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Chapter 1: I Hole Up in a Snowstorm

READING NOTES

Sam Gribley	boy who runs away from his home in the city to live alone in the forests of the Catskill Mountains
Catskill Mountains	a mountain range with rich wildlife and thick forests that is part of the Appalachian Mountains in southeastern New York
Frightful	Sam's falcon

VOCABULARY: Write the meaning of each bold word or phrase.

1. three other **knotholes** a hole in a piece of timber where a knot has fallen out
2. pulled at her **tethers** a rope or chain with which an animal is tied to restrict its movement
3. **felled** the trees cut down

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS: Answer the following in complete sentences.

1. Describe Sam's shelter.
Sam's shelter is in an old hollowed-out hemlock tree six feet in diameter. His bed is on the right and made of ash slats covered by deerskin. Included is a fireplace made of clay and stones with air holes and a chimney.
2. What does Sam see that he says makes him feel like a squirrel?
Sam looks at the wooden pockets that he chopped in the inside of the tree to hold his supplies, and it makes him feel like a squirrel.
3. When Sam shouts "I did it!", what has he just realized he has done?
Sam realizes he has made it through his first snowstorm.
4. What made him want to run back to New York?
His first snowstorm alone in the mountains scared him.

5. What word is carved on the old beech tree, and what boundary does it mark?

"Gribley" is carved on the old beech tree, and it marks the northern boundary of the Gribley family land.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think you could survive in a snowstorm like Sam? Why or why not?
2. What does Sam mean when he says, "I knew that the land was just the place for a Gribley"?

ENRICHMENT

1. The average yearly snowfall in the Catskill Mountains of New York is 44 inches. Research the average yearly snowfall of where you live. _____ inches
2. Read below "The Catskill Mountains" by Washington Irving (from 1851, Littell's *The Living Age*, p. 408)

The Catskill, Katskill, or Cat River Mountains, derived their name, in the time of the Dutch domination, from the catamounts by which they were infested; and which, with the bear, the wolf, and the deer, are still to be found in some of their most difficult recesses. The interior of these mountains is in the highest degree wild and romantic; here are rocky precipices mantled with primeval forests; deep gorges walled in by beetling cliffs, with torrents tumbling as it were from the sky; and savage glens rarely trodden excepting by the hunter. With all this internal rudeness, the aspect of these mountains toward the Hudson at times is eminently bland and beautiful, sloping down into a country softened by cultivation, and bearing much of the rich character of Italian scenery about the skirts of the Apennines. [...]*

The Catskill Mountains, as I have observed, maintain all the internal wildness of the labyrinth of mountains with which they are connected. Their detached position, overlooking a wide, lowland region, with the majestic Hudson rolling through it, has given them a distinct character, and rendered them at all times a rallying point for romance and fable.

*Catamounts: a medium-sized or large wild cat

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Chapter 12: I Find a Real Live Man

READING NOTES

Jessie Coon James	Sam's raccoon friend named after the famous nineteenth-century outlaw, Jesse James
Desdemondia	a spelling variation of Desdemona, the naïve heroine in Shakespeare's <i>Othello</i> who is known for her innocent overconfidence and trust
Thoreau	nineteenth-century American writer who left the city and lived alone for two years at Walden Pond, a secluded wooded reservation and pond in Massachusetts

VOCABULARY: Write the meaning of each bold word or phrase.

1. she **preened** _____ straightened and cleaned feathers with beak
2. glance **furtively** at us _____ secretively

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS: Answer the following in complete sentences.

1. Who does Sam meet down by his private spring bath? What does he look like?
He meets a raccoon that he names Jessie Coon James. He is scrabbly, small, and skinny.

2. What beverages does Sam make, and why does he call them his "chore"?
He makes sassafras tea and a drink with pennyroyal and winterberry leaves. He calls it his chore because no one else wanted beverages except himself.

3. Who does Sam think the old man is when he comes upon him sleeping?
Sam thinks that the old man is an outlaw.

4. What nickname does Sam give the old man? Why?
Sam calls him Bando because he thinks he is running from the law.

5. What is his actual profession, and how did he end up in the mountains?
Bando is a college English teacher lost in the Catskills.

6. List all the useful things that Bando makes from the natural resources.
Bando makes a raft, clay containers, berry jam, willow whistles, and fire bellows.

QUOTATION

I could have left and camped in the gorge again, but my enormous desire to see another human being overcame my fear of being discovered.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Reread Sam's instructions for preparing mussels. Do you think you would like the taste? Why or why not?
2. Read the quotation above. Why do you think Sam wanted to see another human being so badly? Would you have felt the same or differently? Why or why not?

ENRICHMENT

1. Henry David Thoreau

Thoreau was an American transcendentalist writer. He spent two years in a cabin in the woods in Massachusetts and wrote a reflection on his time there in a book named *Walden*, after the pond near his cabin. This book encompasses many American Romantic themes: nature, individuality, and self-reliance.

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion."

-Thoreau, *Walden*, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"



2. Sassafras Tea

Sassafras used to be harvested for the oil, safrole, which was used in flavoring baked goods, drinks, and medicines. However, in 1960, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration found it to be hepatocarcinogenic, meaning that it causes cancer in the liver. One cup of strong sassafras tea could contain as much as 200 mg of safrole. This is more than four times the amount that is hazardous to humans if consumed on a regular basis.

Winterberry



Pennyroyal



Sassafras



Chapters 15-17: I Find Out What to Do with Hunters, Trouble Begins, & I Pile Up Wood and Go on with Winter

READING NOTES

Daniel Boone a famous American explorer and pioneer (to whom this author is related)

VOCABULARY: Write the meaning of each bold word or phrase.

1. Her **plumage** had changed _____ a bird's feathers

2. I began to feel **conspicuous** _____ standing out

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS: Answer the following in complete sentences.

1. What moral ending did the Halloween party have?

Do not feed wild animals.

2. What wakes up Sam in early November? What does this make him realize?

A gunshot wakes him up. He realizes that hunting season has begun.

3. How was Sam able to see the deer when the hunter was not?

Sam was up in a tree and had a clear sight of the fallen deer.

4. How is Sam able to get a total of three deer without killing them himself?

The hunters shoot the deer and then are not able to find them themselves. Sam waits until dark after they have left and goes to get the deer for himself.

5. Where is Sam and what is he doing when he meets a boy his age?

He is looking at magazines in a drugstore in town.

6. What makes him realize it is winter?

The afternoon darkened, and none of the birds were chirping.

7. When Sam notices that it's winter, what does he realize that he has forgotten?

He has forgotten to stack up a big woodpile in preparation for the long winter ahead.

8. What idea does Sam get from the deer?

He sees the deer dig down and get teaberry and wintergreen leaves under the snow.

QUOTATIONS

1. *Hunters are excellent friends if used correctly.*
2. *"Frightful, I made a friend today. Do you think that is what I had in mind all the time?"*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the first quotation. What does Sam mean by this? Do you think he "used" them correctly?
2. Read the second quotation above. Was Sam happy or sad to have met Mr. Jacket? Why or why not?
3. Do you think Mr. Jacket will come visit Sam? Why or why not?

ENRICHMENT

Daniel Boone

Daniel Boone was a famous American pioneer and explorer in the 1700s. He is known for the discovery of the Cumberland Gap, a narrow pass through the Appalachian Mountains, and the settlement of Kentucky. He was a skilled fur trapper and was famous for his beaver-skinned hat.

