**Author's Note and Chapter 1 Questions**

1. What is the personal history of Chris McCandless?

2. Name two themes Jon Krakauer introduces in the “Author’s Note”?

3. What is the quoted material at the start of Chapter One?

4. Who is Jim Gallien, and how did he meet McCandless?

5. What was Gallien’s assessment of Chris’s motives?

6. What kind of stories did Gallien tell Chris to try to stop him?

7. What did Chris give to Gallien and why?

8. What two items did Gallien give McCandless for his journey?

9. Why did Gallien decide not to alert the authorities about McCandless?

10. Gallien’s statement that McCandless would “probably get hungry pretty quick and just walk out to the highway. That’s what any normal person would do,” is an example of the literary device of **situation irony**. What is ironic about the statement?

**Chapter 2**

1. Why would Krakauer include this excerpt from Jack London as the heading for this chapter? (Think: Emerson/Thoreau)

“Dark spruce forest frowned on either side the frozen waterway. The trees had been stripped by a recent wind of their white covering of frost, and they seemed to learn toward each other, black and ominous, in the fading light. A vast silence reigned over the land. The land itself was a desolation, lifeless, without movement, so lone and cold that the spirit of it was not even that of sadness. There was a hint in it of laughter, but of a laughter more terrible than any sadness—a laughter that was mirthless as the smile of the Sphinx, a laughter cold as the frost and partaking of the grimness of infallibility. It was the masterful and incommunicable wisdom of eternity laughing at the futility of life and the effort of life. It was the Wild, the savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild.”

Jack London, *White Fang*

2. What is the purpose of the detailed descriptions of Mt. McKinley, Denali, and the Stampede Trail?

3. What was considered to be the cause of Chris McCandless’s death?

**Chapter 3**

1. Who is Wayne Westerberg and how do Wayne and Chris get along?

2. ***Local color* is introduced when a writer uses regional or colorful terms to present an image of a distinct area or culture**. The terms “leather tramp” and “rubber tramp” qualify as examples of local color. What culture do they describe, and what is the difference between rubber tramps and leather tramps?

3. Why did the author say that McCandless found a “surrogate family in Westerberg and his employees”?

4. Why did McCandless leave Carthage?

5. How does the reader know that ***War and Peace*** was important to McCandless?

6. Describe McCandless’s early years and family life.

7. What clues did McCandless give that he was out of step with the **commercialism** of contemporary society?

8. **What change did McCandless make that symbolized the new life he expected to build after he left Athens**?

**Chapter 4 + 5**

1. The head note to this chapter concludes that people go to the desert “not to escape but to find reality.” How does this statement apply to Chris?

2. Who is Jan Burres, and how did she figure into Chris’s travels?

3. Describe the trip that Chris took in the old metal canoe that Chris bought in Topock, Arizona.

4. This chapter contains numerous excepts from the journal Chris kept. What is noticeable about the writing (point of view) in his account of his Mexican adventure?

5. Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes the individual’s responsibility and free will to direct the course of his/her life. What existential conclusion does Chris reach when leaving Las Vegas? (Look at end of chapter 4 for ideas.)

6. What kind of life did Chris lead (ACCORDING TO HIM) in Bullhead City?

7. Describe the conditions and the residents of the Slab. Note some of the **local color** that makes this community memorable.

8. What character traits and skills does Jan Burres recount about Chris in chapter 5?

9. What was Jan Burres’s assessment of Chris’s ability to survive in Alaska? (end of chapter 5)

**Chapters 6 + 7**

1. Who was Ron Franz, and how did he enter the story? What does Krakauer think about the relationship between Franz and McCandless?

2. What is Anza-Borrego?

3. What was the tragedy of Ron Franz’s life?

4. How did he feel about Chris and what request did he make of Chris?

5. What role did leather making take in their relationship?

6. The author gives a brief character analysis of McCandless after recounting that Franz dropped him off in Colorado. What does the author say about McCandless?

7. When Chris sent Franz a letter from Carthage, what advice did Chris give to Franz and how did Franz respond to this letter?

8. How did Ron Franz learn that McCandless had died and how did this death change Franz’s life?

9. Why was Wayne Westerberg annoyed at the beginning of chapter Seven?

10. What is the author’s analysis of the relationship between McCandless and his father? How did Chris feel about his sister Carine?

**Chapter 8 + 9**

1. What is the purpose of including the full story of Gene Rossellini?

2. What motivated Krakauer to include the story of John Waterman?

3. Finally, what is the purpose of including the story of Chris McCunn in the narrative?

4. Summarize the story of Everett Ruess and his fascination with the American West and natural beauty.

5. What Ken Sleight’s conclusion about Ruess and McCandless?

  
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