

Chapters 1 and 2

1. As the story opens, where is Brian going? Why?
2. What do you learn about “the Secret”?
3. How does the pilot treat Brian?
4. What gift did Brian’s mother give him? How did he feel as he accepted it?
5. What happens to the pilot? How does Brian react?
6. Brian knows some of the basics about steering the plane. How does he know?
7. What happens when Brian tries to get help over the radio?
8. Eventually the plane will run out of gas. What choices does Brian have and what choice does he make?
9. Describe the plan Brian makes for landing the plane. Why is he looking for a lake?
10. How does Brian show his fear when the engine dies?

Chapters 3 and 4

1. Where does the plane crash?
2. What do you know now about “the Secret”?
3. Brian loses consciousness after the crash. Where is he when he first revives and how does he feel?
4. Brian sleeps for a while. When he wakes and sits against a tree, “Things seem to go back and forth between reality and imagination.” What is he going through?
5. What is the first problem Brian faces when the sun comes up?
6. “If you keep walking back from good luck, he thought, you’ll come to bad luck” (p.40). Explain what this means. How is Brian both lucky and unlucky?
7. What plants and animals does Brian notice? How does he know what some of them are?

Chapters 5 and 6

1. How does Brian relieve his thirst? Why does he vomit?
2. Who is Perpich and why does Brian think about him?
3. What does Brian have with him?
4. At first Brian is hopeful that he will be found within a day or so, but then he has a worrisome thought. What is it?
5. Brian looks for a place to build a shelter. What sort of place is he looking for? What does he find?
6. What does Brian think about when he isn't thinking about solving his immediate problems?
7. What does Brian do for food?
8. How does Brian try to start a fire?
9. Why does Brian spend two hours weaving sticks together?

Chapters 7 and 8

1. What wakes Brian up during the first night he spends under the overhang?
2. What do you learn about "the secret"?
3. Brian doesn't want to lose track of his new shelter. How does he keep himself from getting lost?
4. What frightens Brian while he is picking raspberries?
5. What causes the musty smell that Brian notices when he wakes up?
6. Why is it a mistake for Brian to kick out when he hears a slithering sound?
7. How is the hatchet the "key" to starting a fire?
8. What is the "most important rule of survival" Brian learns?

Chapters 9 and 10

1. How does Brian make “fluff” for starting a fire?
2. Brian thinks, “I have a hungry friend.” Who is that?
3. How does Brian keep the mosquitoes away?
4. How does Brian find the turtle eggs?
5. Why does Brian think of his Uncle Carter?

Chapters 11 and 12

1. Why does Brian try to keep busy?
2. How does Brian change, physically?
3. How does Brian change, mentally?
4. What does Brian plan to do when searchers fly over?
5. How does seeing the kingfisher help Brian solve the problem of where to get food?
6. Why doesn't the fish spear that Brian makes work?
7. What does Brian need to make the bow-and-arrow?
8. Why does Brian start to feel hopeless?

Chapters 13 and 14

1. Several times something inside Brian warns him of danger. What is the danger?
2. When Brian sees the wolf, how long has it been since the crash?
3. Why had Brian cut himself with the hatchet?
4. How had Brian been feeling when he kept thinking of the word "Clouddown"?
5. How does Brian change after the plane passes?
6. How does Brian learn to keep his fires burning longer?
7. How is Brian almost blinded?
8. What are some of the mistakes Brian makes? Do you think he is too hard on himself?
9. How does Brian cook the first fish?
10. How does Brian use the fish scraps?

Chapters 13 and 14 Continued

11. What does Brian consider the most important thing he learns- the crucial knowledge that drives all animals?
12. Why does Brian bother the skunk? How could that act have killed him?
13. How does Brian protect his food from the animals?
14. How does Brian improve his shelter?
15. Brian learns from many of his mistakes. Provide one example.
16. While learning to store food, Brian realizes that fish don't "keep." How does he solve this problem?
17. Brian sometimes makes up words when he doesn't know the exact names of plants and animals. Find an example.

Chapters 15 and 16

1. How does Brian keep time?
2. What is the day of "First Meat"?
3. How does Brian cook the bird?
4. What other "First Days" does Brian have?
5. How does the moose create a problem for Brian?
6. How does Brian lose everything- his tools, his fire, his bed?
7. How does Brian react to losing everything and how is this different from the way he reacted after the plane passed?
8. What does the tornado raise out of the lake?

Chapters 17 and 18

1. Why does Brian decide to go back to the plane?
2. How does Brian get to the plane?
3. How does Brian get inside the plane?
4. How does Brian lose his hatchet and how does he get it back?
5. What frightening sight greets Brian when he enters the plane?

Chapter 19 and Epilogue

1. What does Brian get from the plane?
2. Why does Brian put the rifle aside?
3. Why doesn't Brian get more excited when he finds a transmitter?
4. What sort of "feast" does Brian prepare?
5. How does Brian react when he first meets his rescuer?
6. How does Brian's rescuer know where to find him?
7. How long has Brian been alone in the woods?
8. How has Brian changed?
9. How does the press treat Brian?
10. What do you think would have happened if Brian hadn't been rescued when he was?

Chapter 19 and Epilogue continued

11. Do you think the experiences changed the relationship between Brian's parents- or his feelings about their divorce?
12. What have you learned from Brian's experience?