

Bellingham Reads

Book Club Kit

Into the Wild Reading Guide

1. Did you find the book suspenseful? Why or why not?
2. Krakauer's original article for Outside was called "Death of an Innocent." He introduced Chapter 12, which includes Chris McCandless's discovery of his father's infidelity, with a quotation from GK Chesterton: "For children are innocent and love justice, while most of us are wicked and naturally prefer mercy." Who is guilty in this story, if anyone? Do they deserve justice or mercy?
3. What do you think about Chris's relationship with his father? The female characters in the book? The other adventurers/explorers/crazy people? The structure of the book and its chronology? How does Krakauer go about telling Chris's story?
4. Sherry Simpson writes, "Jon Krakauer made up a story about him, by way of telling his own, and every pilgrim since his death has shaped him into something different as well. I'm doing it right now, too." How much of the story is McCandless's, and how much is Krakauer's?
5. Krakauer called his book Into the Wild, which, among other things, sounds a lot like Jack London's Call of the Wild, one of McCandless's favorite books. Thoreau noted that "in wildness is the preservation of the world." What is "the wild"? Is it the same as wilderness?
6. Krakauer describes Chris as living in a "monkish room" but as wanting to feel the "raw throb of existence" and "wallow in unfiltered experience." What do you make of that contrast?
7. What do you think draws some people into extreme adventure? Is the pursuit of such extremes selfish or admirable?

Adapted www.newrambler.net