

Into the Wild

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MODULE: STUDENT VERSION

Reading Selection for This Module

Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild*. New York: Doubleday, 1997. Print.

Other Works Cited

Keyes, Christopher. "I Want This Movie to Grip People in the Heart." *OutsideOnline.com*. *Outside Magazine*, 27 Aug. 2007. Web. 27 Jan. 2013.

Reading Rhetorically

Prereading (Chapters 1-7)

Activity 1

Getting Ready to Read

Into the Wild is a nonfiction, full-length text by Jon Krakauer. Published in 1996, it is based on an article Krakauer wrote in *Outside Magazine* about Christopher McCandless, a young college graduate who went off to Alaska and died in the woods. Because Krakauer's article drew a huge amount of mail to the magazine, he decided to write a book about this interesting character. Chris McCandless was an idealistic young man who formed a life philosophy based on his experience and his reading in college. His idealism, ironically, led to his death by starvation. He made choices that seemed foolish as we look at them now. But McCandless genuinely loved the outdoors and wanted to live in the world without all the trappings of money and his middle-class upbringing. *Into the Wild* is, in a way, a mystery story. We're unsure as to why he rejected his family, why he was so angry with them, and why he chose to head for Alaska.

Quickwrite: Write for three to five minutes on one of the following prompts:

Think about your experience hiking, backpacking, and/or existing in the wild. What are the benefits of any one of these activities?

or

Think about some alternative plans you might have to beginning college immediately after high school. What might you do? Why would you do it, and for how long could you see yourself doing that activity?

or

Think about an experience you have had when you were alone and made some misjudgments that could have led to disaster, but didn't. (It doesn't have to be in the outdoors.) What miscalculations did you make and how did you avoid disaster?

Keep this initial freewrite in your *Into the Wild* notebook.

Activity 2

Exploring Key Concepts

We know about characters from their actions, their thoughts, their spoken words, their appearance, and comments others make about them. This book explores a character, Chris McCandless, and the actions he takes. Before reading about him, complete this prereading activity. Read the scenarios below, and use specific words to describe the character in the scenario. In groups, you will compare your lists and then turn in your finalized list of descriptive words to your teacher.

Mary was from the Valley. She used the word “like” in front of most of her adjectives when she spoke, and she talked quite a bit. On her 16th birthday, she expected to get a car. It was a given. Her friends thought she would get a pink Maserati, but she was sure her parents would buy her the candy-apple red Alfa Romeo. The day of her birthday came, and as she peered out her bedroom window, she noticed a new car in the driveway, but it was yellow—surely not hers. She thought it may have been the new cleaning woman's. She did not see any other car in the long driveway. She ran down to get a closer look. It was a new canary-colored convertible Volkswagen bug. On the front driver's seat was a birthday note to her. She burst into tears and ran into the house.

Words to describe **Mary**: _____

Vandana had a comfortable life. Not unlike her friends, Vandana had gone to school, had done well, and soon was to attend the university. She had received several scholarships and her parents had planned to pay for the rest of her education. Vandana hoped to help people in her future career but hadn't quite decided in which field she wanted to do this. She decided to take a year off before attending college. Her parents refused her this. She worked hard the summer before she was to go to college and made enough money for a one-way ticket to India. She had been interested in the life of Buddha and wanted to learn more about him. Leaving a note for her parents, she headed off to India in hopes of discovering a spiritual and centered path for herself.

Words to describe **Vandana**: _____

Emory was very popular and made friends easily. People were drawn to his honest nature and his free spirit. It was odd when two of his classmates saw drawings he had made to build bombs in his math notebook. It was even odder when he took off one day without a word to his teachers or friends. His parents notified the police. When they did a search of his room, they found two small guns and threatening notes he had written to a former girlfriend a year earlier.

Words to describe **Emory**: _____

Activity 3

Surveying the Text

Count the number of chapters in the text.

- Read a few of the chapter titles. What do the titles have in common?
- Read a few of the short epigraphs that come before a chapter begins. (An epigraph is a relevant quotation at the beginning of a book, a chapter, etc.) Do they seem to have a common thread? What do you know about them and their authors?
- Look at the length of the book.
- Look at any maps or photographs.
- Identify the author and publication date.
- What other works has Krakauer written? What do you know of them? Have you read any of them?

From these clues, what do you think the book is about? How do you think it is organized? Write your predictions in your notebook.

Activity 4

Making Predictions and Asking Questions

Krakauer wrote an article entitled “Death of an Innocent” in 1993. He followed the path of Chris McCandless in the pages of *Outside Magazine*. He later expanded the article into a book, and in 2007, Sean Penn made the book into a movie. For interviews and more background on the book and movie, go to the *Outside Magazine* website: <http://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/Back-Into-the-Wild.html>. Then answer the following questions in your notebook.

1. What do you know or assume about a magazine called *Outside Magazine*? Who do you think the intended readers are?
2. Why do you think Krakauer wrote this particular book?

3. What do you think made this story so popular? What do you think people found engaging about it?

Write your answers in your notebook.

Activity 5

Reading the Author's Note

Many readers skip the author's note that begins a book, but this note by Krakauer is particularly interesting and will guide your reading of his book. Read the three-page author's note before you begin to read the work. Then form groups of three or four, and discuss the following questions:

1. What might McCandless's motives have been for his behavior (par. 3)?
2. How difficult would it be to invent a new life?
3. In paragraph 4, Krakauer introduces some themes of the book. Discuss these themes.
4. In paragraph 5, Krakauer warns us that he will not be an impartial biographer. What does this mean? Are all biographers impartial? What might we expect from Krakauer?
5. In the last paragraph, Krakauer introduces the complexity of Chris McCandless. Keep in mind the following four questions as you read the text:
 - Should we admire McCandless for his courage and noble ideas?
 - Was he a reckless idiot?
 - Was he crazy?
 - Was he an arrogant and stupid narcissist?

After the class discussion, write your response to the author's note in your notebook. After reading this note, what do you expect to find in the rest of the book?

Activity 6

Noticing and Stopping to Understand New or Difficult Words

Vocabulary Self-Assessment chart for before, during, and after reading.

Directions: Place a +, =, or – sign next to the word at each phase of the reading.

Key: + I know it well, = I have heard of it, – I do not know it

	Before I read	While I read	After I read
Chapter 1 unsullied sonorous meandered			
Chapter 2 trough permafrost derelict anomaly environs enigmatic			
Chapter 3 itinerant estranged nomadic unencumbered emancipated			
Chapters 4–7 intermittent emasculated indolently espoused			

Activity 7

Keeping a Vocabulary Reading Log

Because the setting in this text helps to move the story along as we follow McCandless from one location to another and through difficult weather conditions, the author uses descriptive words to present the conflict weather presents for him. Keep a log of all words that you come across in your reading of the text that relate to the raw weather conditions. You should include the word, the definition of the word, and a picture of the word (if possible). You will use these words to increase your vocabulary and enhance your writing as you write about the book and better understand the difficult circumstances McCandless faces.

Activity 8

Using Context Clues To Figure Out Meaning

Since you learn most of the words you know from hearing them or reading them, recognizing and trying to make sense of new words and to notice and attempt to find meaning in what you read is important when and to notice and attempt to find meaning in what you read when you are reading independently. To that end, answer the following questions for a word you do not know:

1. Notice clues in what comes before and after the word, as well as the parts of the word itself you may already know.
2. Link your prior knowledge with what you are reading—make connections to the word or subject.
3. Make predictions about the word’s meaning.
4. Use references to find out more about the word.
5. Make connections to a key concept, and, if relevant, place the new word and its meaning in your vocabulary log.

Activity 9

Vocabulary Word Learning Strategies

Referring back to characteristics from Activity 1 in this module, you may believe McCandless is a narcissist. Here are some questions to help you understand this term better.

- Ask a question: What do you think narcissist means?
- Word Associations: Of these four options, which word is synonymous with narcissist and why?
- Derivation: Where have you heard this word before?
- Who do you know like this? Describe a person you think is narcissistic. What behaviors make you think they exhibit this characteristic?
- Idea Completions: Always needing attention and changing clothing to look his best all day long, it was obvious. . . .

Reading (Chapters 1-7)

Activity 10

First Reading

As you journey through each section of the text, keep your notes, questions, and observations in your *Into the Wild* notebook. Each assigned reading section will have its own questions to answer, but you will do certain tasks throughout the book. Some of these activities require you to maintain a geographical record of where and when McCandless is in the book. Another is to keep track of the

literary quotations that Krakauer uses in his epigraphs. Because you are studying McCandless's personality to discover why he made the decisions he did, you will keep a log of McCandless's personality traits.

Reading Chapters 1 and 2: The Beginning and the End

Note the epigraphs that begin each of these chapters. One is by a friend of Chris McCandless and the other is by McCandless himself, followed by a quotation from *White Fang*, by Jack London. In your notebook, make note of all the maps that begin the text.

What is your assessment of Chris McCandless so far? Keep notes as you read, ask questions of the text, and write down your reactions.

Reading Chapter 3: Home

Jot down your thoughts on the following questions:

1. What was Westerberg like? What kind of character did he have?
2. What was McCandless like? What kind of character did he have? Would you have liked to know him?
3. Why did McCandless start calling himself Alex? Did this make a difference in how he related to people?

Reading Chapters 4–7: The Journey

Study the map that begins Chapter 4 and refer to it as you follow McCandless's journey. Jot down answers to the following as you read these chapters:

4. In your notebook, list the people McCandless met along the way.
5. What was it about McCandless's personality that made an impression on people?
6. Note McCandless's journal. Why do you think he avoided using the first person when he talked about himself? Why doesn't he use the pronoun "I"?
7. What is the purpose of Chapter 4?
8. Characterize Ronald Franz. What kind of a human being was he? Did he have your sympathy? Why or why not?
9. What more did you learn about McCandless's relationship with his father? Do you think his anger is justified? Why or why not?

Activity 11

First Impressions

Now that you have read Chapters 1-7, open your notebook to the predictions you made in Activity 4. Answer the following questions:

1. Which of your predictions turned out to be true?

2. What surprised you?
3. If your prediction was inaccurate, what in the text misled you?
4. What, if anything, is confusing to you?
5. Why is the author telling you this story?
6. How has the author changed what you understand about the situation?
7. Who is the author and how has the author's perspective and attitude influenced your thoughts about McCandless and his situation?

Activity 12

Considering the Structure of the Text

Mapping out the organizational structure of the text helps us understand the content itself.

Mapping the Organizational Structure

Mapping Chapters 1 and 2

1. Contrast the two chapters. What is the purpose of each?
2. The main character of the book is dead by the second chapter. Why does Krakauer begin the story at the end?
3. Draw a line where you think the introduction ends in each chapter. Is it after the first paragraph or after several paragraphs?
4. Consider the last paragraph of each chapter. What is the function of each? How does each paragraph work?

Mapping Chapter 3

5. What is the point of focusing on Carthage, South Dakota, and on Westerberg in this chapter?
6. How does this chapter function in terms of the organization of the whole?

Activity 13

Descriptive Outlining

Outlining Chapters 4-7

Write brief statements describing the function of each of these chapters for the reader. What is Krakauer trying to accomplish?

- Chapter 4:
- Chapter 5:
- Chapter 6:

- Chapter 7:

How do these chapters work as a whole?

Activity 14

Noticing Language

At this time, read the assigned selection or selections below and then explain who the speaker is in the extracted sentences.

Selection 1:

“He seemed extremely intelligent,” Franz states in an exotic brogue that sounds like a blend of Scottish, Pennsylvania Dutch, and Carolina drawl. “I thought he was too nice a kid to be living by that hot springs with those nudist and drunks and dope smokers.” After attending church that Sunday, Franz decided to talk to Alex “about how he was living. Somebody needed to convince him to get an education and a job and make something of his life.”

When he returned to McCandless’s camp and launched into the self-improvement pitch, though, McCandless cut him off abruptly. “Look, Mr. Franz,” he declared, “you don’t need to worry about me. I have a college education. I’m not destitute. I’m living like this by choice.” And then, despite his initial prickliness, the young man warmed to the old-timer, and the two engaged in a long conversation. (51)

Now read the following extracted sentences. In each case, determine who is speaking. Is the person speaking directly, or is someone repeating what another person has said. How do you know?

1. “He seemed extremely intelligent,” Franz states.
2. After attending church that Sunday, Franz decided to talk to Alex.
3. “Look, Mr. Franz,” he declared, “you don’t need to worry about me.”
4. The young man warmed to the old-timer.

What is the purpose of this passage in the book?

Write a one-sentence summary.

Selection 2:

At one point, to reward McCandless with a task that involved slightly more skill, Westerberg attempted to teach him to operate a front-end loader. “Alex hadn’t been around machinery much,” Westerberg says with a shake of his head, “and it was pretty comical to watch him try to get the hang of the clutch and all those levers. He definitely wasn’t what you’d call mechanically minded.”

Nor was McCandless endowed with a surfeit of common sense. Many who knew him have commented, unbidden, that he seemed to have great difficulty seeing the trees, as it were, for the forest. “Alex wasn’t a total space cadet or anything,” says Westerberg; “don’t get me wrong. But there were gaps in his thinking. I remember once I went over to the house, walked into the kitchen, and noticed a god-awful stink. I mean it smelled nasty in there. I opened the microwave, and the bottom of it was filled with rancid grease. Alex had been using it to cook chicken, and it never occurred to him that the grease had to drain somewhere. It wasn’t that he was too lazy to clean it up—Alex always kept things real neat and orderly—it was just that he hadn’t noticed the grease.” (62-63)

Read the following extracted sentences. In each case, determine who is speaking. Is the person speaking directly, or is someone repeating what another person has said. How do you know?

5. Westerberg attempted to teach him to operate a front-end loader.
6. “Alex hadn’t been around machinery much,” Westerberg says.
7. Many who knew him have commented, unbidden, that he seemed to have great difficulty seeing the trees, as it were, for the forest.
8. “Alex wasn’t a total space cadet,” says Westerberg.
9. “It wasn’t that he was too lazy to clean it up.”

What is the purpose of this passage? What is the point of Westerberg’s story about the chicken grease? Is he making fun of McCandless? Write a short summary.

After reading the passage or passages above, consider the following questions:

10. Were you ever confused about who was speaking? If so, what caused the confusion?
11. What is the difference in effects on the reader between direct quotations and reported speech or paraphrases?

Activity 15

Annotating and Questioning the Text

Our first reading of a book gives us the story line, the major conflicts, and a sense of what the author intends. The second (or third) reading provides richer analyses and a deeper understanding of the text. In the author’s notes, Krakauer provides a guide to our reading—especially to our subsequent reading of *Into the Wild*.

Annotating a text enables readers to explore more deeply how a text works to inform or persuade its readers. During the initial reading, you were encouraged to read “with the grain,” or “to play the believing game.” In rereading, you should read “against the grain,” or “play the doubting game.” This is where the conversation

shifts and the reader begins to question the text and the author. As you reread the text, annotate it by making marginal notations (e.g., asking questions, expressing surprise, disagreeing, elaborating, and noting any instances of confusion). As you look at the text again, one clue as to what might be worth annotating is to go back to the four questions Krakauer raises in his “Author’s Note.”

- Was McCandless admirable for his courage and noble ideas?
- Was he a reckless idiot?
- Was he crazy?
- Was he a narcissist who perished out of arrogance and stupidity—and was he undeserving of the considerable media attention he received?

Make marginal notes as you reread the text. When you respond to the chapter questions, cite the text, if necessary, where you find evidence for your judgments.

Annotating Chapters 1 and 2

Each chapter begins with a short epigraph (a quotation that is relevant to that chapter). Now that you have a better sense of Chris McCandless’s story, why do you think these epigraphs are relevant to these chapters?

Annotating Chapter 3

1. How would you characterize McCandless’s relationships with other people: his parents, his sister, Westerberg?
2. What did his friends make of his secretive life?

Annotating Chapters 4–7

As you read, see if you can find evidence of McCandless’s preparation for Alaska. You might read more parts of works that McCandless admired and quoted, such as Thoreau’s “On the Duty of Civil Disobedience,” and consider how McCandless might have incorporated Thoreau’s advice into his life philosophy.

You might also read some of Jack London’s work that we know influenced McCandless: *The Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*, “To Build a Fire,” “An Odyssey of the North,” or “The Wit of Porportuk.”

3. Why did these works appeal to McCandless?

Reread the notes at the end of Chapter 7 that McCandless sent to his friends.

4. What is his tone?
5. What is his attitude? To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Analyzing Stylistic Choices

Analyzing Stylistic Choices helps you see the linguistic and rhetorical choices writers make to inform or convince readers.

Precise writers make linguistic choices to create certain effects. They want to have their readers react in a certain way. Go back through the text to analyze Krakauer's use of words, sentences, and paragraphs, and take note of how effective a writer he is.

Analyzing Chapters 1 and 2

Words

As you revisit these chapters, pay attention to the denotative and connotative meanings of key words. Think about the effect certain words have on you. Krakauer describes McCandless's body in a very clinical way. Reread that description:

“Virtually no subcutaneous fat remained on the body, and the muscles had withered significantly in the days or weeks prior to death. At the time of the McCandless's remains weighed sixty-seven pounds. Starvation was posited as the most probable cause of death.”

1. How are you affected by this description?
2. Look again at the words in the vocabulary list that relate to the harshness of Alaska. Are you interested in traveling there sometime? Why or why not?
3. Why does understanding the new words matter?

Sentences

Consider the sentence structure Krakauer uses.

4. How varied are his sentences?
5. What effects do sentence structure and length have on the reader?

Analyzing Chapter 3

Denotation/Connotation

Consider the connotations of some of the word choices Krakauer makes. For example, he describes Westerberg as “drawn into a scheme to build and sell ‘black boxes,’ which illegally unscramble satellite-television transmissions, allowing people to watch encrypted cable programming without paying for it” (19).

6. Is Krakauer sympathetic to Westerberg? How do you know?
7. Compare the language and tone of the two letters that McCandless writes, one to his sister and one to his parents. What

did McCandless mean when he said, “They will think they have bought my respect”? (21)

Analyzing Chapters 4–7

Paragraphs

A few pages from the end of Chapter 7, Krakauer gives us an analysis of McCandless’s relationship with his father and mother (it begins, “Westerberg’s latter conjecture . . . ” (64)).

8. What is the tone of this paragraph?
9. Does Krakauer cite any evidence that suggests he “knows” that his analysis is accurate?
10. Does it matter?

Postreading (Chapters 1-7)

Activity 17

Summarizing and Responding

Summarizing is a very important skill used to extract the main ideas from a text and explain what the author says about them. You have reread the text and have looked at how each chapter fits into a whole. In a way, you have “mapped” the text. Now you can generate a summary from that mapping.

1. Try to write a one-sentence summary of Chapters 1-7. If a friend who hadn’t read it asked you what it is about, what would you say?
2. Ron Franz taught McCandless how to do leatherworking. Krakauer writes,

For his first project McCandless produced a tooled leather belt, on which he created an artful pictorial record of his wanderings. ALEX is inscribed at the belt’s left end; then the initials C.J.M (for Christopher Johnson McCandless) frame skull and crossbones. Across the strip of cowhide one sees a rendering of a two-lane blacktop, a NO U-TURN sign, a thunderstorm producing a flash flood that engulfs a car, a hitchhiker’s thumb, and eagle, the Sierra Nevada, salmon cavorting in the Pacific Ocean, the Pacific Coast Highway from Oregon to Washington, the Rocky Mountains, Montana wheat fields, a South Dakota rattlesnake, Westerberg’s house in Carthage, the Colorado River, a gale in the Gulf of California, a canoe beached beside a tent, Las Vegas, the initials T.C.D., Morro Bay, Astoria, and at the buckle end, finally, the letter N (presumably representing north). Executed with remarkable skill and creativity, this belt is as astonishing as any artifact Chris McCandless left behind. (52)

Activity 18

Near the end of Chapter 7, Westerberg says of the belt,

Alex used to sit at the bar in the Cabaret and read that belt for hours on end... like he was translating hieroglyphics for us. Each picture he'd carved into the leather had a long story behind it. (68)

- a. Considering what you know of McCandless so far, why did he make the belt? What does it represent to him? Why did he feel a need to explain it to others? What stories does it tell?
 - b. In what sense is the belt a summary of McCandless's life up to that point?
3. If you were going to make a belt that told the story of your own life, what would you put on it?

Write your answers in your notebook.

Thinking Critically

Rhetorical appeals are the accepted ways in which we persuade or argue a case. The following questions will move you through more traditional rhetorical appeals. By focusing on logic, the appeal to logic, to the writer, and to emotion, you will find yourself understanding further how Krakauer has persuaded us and how you can use these same techniques to persuade others when you write or speak.

Questions about Logic (Logos)

1. At the end of Chapter 2, Krakauer says of McCandless,

Driving west out of Atlanta, he intended to invent an utterly new life for himself, one in which he would be free to wallow in unfiltered experience. To symbolize the complete severance from his previous life, he even adopted a new name. No longer would he answer to Chris McCandless; he was now Alexander Supertramp, master of his own destiny. (23)

These are some pretty strong assertions about what McCandless was trying to do. Do you believe them at this point? Has Krakauer supported these conclusions about McCandless? What is some of the evidence he presents?

2. In Chapter 6, Krakauer writes,

On March 14, Franz left McCandless on the shoulder of Interstate 70 outside Grand Junction and returned to southern California. McCandless was thrilled to be on his way north, and he was relieved was well—relieved that he had again evaded the impending threat of human intimacy, of friendship, and all the messy emotional baggage that comes

with it. He had fled the claustrophobic confines of his family. He'd successfully kept Jan Burres and Wayne Westerberg at arm's length, flitting out of their lives before anything was expected of him. And now he'd slipped painlessly out of Ron Franz's life as well. (55)

Does Krakauer actually know what McCandless was feeling at that point? How can he tell? What evidence does he have? Do you think he is right?

3. In Chapter 6, McCandless writes to Ron Franz, telling him,

You are wrong if you think Joy emanates only or principally from human relationships. God has placed it all around us. It is in everything and anything we might experience. We just have to have the courage to turn against our habitual lifestyle and engage in unconventional living.

My point is that you do not need me or anyone else around to bring this new kind of light in your life. It is simply waiting out there for you to grasp it, and all you have to do is reach for it. The only person you are fighting is yourself and your stubbornness to engage in new circumstances. (57-58)

Does McCandless offer any evidence for these assertions about life? Are his life and his journey an argument for or against this position? Is Ron Franz convinced? Are you?

Questions about the Writer (Ethos)

4. Does Krakauer have an acceptable background to speak with authority on this subject? Why or why not?
5. Is this author knowledgeable? Smart? Successful?
6. What does the author's style and language tell you about him?
7. Do you trust this author? Why or why not?

Questions about Emotions (Pathos)

8. Does this section of the book affect you emotionally? Which parts?
9. Do you think the author is trying to manipulate your emotions? If so, how?
10. Do your emotions conflict with your logical interpretation of the arguments?

Write answers to these questions in your notebook.

Prereading (Chapters 8-15)

Note: Because we are cycling through parts of the Assignment Template for each section, some of the introductory language in the instructions is repeated.

Activity 19

Surveying the Text

As you may have noted previously, the chapters in this book are all labeled with place names or descriptions. Taking what you know about the previous part of the book and what the chapter titles below imply, what do you think that the next chapters will be about? You may want to do some Internet searches on some of the place names. In some cases, you will find that the same name is shared by different places, and you will have to use reasoning to determine which one is likely to appear in this book.

- Chapter 8—Alaska
- Chapter 9—Davis Gulch
- Chapter 10—Fairbanks
- Chapter 11—Chesapeake Beach
- Chapter 12—Annandale
- Chapter 14—The Stikine Ice Cap
- Chapter 15—The Stikine Ice Cap

Write down your predictions in your *Into the Wild* notebook.

Activity 20

Making Predictions

By Chapter 7 of the book, it is pretty clear what Chris McCandless was like, where he went on his journey, and what happened to him. What questions about McCandless remain to be answered? What larger themes and questions could be discussed? What will Krakauer write about in the rest of the book? Write your predictions about the upcoming chapters in your *Into the Wild* notebook.

Activity 21

Noticing and Stopping to Understand New or Difficult Words

Vocabulary Self-Assessment chart for before, during, and after reading.

Directions: Place a +, =, or – sign next to the word at each phase of the reading.

Key: + I know it well, = I have heard of it, – I do not know it

	Before I read	While I read	After I read
Chapters 8–10 hubris requisite humility contrived asceticism theatrics enigmatic compulsive copious circuitous labyrinth flamboyant ephemeral overwrought			
Chapters 11–13 taciturn mercurial “marches to a different drummer” nuance inequities sanctimonious hypocrite obliquely extemporaneous insurrectionists			
Chapters 14 and 15 zeal demarcates penitent inebriated phantasmagoria madrigal extricated recumbent epiphany crampon volition			

Reading (Chapters 8-15)

Activity 22

First Reading

As noted for the first section of the book, because you will be given directed tasks as you read *Into the Wild*, you may need to flip back and forth in this guide. For example, you might read Chapters 8-10, practice a reading strategy, skip to the section on vocabulary for those chapters, move next to the section that gives you strategies for rereading, and so forth.

As you journey through each section of the text, keep your notes, questions, and observations in your *Into the Wild* notebook. Each assigned reading section will have its own questions to answer, but you will do certain tasks throughout the book. Some of these activities require you to maintain a geographical record of where and when McCandless is in the book. Another is to keep track of the literary quotations that Krakauer uses in his epigraphs. Because you are studying McCandless's personality to discover why he made the decisions he did, you will keep a log of McCandless's personality traits.

Reading Chapters 8–10: Outcasts, Idealists and Dreamers

1. What is the function of these chapters? What is their relationship to the rest of the text?
2. Chapter 8 opens with some reactions from people to the article about McCandless that Krakauer published in *Outside Magazine*. What do most people think? Why did Krakauer put this material here in the middle of the book?
3. Why did Krakauer interrupt the McCandless story with Chapters 8 and 9?
4. Were you surprised that McCandless left trails so that the authorities could find out who he was?
5. What's in a name? Does it matter that we have the name we were given by our parents? How do names matter? Does your name fit you? If not, what name would you choose? Why?

Reading Chapters 11–13: Family History

These three key chapters give background information that will help you piece together the mystery of McCandless. Chapter 11 fills in his personal past; Chapter 12 fills in his family past; and Chapter 13 chronicles McCandless's family's grief. Jot down the surprises (if any) that you encountered as you read.

6. What was McCandless like as a child and as a teen? What was he like as an adult? Were there indications throughout his life as to the kind of person he would become?

7. Do you think you are essentially the same person you were as a child?
8. How have you changed?

Reading Chapters 14 and 15: Krakauer Interjects

9. Why does Krakauer talk about himself in these two chapters?
10. Do you think it was a good idea for Krakauer to interject himself into the story?
11. What is your reaction to his description of his own climbing experience?
12. How is Krakauer's life related to McCandless's?
13. John Menlove Edwards said that climbing is a "psycho-neurotic tendency." Do you think that is so? Always?
14. Do you think that Edwards defines McCandless? How is he psycho-neurotic?

Activity 23

Considering the Structure of the Text

Mapping out the organizational structure of the text helps us to understand the content itself.

Outlining Chapters 8–10

Briefly outline each of these chapters and explain its function.

- Chapter 8:
- Chapter 9:
- Chapter 10:
- How important is it for us to compare McCandless with Rosellini, Rues, and Waterman?
- Why did Krakauer give us these details?

Outlining Chapters 11–13

These chapters give us important background knowledge.

1. Would the book have been more effective if Krakauer had used a different organizing strategy?
2. What if the book had ended with McCandless's death (i.e., moved chronologically)? Argue for an organizing strategy (either Krakauer's strategy or another one).

Outlining Chapters 14 and 15

In these two chapters, we learn about Krakauer.

Activity 24

3. Are these chapters important to the story of McCandless?
4. What do they add?
5. Is there an argument for dumping them?
6. In the first few pages of Chapter 14, Krakauer gives his thesis for the whole book. Can you find it?
7. Do you agree with Krakauer's thesis? Why or why not?

Annotating and Questioning the Text

Our first reading of a book gives us the story line, the major conflicts, and a sense of what the author intends. The second (or third) reading provides richer analyses and a deeper understanding of the text. In the author's notes, Krakauer provides a guide to our reading—especially to our subsequent reading of *Into the Wild*.

1. Now it is time to read “against the grain,” or “play the doubting game.” This is when the conversation shifts and the reader begins to question the text and the author. As you reread the text, annotate it by making marginal notations (e.g., asking questions, expressing surprise, disagreeing, elaborating, and noting any instances of confusion).
2. As you look at the text again, one clue as to what might be worth annotating is to go back to the four questions Krakauer asks in his “Author's Note.”
 - Was McCandless admirable for his courage and noble ideas?
 - Was he a reckless idiot?
 - Was he crazy?
 - Was he a narcissist who perished out of arrogance and stupidity—and was he undeserving of the considerable media attention he received?

Make marginal notes as you reread the text. When you respond to the chapter questions, cite the text, if necessary, where you find evidence for your judgments.

Annotating Chapters 8–10

Reread Chapter 8, and consider the charges by others against Krakauer.

3. Should they be taken seriously? Why or why not?
4. Study the map that begins Chapter 9 and follow Ruess's journey.
5. Consider how the story of the *papar* (Irish monks) relates to the story of the “outcasts” that Krakauer discusses (Chapter 9).

Annotating Chapters 11–13

Consider McCandless's family history.

6. Does that change your view of him?
7. Characterize each of McCandless's family members. What are their strengths and weaknesses?
8. Was McCandless reasonable in his reaction to his parents' past? Should he have forgiven them?
9. How do you think the information about his parents' difficulties early in their relationship affected McCandless?
10. Does his anger at them explain something about McCandless's choices in life?
11. Chapter 12 ends with McCandless's mother talking about a dream (nightmare?) that she had. Have you ever had such a thing happen to you? Should we take dreams such as these seriously? Why or why not?

Annotating Chapters 14 and 15

12. Think about and then jot down comparisons you see between McCandless's relationship with his father and Krakauer's relationship with his.
13. Do you think Krakauer understands McCandless? Why or why not?
14. Do you think Krakauer reads too much into McCandless's life because he feels some sort of affinity to him?
15. Respond to the following quotation at the end of Chapter 15: "It is easy, when you are young, to believe that what you desire is no less than what you deserve, to assume that if you want something badly enough, it is your God-given right to have it" (155).

Activity 25

Analyzing Stylistic Choices

Analyzing Stylistic Choices helps you see the linguistic and rhetorical choices writers make to inform or convince readers.

Precise writers make linguistic choices to create certain effects. They want to have their readers react in a certain way. Go back through the text and analyze Krakauer's use of words, sentences, and paragraphs, and take note as to how effective a writer he is.

Analyzing Chapters 8–10

Paragraphs

In the first part of Chapter 8, Krakauer quotes Alaskans who had opinions about McCandless and his death.

1. Why does Krakauer cite these letters? How does citing them add to or detract from the text?
2. Choose one of these letters, and respond to it, explaining the degree to which you agree or disagree.

Tone

Krakauer inserts himself into the story in Chapter 8.

3. Does this give him more credibility?
4. Do you find this annoying? Why or why not?

Analyzing Chapters 11–13

Words

A few pages into Chapter 13, Krakauer describes McCandless's sister's behavior when she was told about her brother's death.

5. Why does he use the word "keening" instead of crying?
6. What are the denotations and connotations of this word? What is its history?

Sentences

Reread aloud the next-to-last paragraph in Chapter 13, where Krakauer powerfully describes Billie's grief.

7. Rephrase the paragraph and simplify it in your own words.
8. What makes Krakauer's description (quoted below) powerful?

"It is all she can do to force herself to examine the fuzzy snapshots. As she studies the pictures, she breaks down from time to time, weeping as only a mother who has outlived a child can weep, betraying a sense of loss so huge and irreparable that the mind balks at taking its measure.

"Such bereavement, witnessed at close range, makes even the most eloquent apologies for high-risk activities ring fatuous and hollow."

Analyzing Chapters 14 and 15

Words

Krakauer uses technical vocabulary related to mountain climbing in these two chapters. Investigate the meaning technical words you don't know. What is the effect of these words on the reader?

Activity 26

Summarizing and Responding

Chapters 1-7 describe McCandless's journey and death. Chapters 8-15 try to put McCandless's life in a larger context by comparing him to other people: other wanderers, his family, and the author of the book. Look over your notes and annotations and answer the following questions. Write your answers in your notebook:

1. How does McCandless compare with the other wanderers Krakauer describes? In what ways is McCandless similar? In what ways is he different? Do we understand McCandless better after making these comparisons?
2. Krakauer and others have speculated that McCandless was estranged from his family because of his relationship with his father. What was his family life like? Does it explain his later behavior?
3. Krakauer clearly feels a strong connection to McCandless. Do you think they were very similar? Why or why not? In what ways is this book as much about Krakauer as it is about McCandless?
4. Taking your notes and your answers to the above questions into account, write a short paragraph answering the following question: Who was Chris McCandless?

Activity 27

Thinking Critically

Rhetorical appeals are the accepted ways in which we persuade or argue a case. The following questions will move you through more traditional rhetorical appeals. By focusing on appeals to the writer, to emotion, and to logic, you will be able to discover how Krakauer has persuaded us and how you can use these techniques to persuade others when you write or speak.

Questions about Logic (Logos)

1. Krakauer summarizes the response to his article by saying, "The prevailing Alaska wisdom held that McCandless was simply one more dreamy half-cocked greenhorn who went into the country expecting to find answers to all his problems and instead found only mosquitos and a lonely death" (72). Has Krakauer made the case that the prevailing Alaska wisdom is wrong? Why or why not?
2. At the end of Chapter 9, Krakauer describes Irish monks known as the papar who sought out lonely places so much that they left Iceland for Greenland when some Norwegians showed up because they thought that it had become too crowded, even though the land was nearly uninhabited. Krakauer writes, "Reading of these monks, one cannot help thinking of Everett Reuss and Chris McCandless" (97). Krakauer implies that there

is some kind of similarity between Reuss, McCandless, and the papar, but instead of making a specific connection, he just says “one cannot help thinking of.” Is this a good argument? Why or why not?

3. Krakauer argues in Chapter 14 that McCandless’s death was unplanned and was a terrible accident (134). Does the book so far support that position? Do you agree with Krakauer? Why or why not?
4. Look for other claims that Krakauer makes that might be weak or unsupported. What are they?

Questions about the Writer (Ethos)

5. Chapters 14 and 15 describe Krakauer’s successful attempt when he was 23 years old to climb the “Devil’s Thumb,” a mountain in Alaska. He also describes what he thinks are parallels between McCandless and himself. Do these chapters increase his credibility for writing this book, or do they undermine his credibility by making it seem like he has his own agenda and is not objective?

Questions about Emotions (Pathos)

6. Chapters 11-13 are about McCandless’s relationships with his family. Do any of these descriptions cause an emotional reaction in the reader? If so, what is it about the descriptions that causes this connection? Is it the words? Is it that we identify with the family situations? Do these effects make the book more powerful? Explain your answer.
7. Chapters 14-15 describe the author’s actions and his emotional and psychological state as he climbs the mountain. For example, when he accidentally burns a big hole in his tent, which actually belongs to his father, he is more worried about his father’s reaction than the cold. What are some other details that have an emotional impact on the readers? How do these affect you as the reader?

Prereading (Chapters 16-18, Plus Epilogue)

Activity 28

Surveying the Text

As you may have noted previously, the chapters in this book are all labeled with place names or descriptions. The remaining chapters are named after places that are already familiar from other parts of the book. Taking what you know about the previous part of the book and what the chapter titles below imply, what do you think the next chapters will be about?

- Chapter 16—The Alaskan Interior

- Chapter 17—The Stampede Trail
- Chapter 18—The Stampede Trail
- Epilogue

Write down your findings in your *Into the Wild* notebook.

Activity 29

Making Predictions and Asking Questions

You are nearing the end of the book. You are probably already thinking

1. What part of the story remains to be told?
2. What questions remain unanswered?
3. How will the author end the book?

Write your predictions in your notebook.

Activity 30

Understanding Key Vocabulary: Noticing and Stopping to Understand New or Difficult Words

Vocabulary Self-Assessment chart for before, during, and after reading.

Directions: Place a +, =, or – sign next to the word at each phase of the reading.

Key: + I know it well, = I have heard of it, – I do not know it

	Before I read	While I read	After I read
Chapters 16–18 Rubicon perambulation claustrophobic lacerations malevolent repertoire resilience insidiously			
Epilogue epilogue anomalous			

Reading (Chapters 16-18, Plus Epilogue)

Activity 31

Reading for Understanding: First Reading

As you read this section of the text, keep your notes, questions, and observations in your *Into the Wild* notebook. Continue to keep track of the literary quotations that Krakauer uses in his epigraphs. Because you are studying McCandless's personality to discover why he made the decisions he did, continue to keep a log of McCandless's personality traits.

Reading Chapters 16–18: Into the Alaskan Wild

1. After a long detour, Krakauer brings us back to the scene of McCandless's death. What does Krakauer discuss in these chapters that he did not discuss in the previous chapters? Why did he delay presenting this information?
2. Krakauer provides a lot of quotations from McCandless's journal in these chapters. What is McCandless talking about? Why did Krakauer include these selections?
3. Krakauer quotes one of McCandless's friends, who said that McCandless "was born into the wrong century. He was looking for more adventure and freedom than today's society gives people" (174). Do you think this is true?

Reading the Epilogue: Grief

4. What was your initial sense of McCandless's mental condition compared to what you think now? Have you changed your mind?
5. What was your reaction to his parents as they visited the bus?

Activity 32

Considering the Structure of the Text

Mapping out the organizational structure of the text helps us to understand the content itself.

Outlining Chapters 16–18

1. In Chapter 16, Krakauer gives a summary of the last few months of McCandless's life. Do you think Krakauer admires McCandless or not? Cite your evidence.
2. In Chapter 17, Krakauer does not arrive at the bus until after about four pages. In those first pages, he gives us the details of the equipment he carries, the flow of the river, and the others with him. Is this necessary? What does it add? What does it detract?
3. Krakauer says that McCandless had a kind of "idiosyncratic logic." Explain Krakauer's meaning and the extent to which you agree or disagree with him.

Activity 33

Outlining the Epilogue

This part of the book is very short.

4. What is the effect of having an epilogue that focuses entirely on the parents' return to the bus? Does it provide closure?

Annotating and Questioning the Text

Our first reading of a book gives us the story line, the major conflicts, and a sense of what the author intends. The second (or third) reading provides richer analyses and a deeper understanding of the text. In the author's notes, Krakauer provides a guide to our reading—especially to our subsequent reading of *Into the Wild*.

In the "Author's Note" at the beginning of the book, Krakauer introduces the complexity of Chris McCandless. His words imply the following four questions, which we have been considering throughout the book:

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?

Make marginal notes as you reread the text. When you respond to the chapter questions, cite the text, if necessary, where you find evidence for your judgments. At this point in your reading, have your answers to these questions changed in any way?

Annotating Chapters 16–18

5. List the various miscalculations and mistakes McCandless made.
6. Toward the end of Chapter 16, Krakauer tells us that McCandless read *Walden*. You may want to take a look at Thoreau's text and figure out what Chris found most interesting in Thoreau's discussion of food.
7. Have you ever fasted? Do you know anyone who has? Do some research on fasting and report to the class what you find or write a short report.

Annotating the Epilogue

The traditional definition of an epilogue is that it is a concluding part of a literary work.

8. Is *Into the Wild* a "literary work"? Why or why not?
9. Is the last paragraph of the book an effective ending to the book? Why or why not?

Activity 34

Analyzing Stylistic Choices

Analyzing Stylistic Choices helps you see the linguistic and rhetorical choices writers make to inform or convince readers.

Precise writers make linguistic choices to create certain effects because they want their readers to react in a certain way. Go back through the text, and analyze Krakauer's use of words, sentences, and paragraphs. Then decide how effective his writing is.

Analyzing Chapters 16–18

Tone

Read aloud the last paragraph in Chapter 18.

1. How does Krakauer know that McCandless “was at peace, serene as a monk gone to God”? Explain.
2. Does Krakauer have the right to infer from the photograph that McCandless had the serenity of a monk?
3. What is an alternative interpretation of the photograph?

Analyzing the Epilogue

Read aloud the last paragraph of the book.

4. Is the language literary? Why or why not? What is its effect on you?

Activity 35

Thinking Critically

Rhetorical appeals are the accepted ways in which we persuade or argue a case. The following questions will consider the traditional rhetorical appeals. By focusing on the appeal to logic, to the writer, and to emotion, you will understand further how Krakauer has persuaded us and how you can use these techniques to persuade others when you write or speak.

Questions about Logic (Logos)

1. In Chapter 16, Krakauer says that McCandless “seemed to have moved beyond his need to assert so adamantly his autonomy, his need to separate himself from his parents. Maybe he was prepared to forgive their imperfections; maybe he was even prepared to forgive some of his own. McCandless seemed ready, perhaps, to go home.” Do you agree with Krakauer's assessment?
2. Look at McCandless's response to several passages in Tolstoy's “Family Happiness” toward the end of Chapter 16:

He was right in saying that the only certain happiness in life is to live for others . . . I have lived through much, and now

I think I have found what is needed for happiness. A quiet secluded life in the country, with the possibility of being useful to people to whom it is easy to do good, and who are not accustomed to have it done to them; then work which one hopes may be of some use; then rest, nature, books, music, love for one's neighbor—such is my idea of happiness. And then, on top of all that, you for a mate, and children, perhaps—what more can the heart of a man desire. (169)

Does this indicate a change in McCandless? Was he ready to “go home”?

3. Krakauer says that in his original article, he “reported with great certainty that *H. mackenzii*, the wild sweet pea, killed the boy” (192). He now feels he was wrong. What evidence does he have for his new position?
4. Does Krakauer prove his hypothesis that McCandless's death was an unplanned accident?

Questions about the Writer (Ethos)

5. What is your impression of Krakauer as a person and a writer at this point? What are some of the details that give you this impression?

Questions about Emotions (Pathos)

6. Does this piece affect you emotionally? Which parts?

Activity 36

Summarizing and Responding

In Chapter 18, Krakauer reports that some cabins stocked with food and emergency gear were located about three hours upstream from the bus where McCandless died. However, after McCandless had been found dead, a wildlife biologist in the area discovered that the cabins had been vandalized. He said,

I'm a bear technician, so I know what bear damage looks like. This looked like somebody had gone at the cabins with a claw hammer and bashed everything in sight. From the size of the fireweed growing up through mattresses that had been tossed outside, it was clear that the vandalism had occurred many weeks earlier. (196)

Some people blamed McCandless, saying that he was angry that civilization had intruded into his wilderness. Others said that there was no evidence that McCandless had even walked that way. Considering everything you know about McCandless—his journey, his character, his ideas—do you think that he was capable of trashing these cabins? After reading this book, do you know McCandless well enough to know whether or not he would do this? Write a paragraph in your notebook about your thoughts.

Activity 37

Reflecting on Your Reading Process

1. There is still so much unknown about Chris McCandless and his journey. What do you want to learn next?
2. What reading strategies did you use or learn in this module? Which strategies will you use in reading other texts? How will these strategies apply in other classes?
3. In what ways has your ability to read and discuss texts like this one improved?

Connecting Reading to Writing

Discovering What You Think

Activity 38

Writing under Pressure

In some cases, you might be asked to write a draft of an essay in a time- pressure situation. At this point, we are using a timed writing assignment as a prewriting exercise to help you discover what you think on a related topic. Following is the writing assignment and some guidelines for approaching the timed task.

Timed Writing Assignment

What kind of person was Chris McCandless and what was he trying to do?

You will have 45 minutes to plan and write an essay on the topic assigned below. Before you begin writing, read the passage carefully and plan what you will say. Your essay should be as well organized and carefully written as you can make it.

Jon Krakauer writes,

McCandless didn't conform particularly well to the bush-casualty stereotype. Although he was rash, untutored in the ways of the backcountry, and incautious to the point of foolhardiness, he wasn't incompetent—he wouldn't have lasted 113 days if he were. And he wasn't a nutcase, he wasn't a sociopath, he wasn't an outcast. McCandless was something else—although precisely what is hard to say. A pilgrim, perhaps. (85)

What was Chris McCandless seeking in the wilderness? Do you think he found it before he died? Considering these questions and Krakauer's statement, write an essay in which you define who Chris McCandless was and explain what he was trying to do. Support your conclusions with evidence from your notes and your reading of the text.

Strategies for Writing Under Pressure

1. Read and then reread the prompt. Underline the important verbs that tell you what action to perform. For example, the verbs “define,” “explain,” and “support” are in the above prompt.
2. Identify and explain the argument in the passage.
3. Quickly jot down some ideas that come to mind. Do you agree or disagree with the author’s basic position?
4. Figure out the topics and topic sentences of your body paragraphs, and put them in a brief scratch outline.
5. Don’t worry about a smooth introduction if nothing comes to mind; begin with your point, your thesis.
6. What is the evidence that you will use to prove your position? Jot down in list form the evidence that comes to mind. Fit these ideas into your paragraph outline under your topic sentences. Having this brief outline will remind you of what you want to say, but it won’t mean that you can’t change your mind.
7. Brainstorm your thoughts in response to the topic. Use your vocabulary log, your annotations, and your notes about the book to provide more ideas and examples from the text and ways to speak about them to help you move as smoothly as possible from reading to writing.
8. Consider what most people know and think about the topic of their papers. To change the opinions of the audience, you will need to think about persuasive techniques, both logical and emotional.

Activity 39

A Take-Home Essay

Is life on the road suited for everyone?

A question implicit in this book is whether something is fundamentally wrong with human society, which McCandless says poisons him, or if there is simply a type of individual who desires the friendship of other humans but can’t abide in society. Krakauer quotes Ken Sleight talking about Everett Ruess, another wanderer like McCandless who disappeared in the wilderness. Sleight says that Ruess was a loner who liked people too much to live in secret all his life. He says,

A lot of us are like that—I’m like that, Ed Abbey was like that, and it sounds like this McCandless kid was like that: We like companionship, see, but we can’t stand to be around people for very long. So we go get ourselves lost, come back for a while, then get the hell out again. (96)

McCandless gives advice consistent with that view to Ron Franz, an 81-year-old man. He writes in a letter,

Don't settle down and sit in one place. Move around, be nomadic, make each day a new horizon. You are still going to live a long time, Ron, and it would be a shame if you did not take the opportunity to revolutionize your life and move into an entirely new realm of experience. (57)

Ron Franz actually follows the advice and moves out of his home. Is this good advice for everyone, or only for a certain kind of person? What does McCandless experience on the road that justifies the risks and discomforts of this kind of life? Considering the quotations and questions above, write an essay in which you discuss the advantages and disadvantages of life on the road. Who should follow this path? Support your views with examples from the text and your own experience.

Activity 40

A Researched Essay

Your instructor may assign one of these research topics.

1. Investigate how someone might go about smoking game (i.e., McCandless's moose) when out in the wild. Analyze where McCandless might have gone wrong.
2. Compare and contrast your initial judgment of McCandless's parents with your judgment at the end of the epilogue.
3. Consider three people who befriended McCandless: Jan Burre, Ronald Franz, and Westerberg. Explain why McCandless left such a strong impression on each of them.
4. McCandless had certain literary heroes: Henry David Thoreau, Jack London, and Leo Tolstoy, to name a few. Choose one or more of McCandless's literary heroes, and analyze what he appreciated about their work as well as what he incorporated into his own philosophy of life.

Activity 41

Taking a Stance

Whether you are revising your timed writing, beginning your take-home essay, or working on one of the research topics, you need to define your own position in the context of what other people think. Focus on the core question of the topic you are working on:

Timed writing: What kind of person was McCandless and what was he trying to do?

Take-home essay: Is life on the road suited for everyone?

Whatever the issue, you need to consider the opinions of the various people McCandless met on the road, the opinions of his family, Krakauer's own views, and what Krakauer calls "the prevailing Alaska wisdom," along with various statements by McCandless

himself. What do you believe your readers will think about McCandless, his ideas and his quest? What do you think? How will you best present and support your views for your audience?

One way to get some perspective is to imagine how other people would tell the story. How would the story have been different if McCandless's mother had told it? His sister? Another journalist?

Krakauer had outdoor experiences that he reflected on at times in the book and appeared to identify with McCandless in many ways. What if he relied so much on his own experiences that he made incorrect assumptions about McCandless's experiences? What if he had not been so sympathetic in his recounting of McCandless's story? What if a totally objective journalist had told the story? What would be different about the writing?

Consider this story told from a different perspective. Answer these questions with that person in mind: "What would _____ say about this?" "How would _____ tell this story?" What words would he or she use?

Here are some possible perspectives:

- A totally objective news reporter
- McCandless's father
- McCandless's mother
- McCandless's sister Carine
- Ron Franz
- Wayne Westerberg
- An Alaskan hunter
- An Athapaskan Indian
- A teacher at your school
- Your favorite athlete
- Your favorite actor or musician
- A politician

Discuss these various perspectives with your classmates.

Now think about your own stance. Here are some questions to help you:

- What is the gist of your argument in one or two sentences? Turn these sentences into a working thesis statement.
- What would you say is your main claim at this point in time?
- How do your ideas relate to what others have said?

- What arguments or ideas are you responding to?
- What evidence best supports your argument or claim? What evidence might you use in relation to what others say about your argument? How does it support your claim?
- What background information does the reader need to understand your argument?
- What will those who disagree with you have to say about your argument? What evidence might they use to refute your ideas?
- How did your views change during the reading? What factors caused you to change? Could you use these factors to change someone else's views?

Activity 42

Gathering Evidence To Support Your Claims

Practice identifying claims and good evidence to support them from some sample sentences written by other students. Was the student's claim backed up with effective evidence from the text? Then, identify your own claims, and find evidence that supports them.

Writing Rhetorically

Entering the Conversation

Activity 43

Composing a Draft

At this point, you have considered the topic and your stance toward it, and you have gathered evidence from your notes and reading to support your ideas. Whatever topic you are responding to, your task now is to compose the first draft of your essay. Although some people write with music or TV on in the background, if you find that your attention is constantly being drawn away from the writing task, you may want to minimize the distractions in your writing environment.

Don't worry too much about spelling and grammar in this first draft. What's most important now is to get your ideas on paper or on your screen. You can adjust the presentation to your audience in the revision process.

Relax and write!

Activity 44

Considering Structure

Different kinds of writing require different organizational structures, but the general structure described below will work for most essays and reports. Once you have a draft of your essay, compare your

organization with this structure. Are there sections that need to be reorganized? Are there parts that should be added? Use the items in the outline below as a revision checklist for the structure of your essay.

The Beginning or Introduction

- Directs readers' attention to the topic or issue the writing addresses.
- Establishes the importance of the topic.
- Provides background information that the audience may need.
- Introduces the thesis, purpose, or main claim of the writing in order to suggest how the piece will be developed.

For example, if you are going to respond to the question that asks about your initial judgment of McCandless's parents versus your judgment after you finished the book, you might first list your initial impressions when you began the book in one column and then list your final impressions in another. Then compare the two and figure out a general statement that you can begin to outline. Your tentative thesis might then be that McCandless's parents were terrible human beings and you didn't change your mind after you read the book. Remember, if you say this, you must then go to the text to prove it.

Here are some further considerations for your essay:

- What specific question will your essay answer? What is your response to this question? (This is your tentative thesis.)
- What support have you found for your thesis?
- What evidence have you found for this support? For example, facts, statistics, authorities, personal experience, anecdotes, stories, scenarios, and examples.
- How much background information do your readers need to understand your topic and thesis?
- If readers were to disagree with your thesis or the validity of your support, what would they say? How would you address their concerns (what would you say to them)?

Now, once again, draft a possible thesis for your essay.

You might want to think about the following items as you compose your introductory paragraph(s):

- Use a "hook" to get the reader's attention.
- Avoid truisms—obvious statements that everyone knows: "One should always be prepared to go into the wild." Why would anyone argue with that?

- Provide background information that the audience may need to begin reading your argument.
- You might sharpen or narrow your thesis at this point.

The Middle or Body

- Explains, illustrates, and develops the topic or issue
- Contains as many paragraphs as are necessary to develop the ideas
- May have sections and subheads in some types of writing
- Contains examples or arguments supported by evidence
- Often quotes, paraphrases, or summarizes other texts in support of the purpose of the writing
- May present and analyze data
- Often addresses counter-arguments or alternative positions or explanations
- Uses words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counter-claims.

The number of paragraphs in an essay depends on the nature and complexity of your argument.

- Your paragraphs should relate to your thesis and support it.
- Your paragraphs should begin with topic sentences.
- Your paragraphs should include different points of view, and you should directly address them (e.g., refute them, show them to be irrelevant, dazzle the audience with the strength of your own argument, etc.).
- Make it clear that you have considered the values, beliefs, and assumptions of your audience as well as your own and that you have perhaps found some common ground.
- Develop the content of your argument by giving evidence in the form of examples, illustrations, statistics, and so forth.
- In addition to giving evidence, you must analyze what the evidence means to your argument and how it connects to your argument.

The Conclusion

- Connects the writing to some larger claim or idea
- Points the reader to next steps or new questions raised by the writing

- Identifies the conclusion the writer has reached and its significance
- Evaluates or analyzes the conclusions drawn
- Explains the implications of the major point of the writing

Activity 45

Using the Words of Others

One of the most important features of academic writing is the use of words and ideas from written sources to support your own points. There are essentially three ways to incorporate words and ideas from sources, as shown below:

- **Direct quotation.** Jon Krakauer says, “I had been granted unusual freedom and responsibility at an early age, for which I should have been grateful in the extreme, but I wasn’t” (148).
- **Paraphrase.** In Chapter 11 of *Into the Wild*, Walt, McCandless’s father, remembers an early hike with twelve-year-old Chris. They made it to 13,000 feet before turning back from the 14,256-foot summit in Colorado. Chris did not want to quit and complained all the way down (109).
- **Summary.** In *Into the Wild*, Krakauer seems to be working out his own past and his relationship with his own father as well as telling the sad story of Chris McCandless. Because Krakauer, too, is a man of the outdoors, he understands something about the call of the wild.

Check your essay to see that you have quoted, paraphrased, and summarized accurately.

Documentation. You will also need to learn to take notes with full citation information. For print material, you will need to record, at a minimum, the author, title, city of publication, publisher, date of publication, and page number. The two most common documentation formats used are the Modern Language Association (MLA) format, which is used mainly by English departments, and the American Psychological Association format (APA).

MLA Format

Books. Here is the Works Cited format for a typical book in the MLA style:

Berry, Wendell. *The Unsettling of America*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977. Print.

Here is the bibliographic information, in the MLA format, for the text by Krakauer:

Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild*. New York: Doubleday, 1997. Print.

Web Sites. You might also want to incorporate material from Web sites. To document a Web site, you will need to give the name of the author (if known), the title of the site (or a description, such as “Homepage,” if no title is available), the date of publication or update (if known), the name of the organization that sponsors the site, the date of access, and the Web address (URL) in angle brackets. Here is an example:

University Writing Center. University Writing Center, California Polytechnic State University, Pomona. 26 June 2003. Web. 26 May 2004. <<http://www.csupomona.edu/uwc>>.

The author for the above site is unknown, so no author name is given. This entry would appear in the Works Cited section, alphabetized by “University.”

In-Text Documentation. The MLA style also requires in-text documentation for every direct quotation, indirect quotation, paraphrase, or summary. If the author is given in the text, the page number should be given in parentheses at the end of the sentence containing the material.

Quote, Paraphrase, and Respond

Choose three passages from the text that relate to a particular theme in the book. Write each passage down as a correctly punctuated direct quotation. Then paraphrase the material in your own words. Finally, respond to the idea expressed in the passage by agreeing or disagreeing with it and explaining why. Later, you can use this material in an essay.

- Direct quotation:
- Paraphrase:
- Response to the idea expressed in a passage by agreeing or disagreeing with it and explaining why:

Activity 46

Using Model Language

The following activity can help you put direct quotations, indirect quotations, concepts, facts, ideas, and opinions from other writers into your own texts while keeping all the voices distinct. Use the following templates to help you accomplish this.

- The issue of McCandless’s motivations for going into the wild without sufficient food or equipment can be viewed from several different perspectives.
- Experts disagree on what caused McCandless’s death.

You might then give them language that introduces ideas from particular writers:

- Journalist Jon Krakauer argues that . . .
- In his original article, Krakauer states that McCandless ate poisonous seeds. However, later . . .
- According to cross-country teammate Andy Horowitz, McCandless was born in the wrong century.

Contrary views can be signaled by adding transitional phrases:

- The roots of the wild potato are edible. However, the data presented by John Bryant, a chemical ecologist, show that a plant can have edible roots but poisonous seeds.
- On the other hand, Krakauer believes . . .

To add your own voice to the mix:

- Although some argue that McCandless trashed the cabins, others argue that he was never in the area. In my view . . .
- Though researchers disagree, clearly . . .

Revising and Editing

Activity 47

Revising Rhetorically

You will now need to work with the organization and development of your draft to make sure your essay is as effective as possible.

Peer Group Work

Break into groups of three or four. Each student will read his or her essay aloud to the other members of the group. After listening to the essay, have the group discuss the following questions:

- What is the thesis of the essay? What point does the writer make?
- What support does the writer provide for the thesis?
- Are you persuaded by the writer's argument?
- What do you like best about the essay?
- What could the writer do to improve the essay?

Paired Work

Work in pairs to decide how you want to revise the problems group members have identified.

Individual Work

Revise the draft on the basis of the feedback you have received and the decisions you have made with your partners. Consider these additional questions for your individual work:

- Have you responded to the assignment?
- What is your purpose for this essay?
- What should you keep? What is most effective?
- What should you add? Where do you need more details, examples, and other evidence to support your point?
- What could you omit? Did you use irrelevant details? Were you repetitive?
- What should you change? Are parts of your essay confusing or contradictory?
- Do you need to explain your ideas more fully?
- What should you rethink? Is your position clear? Did you provide enough analysis to convince your readers?
- How is your tone? Are you too overbearing, too firm? Do you need qualifiers?
- Does your conclusion show the significance of your essay?

Activity 48

Considering Stylistic Choices

Writers can make stylistic choices in order to enhance the clarity of their messages, make emotional connections with readers, and establish their ethos. These choices draw readers in or push them away. You can consider the effectiveness of their stylistic choices by responding to the following questions:

- How will the language you have used affect your reader's response?
- Which words or synonyms have you repeated? Why?
- What figurative language have you used? Why did you use it?
- What effects will your choices of sentence structure and length have on the reader?
- In what ways does your language help convey your identity and character as a writer?
- Is your language appropriate for your intended audience?

Activity 49

Editing the Draft

You will now need to work with the grammar, punctuation, and mechanics of your draft to make sure your essay conforms to the guidelines of standard written English.

Edit your draft on the basis of information you have received from your teacher or a tutor. The suggestions below will also help you edit your own work.

Editing Guidelines for Individual Work

- If possible, set your essay aside for 24 hours before rereading it to find errors.
- If possible, read your essay aloud to a friend so you can hear your errors.
- At this point, focus on individual words and sentences rather than on overall meaning. Take a sheet of paper, and cover everything except the line you are reading. Then touch your pencil to each word as you read.
- With the help of your teacher, figure out your own pattern of errors—the most serious and frequent errors you make.
- Look for only one type of error at a time. Then go back, and look for a second type and, if necessary, a third.
- Use the dictionary to check spelling and confirm that you have chosen the right word for the context.

Activity 50

Responding to Feedback

Consider all of the feedback you have received from fellow students, instructors, and others and make decisions about what changes you are going to make in your final draft.

- What are the main concerns your readers had in reading your draft?
- Do all of the readers agree?
- What global changes should you consider (thesis, arguments, evidence, organization)?
- What do you need to add?
- What do you need to delete?
- What sentence-level and stylistic problems do you need to correct?
- What kinds of grammar and usage errors do you have? How can you correct them?
- What is your next move toward improving this paper?

Reflecting on the Writing

When you have completed your essay, answer the following six questions. Write your answers in your *Into the Wild* notebook.

1. What was most difficult about this assignment?
2. What was easiest?
3. What did you learn about arguing by completing this assignment?
4. What do you think are the strengths of your argument? Place a wavy line by the parts of your essay you feel are very good.
5. What are the weaknesses, if any, of your paper? Place an X by the parts of your essay you would like help with. Write any questions you have in the margin.
6. What did you learn from this assignment about your own writing process—about preparing to write, about writing the first draft, about revising, and about editing?