

My Side of the Mountain

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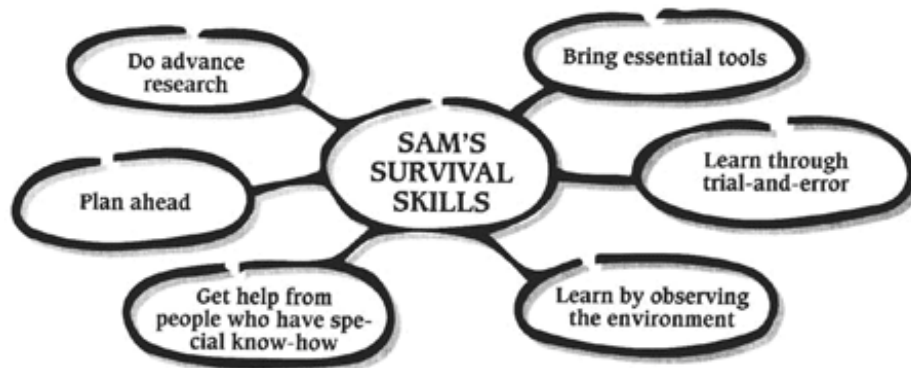
QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT

Comprehension and Recall

1. Why has Sam run away to the mountains? (*His city home is crowded; he wants to find the Gribbley farm; he wants to be independent and live alone.*)
2. What tasks does he set for himself once he finds the property? (*get food, build a shelter, make warm clothes, learn to make fire*)

Higher Level Thinking Skills

3. Sam uses various survival skills to make a home in the wilderness. What are some of these skills?



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4. Why doesn't Sam's father prevent him from leaving home? (*Possible: believes Sam will return very soon; understands Sam's need to explore; trusts Sam to do the right thing*)

Literary Elements

5. The book begins with a journal entry about a December storm. Then the story flashes back to the previous May. Why do you think the book begins with the winter event? (*Possible: The storm is an exciting interest-grabber. The beginning makes you curious: you want to read on to find out how the boy got into this situation.*)

Personal Response

6. In what ways does Sam seem unusual compared to other people of his age? In what ways does he seem much like other young people?

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT

Comprehension and Recall

1. Who is Bando? (*a college professor who's gotten lost in the woods*) Why does Sam feel sad when Bando leaves? (*Bando was fun to be with; he can make useful things from natural resources: e.g., a raft, clay containers, berry jam, willow whistles, fire bellows*)
2. Sam sees signs of the coming winter in the way animals behave. What are some of these signs? (*the weasel's coat changes; raccoons fatten up; squirrels store food*)

Higher Level Thinking Skills

3. As winter approaches, Sam gives a lot of attention to how to keep warm. One way to keep warm is through making warm clothes. What is the other way? (*build a fireplace inside his tree house*) What two major problems does Sam encounter? (*A. how to keep an all-clay fireplace from collapsing; B. how to make sure the fire doesn't pull all the oxygen from the house*) How does he solve the two problems? (*A. mix grass with the clay; B. use Frightful as a test-animal to see whether enough oxygen is present; bore knotholes to let in more air.*)

Literary Elements

4. Jean Craighead George doesn't talk down to her young readers! She often makes literary allusions, which - if they're clarified through discussion-add to students' understanding of the story. To clarify three important allusions Bando uses as he talks to Sam, you may wish to construct a chalkboard chart and discuss how the first two allusions apply to Sam, and the third to Bando's pottery project. Entries in the third column are examples of discussion results.

Word	What it refers to	How it applies to the story
Desdemondia	This is a version of Desdemona, the naive heroine in Shakespeare's "Othello". Desdemona takes things at their face value, and trusts people.	Bando thinks Sam is a pure and simple person who reacts honestly to the world around him.
Thoreau	Henry David Thoreau, a 19th century American writer, left the city and lived alone for 2 years at Walden Pond.	Bando sees Sam as a modern Thoreau who leaves civilization behind and experiments with living in the wilderness.
Wedgewood	Wedgewood is a beautiful and delicate kind of china.	Bando's clay pots are not fine and beautiful, but they are serviceable.

Personal Response

5. Why does Sam want to celebrate Halloween? As he does this, what does he learn about himself and about the animals around him?

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT

Comprehension and Recall

1. What newspaper story does Bando bring to Sam? (*an article about a "wild boy" living in the mountains*) How has the news gotten out about Sam? (*sources: the fire warden, elderly Mrs. Fielder, several deer hunters*)
2. Who is Matt Spell? (*a young newspaper reporter*) What bargain does Sam strike with him? (*Sam will let*

Matt visit him in the spring, if Matt will agree not to reveal Sam's exact location and identity to the public.)

3. Why does Sam's family move to the mountain? (*Sam's mother wants him to have a real home; she knows Sam dislikes the city; she, like Sam, loves the land.*)

Higher Level Thinking Skills

4. Toward the end of his year alone, what challenges from nature does Sam face? (*ice storm; deep snow; a serious vitamin deficiency*) How is he able to cope with these problems? (*has stored up food and fuel; makes snowshoes; eats rabbit liver to get Vitamin C*)

5. During winter and spring, Sam has several human visitors. What feelings does Sam have about this situation? (*His feelings are mixed. He is glad to have human company, and suspects he may want to be "found." But he is also irritated at being "discovered," and sad that his isolation is disturbed.*)

6. Bando says to Sam, "Let's face it, Thoreau; you can't live in America today and be quietly different." What does Bando mean by this? (*"Different" people stand out; the public is attracted to people who are different, seeks them out, and so destroys their quiet life.*)

Literary Elements

7. Writers often foreshadow, or give clues about, what will happen next. Here are three events from Sam's story: Sam seeks out a friendship with Aaron; Sam enjoys Tom's stories about kids in town; Sam gets tired of writing in his journal, and goes to the library to get books to read. What major change do these events foreshadow? (*Answers will vary slightly. In general, Sam will decide that he can't spend the rest of his life alone; he needs human companionship and the sharing of ideas.*)

Personal Response

8. Do you like the way the book ends? Explain why or why not.

9. Sam says of Frightful, "She was a captive, not a wild bird, and that is almost another kind of bird." What do you think Sam means by this? In what way might Sam's statement apply to himself?

- Subjects:

Family Life, Literature, Literature Appreciation, Courage, Bravery, Heroism, Honor

- Skills:

Reading