

**CYRM Resource Book
Intermediate Nominees
(Grades 3-5)
2006-2007**

***Christopher Mouse:
The Tale of a Small Traveler***
by William Wise
illustrations by Patrick Benson
Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2004.

***Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun,
Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World***
by Katherine Hannigan
Greenwillow, 2004.

A Week in the Woods
by Andrew Clements
Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2002.



California Young Reader Medal
Intermediate Ballot
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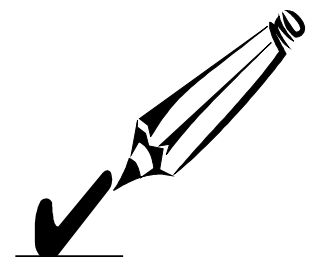
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Christopher Mouse: The Tale of a Small Traveler



by William Wise, illustrated by Patrick Benson

Synopsis

Christopher is a small white mouse in a cage. He nervously awaits his fate in a medical lab or pet store. When he hears he will be going to a pet store with his sister Anna, he is happy. Angelica Rose comes into the pet store, and buys Anna. Christopher is left alone.

Then Freddy comes into the store, and buys Christopher. He has a good life until Freddy trades Christopher to Aubrey. Christopher has grown lazy and he no longer tries to please his owner Freddy. He also feels that Freddy has been neglecting him. Christopher does not like Aubrey, and escapes in the museum.

After two days of freedom in the museum, Christopher realizes that freedom is not good; he needs an owner to take care of him. Christopher sets out to find an owner.

He approaches a lady in the museum who luckily decides to take him home to her children. Her children treat Christopher very well. In fact they talk about perhaps getting another white mouse to be with Christopher. Perhaps Anna?



Hooks

- Have you ever had a pet? A pet mouse perhaps? Did you take care of it? Did someone help you?
- Have you ever thought about trading away your pet, or trading to get a pet? What would you trade to get a pet? How would you take care of your pet? If you have a pet, would you consider trading it away? What would you trade it for?
- Have you ever seen a small animal and wondered about it? With no one to feed it, how do they find their own food? Where do they sleep? What if it is cold or raining? How do they stay clean?
- Would you take home an animal you found and keep it for a pet?

Meet the Author—William Wise



William Wise has been writing children's books for 50 years. Some, like *Christopher Mouse: The Tale of a Small Traveler*, are novels for intermediate readers. Others are biographies of famous Americans, including Allan Pinkerton, Abraham Lincoln and Booker T. Washington. He has also written other nonfiction for children, such as *When the Saboteurs Came*. Although many of his books have serious subjects, he writes with both sensitivity and humor, giving readers a way to look at the subject with new interest. Mr. Wise was born in New York City, where he continues to live. To read more about him, see *Something about the Author*, volume 4 (Gale, 1973).



Meet the Illustrator—Patrick Benson

Patrick Benson is British. After studying classical drawing in Italy and England, he worked in fashion. However, while still in his twenties, Mr. Benson discovered illustration as the field he wanted to pursue. He has won several awards for his illustration work over the past 25 years. Mr. Benson works in pen and ink and then applies color to his drawings, which have appeared in more than 30 books, including Martin Waddell's *Owl Babies*, his own story *Little Penguin*, and William Wise's *Christopher Mouse*. He has also illustrated classics such as *Robin Hood* (as adapted by Sarah Hayes) and Roald Dahl's *The Minpins*. For more information about Patrick Benson, see the British Council of Arts' "Magic Pencil" at: <http://magicpencil.britishcouncil.org/artists/benson/>





Mice Stories

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- Holm, Jennifer L. & Matthew Holm. *Babymouse 1, Queen of the World!* Random House, 2005.
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- O'Brien, Robert C. *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. Atheneum, 1971.
- Steig, William. *Abel's Island*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976.
- White, E. B. *Stuart Little*. Harper Collins, 1945.

Mice as Pets

- Jefferey, Laura S. *Hamsters, Gerbils, Guinea Pigs, Rabbits, Ferrets, Mice and Rats: How to Choose and Care for a Small Mammal*. Enslow Publishers, 2004.
- Markle, Sandra. *Outside and Inside Rats and Mice*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2001.
- Phillips, Meredith. *Rodents Rule!* Compass Point Books, 2005.

Mouse/Animal Poems

- Florian, Douglas. *Omnibeasts: Animal Poems and Paintings*. Harcourt, 2004.
- Foster, John. *My First Oxford Book of Animal Poems*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Hollander, John. *Animal Poems*. Sterling, 2004.
- Swados, Elizabeth. *The Animal Rescue Store*. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2005.

Center Activities for *Christopher Mouse*



- **ABC Book:**

Have students create an ABC Book about nuts and cheeses. Christopher and Anna used to play a game with their mother where one of the three would call out a letter of the alphabet and the next person would have to name a nut or cheese beginning with that letter. Have students find the various names of nuts and cheeses first and then assign them (in cooperative teams) to gather information about the food item, its source of origin, where it's commonly found or made today (geographic location), how it is produced, processed, or harvested, and any other feature of interest about the food item. Students may want to have comments about taste also. A separate book could be made on CHEESES and a separate book could be made about NUTS. (See page 20 of *Christopher Mouse* for the section about the game the mouse family played.)

- **Vocabulary Fun:**

This book is rich with vocabulary that will challenge many intermediate grade readers. Have students nominate "new" and "challenging" words as they encounter them in their reading. At a writing center, provide a list of words (with page numbers) for the students to examine and explore. Assign the students a special word from the list, have them find the word in a dictionary and create a drawing using the word decorated in some fashion in the center of the page. For example, if the word were "frigid," the letters could be made in the shape of icicles or ice cubes. Have students include the following information about the word in the four corners:

top left – the part of speech this word usually is;

top right – the sentence or phrase from the text which features the word;

bottom left – the definition of the word as suggested in the dictionary;

bottom right – an original sentence using the word

These are some of the words gathered

sulks	(p. 21)	reminisce	(p. 34)	genius	(p. 35)
elegance	(p. 38)	felicity	(p. 38)	puns	(p. 35)
quips	(p. 35)	sallies	(p. 35)	ripostes	(p. 35)
crude	(p. 40)	morosely	(p. 39)	repulsive	(p. 40)
verve	(p. 48)	esprit de corps	(p. 48)	contemptuous	(p. 51)
precarious	(p. 58)	shrewd	(p. 60)	unscrupulous	(p. 67)
swindle	(p. 67)	tranquility	(p. 80)	imperceptibly	(p. 82)
callous	(p. 86)	pretense	(p. 92)	disconcerting	(p. 108)
inaccessible	(p. 108)	resiliency	(p. 148)	eloquence	(p. 109)
futile	(p.109)				

- **Idioms:**

Unfortunately Christopher is forced to live in Aubrey Sharpe's world for a period of time. While in that household, Christopher hears plenty of short sayings, especially by Mr. Sharpe, that we call "idioms." Several idioms mentioned in the book are: "another day – another dollar," and "chip off the old block," and "cash on the barrel." Have students search out (as a homework assignment with parents or other adult helpers) other idioms that are common to our English language. Collect them in class and then have the students select one to illustrate what the particular idiom means literally and figuratively. Discuss how idioms can be very confusing for people who are newcomers to the English language.

- **Exploring Famous Museums:**

Have students research famous or important museums around the world. Where is the museum found? Who built the museum? When? What features of the museum make it unique or exceptional? Why is it considered important or renowned today? Use the Internet to locate pictures of the museum and some of the famous pieces that might be found inside. Write a brief report on the museum that you can share with the class. Tell which part of the museum interests you the most and why!

Since Christopher was very concerned about the floor plan for the museum in which he found himself, have students search for floor plans for the museum they've selected.

NOTE: Teacher could extend this assignment by having the students select a favorite artist or sculptor to research. This would allow the students to experience the various "periods" or "movements" found in art – especially in paintings. There are wonderful series books that can assist the students in their research: *Adventures in Art* (Prestel-Verlag), *Famous Artists* (Barron's Education Books), *What Makes a . . . ?* (Metropolitan Museum of Art), *Smart About Art* (Gosset & Dunlap), and *Great Artists* (Barron's Educational Books). *Eyewitness Books* also feature many famous artists.

- **Poetry Writing:**

Christopher Mouse was quite a poet in his own right. He had experienced various forms of poetry while living in the Pet Shop. The parrot was quite versed in this art form (or so he thought.) Christopher often wrote his poetry about events or circumstances that he experienced. He usually included some form of rhyme. Write a poem about one of the following topics: an adventure you had that was scary or fun, a time you were afraid or worried, a time that you saw something new for the very first time, or a poem about your feelings for another person. Be ready to publish and share your writing in an Author's Chair sharing – or on a bulletin board display. Think about who your muse might be - that person who encourages you and gives you ideas for your writing.

- **Writing Tragic Tales:**

At one point in the story, Christopher is sure that his life will end tragically. Create another scenario or setting for Christopher to have an adventure that could be tragic, but miraculously works out to Christopher's benefit. You might want to imagine that Christopher manages to leave the museum on his own, and has more adventures in the big city! Plan out your story on a story map so you have some challenges identified and then show how Christopher overcomes these challenges or obstacles. Does Christopher make (or meet) some new friends? Who are the people that come to his rescue this time? Create some alternate potentially tragic adventures for Christopher Mouse to experience.

Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions for *Christopher Mouse*



- Christopher Mouse had to leave the security of his mother to be taken out in the real world. At first, Christopher was scared, but eventually, as he learned more about himself and his surroundings, he felt quite secure. Think about a time you had to do something by yourself for the first time. Maybe it was walking to school by yourself, going for a sleepover to a friend's house, or riding a two-wheeled bike. How did you prepare yourself? How did you feel? Write an instruction manual for other children on how to get through a first experience of doing something on their own. Be sure to include helpful hints and anecdotes.
- To pass the time in his cage, Christopher Mouse's mother taught him and his sister a game called "Nuts and Cheese." There are many times we are waiting somewhere and need a little thinking game to help pass the time. What thinking games have you or your parents made up while waiting in the dentist's office, in the doctor's office, in the car on a long trip, or at the airport? Make up a thinking game and write down the instructions. Be sure to include a title, the rules, the number of players required, how to keep score and determine a winner, and how you play.
- Many children have pets and are responsible for the feeding and care of their pets. Write about a pet you have or would like to have. Be sure to include how you acquired the pet, its name and name origin, what you would feed it, how you would care for it (bathing, playing, housing, etc.) and any other pertinent information.
- At the pet store, Christopher met a parrot that liked to recite poetry. When things became glum, Christopher remembered how much he enjoyed the poems and began to make up his own poems. Write a poem about an experience you had, good or bad. Remember, poems DO NOT have to rhyme and DO NOT have to be written in complete sentence form.
- Christopher Mouse had many travel adventures, some good, some not so good. Write about a time you went on a trip. Be sure to include the good, as well as the bad, things you encountered.

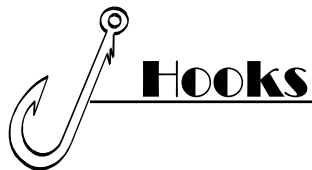
Ida B... and her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World

by Katherine Hannigan



Synopsis

Ida B lives in an orchard and is homeschooled. She once went to the public school for about 3 weeks; a horrible experience! She thinks her life is perfect. Then she learns her mother has cancer. Part of the orchard that Ida B loves has to be sold to help pay the medical bills. Ida B considers the trees her friends she has even named them. Now they are being cut down! And Ida B has to go to public school; her mother is no longer well enough to homeschool her. Ida B is determined to hate everything. But her teacher will not let her and wins her trust. It will never be the way it was before; after all, it was perfect before. But, things can be, and are, OK, and Ida B can adjust.



Hooks

- How would you feel if someone in your family was very ill? What would you do? Could you help? How?
- How would you feel if you had to go to a new school where you did not know anyone? How do you think you would make friends?
- Has there ever been a time when something happened at school, and you did not want to ever go back? What happened? Were you able to stay home? Or did you have to go back right away? What happened when you did go back?

Meet the Author—Katherine Hannigan



Katherine Hannigan spent her childhood surrounded by books and a variety of stray animals. When she was in school, she created little dramas using clay or paper as puppets. After college and graduate school, she taught art and design at Iowa State University. *Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun* is Ms. Hannigan's first novel. To read more about the author, see:

<http://www.pippinproperties.com/aut hill/hannigan/>



Families and Illness

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- Watters, Debbie. *Where's Mom's Hair?: A Family's Journey through Cancer*. Second Story Press, 2005.
- Williams, Dar. *Amalee*. Scholastic Press, 2004.

Mothers and Daughters

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- Moore, Ishbel. *Daughter*. Kids Can Press, 1999.
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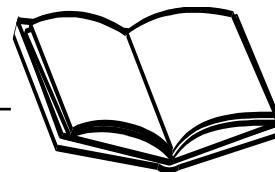
Family Life

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Farm/Rural Life

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- Eccles, Mary. *By Lizzie*. Puffin Books, 2003, 2001.
- Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *Little House in the Big Woods*. Harper Collins, 1953.

Center Activities for *Ida B...*



- **Nature Talks:**

Ida B definitely had conversations with various objects in nature. Do you think trees can talk? Can a running brook have a conversation? Think about how nature talks to you in various ways. Write about one of your "conversations" or experiences with an aspect of nature. Think about the wind, rain, leaves, birds and other animals, clouds and sunshine, trees, and flowers.

Note: The teacher may want to bring a variety of nature poems (rhymed and free verse) into the classroom setting first to let students explore nature as viewed through the poets' eyes. This exposure might be helpful to stimulate student thought (and visual imagery) before students are directed to a writing assignment. The students could respond to the written assignment in poem format also.

- **Science—Botany Focus:**

Gather leaf samples to create a class bulletin board on the kinds of trees in our region. Group and cluster the leaves into the leaf types, classifications, or families in which the trees might belong. The teacher may want to give some directions on leaf pressing and leaf preservation – as well as the "dos" and "don'ts" of gathering leaves NOT on one's own property. Use the leaves in a science unit on trees, fruits, nuts, and plants in our environment. Why do some communities become Tree Cities? Examine how plants and trees help the environment.

To extend the study, have students select a favorite tree to research further. In the report, information about size, location, growing conditions, usage, etc. could be included.

- **Read Alouds:**

Ida B is taken with Ms. Washington's ability to transform a story into "magic" when she reads. She also states that Ms. Washington picks "good books" to share with the class. Have students think about a favorite "read aloud" book they have experienced in their life as a student. Have them create a poster advertising the book – and its "read aloud" potential. Encourage students to NOT merely recreate the cover of the book, but attempt to create a new design for the book cover – or to create a scene from the story they remember. You may want to bring in some full page movie advertisements – like those found in major papers like the L.A. Times or the San Francisco Chronicle – to help students get the idea of how descriptive adjectives can be used to generate interest in the movie. Make a visual display of the students' favorite "read alouds."

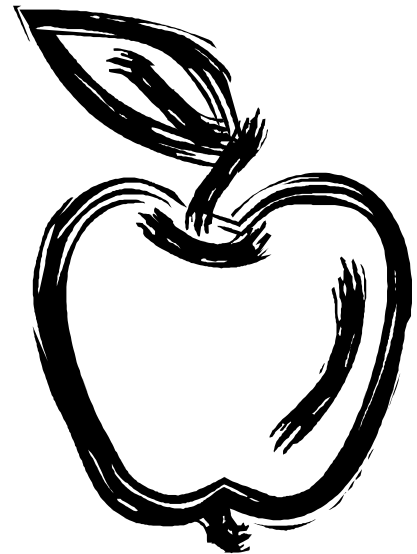
Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions

Ida B...



- Ida B is a very imaginative child full of life and energy. The author paints a clear picture of the main character through Ida B's thoughts and words. In describing Ida B's urgency for being outside and doing her own thing, the reader is told "There is never enough time for fun." (p. 3) and "There are too many things to think about in this world besides what I'm going to have for lunch." (p. 36) When Ida B is expressing her dislike for public school, she calls the school the "sacrificial pit of never-ending agony" (p. 91) and the school bus a "yellow prison of propulsion." (p. 109) If you were the main character of a story, what thoughts and words would you use to make the character come alive? Write an opening paragraph to an adventure using you as the main character. Be sure to include the thoughts and words of your character to convey to the reader your personality.
- Ida B is a planner; she likes to make plans and come up with all the different scenarios in her head. It is always a good idea to have a plan. Do you have any plans for your future? Write down any plans you may have for yourself. It can be a plan for when you grow up, to finish out your school career, finish out your current grade, or just plans for the rest of your week.
- Some families choose to teach their children at home rather than send them to a public school with other children. What is your opinion on this? Are there benefits for being homeschooled or to attend a public school? Write a persuasive essay as to whether it is better to be homeschooled or attend a public school. Be sure to include valid reasons to defend your position.
- When Ida B had to attend public school for the second time, she did not want to go. She dressed in black, stood out in the rain without protection while waiting for the school bus, and assessed the classroom to make "battle plans." Has there ever been a time when you had to go somewhere you did not want to go? How did you feel? What did you do to express your feelings? Did you end up going or not? If you went, what happened when you got there? How did it all work out?

- Mrs. W asked Ida B to read aloud in class when she was not feeling very well. At first Ida B was scared, but then she got lost in the story and truly enjoyed herself. Has there ever been a time when you were afraid to do something, but once you started you were having so much fun, you forgot to be scared? Write about that time and describe your thoughts and feelings as you tell the story.
- Claire and her family buy the piece of land from Ida B's parents to build themselves a new house. Ida B is not so pleased and tries to scare them away; she is mean to them for all the wrong reasons. She is angry at the situation and takes out her anger on Claire and Charlie. Write about a time when you acted like Ida B and took your anger out on someone. What was the situation? Who or what were you really upset about? On whom did you take out your anger? How did you fix the situation?



A Week in the Woods

by Andrew Clements



Synopsis

Mark's wealthy family is moving. He is leaving his private school, and will start the next school year at a new private school. Mark will have to attend the public school in the new neighborhood for a short time in order to finish the school year. He does not want to, and decides to be miserable.

His teacher, Mr. Maxwell, at first tries to reach Mark. Once he learns who Mark's family is, he decides that Mark is a 'wealthy slacker', and treats him as such. The entire 5th grade goes to the woods for a week every year and the whole class looks forward to this trip for the entire year. On the first day of the trip, Mark is found with a knife (not his - a friend's.) He just happened to be holding it when Mr. Maxwell came in. Mark refuses to tell on his friend, so he will be sent home and suspended from school.

Mark feels like he is being treated unfairly, and decides to go hiking on his own. When he discovers Mark missing, Mr. Maxwell follows. Mark's footprints lead down a closed trail, and Mr. Maxwell follows. Although Mr. Maxwell calls for Mark, Mark does not answer at first. They both end up staying in the woods overnight alone, and meet up the next morning. Mr. Maxwell has hurt his ankle, and Mark needs to help him back to the camp.

They realize that they are both to blame. Mark started at the school with the wrong attitude. He did not join in, acted bored, and did not want to be there. Mr. Maxwell did not like "buy-the-whole-world rich folks," and disliked their lazy spoiled kids even more.



Hooks

- How would you feel if you thought that you were being punished unfairly? Would you tell on your friend? Would you expect your friend to step forward to take the blame?
- Have you ever thought about running away? Have you ever actually done it? How do you think that you would do if you had to spend the night outside in the woods all alone? Would you know what to do?
- Would you know how to help an injured friend?
- Have you ever thought that a teacher treated you unfairly? What did you do about it, if anything?

Meet the Author—Andrew Clements



Andrew Clements was born in New Jersey and now lives in Massachusetts. He has written books for intermediate grades, like *A Week in the Woods*, and books for younger and older readers, too. Mr. Clements taught fourth grade, eighth grade, and high school students before he became an editor and then a full-time author. As a boy, Mr. Clements loved to read and remembers that some of his favorite books were about Sherlock Holmes, the Hardy Boys, and stories by A. A. Milne and Robert Louis Stevenson. He says now that he became a writer because he loved reading so much and wanted to create stories as good as the ones he enjoyed. Many of his books celebrate the pleasure of words, such as *Frindle*, and are set in schools, including *The Landry News* and *The Report Card*. You can find out more about Mr. Clements at:

<http://www.andrewclements.com>



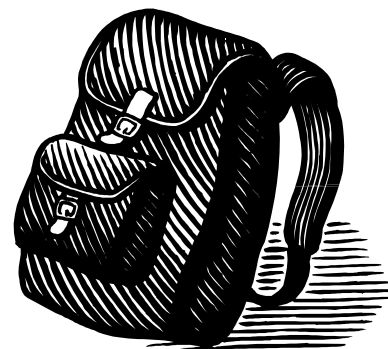


Camping/Survival

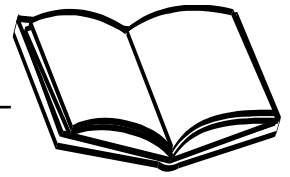
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- Honey, Elizabeth. *Don't Pat the Wombat!* Dell Yearling, 2001.
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- McManners, Hugh. *The Complete Wilderness Training Book*. DK Pub., 1994.
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Teacher/Student Relationship

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- Evangelista, Beth. *Gifted*. Walker, 2005.
- Konigsburg, E. L. *The View From Saturday*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1996.
- Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. *The Fear Place*. Atheneum, 1994.
- Patneude, David. *The Last Man's Reward*. A. Whitman, 1996.



Center Activities for *A Week in the Woods*



- **Moving Days Reflective Writing:**

At the beginning of the story, Mark is being “forced” to move, relocate, and start over. This means for him a new town, new house, new school, and finding new friends. That often isn’t an easy task, especially when one is happy where he is. That’s how Mark felt.

Have students think about times in their lives where they were confronted with a move to a new house, new community, new school, or new state. Have them first brainstorm the impact of that move, as a form of pre-writing, and then have them write a story or report on their “Moving Days.” Encourage them to express their feelings honestly, as Mark did in the story. If they have not experienced a move, have them write about a friend’s moving away, or another type of major change that they have experienced in their life.

Once the stories or “reports” are completed, have the students create a series of illustrations – or a series of thumbnail sketches, like a story board – to convey visually the key elements of the story. Have students share their stories and post them on a bulletin board entitled MOVING DAYS (or MOVING DAZE, if you prefer.)

- **Nature Scavenger Hunt:**

Have the students plan a nature scavenger hunt for a class of students younger than they are. The “hunt” should occur on the campus of their school – or in a neighboring park, if that facility is available. Think about the items mentioned in the book that the 5th grade students had to discover and record. Also determine if the students will be asked to return the objects collected to their original place. Make lists of the various items that need to be collected. If the children are quite young, you may want to include picture clues for them also. The students creating the “hunt” need to be highly familiar with what items are available to locate when making their various scavenger lists.



- **Thinking about Fears:**

With the class, brainstorm the various things that frighten people. As an example, in the story *A Week in the Woods*, Mark was afraid of the dark. Record the various “fears” on a transparency or on chart paper so that students can refer back to them. If possible, have the students begin to categorize or cluster the types of fears that are presented.

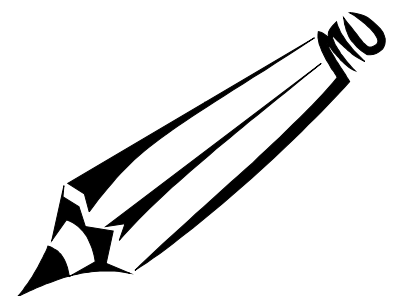
Introduce the concept of “phobias” also, as a way of reinforcing that science and psychology recognize “fears” are a very real issue with which people must deal. You might also talk about the “Fear Factor” programs that are now a major part of “reality TV” programming.

Then have the students conduct a survey of at least 20 people who are outside of their classroom, asking them to identify one of their biggest fears. You may want to provide a special form for the students to use as they conduct their survey. Encourage them to survey a variety of different aged people. A sample form is provided below.

NAME	AGE BRACKET	BIGGEST FEAR	MALE/FEMALE
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Once students have completed their survey, have them create an independent graph to show the responses they generated. (Review graphing and axis labeling, if necessary. Bar Graphs tend to work better for this activity). Have students write a summary paragraph to accompany the graph which conveys their findings. Have them comment on most “common” fears expressed and any possible differences that may occur between male and female responses.

From the student findings, construct a class graph to show the information that was gathered in the survey. Break students into cooperative groups and have them write a group summary of the total class findings from the “fear” survey.



- **Compass and Mapping Activities:**

If compasses are available in the classroom, distribute them to the students and talk about how the compass is used. (Note: Sometimes geography, social studies, or science books have some compass activities included in them.) At the same time, have students generate a map of the route that they take to get to school each day. Once the map is drawn (remind students about scale and legends), have students use the compass to create a set of written directions which indicate the path they would follow to successfully arrive at school. Indicate with arrows the various directions made with each major turn.



- **Survival Rules and Survival Rule Posters or Pamphlets:**

Mark was able to gather some wonderful information about successful camping practices on the Internet through the REI Web site. (See Chapter Twelve – “Gearing Up,” p. 94-101.)

As a class, generate a list of camping guidelines or camping rules – feel free to use Mr. Survival’s suggestions from Chapter 12, also. Then have students sign up to design a 12 x 18 sized poster about the particular rule or guideline he or she selected. For example: Always add iodine drops to stream water if you are planning to drink it. Once the posters are done, display them around campus – in the cafeteria, in the main office, in hallways, as well as in the classroom, etc. It might be helpful to laminate the posters before putting them on display.

An alternate way to approach this assignment would be to have teams of 2-3 students create a pamphlet related to “Survival Tips for the Modern Camper,” or “How to Survive in the Wilderness.” Encourage the student to balance text with illustrations in their tri-fold brochure or pamphlet.

A related activity could be to have students “surf the web” to find a variety of companies who specialize in camping equipment and survival gear. Based on their searches, students could create a personal list of the “10 Things to Have on a Camping Trip” for campers of all ages.

- **Outside Reading – Book Clubs:**

Since the topic of survival emerges in this story on a short term basis, encourage students to read other book that expand the “survival” theme. One of the most frequently used books at the intermediate level is *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen. Other books to consider for independent reading – or classroom book club sharing – include: *Brian’s Winter* by Gary Paulsen, *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse, *Call it Courage* by Armstrong Sperry, *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George, *Holes* by Louis Sachar, *Maniac Magee* or *Milkweed* by Jerry Spinelli and many others. (Check with your librarian for other great titles.)

- **An Essay on “The Qualities of a Good Teacher”**

This book includes scenes that show how teachers act and react to students and situations, and also how students react and act to teachers and classroom situations. You might want to first discuss in class your student’s opinions about Mark – the “new kid on the block,” and the way the teachers reacted to him and his family background. Then have students write an essay for the school newspaper in which they describe and highlight the quality and attributes of a “good teacher.” If you want to have diversity in this assignment, you might also have a group of students write an essay on the qualities and attributes of a “good student.” It would be fun to compare and contrast the various essays (and points of view) once the assignment is completed.



Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions for *A Week in the Woods*



- Camping is a fun adventure for many people. Often people go camping with their family or friends. Camping gives us time to bond and experience nature. Think back to a time you had a good adventure with family or friends. Write about your experience. Where did you go, who went with you, what did you do, what are your memories?
- In this story, Mark is the “new kid at school.” At first, he has trouble adjusting because he is not happy about moving to a new town and a new school, but after awhile he settles in and comes to enjoy his new surroundings. Has there been a time when you had to go somewhere you did not want to go? Write a personal narrative about this time. You may want to think about how you acted, how things turned out, how you behaved, how others reacted and how it ended.
- Mark was very excited about going camping and the “Week in the Woods” program. He did lots of research as to what tools and supplies he would need to survive out in the woods. Pretend you are taking a trip and do some research. What things will you need to take with you? What other things would be fun to take with you? Create a traveler’s guide of things to take, and things to know about your destination.
- Mark made some good decisions and some bad decisions. Pick a good decision Mark made and compare that to a time you made a good decision. Then pick a bad decision Mark made and compare that to a bad decision you made.
- Mark went on the “Week In the Woods” program with his school. How was his “Week in the Woods” like your week at Science Camp? How was your week different than Mark’s week?