woods skills to hide his family as they make their way slowly southwest.

Samuel's considerable skills do not completely protect him, however. In an unusual lapse, he steps out of the brush into a road in full view of a group of British soldiers. This episode is the second time Samuel kills a man. Just as in the earlier attack, he is raising his rifle to fire when he is startled and shoots his weapon accidentally, killing a British officer. With only a single shot rifle, Samuel appears to be doomed, but he is saved by the sudden and fortunate appearance of a group of colonial soldiers who fire on the British.

As Samuel's family is escorted to Philadelphia by the soldiers, the full impact of what he has done finally hits him. He has carried an enormous weight up to this point and feels as if the weight has been lifted.



# Epilogue and Afterword

## Epilogue and Afterword Summary

In an epilogue, the author describes the lives of Samuel's family after reaching Philadelphia. His parents do not wish to return to the frontier and they take a house in Philadelphia where they start a school for orphaned children. After three years Samuel is sixteen and he feels the need to return to the war to pay back the people who had helped him rescue his family. He goes north to Boston and joins Morgan's Rifles with Coop and the other men who saved him. He does not fight, but supports the men by hunting for food and working in camp. After Coop dies of dysentery, he decides to leave the fighting and return home. Before he returns, however, he goes back to the clearing where he had first found his captive parents and thinks over the previous years. He had thought it was all over, but the war continued on.

In an afterword, Paulsen explains that part of his intention for writing the story was to illustrate some of the more atrocious aspects of war that were often left out of other dramatic stories. The American colonists were not well trained in fighting, and the infection and disease from wounds and unclean camp living as well as battle deaths combined for a very high death rate. Paulsen estimates that about half of the Americans who fought in the war dies from injuries, wounds or disease. He finds it astonishing that even with this high death rate they were able to fight and win their independence.

## Epilogue and Afterword Analysis

Paulsen sums up the subsequent years following Samuel's adventures in a brief epilogue. He decides he must return to help fight the British, but he has apparently developed a moral objection to killing. Instead, he joins with Cooper and the other riflemen who had saved him earlier and supports them by working in their camp and hunting for their food. He witnesses even more horrific brutality and is finally moved to leave the fighting after watching the terrible slow death of his friend Coop from dysentery. In a final note, Paulsen explains his goal to illustrate exactly this kind of ugly truth about warfare that he feels have been left out of other stories.





# Characters

## Samuel Smith

Samuel Smith is 13 years old at the beginning of the story, living with his parents in a settlement of cabins in the deep woods of western Pennsylvania in 1776. Samuel is the son of two educated parents who have little experience with frontier life, and he surpasses them in his practical survival skills, becoming their main source of support from his hunting.

Samuel is aware of death at a young age and he is morally opposed to killing others. His views arise partly out of his own experience having killed two men in self defense. He is a quick-witted boy who has an almost supernatural ability to sense danger and react quickly in dangerous situations. When his parents are captured by British troops and his neighbors slaughtered, he is able to contain his rage and desire for revenge and focus on the single-minded task of finding his parents and rescuing them.

Samuel is successful in his mission and eventually leads his family to safety on colonial territory. As a sixteen-year-old boy, he returns to the fighting in the Revolutionary War. He does not engage in combat however, but takes a supporting role hunting and helping in camp.

## Abner McDougal

Abner McDougal is a Scottish tinker, a person who travels from place to place providing minor repair services and sharpening tools and knives. He travels in a large wagon pulled by mules with two dogs named William and Wallace who keep him company and alert him to the presence of approaching enemies.

McDougal is an older man with a large beard. He maintains an air of eccentricity, but is secretly involved in espionage against the British. Using forged documents and passes, he talks his way past inquisitive soldiers and carries information back and forth between enemy and colonial territory.

McDougal finds Samuel and Annie hiding along the road to New York City and offers to help rescue Samuel's parents. He is instrumental in the success of the plan, leading Samuel to the place where his father is being held and arranging for escape by boat. He parts ways with Samuel and his family after giving Samuel careful instructions for finding his way to Philadelphia.

## Annie Clark

Annie Clark is an 8-year-old girl who is orphaned when her parents are gunned down by Hessian troops on their own front porch. She escapes into the forest and is later found



by Samuel, who takes her with him to New York City. She is later adopted as a daughter by Samuel's parents. Annie is a strong girl who keeps up with Samuel and does not complain. She is traumatized by her parents' death at first, but appears to recover after becoming attached to Samuel.

## **Olin Smith**

Olin Smith is Samuel's father. An educated man, Olin has taken his family to the Pennsylvania frontier to escape the bustle of city life. He reads widely and is respected by his neighbors as an intelligent man whose views are important. He enjoys playing chess, which saves his life when an attacking British officer spares his life so he will have an opponent at the game. Olin is taken captive and put in prison in a sugar mill in New York City from which he is rescued by Samuel.

## **Abigail Smith**

Abigail Smith is Samuel's mother. Like her husband, she is an intelligent person raised in the city who has come to the frontier to escape her urban lifestyle. She is somewhat afraid of the wilderness, however, and admires her son's comfort in the woods. Along with her husband, Abigail is taken prisoner by the British and hauled to New York City where she is made to become a housekeeper for a loyalist family. She is rescued by Samuel.

## **Matthew**

Matthew is a fellow countryman of Abner McDougal who owns a small trim sailing boat on the Hudson River. Matthew ferries Samuel and Abner to the city on their rescue mission and also evacuates Samuel and his family after their rescue.

## **Caleb Clark**

Caleb Clark is the father of Annie Clark. He is a farmer with a neatly kept farm with a large painted barn. Caleb Clark catches Samuel stealing one of his chickens and invites him in for a large meal. He provides Samuel with news of his parents, who had passed by his farm with their captors. Caleb is gunned down unarmed on his porch by Hessian troops.

## **Ma Clark**

Ma Clark is the wife of Caleb Clark and the mother of Annie. She is a kind and generous woman who feed Samuel and provides him with provisions for his journey. She is shot down along with her husband on the porch of their house.



## **Micah and Martha**

Micah and Martha are farmers that are sympathetic to the colonial cause and friends of Abner McDougal. They provide Abner, Samuel, and Annie with a good meal on their way to New York. Micah and Abner maintain a network of intelligence involving messages carried by homing pigeon.

## **John Cooper**

John Cooper is a rough rifleman from Pennsylvania who nurses Samuel to health after he receives a head wound from an Iroquois. He travels to Massachusetts to join Morgan's Rifles, a fighting unit, where he later dies from dysentery.

## **Morgan's Rifles**

Morgan's Rifles are an elite group of riflemen who use guerrilla and surprise tactics against British forces. John Cooper and later Samuel join the group.

## **The Redcoats**

Redcoats is a general terms for the trained British soldiers who wore uniforms made of red cloth.

## **The Hessians**

Hessians were German troops hired by the British government to support them in battle. They are depicted as being brutal and merciless in killing innocent civilians

## **The Iroquois**

The Iroquois were a Native American tribe, some of whose members were hired by British troops to assist in raiding frontier settlements.



# Objects/Places

## Western Pennsylvania

Samuel's family's cabin is in a settlement in western Pennsylvania, an area considered the frontier of the American colonies at the time. It is a secluded place and many day's travel from the nearest city. The land is hilly and heavily wooded.

## The Woods

Samuel is most at home in the woods, which are made up of enormous trees that form a thick canopy. The woods are inhabited by dangerous animals such as bears and panthers, and Samuel has a deep respect for the danger.

## New York City

New York City has about 25,000 residents at the time the novel takes place. It is located on the island of Manhattan in New York state, across the Hudson River from New Jersey. In 1776 it is held by the British forces and is where many prisoners of war are held.

## Hudson River

This is the wide river that separates New York from New Jersey. When Samuel first sees the river, he wonders if it is the ocean.

## Philadelphia

This is a large city in Pennsylvania that is held by American forces. Samuel and his family relocate to Philadelphia after their adventure.

## Lexington and Concord

These are two towns in Massachusetts where fighting first breaks out between British forces and colonial rebels. News of the battle is carried on foot to Samuel's home on the frontier.



## **Brown Bess Musket**

This is a type of weapon carried by British troops. The barrel of a Brown Bess musket is smooth on the inside and it fires a round ball that does not fly very accurately. The musket is also fitted with a bayonet on the end to be used in close combat.

## **Pennsylvania Rifle**

This is a Pennsylvania rifle is a more accurate shooting weapon than the smooth-bore musket. It is an expensive item, but a crucial one for anyone living on the frontier, both for hunting and defense.

## **Revolutionary War**

This is a war fought between England and the English colonists in America. Beginning in 1776, the war lasted eight years and resulted in hundreds of thousands dead. The Americans eventually won the war, gaining independence from England.

## **Boston**

This is a large city in Massachusetts. John Cooper and his companions are making their way to Boston to join the fighting against the British.



# Themes

## Coming of Age

Although Samuel act like an adult in many ways as the book opens, he undergoes a change over the course of his adventure that significantly changes his outlook. Raised in the woods, he is most comfortable on his own, being self-reliant and living independently. When he loses his parents to British captors, he is driven to keep his family together and follows the trail to their rescue.

Along the way, he experiences the more populated areas of the eastern colonies for the first time. Uncertain about who he can trust, he remains wary and skeptical of others. He indeed finds out that people are not always what they seem, but sometimes in a positive way, such as when he discovers the loud and eccentric Abner McDougal is also a spy against the British.

Samuel also displays a protective side when he rescues and helps the young Annie Clark, an orphan whose parents have been killed by raiding Hessians. He is willing to take on adult responsibilities.

This is even more prominently illustrated once he has rescued his parents and must use his woods skills to bring them safely to Philadelphia. His parents, who have noticed the change in their son, place themselves under his charge recognizing that he is responsible for keeping them alive. After they have been delivered safely into the hands of friendly troops, Samuel is relieved of the enormous weight he has been carrying, but he is also exhilarated at his accomplishment. His sense of relief does not last. Now an adult, he has developed principles he wants to fight for and he leaves his family to support the colonial troops.

## The Brutality of War

In the afterword of the novel, Paulsen writes "the simple fact is that all combat is outrageous - thousands and thousands of young soldiers die horrible, painful deaths lying in their own filth, far from home, weak and hallucinating, forgotten and lost" (p. 120). He has kept this in mind while writing "Woods Runner" with the aim of showing some of the uglier parts of war that he feels are often left out of other stories.

Toward that end, much of the narrative and many of the historical notes in the book illustrate the results of combat. Children are orphaned or themselves gunned down. Wounds fester and lead to gangrene and amputation or death. Camp life leads to dysentery and a slow painful death by dehydration. War prisoners are malnourished and mistreated

Samuel is exposed to these things at a young age, which is in itself a kind of brutality. Children at this time were required to "grow up" at a much younger age, he explains.

Some were traumatized by what they experienced. The character of Samuel, however, is able to channel his reactions into forming a moral sense about killing. Although he kills two men in self-defense, he eventually decides that killing is senseless.

## The Revolutionary War

Paulsen expresses his opinion of the scrappy American colonial forces in the afterword to his book. "The men fighting, and dying, in the War for Independence were, for the most part, average young workingmen with little or no military training...That these young men and boys stood to as they did, in the face of withering odds, and actually won and created a new country with their blood, is nothing short of astonishing" (p. 121).

In the historical notes, Paulsen explains some of the reasons that these untrained rebels may have beaten their better-trained enemies. They were fighting on their home ground and were motivated to defend it, especially against troops such as the Hessians who were Germans hired to fight for the British. Some of the atrocities by the Hessians, such as the one that Samuel witnessed, motivated colonial Americans to fight back even more.

The fighting style and weaponry of the Americans was better suited for the fighting terrain. The British style of fighting in the open with inaccurate muskets was not compatible with the colonists who used the more accurate rifle and were expert at moving and hiding in the forest.

Finally, since the colonists were fighting on their own ground they had a superior knowledge of the terrain and networks of neighbors and friends by which they could secretly pass information. Paulsen illustrates this kind of home-grown intelligence with the characters of Abner and Micah, two seemingly plain men who actually have a spying network set up.



# Style

## Point of View

"Woods Runner" is told from the point of view of Samuel Smith, a thirteen-year-old boy who has been raised in the frontier forests of western Pennsylvania. The narrative sections of the novel are written from an omniscient and third-person viewpoint so the reader is aware of Samuel's thoughts and motivations. As a hunter, Samuel is no stranger to death, but he is deeply moved by the sight of dead people who have been scalped or brutally cut down by enemy soldiers. As a result his point of view is that violence should be avoided unless it is absolutely necessary. His early experiences have also made him wary of strangers and uncertain of who is a friend or a potential enemy.

The book is divided between narrative sections told from the point of view and brief non-fiction sections where the author presents factual information about life in the eighteenth century. The author brings his own point of view to these historical notes, as he describes in the afterword. Paulsen wishes to illustrate some of the unpleasant aspects of warfare that he feels are usually left out of other similar stories. Paulsen appears to share much of the same point of view of his main character, Samuel.

## Setting

"Woods Runner" is set in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York in 1776, during the American Revolution. The book opens in the forests of western Pennsylvania where the main character Samuel Smith has grown up to be an expert hunter and woodsman. Samuel lives with his parents in a cabin that is part of a small frontier settlement. When his settlement is attacked and burned Samuel begins to travel east. As he does, he comes across more thickly populated areas where the houses are made of lumber and are closer together. Ultimately he makes his way to New York City, one of the largest cities in the colonies.

Paulsen evokes the setting in time by describing many of the facts of everyday living in the eighteenth century. In brief historical notes, he describes frontier life, warfare, weaponry, and the challenges faced by colonists who lived at the time of the novel. Most of the action of the story takes place over a few weeks in 1776, however in an epilogue Paulsen explains how the war went on for eight years. He briefly describes Samuel's role in the war supporting a group of riflemen until he is sixteen, at which point he returns to western Pennsylvania then to Philadelphia where his family has relocated.

## Language and Meaning

Paulsen uses two types of prose writing throughout "Woods Runner." He alternates fictional narrative with brief historical non-fiction sections that describe elements from





the story. In the narrative sections, Paulsen makes frequent use of period slang and patterns of speech that indicate the background of the speaker. Samuel's educated mother and father speak in complete sentences with proper grammar, for example. By contrast, John Cooper, the rough rifleman who treats Samuel's wound, speaks informally, as when he says "Don't take much thinkin'. Them that starts in to killing people for no reason ... they's the bad ones" (p. 57). The character of Abner McDougal, who is Scottish, uses Scottish words and phrases. In the narrative and descriptive passages, Paulsen uses short, direct sentences that create an urgent pace to the story that fits the subject matter. When Samuel realizes that his suspicions about the origin of the smoke he sees from a distance are correct, Paulsen writes "Samuel smelled it before he saw anything. Not just the smoke from the fires. But the thick, heavy smell. Blood. Death. No." (p. 26).

The historical notes are brief factual statements that describe various facts about life in eighteenth-century America. They are alternated with the narrative chapters, which often end on suspenseful notes. By alternating the types of writing, Paulsen heightens the suspense between the rapidly-moving narrative sections.

## Structure

"Woods Runner" is made up of 19 numbered chapters and 18 brief non-fiction sections that each describe an aspect of life during the Revolutionary War, when the story takes place. The chapters are gathered into three titled parts.

Part 1 is called "Green: The Forest - 1776." In this part, the main character Samuel is introduced and his skills as a woodsman are demonstrated. Samuel's parents and the small settlement where he lives are described. The first part ends when Samuel is on a hunting foray in the woods and sees the smoke from an attack on his home settlement.

Part 2 is called "Red: War - 1776." In this section, Samuel becomes aware of the war raging in the American colonies as he trails the group of British soldiers who captured his parents. He rescues a young girl who also survived an attack and the two of them make their way toward New York City, where they expect Samuel's parents are being held as prisoners.

Part 3 is called "Green: New York City - 1776." This final section describes Samuel and Annie's journey to New York City with the help of a man named Abner McDougal. Once in New York, they manage to find Samuel's parents, rescue them, and escape to the safety of Philadelphia.

Paulsen ends the book with an epilogue that briefly describes Samuel's life in the years after his adventure serving in Morgan's Rifles on the side of the colonists. In an afterword, he describes his motivation for writing the book.



## Quotes

"And yet Samuel loved the forest now. He knew the sounds and smells and images like he knew his own mind, his own yard. Each time he had entered he'd gone farther, learned more, marked more trees with his knife, until he always knew where he was. Now he thought of the deep forest as his home, as much as their cabin." (Chapter 1, p. 10).

"The only thing that came easy to people of the frontier was land. A single family could own hundreds, even thousands of acres simply by claiming them. If getting the land was easily accomplished, using the land was a different matter." (Frontier Life, p. 19).

"Samuel smelled it before he saw anything. Not just the smoke from the fires. But the thick, heavy smell. Blood. Death. No." (Chapter 4, p. 26).

"Young British officers in England, when they were being shipped out to fight in the colonies, were told to 'settle your affairs and make out a proper will because the rifleman will almost certainly kill you.'" (The British, p. 36).

"The water was muddy where the creek crossed the trail, so he moved off into the thick underbrush twenty yards upstream to where the creek ran clear. He knelt to put his mouth to the water and this act saved his life." (Chapter 7, p. 41).

"Untreated battle injuries often led to gangrene, which causes the body to literally rot away, turning first green, then black, from infection that travels rapidly. Because antibiotics were unavailable in the eighteenth century, amputation was the usual treatment." (Wounds, p. 47).

"Coop spit - the men all spit, almost all the time. Samuel had once tried tobacco, first in a clay pipe, then taking a chew, and it had made him sick as a dog. He couldn't see the sense in using it, but all these men seemed to chew all the time. And spit like fountains." (Chapter 10, p. 56).

"Children orphaned by war, a countless were during the Revolutionary War, suffer from nightmares and sleeping problems, headaches, stomachaches, anger, irritability and anxiety. Severely traumatized children may become withdrawn, appearing numb and unresponsive and sometimes becoming mute." (War Orphans, p. 68).

"'What's to think about?' Annie said. 'We go to New York to get our ma and pa.' She did not realize what she said, but Samuel heard the words. Something had happened in her mind, she'd found a way to stand it all, to keep going." (Chapter 13, p. 74).

"The soldiers came marching in a file. Not Hessians but regular British soldiers. There must have been two or three hundred of them, as near as Samuel could estimate, marching in loose route step, followed by supply wagons. They did nothing threatening,



they didn't stop at all, except to work around the wagons that couldn't get out of the way soon enough." (Chapter 14, p. 87).

"Samuel had never even imagined such a place. Houses and other buildings everywhere, built on the land next to the open water. And that water was another thing he'd never seen. 'Is that it?' he asked. 'That water - is that part of the ocean?'" (Chapter 16, p. 93).

"It was over now, he knew. The run, the madness, listening to every crack of a twig, worrying over every brush of a leaf. his parents and Annie would be safe now. A great weight came off him and then he thought, No, we will be safe now." (Chapter 19, p. 117).



## Topics for Discussion

How does Samuel change over the course of his adventure?

How does Paulsen create suspense in his narrative?

What role do the historical notes play in the development of the central story line?

What are Paulsen's views on combat? Does he make an argument one way or the other?

What role does plain luck play in Samuel's survival?

How does Paulsen portray the British troops? Are they always bad?

What are the moral questions about killing raised by the book? Is killing another ever justified? What would Samuel say?