

My Side of the Mountain



By

Jean Craighead George

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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Suggestions and Expectations

This 71 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one, two or three (short) chapters of *My Side of the Mountain* and is comprised of four different activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include the wilderness, perseverance, responsibility, determination, survival, and communing with nature.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *personification*.
7. Working with anagrams.
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel.
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design an Information Card

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Synopsis

Terribly unhappy in his family's crowded New York City apartment, Sam Gribley runs away to the solitude and danger of the Catskill Mountains, where he finds a side of himself he never knew. With only a penknife, a ball of cord, forty dollars, and some flint and steel, he intends to survive on his own. Sam learns about courage, danger, and independence during his year in the wilderness, a year that changes his life forever. [The Publisher]

Author Biography

Jean Craighead George

Jean Craighead George was born in a family of naturalists. On weekends they camped in the woods near their Washington, D.C. home, climbed trees to study owls, gathered edible plants and made fish hooks from twigs. In third grade she began writing and hasn't stopped yet. She has written over 100 books.

Her book, **Julie of the Wolves** won the prestigious Newbery Medal. **My Side of the Mountain**, was a 1960 Newbery Honor Book. She has also received 20 other awards.



She attended Penn State University graduating with a degree in Science/Literature. In the 1940s she was a reporter for The Washington Post and a member of the White House Press Corps. After her children were born she returned to her love of nature and brought owls, robins, mink, sea gulls, tarantulas, 173 wild animals into their home and backyard. These became characters in her books.

Her children, Craig and Luke are now environmental scientists and Twig writes children's books, too. Jean passed away in 2012. [www.jeancraigheadgeorge.com]

My Side of The Mountain



By Jean Craighead George

Name:

My Side of the Mountain

By Jean Craighead George

I Hole Up in a Snowstorm
I Get Started on This Venture



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main protagonist of *My Side of the Mountain* is a very enterprising and courageous boy, Sam Gribble, who decides to spend a year by himself in the wilds of the Catskill Mountains. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting protagonist?

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Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

| | | | |
|-----------|------------|----------|-----------|
| inspired | misstep | folly | tinder |
| departure | congregate | emphatic | exhibited |

1. John’s butterfly collection will be _____ at the Community Hall .
2. Everyone in the nursing home thought it was _____ for Marjorie to go bowling so soon after her surgery.
3. I really felt _____ after hearing the astronaut’s speech.
4. The crowd began to _____ in front of the drug store.
5. Mrs. Henderson was quite _____ when she told the class to be quiet.
6. Sam found some _____ under the stump which he used to start the fire.
7. The only _____ made by the sheriff was taking the suspect at his word.
8. Her _____ was accompanied with a lot of fanfare.

Questions



1. Describe Sam's new winter home. Please include at least three details.

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |

2. Describe the setting of the first chapter.

| |
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| |

3. On what date does the novel begin?

| |
|--|
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4. What was Sam's main worry during the snowstorm?

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| |

5. Sam's trained falcon was named _____.

6. Sam was originally from the city of _____ where he had lived with his parents, four brothers and _____ sisters.

7. Why was that particular spot in the Catskill Mountains especially important to Sam and his family?

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8. What were the only items that Sam brought with him to the Catskills?

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9. What had been Sam's dad's attitude about him leaving for the wilderness by himself? How do you think his mother must have felt about his decision?

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10. What was Sam's biggest challenge in the wilderness? How was this problem resolved?

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| |

11. Using a _____ for bait, Sam caught a kind of fish called a _____.

Language Activities



A. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here is an example from Chapter 2: *It was a clear athletic stream that rushed and ran and jumped and splashed.* In this sentence the stream is described as **athletic** - and it **runs and jumps**, attributes usually given to a person.

a) Why do you think personification is a literary device used by many authors?

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b) Create your own example of personification.

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c) **Bonus:** Keep your eyes open for another example of personification. When you find one, come back to this page and record it below.

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B. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **PAN** can also form the word **NAP**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



- read the clue in the right-hand column.
- Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters.

Each of the words in the left-hand column are found in the first two chapters of our novel.

| Word | Anagram | Clue |
|--------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| aspen | | The glass in windows. |
| blows | | Containers for soup. |
| moans | | Someone who works with stone. |
| trout | | A person who helps a student learn. |
| stream | | A slave-owner. |
| means | | Horse hair. |

C. Eliminate the following letters from the puzzle to reveal the secret message which was written by the great naturalist, **Henry David Thoreau**: **Z, X, Q, P, V, B**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Z | I | T | X | I | S | Z | N | O | T | Q | B | X | P | Q | Z | B | P | X | B |
| V | X | P | B | Z | W | H | A | T | X | Y | O | U | Q | X | P | V | Q | B | Z |
| L | O | O | K | B | A | T | Z | T | H | A | T | Z | V | P | Q | X | B | V | Q |
| B | P | Z | V | B | P | X | V | B | Z | M | A | T | T | E | R | S | B | Q | X |
| Z | P | V | I | T | Q | I | S | Q | P | Z | Q | P | X | Q | V | Z | Q | P | B |
| B | Q | X | Q | P | X | B | P | W | H | A | T | Z | Q | V | B | Q | V | X | P |
| X | B | Y | O | U | Z | S | E | E | B | X | Q | B | Z | P | Q | X | B | Q | Z |

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Extension Activities



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A story-board can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of **My Side of the Mountain**. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |