

Literature Guide

My Side of the Mountain by Jean Craighead George

General Discussion Questions (can be used at any point and can be revisited)

1. Would you have any desire to do what Sam did?
2. What tools would you take with you (aside from what he had)?
3. What ways would you prepare for doing this?
4. What would you miss most about living off the land (aside from people)?
5. What food would you miss the most?
6. What was most exciting/appealing to you about Sam's story? What was least exciting/appealing?

Chapter 1: In Which I Hole Up in a Snowstorm

1. Describe Sam's tree home. Hemlock tree, 6 feet in diameter, burned and dug out to make a cave. Bed is on the right, made of ash slats and covered with deerskin. Left side is a small fireplace, made of clay and stones.
2. Describe some of Sam's food provisions. Nuts, berries, smoked venison, fish, small game, turtle soup, acorn pancakes.
3. Describe some of Sam's household provisions. Aspen pole calendar, three knotholes to let air in, lamp made from a turtle shell, deer fat, and a strip of cloth
4. How long has Sam been in the wilderness? 8 months
5. Who is the Baron? A wild weasel that lives behind the big boulder close to the tree
6. Who is Frightful? Sam's trained falcon
7. Describe Sam's life in New York City. Lived with his family of 11 in a small apartment. His dad had been a sailor.
8. Where was Sam living currently? In the Catskill Mountains on his families' abandoned farm

Chapter 2: I Get Started on this Venture

1. What things did Sam have upon leaving NYC? Penknife, ball of cord, ax, \$40, flint, steel and tinder
2. What was Sam's father's reaction to him running away? He laughed and said "Sure go try it. Every boy should try it."

3. What things did Sam do to prepare for running away? Read books at the library, bought the supplies, memorized things about fishing
4. What was the first thing Sam made? A fish hook. How did the first fishing work out? His hook broke. Then he tried again and caught a trout.
5. How did Sam's first night on his own go? Terrible. He couldn't start a fire to cook his fish. It was very cold and a bird kept him awake.
6. How did Bill help Sam? Cooked his fish, gave him some additional food, let him sleep, taught him to make a fire

Chapter 3: I Find Gribbley's Farm

1. How did Miss Turner help Sam? Found the farm on a map, drew a picture of the map
2. How did Sam's second night in the wilderness go? Much better. He found the farm, caught a catfish, and started a fire.

Chapter 4: I Find Many Useful Plants

1. What did Sam find in the stream to eat? Mussels
2. What provisions could he get from the Hickory Tree? Hickory nuts and salt from the limbs
3. What other plants did he find that would provide provisions? Apple trees, walnut trees, cattails, and arrow-leaf

Chapter 5: The Old, Old Tree

1. How did Sam plan to use the tree? As a home, hollowed out. How did he hollow it out? Most of it was rotten, then he used his ax, then fire.
2. Name one way he was beginning to plan ahead? By killing the crayfish he found for dinner.
3. Name one tool he wished he had and what he used to improvise instead? A bucket, dirt

Chapter 6: I Meet One of My Own Kind

1. Name some additional food provisions? Frogs' legs, turtles, rabbits, cattail roots, strawberries
2. Who was the person on the mountain and why was she there? A little old lady, looking for strawberries
3. Describe her. Wiry, determined, very commanding, feisty

Chapter 7: The King's Provider

1. What did Sam research at the library? Falcons.
2. What did Miss Turner do for him? Gave him a haircut
3. Who is Frightful? The falcon Sam stole from the nest

Chapter 8: What I did about the first Man who was after me

1. Who was at Sam's tree when he returned? A man in a forester's uniform, a fire warden
2. How did Sam avoid him? Went around to where he could see his tree but not the man
3. Why did the man come? Because there had been no rain and Sam had had a fire

Chapter 9: I Learn to Season My Food

1. What tools had Sam made to catch food? Traps. What were the downsides to his traps? Sometimes he got bit by the animals.
2. Who is the Baron? A weasel he had caught in a trap that was fearless of Sam and yelled at Sam for catching him
3. What did Sam want? A deer. Why? He needed a door, tethers for Frightful, and a blanket
4. How did he plan on catching one? By digging a pit
5. How did Sam make salt? By boiling hickory sticks

Chapter 10: How a door came to me

1. Describe the Baron. Playful, not afraid of Sam
2. What windfall was bestowed upon Sam? A deer
3. How did Sam keep Frightful quiet? By stroking her

Chapter 11: Frightful Learns her ABCs

1. How did Sam solve the problem of tanning the hide? He felled an oak tree, burned out the hold, and let the deer skin sit in it for 5 days in order to absorb the tannic acid
2. What were some of the things he made from the deer? A door, meat, leg straps for Frightful, a spearhead made of the bones
3. How did the Baron act as a watchdog? He frightened away a couple of hikers who had come to picnic on his rocks
4. What did Sam use the other deer he caught for? Clothing, deerskin bags

Chapter 12: I Find a Real Live Man

1. What pleasure did Sam enjoy in the summer? A daily bath. What did he use for soap?
The bark of slippery elm
2. Who is Jesse Coon James? A raccoon, small, not well fed, crossed eyes, looked a bit peculiar, perhaps an orphan
3. How did he help Sam? Dug for mussels
4. How did Sam flavor his food? Garlic, sassafras, winterberry
5. Who did Sam think the man was? An outlaw. Why? Because he heard sirens, the man was unshaven and slovenly
6. Who was he really? Bando - a college English teacher lost in the Catskills. He was out hiking and became lost. He saw Sam's fire and thought a boy scout had built it.
7. What did he help Sam do? Build a raft, gather nuts, smoke fish, made blueberry jam, made clay pots, made willow whistles
8. What did Sam realize he was missing after Bando left? Human companionship

Chapter 13: The Autumn Provides Food and Loneliness

1. What did Sam do in September? Father food - onions, tubers, nuts, etc
2. What did the Baron do? Changed into his winter coat
3. How did Sam plan to heat his tree for winter? By building a small clay fireplace
4. What were some of the challenges Sam faced in building it? It smoked out the tree, the chimney sagged and needed dry grasses worked in, when the clay dried, it pulled away from the tree, the funnel over the fire bed cracked, the wooden props burned, it sucked up all the air and needed ventilation

Chapter 14: We all Learn about Halloween

1. What things was Sam collecting? Nuts, apples, wild rice
2. Who was he competing with for these? Squirrels, raccoons, skunk
3. Who was the Halloween feast for? The animals
4. How does Sam spend his days? Trying to survive the winter: gathering food, making warm clothes, preparing his tree, recording his thoughts and preparations
5. What surprise did Sam get that night? Two raccoons had gotten into his house finding his nut supply, while chasing them he stumbled over a skunk and was sprayed

Chapter 15: I Find Out what to do with Hunters

1. What did Sam learn from his Halloween party? Don't feed the animals
2. What was Sam's next challenge? Hiding from the hunters
3. What unexpected windfall did Sam get from hunting season? 3 deer
4. What was Sam's advice concerning hunting season? Don't let them see you, follow closely, use the tops of trees for hunter's never look up and this way you can see what they shoot and where it falls
5. What did Sam make from his deerskin? Blankets and a jacket

Chapter 16: Trouble Begins

1. Describe Sam's clothes. Deerskin outfit lined with rabbit fur, mittens, and squirrel lined moccasins
2. Who is Mr. Jacket? A boy Sam met in town about Sam's age
3. Why did Sam go to town? He wanted to see people. What kind of attention did he draw? Lots! People were curious about his clothes and probably smell

Chapter 17: I Pile Up the Wood and Go on with Winter

1. How did Sam make his woodpile? So he could reach it from his tree or by making a tunnel
2. What did Sam eat? Blueberry jam on acorn pancakes, fish (from ice fishing), rabbit or pheasant caught by Frightful
3. What did Sam do? Cook, look for food, write, make things out of deer hide.

Chapter 18: I Learn about Birds and People

1. Who did Sam name the birds after? People from his apartment building in NY
2. How did Sam get through the lonesome winter months? Watching the birds, going for walks
3. What feast did Sam plan for Christmas Eve? Venison steaks, teaberry syrup over snow, onion soup, mashed potatoes, violet bulbs, seal roots, dried apples, nuts. Why? Bando was coming
4. What news did Bando have? A newspaper article said a wild boy was living in the mountains, stealing deer from the hunters, eating berries and nuts
5. Who arrived on Christmas Day? Sam's father
6. What did Sam's father think of his lodgings? He was very impressed

Chapter 19: I Have a Good look at winter and find spring in the snow

1. What did Sam make that helped in the snow? Snowshoes
2. How did Sam know a blizzard was coming? He could smell it, he watched the birds and animals
3. Who was Sam's visitor? A little deer mouse
4. What spooked Frightful? A great horned owl
5. Describe the ice storm. Horrible, ice caused the trees to break. No place for Frightful to land. Iced over Sam's tree. Many birds died. Many animals were frozen under the snow
6. What physical things started to happen to Sam at the end of January? Tired, elbows and knees were stiff. What did Sam eat that helped? Liver. Why? It is rich in Vitamin C - same as green vegetables that he was lacking
7. What effect did cutting down the tender limbs have? A whole herd of deer showed up. Why did they disappear? Spring was coming and they could forage again
8. What were the other signs of spring? Owl eggs

Chapter 20: The Spring in the Winter and the Beginning of My Story's End

1. What were the signs of spring? Insects appeared, birds built nests, raccoons mated, foxes called to each other to mate
2. What other food provisions did Sam find? Maple syrup, skunk cabbages, dandelion greens
3. Why did Sam not let Frightful go? He depended on her talents and company; she probably would have been killed by another female; she was trained for man
4. Who was Matt Spell? A young newspaper reporter trying to get the story on the wild boy in the Catskills
5. How did Sam help Matt? Made him a fire, roasted him a rabbit
6. What did Sam tell Matt of the wild boy? Lives in a cave, wears a bearskin coat, long hair, fishes for a living, wears a coon tail hat
7. What did Matt write? The truth
8. What deal did they make? Matt would spend a week with Sam provided he didn't write the truth or tell anyone where Sam was

Chapter 21: I Cooperate with the Ending

5. Who was Aaron? A hiker who took an interest in the songs Sam hummed
6. How was Matt's visit? Very good. He ate well, learned a lot, made a hat

7. Who else joined them? Bando. What did they do while Bando was there? Made a guest house
8. Who was Mr. Jacket? Tom Sidler from the town
9. Why was Sam a little sad? People knew he was up in the mountains. His solitary life was coming to an end.

Chapter 22: The City Comes to Me

10. Who was coming in abundance? Reporters and photographers
11. Who else came? Sam's family. Why? They wanted to move up there
12. What did Sam's mother take offense at? The articles and editorials implying that she was not a good mother
13. Why do you think Sam was content to be found? He realized how much he missed people
14. Were you satisfied with the ending?