

A photograph of a man with a beard and long hair, wearing a plaid shirt and light-colored pants, sitting on the ground in front of a green and white train car. The train car has the number '142' on its side and the text 'FAIRBANKS CITY TRANSIT SYSTEM' below the windows. The man is holding a bag and looking towards the camera. The background shows some trees and a clear sky.

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Into the Wild

By Jon Krakauer

Essential Question

What motivated McCandless to go *into the wild*?

What makes McCandless a fascinating character?

In what ways does McCandless parallel your own experiences or the experiences of those you know?

Final Essay Preview

- Readers and observers of Chris McCandless' story come to different conclusions. Some think he is crazy, while others, like Krakauer, think: "he wasn't a nutcase, he wasn't a sociopath, he wasn't an outcast. McCandless was something else" (85).
- In consideration of what we have read as well as the concepts of family, society, norms, human behavior and development, and/or clinical "craziness," develop a claim about what motivated McCandless to go *into the wild*.
- From this, develop a sub claim that presents an insight on what we, as a society, can gain from understanding McCandless' story.
- You must directly reference the text to prove your claim. Remember to address alternative arguments in your essay, providing a clear response to each.

Activity 1: Getting Ready to Read

Into the Wild is a nonfiction, full-length text by Jon Krakauer. Published in 1996, it is based on an article Krakauer wrote in *Outside Magazine* about Christopher McCandless, a young college graduate who went off to Alaska and died in the woods. Because Krakauer's article drew a huge amount of mail to the magazine, he decided to write a book about this interesting character.

Chris McCandless was an idealistic young man who formed a life philosophy based on his experience and his reading in college. His idealism, ironically, led to his death by starvation. He made choices that seemed foolish as we look at them now. But McCandless genuinely loved the outdoors and wanted to live in the world without all the trappings of money and his middle-class upbringing. *Into the Wild* is, in a way, a mystery story. We're unsure as to why he rejected his family, why he was so angry with them, and why he chose to head for Alaska.

Activity 1: Getting Ready to Read

Quickwrite: Write for five minutes on one of the following prompts:

- Think about your experience hiking, backpacking, and/or existing in the wild. What motivates you to participate in these types of activities? What are the benefits of any one of these activities?

or

- Think about some alternative plans you might have to beginning college immediately after high school. What might you do? Why would you do it, and for how long could you see yourself doing that activity?

or

- Think about an experience you have had when you were alone and made some misjudgments that could have led to disaster, but didn't. (It doesn't have to be in the outdoors.) What led you to this experience? What miscalculations did you make and how did you avoid disaster?

[illegible]

Activity 3: Surveying the Text

Survey the Text

- A. Count the number of chapters in the text.
- B. Read a few of the chapter titles. What do the titles have in common?
- C. Read a few of the short epigraphs that come before a chapter begins. (An epigraph is a relevant quotation at the beginning of a book, a chapter, etc.) Do they seem to have a common thread? What do you know about them and their authors?
- D. Look at the length of the book.
- E. Look at any maps or photographs.
- F. Identify the author and publication date.
- G. What other works has Krakauer written? What do you know of them? Have you read any of them?