

Honors American Literature  
Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* Summer Reading Assignment

**NOTES**

*Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer – ISBN: 978-0-385-48680-4

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**Synopsis:** Jon Krakauer's 1996 book *Into the Wild* delves into the riveting story of Chris McCandless, a twenty-four-year-old man from an affluent family outside Washington, D.C., who in April 1992 hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. He had given \$25,000 in savings to charity, abandoned his car and most of his possessions, burned all the cash in his wallet, and invented a new life for himself. Four months later, a party of moose hunters found his decomposed body. How McCandless came to die is the unforgettable story of *Into the Wild*.

Immediately after graduating from college in 1991, McCandless had roamed through the West and Southwest on a vision quest like those made by his heroes Jack London and John Muir. In the Mojave Desert he abandoned his car, stripped it of its license plates, and burned all of his cash. He would give himself a new name, Alexander Supertramp, and, unencumbered by money and belongings, he would be free to wallow in the raw, unfiltered experiences that nature presented. Craving a blank spot on the map, McCandless simply threw away the maps. Leaving behind his desperate parents and sister, he vanished into the wild. (Sources: NPR and Goodreads)

**Assignment:** In connection with your reading of Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild*, complete the following for the first day of school:

**McCandless's Journal Continuation**

Use your imagination to fill in the holes of McCandless's story with a series of journal entries.

**REQUIRED**

Include the following:

- Both a recap of the events AND the thoughts that McCandless has about them
- Focus on events in the text not already covered in existing McCandless entries
- Include a matching page number and sentence copied from the book with each entry (NOTE: Either start the entry with the quote and pick up where he left off or add it to the bottom of the new entry—refer to the example on the next page.)

Write **10** entries (10 sentences per entry minimum, NOT including your copied sentences)

- May be typed or hand-written in a legible font, with proper spelling/grammar

**OPTIONAL**—Choose ONE (\*E.C. will be added to your summer reading assessment.)

- Include 4 original pieces of artwork that illustrate scenes from your entries
- or
- Reflective Journal
  - Imitating McCandless, reflect upon some of your own experiences this summer
  - Explain the events that happened and your actions within them
  - Reflect on what lessons you might learn from these experiences
  - Write 3 entries (10 sentences per entry minimum)
  - Must be typed, size 12 Times New Roman font, with proper spelling/grammar

Upon your return, be prepared for the following additional assessments:

**Reflection and Classroom Discussion on Major Themes**

- What sources does McCandless look to in forming his beliefs about life?
- How do McCandless's beliefs impact the ethics of his daily life? In what ways do they not?
- In what ways does McCandless provide us with an example of the American Dream?

Comprehension quiz on the plot, characters, and themes of *Into the Wild* as well as an essay.

**Example of McCandless's Journal Continuation**

April 28, 1992 – I wasn't exactly sure how I was going to get here from the highway, but I met this guy named Jim. He was nice enough, gave me a lift in his pickup to the edge of Denali National Park. At the same time, he clearly didn't think that I knew what I was doing. He tried to scare me with stories about bears and starvation and wild rivers. He kept shaking his head when I told him my plans to hunt small game and to gather local plants. He practically begged me to go with him to town instead. I did let him give me a pair of boots, a little food, and his phone number before I got out of his truck—in a few months I'll call him up and return those boots with a polite 'thank you.' I know that Jim was just trying to watch out for me. I realize that there are amateurs who try to live off the land every year and fail, but I'm not one of them—I am Alexander Supertramp. The human spirit is a wild thing, and nature is the fire that refines us. Society makes us soft, but in every generation there have been men who struck out on their own, who wanted to be tested, and who overcame. When I left home, I wanted to be one of those men. I've trained and I've practiced, and today, here I am, at the edge of the last frontier.

“‘There was just no talking the guy out of it,’ Gallion remembers. ‘He was determined, real gung-ho. The word that comes to mind is excited. He couldn't wait to head out there and get started’” (Krakauer 7).