

# Into The Wild Study Guide Questions

## 4. Criminal Mind

Might be interesting to collect a list of the various items he carried to establish a kind of psychological profile of him—page 26 has the ones from his car; previous chapters have others. Could also ask students to do the same for themselves.

Page 26—Chris's car had expired plates, he hadn't renewed his license, he drove where signs said he couldn't—were these minor infractions of the law, or should Chris take greater responsibility as a member of a society? What is the basis for any society to function well, and what happens when some choose to break or disregard its laws?

Chris considers it his "moral responsibility to fix the laws of the state" (26). What's up with that?

For two years, Chris sent postcards "every month or two" to people he met along the way, but he never once let his mom, dad, or sister know where he was or what he was doing—or even that he was alive. Was this true to his family? Why do you think Chris could invest in his relationships with other people but not with his own family?

The book (and Chris's journey) is highly informed by other literature, with references to Tolstoy, Frost, Thoreau, Joyce, and many others. What is the effect of such literary references on your reading of the book?

Krakauer tells Chris's story out of order—the previous chapter told us about his experiences with Wayne Westerberg, and this chapter tells us about what Chris did before meeting Wayne (and then tells us even more about what Chris did after meeting him). How does this narrative technique impact your reading experience? Can you think of reasons for why Krakauer structured the story this way? What would change, for better or worse, if he chose a purely chronological arrangement of events?

In this chapter, we see for the first time substantive journal entries from Chris, where he refers to himself as "Alex" and writes in the third person. Why do you think Chris doesn't use the first person "I" when referring to himself?

Chris ends more than seven months of almost entirely isolated wandering by getting a job at a restaurant in Las Vegas. Discuss the interesting juxtaposition of these two experiences. (What makes Las Vegas such a strange place for him to stay for so long?)

## 5. Bullhead City

Lon Zepka, Chris's manager at McDonald's, said of him, "he was always going on about trees and nature and weird stuff like that. We all thought he was missing a few screws" (40). Do you think his attitude is typical of how most people would have viewed Chris? Is social judgement and suspicion the price someone must pay to live a more authentic life?

Krakauer writes that Chris was so enthralled by Jack London's stories that he "seemed to forget they were works of fiction, constructions of the imagination that had nothing to do with London's romantic sensibilities than with the actualities of life in the subarctic wilderness" (44). In what ways was Chris's own journey troubled by this same tension between the ideal and the real, the imagined and the actual?

**Into the Wild study guide questions** are essential tools for understanding the complexities of Jon Krakauer's compelling narrative about Christopher McCandless. This article aims to provide a comprehensive guide to the key themes, characters, and events in "Into the Wild," accompanied by study questions that can enhance your understanding and analysis of the text. Whether you're preparing for a class discussion, writing an essay, or simply seeking to deepen your comprehension, these study questions will serve as a valuable resource.

## Overview of "Into the Wild"

"Into the Wild" is a non-fiction book published in 1996, detailing the true story of Christopher McCandless, a young man who ventured into the Alaskan wilderness in search of adventure and self-discovery. After graduating from Emory University in 1990, McCandless abandoned his possessions, gave away his savings, and embarked on a journey across America. His ultimate goal was to live in the wild, disconnected from society and its constraints. Unfortunately, his journey ended tragically when he died in an abandoned bus in Alaska in 1992.

## Key Themes

Understanding the themes of "Into the Wild" is crucial for analyzing the text. Here are some prominent themes to consider:

## **1. The Call of the Wild**

- McCandless's desire for freedom and a deeper connection to nature.

## **2. Individualism vs. Society**

- The conflict between personal beliefs and societal expectations.

## **3. The Search for Meaning**

- The quest for identity and purpose in a materialistic world.

## **4. The Consequences of Isolation**

- The dangers and challenges of living in solitude.

## **5. Nature as a Teacher**

- How nature shapes individuals and provides insights into life.

## **Character Analysis**

Understanding the characters in "Into the Wild" is vital for grasping the narrative's depth. Here are some key figures:

### **1. Christopher McCandless (Alex Supertramp)**

- The protagonist whose journey serves as the focal point of the narrative.

### **2. Jim Gallien**

- The last person to see McCandless alive; he offers significant insight into McCandless's character.

### **3. Wayne Westerberg**

- A grain elevator operator who befriends McCandless and provides context to his travels.

### **4. Carine McCandless**

- Christopher's sister, who shares her perspective on his life and choices.

## 5. Walt and Billie McCandless

- Christopher's parents, whose relationship with him reflects the theme of family dynamics.

## Study Guide Questions

To facilitate a deeper understanding of "Into the Wild," here is a series of study guide questions organized by theme and character. These questions can be used for personal reflection or group discussions.

### Questions on Themes

1. **The Call of the Wild:** What does the wilderness symbolize for McCandless? How does this perspective shift throughout the book?
2. **Individualism vs. Society:** How does McCandless's struggle with societal norms reflect broader societal issues? In what ways does he succeed or fail in his quest for individualism?
3. **The Search for Meaning:** How does McCandless's journey reflect the universal human search for meaning? What lessons does he learn along the way?
4. **The Consequences of Isolation:** What are the physical and psychological challenges McCandless faces due to his isolation? How does this affect his overall journey?
5. **Nature as a Teacher:** In what ways does nature influence McCandless's understanding of life? Can you identify specific moments where this is evident?

### Questions on Characters

1. **Christopher McCandless:** How do McCandless's experiences shape his worldview? What motivations drive his decision to leave his former life behind?
2. **Jim Gallien:** What insights does Gallien provide about McCandless's character and the risks he undertakes? How does their conversation highlight key themes in the book?
3. **Wayne Westerberg:** What role does Westerberg play in McCandless's journey? How does their friendship illustrate the concept of community versus isolation?
4. **Carine McCandless:** How does Carine's perspective on her brother enhance our understanding of him? What does she reveal about their family dynamics?

5. **Walt and Billie McCandless:** How do the parents' backgrounds and their relationship with Christopher contribute to his desire to escape? What does this suggest about familial influence on personal identity?

## Literary Devices

Krakauer employs various literary devices throughout "Into the Wild" to convey his message effectively. Here are some notable devices:

### 1. Foreshadowing

- Instances in the narrative that hint at McCandless's eventual fate.

### 2. Flashbacks

- The use of flashbacks to provide context and depth to McCandless's character and motivations.

### 3. Symbolism

- The significance of the Alaskan wilderness as a symbol of freedom and danger.

### 4. Imagery

- Vivid descriptions that paint a picture of McCandless's experiences and the natural world around him.

## Conclusion

"Into the Wild" is not just a tale of adventure; it is a profound exploration of human experience, individuality, and the relationship between man and nature. The study guide questions outlined in this article can aid readers in analyzing the text's themes and characters, allowing for a deeper understanding of McCandless's journey and the motivations behind it. By examining these elements critically, readers can appreciate the complexities of Krakauer's narrative and engage with its enduring questions about life, freedom, and the search for authenticity.

## Frequently Asked Questions

## **What is the significance of Chris McCandless's journey into the wild?**

Chris McCandless's journey represents a quest for self-discovery and a rejection of materialism, highlighting the allure of nature and the search for true meaning in life.

## **How does the author, Jon Krakauer, connect his own experiences to those of Chris McCandless?**

Jon Krakauer shares his own adventurous spirit and personal challenges, drawing parallels between his life and McCandless's to provide context and depth to Chris's motivations and struggles.

## **What role does family play in Chris McCandless's life choices?**

Family dynamics, particularly Chris's strained relationship with his parents, significantly influence his decision to abandon societal norms and pursue a life of freedom away from familial expectations.

## **In what ways does nature serve as a character in 'Into the Wild'?**

Nature acts as a powerful force throughout the narrative, symbolizing both the beauty and danger of the wilderness, reflecting Chris's internal conflicts and ultimately playing a crucial role in his fate.

## **What themes of isolation and community are explored in 'Into the Wild'?**

The book explores the tension between isolation and the desire for community, as Chris seeks solitude in the wild while also forming connections with various individuals he meets along his journey.

## **What lessons can be drawn from Chris McCandless's experiences and decisions?**

Chris McCandless's story teaches the importance of self-reflection, understanding one's values, the risks of idealism, and the need for balance between independence and human connection.

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