



HATCHET  
BY GARY PAULSEN

## Lesson Plan

### Overview

[\*Hatchet\*](#) is a superior example of Gary Paulsen's writing. It appeals to most students and is exemplary in demonstrating how sensory details improve writing. The scene of the plane crash draws my students in. Many of them have limited knowledge of what to do when someone has a heart attack, and the scene is purposely written in a confusing way to match the chaos of the moment. The drama can be magnified if the teacher reads this part of the novel aloud.

### Objective

Students will:

- Preview the text and make predictions based on the cover of the book and the title.
- Develop comprehension skills by visualizing the story while reading.
- Sequence events from the novel.
- Discuss the effects of the events from the story on the novel's hero, Brian.
- Read independently.

### Materials

- Hatchet by Gary Paulsen
- student journals

### Set Up and Prepare

Show the students the cover of Hatchet. Depending on your level of learners, you may want to lead a think aloud about the cover or ask the students to consider it quietly. Then, read the first few paragraphs of the story to the students. Have the students write a paragraph or two of a predicted summary of the novel. A neat extension of this activity would be to have the students also write a statement of theme, as predicted from the exposure to the novel so far. Take up this writing and share it with the students once the novel has been completely read. At that point, have students evaluate their predictions in small groups.

### Directions

Invite students to journal about what is read. Have them put themselves in Brian's shoes and evaluate how they would have handled each situation described in the story.

### **Lesson Extensions**

Invite survival experts to come speak to the class. Find someone who can teach the students how to pitch a tent or create another type of shelter. Search for someone in the community that can show the students what is edible on their own playground or other green space. Lead a research activity on the signs that someone is having a heart attack and what to do about it. In other words, teach the students some of the skills Brian had to teach himself in the novel.

### **Related Resources**

- [Gary Paulsen's official Web site](http://www.randomhouse.com/features/garypaulsen/) (external link)  
<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/garypaulsen/>
- [More books to help teach Gary Paulsen](http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/books-teaching-imagery-gary-paulsen)  
<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/books-teaching-imagery-gary-paulsen>

### **Assignments**

The best thing teachers do at the end of a novel study is encourage students to read another book. Collect a stack of Gary Paulsen books, including *Brian's Winter*, another story with our hero. Have students preview these books. When I teach this novel, we use the books to go on a scavenger hunt for sensory details. It's amazing how quickly students can find passages with sensory details in books they have never read. This is also a great small group activity.

This guide was created by Jennifer Chandler