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**American Studies English**

***Into the Wild***

**Study Guide Questions**

**Author’s Note**

1. What might have McCandless’s motives have been for his behavior?
2. Krakauer introduces the themes of the book. What are the three themes he discusses?
3. Krakauer warns us that he will not be an impartial biographer. What does this mean? Are all biographers impartial?
4. In the last paragraph, Krakauer introduces the complexity of Chris McCandless. Note the four questions that you should keep in mind as you read the text:
   1. Should we admire McCandless for his courage and noble ideas?
   2. Was he a reckless idiot?
   3. Was he crazy?
   4. Was he an arrogant and stupid narcissist?

**Chapter 1: The Alaska Interior—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. Who is Alex?
2. What does Gallien notice about Alex’s backpack?
3. Where does Alex want to go?
4. What is Alex’s attitude towards the government?
5. What does Alex insist on giving Gallien?
6. Based on this chapter, what personality traits can the reader associate with Alex?

**Chapter 2: The Stampede Trail—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. What route does Chris McCandless follow into the wilderness?
2. What is the state of the Stampede Trail?
3. What is found in the abandoned bus?
4. What does the autopsy reveal?
5. Why are the authorities not able to identify the body?

**Chapter 3: Carthage—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. Describe Carthage, South Dakota.
2. When the chapter opens, who is the man remembering McCandless?
3. How does Westerberg meet Alex?
4. What is Westerberg’s profession?
5. Where does Westerberg give McCandless employment?
6. What does Westerberg discover about Alex at one point?
7. What is Westerberg’s scheme?
8. Describe McCandless’s upbringing.
9. Why does McCandless not accept membership in Phi Beta Kappa?
10. To what organization does McCandless donate the money from his college fund?
11. What do Billie and Walt offer to buy Chris?
12. At the end of June, what does Chris mail his parents?
13. What is Chris “emancipated from” upon his college graduation?
14. What symbolizes his new life?

**Chapter 4: Detrital Wash—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. What do the rangers find beneath the yellow tarp?
2. What state is the vehicle in?
3. What does McCandless do after the battery to his car dies? How is it documented?
4. Who is Jan Burres?
5. Where does McCandless go after Westerberg is jailed?
6. What does McCandless do with the aluminum canoe he purchases?
7. Why does Alex need to be rescued by duck hunters when he is in Mexico?
8. What does McCandless do in Las Vegas?

**Chapter 5: Bullhead City—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. What is Bullhead City like?
2. Describe McCandless’s experience working at McDonald’s.
3. Who is Charlie?
4. What are The Slabs?
5. Who is Tracy?
6. What does McCandless speak about with the people at The Slabs?
7. Why does Jan say that Alex “could really make her mad sometimes” (46)?

**Chapter 6: Anza-Borrego—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. Who is Ronald Franz?
2. How does Franz meet McCandless?
3. How does Krakauer describe the culture of Oh-My-God Hot Springs?
4. What is the tragic loss that caused Franz to begin abusing alcohol?
5. What is the special request that Franz makes of McCandless?
6. What creation does McCandless make that chronicles his adventure?
7. In his letter to Franz, what does McCandless ask him to do?
8. Why do you think Franz take McCandless’s advice?

1. How does Franz learn about McCandless’s death?
2. What effect did McCandless’s death have on Franz?

**Chapter 7: Carthage—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. Why did McCandless go back to work for Westerberg in South Dakota?
2. Even though McCandless was a hard worker, what did Westerberg say he lacked?
3. In his letter to Carine, what does McCandless say is his “plan” concerning his relationship with his parents?
4. What effect did McCandless have on Westerberg’s mother?
5. Before McCandless left for Alaska, what did he leave with Wayne?
6. Who did McCandless send postcards to on April 27, 1992? What did the postcards say?

**Chapter 8: Alaska —Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. When Krakauer published an article on Chris in *Outside* magazine, where were the majority of people who wrote in criticizing him from? What did they say about him?
2. Explain what happened to following people who ventured into the Alaskan wilderness before McCandless:
   1. Gene Rosellini-
   2. John Mallon Waterman-
   3. Carl McCunn-
3. What do you think Krakauer’s purpose was in including passages about these men?
4. Why does Krakauer say McCandless was different from them?

**Chapter 9: Davis Gulch—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. Who was Everett Ruess?
2. How was Ruess similar to McCandless?
3. Why was Ruess inspired to call himself Nemo?
4. How does Ken Sleight believe Ruess died?

**Chapter 10: Fairbanks —Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. How does Westerberg find out about McCandless’s death?
2. Who is Sam McCandless?
3. How can you infer Walt and Billy find out about McCandless’s death?

**Chapter 11: Chesapeake Beach—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. Consider Krakauer’s description of Chris McCandless’s father, Walt, on pgs. 104-105. What are some character traits that may be associated with him?
2. What was Walt and Billie’s relationship like when Chris was a child?
3. Why did Billie’s father, Loren Johnson, leave an impression on Chris?
4. Why did Chris receive an F in Physics? What does this suggest about his character?
5. Provide an example that reflects Chris’s stubborn personality.
6. What would Chris do when he went into Washington D.C?

**Chapter 12: Annandale —Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. What did Chris do the summer after he graduated from high school?
2. How did Chris change after his sophomore year at Emory?
3. What discovery had Chris made two summers earlier that made him very upset?
4. What did Billie do every time she left the house?

**Chapter 13: Virginia Beach—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. Who is Carine McCandless?
2. Who is Buckley?
3. Where does Carine live and what does she do for work?
4. How did Carine react when she found out that Chris had died?

**Chapter 14: The Stikine Cap —Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. In this chapter, Krakauer compares his own experiences to McCandless’s. What did Krakauer decide to do in 1977 while sitting on a Colorado bar stool?
2. Briefly summarize Krakauer’s narration of his trip to Devil’s Thumb on pgs. 136-143.

**Chapter 15: The Stikine Ice Cap—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. What was Krakauer’s father like?
2. What is the irony that Krakauer claims his father “failed to appreciate”?
3. Is Krakauer ultimately successful in reaching the top of Devil’s Thumb?
4. Why does Krakauer feel he is similar to Chris McCandless?

**Chapter 16: The Alaska Interior—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. Who is Stuckey and what town did he take Chris to?
2. Where did Stuckey drop Chris off?
3. Instead of setting up a permanent camp at the school bus, what was Chris’s original plan?
4. What did Chris consider to be one of the greatest tragedies of his life, according to his journal?
5. What does Chris decide to do at the end of his two months of solitary life in the wild?
6. List two major setbacks that caused Chris to go back to the bus.

**Chapter 17: The Stampede Trail—Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. Why does Krakauer want to go back to the bus?
2. How is Krakauer able to cross the Teklanika River? What is ironic about this?
3. What happened during Sir John Franklin’s expedition into Canada in 1819?
4. According to Krakauer, what did Muir and Thoreau already know that McCandless discovered?

**Chapter 18: The Stampede Trail —Please include correct page citations with your answers**

1. What did Krakauer initially cite in *Outside* magazine as being the cause of McCandless’s death?
2. Why did he begin to doubt this assumption?
3. Krakauer asserts that McCandless didn’t die from misidentifying potato seeds, but from eating moldy seeds (swainsonine poisoning). What are the effects of swainsonine poisoning?
4. Describe the last picture of Chris McCandless took of himself and explain what this image may reveal about him.

**EPILOGUE**

1. What effect did travelling to the bus have on Walt and Billie?