

Hatchet Discussion Questions

Chapter 1

- What is Brian's state of mind as he heads from New York to visit his father in Canada?
- What affect does his mother's "secret" have on him?
- How does Brian's mother respond to his moodiness?

Chapter 2

- Judge Brian's decision to wait for the plane to run out of gas.
- How would you have reacted in a similar situation?

Chapter 3

- Evaluate Brian's ability to handle the controls of the plane.
- Do you think that a boy his age could realistically land a plane under these circumstances? Explain your opinion.

Chapter 4

- Why won't Brian tell his father or his mother that he knows about the affair?
- Why did Brian think he had both good and back luck?
- Predict what Brian will do to save himself.
- What would be your first priority?

Chapter 5

- Brian suffered from great thirst. Judge his decision to drink the water from the lake.
- What thought caused Brian to panic?
- Relate the lesson that Brian learned from his former English teacher. How did he apply this lesson to his situation?

Chapter 6

- Whom did Brian blame for his predicament? Evaluate his thinking.

Chapter 7

- In your opinion, why wasn't Brian harmed by the bear?
- Brian thought that the danger in a city park at night was worse than the danger he faced in the woods. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Chapter 8

- Brian discovers what he believes to be the most important rule of survival. Explain it.

Chapter 9

- What was Brian's reaction when he finally achieved his goal?
- Why did this accomplishment make him feel lonely?

Chapter 10

- Brian chides himself for not focusing on his rescue. Judge his reasoning.

Chapter 11

- Brian's mind and body have changed. Describe these changes.
- Many times, in this chapter, the author writes, "These were things to do." Judge the importance of Brian's having things to keep him occupied.

Chapter 12

- Analyze Brian's statement, "Maybe it was always that way, discoveries happened because they needed to happen."
- The mood at the end of this chapter is pessimistic and hopeless. Why?
- How would you have felt if you were in Brian's situation?

Chapter 13

- What drives Brian's decision to try to commit suicide?
- In what way is he changed by his failed attempt?
- Brian felt like he was a new person. Where and how did this take place?
- What does Brian mean when he says that he is full of "tough hope".

Chapter 14

- Judge Brian's conclusion that mistakes were more serious in his situation than in the city.
- What lessons did the skunk teach Brian?

Chapter 15

- Describe Brian's method of keeping track of time.
- How do you think was it possible for Brian to do these things that he had never done without anyone teaching him?

Chapter 16

- Brian is once again alone with his hatchet. Why doesn't he feel the same sense of hopelessness as when he first landed?
- After the devastation of the tornado, Brian was able to show some humor. Cite the example.

Chapter 17

- Why did Brian state it would be worth it even for just a candy bar?

Chapter 18

- Think of all that happened from the time Brian first landed to the time he dropped the hatchet and explain this statement, "For all this time, all the living and fighting, the hatchet had been everything – he had always worn it without the hatchet he had

nothing – no fire, no tools, no weapons – he was nothing. The hatchet was, had been him.”

Chapter 19

- When Brian finds the survival pack, he rejects the rifle. Why?
- Rate the contents of the pack. List the items in order of importance.

Epilogue

- This is a coming-of-age story in the extreme. Once rescued and returned to civilization, how has Brian’s survival experiences changed him?
- In what way is he a different boy than the one who stepped on the plane at the beginning of the story?
- How, for instance, does he come to view his parents’ divorce?
- What minor traits does Brian develop to survive in the wilderness?
- From the beginning of literature, stories have pitted man against nature. In what ways does *Hatchet* than the theme on its head?
- How does Brian’s relationship to nature change during the course of the novel?
- What lessons does he learn about the natural world?
- Put yourself in Brian’s shoes. How would you do in his situation? Which personal qualities and skills would you draw upon to survive?
- What is the significance of the title?
- Why would Gary Paulsen have chosen “Hatchet” as the name of the book?
- What does the hatchet symbolize?
- Is the ending satisfying? Why or why not?
- Why, do you suppose did Brian keep the secret about his mother’s relationship with another man?
- Predict the affect this experience will have on Brian’s adult life.
- Some of the changes Brian underwent were permanent. Explain.
- Predict how Brian’s parents felt upon learning of his rescue.