

# Children's Literature Across the Curriculum Ideas

Created by students at the University of North Carolina Charlotte

**Title:** *Hatchet*

**Author:** Gary Paulsen

**Publisher/Copyright:** Bradbury Press, 1987

**Grade level:** 5-6

**Summary:** Thoughts of his parent's divorce fill Brian Robeson's head as he flies in a single engine plane to visit his father in the Canadian wilderness. When the pilot suffers a massive heart attack and dies, Brian must somehow land the plane by himself and then left with only the clothes he is wearing and a hatchet he received from his mother as a parting gift, Brian puts the thoughts of his past behind him and has to figure out how to stay alive.

## Reading/Writing Connection

1. Prior to reading this novel, ask several predictions: How old does the boy appear to be and what are some things the might use the hatchet for?
2. Have you ever been faced with an unusual problem which required you to learn some new skill.
3. Write about a time you've been in a situation where nature frightened you. How did you overcome your fear?
4. Write about what the power of positive thinking is and if you believe in it or not.
5. Make a comparison on how Brian is like you.
6. Predict whether you think Brian will be able to land the plane or will it crash.
7. In a monologue, there is only one speaker who reveals his thoughts and feelings. Pretend that you are Brian. In a monologue, describe what has happened to you and how you feel about it.
8. Write about how Brian will solve the problem of how to start a fire.
9. Think of a time when you felt sorry for yourself. Write a composition about your situation and why it did or didn't help to feel sorry for yourself.
10. Imagine that Brian had kept a list in the sand of 'things to do'. What would his list say.
11. Write a composition about a time that you had to keep trying, for a long time, making many mistakes, before you were successful at something.
12. Predict new dangers Brian will face.
13. Write a telegram of 10 words or more. Remember you should use only the most important words to describe your emergency. Write the telegram on a piece of paper that is 2" square so that you can fit it into a bottle you find on the plane.
14. Stream-of-consciousness is a method used by some authors to show you what a character is thinking. The author's sentences, like real thoughts, may be jumbled fragments. Find an example of stream-of-consciousness in the 2 chapters you have read. Then write your own.
15. A simile uses 'like' or 'as' to show how two different things are alike. Find a simile and discuss how the two things are being compared.

## Vocabulary/Spelling

|          |           |            |            |         |
|----------|-----------|------------|------------|---------|
| abated   | altitude  | amphibious | anked      | coupled |
| cowling  | dormant   | flailing   | flammable  | formers |
| foul     | gingerly  | grazed     | hammocks   | impact  |
| lashed   | massively | motivated  | naturalist | ordes   |
| remnants | rivets    | ruefully   | smoldered  | tapered |

|             |            |               |        |            |
|-------------|------------|---------------|--------|------------|
| telegraphed | tendrils   | transmissions | tundra | turbulence |
| virtually   | visibility | visualize     | wallow | welted     |
| wincing     | wisps      | wrenching     | motive |            |

### Library Connections

1. Other books by Gary Paulsen:  
*Dancing Carl* which shows how Carl's power and dancing were real magic.  
*Dogsong* tells of a young man and his dog team. Inspired by an Eskimo Shaman, who escapes modern life to find their 'true love'.  
*Tracker* tells of a boy named John who must track the doe but not to kill it.

### Science/Mathematics Connections

1. List everything Brian has when the plane crashes. Rate the items with 1 equaling the item that you think is the most valuable to him, etc.
2. Write about what steps you would take to start a fire if you were in Brian's place?
3. Suppose you are the boy and you decide to make up some ciphers to pass the time. In ciphers numbers are used to take the place of letters. For example, if a=1, b=2, c=3 etc. then Hello becomes 8-5-12-12-15. Write a sentence in cipher telling one thing you have learned since your plane crash.
4. Do a short research paper on one of the plants or animals Brian met such as choke cherries or grouse.

### Social Studies Connections

1. Describe the shelter Brian decides to build. What other kinds of shelters could he make?
2. Draw an imaginary map labeling locations mentioned in the story, such as the site of the crash, where Brian built his shelter, where he met the moose, etc.
3. The pilot who found Brian was a fur buyer mapping Cree trapping camps. Do some research to find out where these camps might be and locate on a map of Canada you think Brian's plane crashed.

### English/Language Arts Connections

1. Write about why you would like to be like Brian?
2. Do you think Hatchet is a good title for the book? Make up a new title.
3. This book was named as a Newbery Honor Book, a very high honor that only the best young people's books receive. Do you think the book deserved the honor? Why or why not?
4. If you were to talk to the author, what questions would you ask about the book?
5. Why do you think the author ended with the information he have in the Epilogue?
6. Write a new ending to the story.

### Arts Connections

1. Make a 'missing person' poster for Brian. Include such important information as his physical description and where he was last seen.
2. Use colored chalk on wet paper to draw something Brian sees while he is underwater. Write a short poem describing the experience.
3. Illustrate what sorts of dreams you suppose Brian had during the days after the crash.
4. Make a collage about Brian's survival experience.

- Using a shoe box, clay and various other materials of your choice such a fabric and bits of yarn, make a diorama showing a scene in the book.
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**Author:** Paulsen, Gary

**Publisher/Copyright:** Bradbury Press, 1987

**Grade Level:** 4-5

**Summary:** Brian Robeson must put thoughts of his parents divorce behind him and figure out how to survive in the wilderness with only his courage, determination, and a hatchet.

### Reading/Writing Connections

- Oral reading shall stop and students shall make predictions at various points in the story. Will Brian be able to land the plane? What are some potential uses of his hatchet? What new dangers will Brian face?
- Students shall write a new ending to the story.
- Students will make a list of the mistakes Brian made as well as what he learned from the mistake. Expand the subject into the students' personal lives.
- Students will create a questionnaire about secrets. Why do you keep rather than tell some things? What kinds of things do you tell your close friends? What kinds of things do you keep to yourself?

### Vocabulary/Spelling

|          |            |          |       |
|----------|------------|----------|-------|
| convulse | corrosive  | diminish | dung  |
| furor    | pulverized | slewed   | spasm |
| stymied  | turbulence | waffling |       |

### Communication Arts Connections

Students shall discuss situations and problems that required the student to learn a new skill.

Students shall list the steps for starting a fire in proper outline form.

During a class discussion, comparisons will be made between Brian and the students. Students will then compose similes about themselves and the main character.

Students shall discuss the Newbery Honor book requirements. Pupils will write and present reasons why the book deserved or did not deserve this respect.

### Media Center Connections

- With assistance from the media specialist, students will research how fast a Cessna 406 plane travels in order to plot the crash location.
- The media specialist will present other books with a similar survival theme.  
*The Talking Earth* - Jean Craighead George: A raging fire burns Billie Wind's boat while she is researching Seminole legends.  
*Island of the Blue Dolphins* - Scott O'Dell: As the Indians of Gholas-at are being relocated, Karana jumps overboard to search for her missing brother.
- Survival from an animal's perspective:  
*Dipper of Copper Creek* - Jean Craighead George  
*Bear* - John Schoenherr

4. Using electronic media, the students will extend the activity by gathering news stories and biographic accounts of survival.

### **Social Studies Connections**

1. Using the topographical clues given in the text, students will hypothesize where the lake is located in Canada.
2. Students will sketch a map of the area and label locations mentioned in the story (i.e., site of crash, where first shelter built).
3. Students will fashion a tool or utensil similar to something made in the story.

### **Science Connections**

1. Students shall research the various plants and animals inhabiting the Canadian wilderness. Reports, including pictures, will be bound into a classroom field guide.
2. Students will summarize the need for heat (fire) and analyze alternative heat sources.

### **Math Connections**

1. Based on the flight information in Chapters 1 and 2, the student shall calculate the length of time Brian was in the air and the distance he traveled from Hampton, New York.
2. Sequence the events of the story into a time line.
3. In certain codes, numbers are used to take place of letters (i.e., A=1, B=2 'Help'=8-5-12-16), students will create cipher and write a message Brian may have sent.
4. Students will chart and graph the results of the questionnaires about secrets.

### **Art Connections**

1. Students will make a missing person poster for Brian, including a physical description and where last seen.
2. Students shall work together in two large groups to construct one of the two different shelters described in the book. (The same materials should be used whenever possible.) The groups will then summarize the advantages and disadvantages of each shelter.
3. Each student shall construct a diorama depicting the book.