***Hatchet***

***Chapter 5***

***Summary:***

When Brian wakes again, he is suddenly very thirsty. Brian drinks his fill at the lake, but is sick when he is done. Brian then becomes aware of an insistent hunger, but he has no idea what he might be able to eat. Brian remembers an old English teacher who was always trying to motivate the students. Brian uses one of the teacher’s tricks now by taking inventory of everything he has. It turns out he has little more than some money, his hatchet, and himself. Brian becomes overwhelmed with desperation for a moment, but then begins to focus what he can control, not what he cannot.

In a semi-dream state, Brian vividly recalls every detail of the incident in which he discovers "The Secret." He had been riding his bike with his friend Terry when he saw his mother in a strange car, kissing a man with short blond hair. The hatred, anger, and astonishment that had swept over him at that moment return to him anew. Becoming conscious once again, Brian slowly absorbs the surrounding wilderness as the details of the plane crash rush back into his mind. His entire body aching from the injuries he has sustained during the crash, he falls quickly asleep. Awakening in a haze, Brian finds his survival of the plane crash almost unbelievable and quickly remembers the pilot's less fortunate fate. The mosquitoes in the area swarm around him and leave him with painful bites on every part of his exposed skin. Brian feels lucky to have survived the crash, and upon looking at the surrounding area, realizes how close a call it had been; he had just barely avoided a huge rock nearby. Contemplating the scenery and listening to the many sounds of nature surrounding him, he falls asleep once again.

Brian wakes up suddenly. He's sunburned and incredibly thirsty, but he isn't sure if it is safe to drink the lake water, and the thought of the pilot's dead body in the lake bothers him. He thinks that if this were a movie, the hero would have easily found a "clear spring with pure sweet water." Eventually he tries the lake water. He drinks thirstily until he makes himself sick and throws up, but he does feel somewhat better. He starts to think about his situation. He is sure that people will look for him and are probably already looking. He thinks they will find him soon.

Brian realizes he's very hungry and thinks about how easily stranded heroes in movies find plants to eat. He doesn't know how to find food, but he remembers a former English teacher of his, [Perpich](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Hatchet/character-analysis/" \l "Perpich), who believed in the power of positive thinking. Brian sits down and inventories his possessions: a little money and paper, his shoes and clothes, a broken watch, and the hatchet his mother gave him for the trip. Brian again realizes how hungry he is and says this to himself over and over, eventually shouting that he is hungry. When he stops he notices that the nearby woods are completely silent, and that he's never heard that kind of silence before. To get his mind off his hunger, Brian tries to think of other things. He eventually realizes that when the pilot died, he took the plane off course. Brian doesn't know how far off course, but he remembers they had flown for hours after the plane turned. Because of this, the search for the crashed plane is likely to focus somewhere else, somewhere very far away. He is still sure he will be found, but now he realizes that he can't just sit and wait. He has to take responsibility for himself by finding food and shelter. He remembers Perpich's advice and understands "that I'm all I've got."

***Analysis:***

[Paulsen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Hatchet/author/) makes small actions seem meaningful and makes single actions fulfill multiple purposes. For instance, Brian's first drink from the lake is an act of survival and transformation. He almost died in the lake, a dead body is submerged in it, and the water might not be safe. In fact, the water is fine, but when he drinks too much of it, he learns a lesson. After what he just experienced, he needs to go slowly.

This chapter also shows Brian using past skills that no longer work in his current circumstance. At home shouting that he was hungry might have gotten Brian fed. Here, no one cares if he is hungry or not, and he must learn to feed himself. His isolation pushes him to develop the autonomy he needs to survive. Brian also must learn to manage his mental state, another way in which his autonomy will develop over the course of the novel. He tries to think "short thoughts." Instead of panicking because he "ha[s] nothing," he reasons that he doesn't "know what I've got or haven't got. Maybe I should try and figure out just how I stand." He also recalls [Perpich](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Hatchet/character-analysis/" \l "Perpich)'s advice "to stay positive and stay on top of things" and "get motivated." Once he adjusts his attitude Brian is able to assess his possessions and to accept that he may not be rescued right away. Finally, he consciously chooses to think about things other than hunger. As he accepts that "right now, I'm all I've got," he takes the first step in accepting responsibility for his situation, a much-needed change to ensure his survival.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Brian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/characters/brian-robeson) wakes up and is extremely thirsty. He also realizes that he has been badly sunburned while he slept. Although he is unsure whether it’s safe to drink the lake water, he is unable to resist and drinks deeply from the lake. Back on the bank, he feels sick but somewhat restored, able to think more clearly than before. Brian says aloud, “So here I am.” At that point, he feels his mind begin to work “for the first time since the crash.”

***Analysis Part 1:***

Though he is unsure about doing so, Brian begins to learn to rely on the natural world when he drinks the lake water. This moment is also a crucial turning point in Brian’s use of the power of language; speaking aloud enables him to take further action to survive, showing how language can actually create reality rather than just describe it.

***Summary Part 2:***

All of [Brian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/characters/brian-robeson)’s thoughts come rushing in at once, so he forces himself to think through the facts of his situation slowly, one by one. He does not know where he is, only that he was flying over the northern Canadian woods when the plane crashed. Brian comforts himself with the thought that his [mother](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/characters/brian-s-mother) and [father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/characters/brian-s-father) will do everything possible to find him, and that a search crew could even arrive within a day or two. Brian wonders whether he’ll go to his mother’s home or his father’s, and realizes that he no longer cares what the answer is.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Here, the use of clear language again allows Brian to find a measure of calm as he faces a difficult situation. His realization that he does not care whether he goes home to his mother or his father also shows that Brian is beginning to escape from his despair over the divorce now that he has to deal with more pressing adversity.

***Summary Part 3:***

Thinking of home, [Brian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/characters/brian-robeson) realizes how hungry he is and wonders how he will find food. At first, he thinks that he has nothing, and then stops and thinks that he actually doesn’t know what he has. Brian remembers an English teacher named [Perpich](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/characters/perpich) who used to talk about staying positive and getting motivated, and he thinks that Perpich would tell him to look at everything to determine his assets.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Brian at first assumes that he has nothing, showing how pessimistic he still tends to be. However, he quickly challenges that assumption by remembering Perpich’s instructions to stay positive, demonstrating that he is beginning to gain some ability to see the potential for growth within difficulty. Again, the power of language comes into play here as Brian remembers words like “think positive” and “get motivated.”

***Summary Part 4:***

[Brian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/characters/brian-robeson) empties his pockets and finds only some change, a twenty-dollar bill, and a nail clipper. Then, he remembers the [hatchet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/symbols/hatchet) on his belt and adds that to his assets. He also inventories his clothes, shoes, and torn windbreaker. Finally, Brian realizes that [Perpich](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/characters/perpich) would say that Brian himself is his most valuable asset. Brian wishes that Perpich were with him and yells aloud how hungry he is. In response to his voice, everything in the woods around him falls silent, making Brian realize that he has never before experienced true silence.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Finding the hatchet provides Brian with a link to an idea of his own value and ability to act independently even within a strange new environment. His decision to value himself hints at the growing independence that he will find in the wilderness. When Brian yells out into the wild, he uses words to discover his power to shape the natural world, in this case by making it go silent.

***Summary Part 5:***

Preoccupied with thoughts of hamburgers, [Brian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/characters/brian-robeson) tries to ignore a nagging realization about his time in the plane. Slowly, he remembers that the [pilot](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/characters/pilot) had knocked the plane off course and is forced to admit to himself that the searchers might not be able to find him right away. Still, he tells himself that they will arrive in a matter of days. He decides that he can live in the woods for three or four days. Resolute, Brian touches the hatchet and, thinking of [Perpich](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hatchet/characters/perpich), motivates himself to find food and shelter.

***Analysis Part 5:***

This moment marks an early example of Brian’s choosing action over despair. He accepts the troubling knowledge that the plane was off course, but he does not let this knowledge crush him as it might have in the past. Armed with his decision to value himself and his independence, Brian again remembers the power of Perpich’s inspirational words and adopts an attitude that will support his immediate survival.