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| ***LEARNING GUIDE TO:***http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild-files/into-the-wild-DVDCover.jpg***INTO THE WILD****SUBJECTS* — Literature: Nonfiction; Literary Devices:        theme; allusion; U.S.: 1945 - 1991;*SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING* — Taking Care of Yourself; Families in Crisis;        Friendship;*MORAL-ETHICAL EMPHASIS* — Responsibility. Age: 14+; MPAA Rating -- R for language and some nudity (see the [Possible Problems section](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#PossibleProblems) for TWM's note about why we recommend this film despite its R rating); 148 Minutes, Drama, Color; Released in 2007; Available from [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000ZN802W/ref%3Das_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=teachwithmovieso&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000ZN802W). Note: Responding to the emphasis of the [Common Core Curriculum Standards](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/CCSS-informational-texts-highlighted.pdf) on teaching students to read nonfiction ("informational texts"), TWM has established a [category for films that are based on books of nonfiction](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/literature-subject-list.htm#nonfiction-reading). For more on this initiative, see [Teaching Students to Read Nonfiction: How Movies Can Help](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/nonfiction.html). This *Guide* will assist teachers who show the movie alone or in conjunction with reading John Krakauer's book of the same title. *When showing or discussing the movie, teachers should inform students that the book gives additional details about the events portrayed in the film and recounts interesting facts about the life of Chris McCandless that could not be included in the movie.***Description:**     *Into the Wild* tells the true story of Chris McCandless, a young man from a troubled family who was enraged by the moral lapses of his mother and father and their multiple failures as parents. McCandless also had a love of nature and adventuring in the wild. Upon graduating near the top of his class from college, McCandless cut himself off from family and friends to go solo adventuring in the Western United States. His last trip was to the Alaskan wilderness where he was found dead of starvation in an abandoned bus. The movie tells the story of the events at home, McCandless' love of nature, his wanderings in the West, the people that he met, and in the final weeks, his epiphany of forgiveness and realization of the importance of human relationships. McCandless' journey was investigated by John Krakauer, a writer for *Outdoor Magazine*, who tracked the young man's travels seeking to understand both his motives for going on the road and the cause of his untimely death. **Benefits of the Movie:** Embedded in beautiful scenery and rich in the kind of music that has special appeal to young people, *Into The Wild* provides important life-lessons that: (1) risky behavior can have fatal consequences; (2) parents need to be careful in raising their children; (3) there are times when children need to forgive their parents; (4) happiness and beauty must be shared to be fully enjoyed; and (5) relationships with people are an essential part of life. With respect to the ELA curriculum, this *Learning Guide* assists teachers in using the movie to provide context for the study of Jack London and particularly for his short story "To Build a Fire." It contains opportunities for students to explore the ideas in the movie and its use of literary allusion. The *Guide* contains multiple assignments of formal and informal writing and an introduction to the history of American adventurism. In addition to Jack London, the *Guide* offers the opportunity to briefly introduce students to Lord Byron, Leo Tolstoy, and Henry David Thoreau. The book, *Into the Wild*, by John Krakauer, is an excellent nonfiction text for students in grades 10 - 12. This *Guide* provides discussion questions and writing assignments for the study of the book. See [Teaching Students to Read Nonfiction: How Movies Can Help](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/nonfiction.html). [Click Here](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#standards) for the specific College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, set out in the 2010 Common Core State Standards, which are served by this *Learning Guide*.  |   |  |

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| LEARNING GUIDE MENU |
| [Benefits of the Movie](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#benefits) |  |
| [Possible Problems](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#PossibleProblems) |  |
| [Parenting Points](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#ParentingPoints) |  |
| [Selected Awards & Cast](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#AwardsCast) |  |
| Using the Movie in the Classroom[Before Showing the Film](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#before-showing)[Showing the Movie](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#showing-the-movie)[Afterwards — Discussion Questions](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#Dq)      [Subjects (Curriculum Topics)](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#Dq)      [Social-Emotional Learning](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#DqsSEL)      [Moral-Ethical Emphasis](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#DqsEthics)            [(Character Counts)](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#DqsEthics) [Afterwards — Assignments](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#projects) |  |
| [Bridges to Reading](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#BridgesToReading) |  |
| [Links to the Internet](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#links) |  |
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| **Possible Problems:**     MAJOR. There are short scenes of nudity including brief glimpses of people in a nudist colony and a short scene in which a young Scandinavian woman appears without her top and without embarrassment. There is nothing sensual about the scenes of nudity. There are brief scenes referring to lovemaking that has just occurred or in which we can only hear murmuring and laughter or see people after lovemaking. There is some profanity and crude language. McCandless is badly beaten by a railroad bull. Squirrels and a moose are killed for food, and the audience is shown a squirrel being roasted and the moose being cut-up and dismembered. McCandless is shown slowly wasting away and then dying. TWM advises using this movie despite its R rating because the benefits of the film far outweigh any negatives. Two reasons are given for the R rating: gross language and nudity. Most of the gross language is uttered by the hippie Rainey in brief comments while McCandless is doing sit-ups. Adults concerned about this language can turn the volume down for three or four seconds during this scene. The remaining profanity consists of infrequent examples of garden variety four letter words that teenagers have heard many times. The nudity is simply three women shown going about their lives. There is one scene in which a Scandinavian girl is talking with her boyfriend and McCandless without wearing anything above the waist. There is also a fleeting glimpse of two women walking at a nudist colony. There is nothing sensual about either of these scenes. Because of the R rating, TWM strongly recommends getting administrative and parental permission before showing the film. See TWM's [Movie Permission Slip](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/permission-slip.html). **Parenting Points:**     Parents can illuminate some of the elements in the film by discussing with their children some of the reasons why McCandless took to the road and a few of the ways that he could have had the same experience with less danger to himself. |   | "... A recent example of raising the artistic and ethical bar was Sean Penn's 'Into the Wild,' an adaptation of John Krakauer's book about Chris McCandless. Penn used a full pallet of cinematic tools to introduce several voices to the story, including on-screen text of McCandless' own writings, a voice-over narration by his sister, and finally Penn and actor Emile Hirsch's interpretation of McCandless' final two years. The result is an unusually sophisticated portrait of an often-contradictory protagonist who resists facile pigeon-holing. (See also 'Reds.')" "New Rules for 'based on a true story'", by Ann Hornady (Washington Post) Los Angeles Times, Friday, December 26, 2007, pp. E26 & 27. |
| **Using the Movie in the Classroom** *BEFORE SHOWING THE FILM* *Introduction, Class Discussion and Writing Assignments**Prior to watching the film, students can be told the following:*In 1990, 22-year-old Chris McCandless left what seemed to be a privileged life in Annandale, Virginia, gave away most of his money, and began a cross-country journey. McCandless told neither family nor friends where he was headed. Months after he left, his car was found washed up in a ditch in the desert with no evidence of foul play. Two years after he left on his trip, McCandless was found dead in an abandoned bus a few miles into the Alaskan wilderness. Prevented from hiking back to civilization by rivers swollen with spring run-off, McCandless had starved to death. John Krakauer, author of the book upon which the film is based, used his investigative reporting skills to track the path taken by the young man. Krakauer wanted to know why McCandless would leave behind the trappings of the American Dream, as have some individuals throughout history, and search for something elusive and, to his mind, more meaningful. In his book, Krakauer alludes to over a dozen authors, adventurers and philosophers in order to clarify the attributes of character that McCandless reveals in his relationships with the people he meets along the way as well as in his journals and postcards. The film begins with reference to English poet George Lord Byron's poem, "Child Roland's Pilgrimage," written between 1812 and 1818. Both Krakauer and the film's director, Sean Penn, felt that Byron's personal ethos expressed in these lines from his famous poem helped to describe the character of McCandless. Byron was known for creating the "Byronic Hero," a melancholy, defiant and troubled young man haunted by some mysterious transgression from his past. The five lines referenced in the film are from canto iv, verse 178, as follows:There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,There is a rapture on the lonely shore,There is society, where none intrudes,By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:I love not Man the less, but Nature more*Assignment:* After discussing this passage from the poem, ask students to write a brief reflection on the kind of person who may be characterized in this verse. Tell them to think of someone they know, or even of themselves. The individual will be inclined to love nature and enjoy being alone, but also to care about his or her fellows. Or do the students believe that there is something of this trait in most people, with some having it more and others having it less? At the end of the film, students will be able to see whether or not their reflection on the kind of character depicted in this poem is anything like McCandless.**The Chapters:** The film narrows the 18 chapters in the book to five: Described below is a description of a few chapters and some additional reading that will assist in understanding the character of Chris McCandless.*Note to Teachers: Present one or all of the following sections.***Chapter One: The Alaska Interior** If possible, teachers should read Chapter One aloud to the students and point out Krakauer's allusion to the work of Jack London. An American writer from San Francisco who lived between 1876 and 1916, London wrote realistic portrayals of nature and the individuals who seek to survive under the harsh conditions they find in the wilderness. Distribute copies of London's short story, ["To Build a Fire"](http://www.jacklondons.net/buildafire.html), widely considered to be London's best short story. Have the students read the short story and then engage them in discussion about what personal attributes of the main character may have led to his death. Answers will vary, but often the students will decide the man was afflicted with overconfidence, founded in experience, that can easily lead to arrogance. Tell students to keep their minds open to the similarities and the differences between the death of the character in Jack London's story and the death of Chris McCandless.*Assignment:* Man against nature is a common conflict in literature and these "survival stories" have intrigued readers for centuries. Ask students to write about another adventure story in which the antagonist was nature or a force occurring in nature. The story could be an actual experience known to the student or an event that the student had read about, or it could be a work of fiction in a book or a movie. Tell students to include in their writing a description of the personality traits of the people or characters involved that led to the situation that they are describing.**Chapter Five: Misfits** Krakauer introduces his readers to an odd lot of people that McCandless meets on his adventures, including those who live in what is called "Slab City." The film shows these people with a degree of affection that is unusual in mainstream society. Sites such as Slab City can be found all over the United States; the one portrayed in the film, in California, houses up to 5,000 people in winter, most of whom are retired, destitute, or unemployed; all clearly unable or unwilling to keep up with the "middle class grind." It is clear in both the film and the book that McCandless harbors both respect and affection for these outsiders.*Assignment:* Write a paragraph describing what you think about the kinds of people seen in Slab City. Try to be direct and honest in expressing your feelings; are they based in fear, compassion or ignorance? Write about any relationship you may have had with these kinds of people.**Chapter Nine: A Young Adventurer Lost and Found** Chapter nine begins with the last letter written by Everett Ruess, another of the many adventurers Krakauer studies in his effort to explain the nature of Chris McCandless. Ruess is compared to John Muir, a man who grew famous through his love for the outdoors and his efforts to preserve it for future generations. Read to the students the account of Everett Ruess given in the chapter and then deliver the following information:Under the headline, "Solved: The Mystery of Edmund Ruess," the story tells readers about how the disappearance of Ruess is finally explained by an aging Navajo who wanted to lay to rest the remains of a boy he witnessed murdered in Utah's Davis Gulch back in 1934. The old man said he watched from a ridge as three Ute teenagers killed Ruess. He claims to have helped hide the body and explained that he wanted to gather a lock of the boy's hair so he could perform a ceremony bring peace to the dead boy and to rid himself of the guilt associated with the crime. Relatives of the old man, eager to dispel the burden of a family secret, eventually led the authorities to the gruesome find and forensic scientists using DNA evidence determined that the body was irrefutably that of Ruess. The body was found jammed into a crevice. The National Geographic Society had relentlessly pressed for proper identification of the body after FBI agents originally asserted that the remains were those of a local Navajo. With the society's persistence, the mystery of the young Ruess, who wrote that he intended to spend his life exploring the beauty of nature, was thought to be solved. Now, new DNA analysis of the remains found in the crevice questions that conclusion.*Assignment:* Ruess was a young, innocent man when he decided to hike and climb and explore on his own. Write your opinion about whether or not you think it is too risky to take solo adventures. Argue your points for or against going off on one's own by pointing out what could be gained in a solo experience and the possible dangers that may be met. Decide whether the gains and potential losses balance or overpower one another.**Chapter Twelve:** Krakauer digs deep into the family in which McCandless grew up. His book is honest in its depiction of the kinds of family conflicts that are not dramatic but nevertheless do considerable damage to children. The arguments and the dishonest relationship between McCandless' parents may have served as the catalyst for driving the young man from home and onto the road. McCandless develops close relationships with several people on his journey but always moves on, making it clear that he is not interested in settling down or becoming a part of a family in lieu of his own.*Assignment:* Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian novelist, said that happy families are all alike and unhappy families are all different. Family experience, whether happy or unhappy, however, is very personal. Write an informal paragraph about a family you know of that appears to be happy. It can be your own family, but it can also be the family of a friend or a relative. Be descriptive and clear about the attributes that make you judge the family to be happy. Give examples to illustrate any generalities you make. In a separate paragraph, write about a family you consider to be unhappy. As in the first paragraph, be clear about the reasons for your judgment.**Chapter Sixteen: Epiphany** Once McCandless crosses the stream and finds the bus he intends to use for shelter, he goes about finding food to last through the winter. He kills a moose and thinks about Henry David Thoreau, underlining a passage in the American writer/philosopher's book, *Walden*. He is now thinking of all aspects of daily living, including our relationship with animals, plants, and food. In this chapter, McCandless writes that the way in which a person relates to a situation is more important than the situation itself. He writes that circumstance itself is of little importance, and the only true value in a situation is in one's personal relationship to the experience. In other words, our response to any situation is what shapes our reality rather than the situation itself. McCandless seems to think that all meaning comes from inside the self.*Assignment:* Write your opinion about McCandless' idea. Think it over. Does it make any sense in the way you have lived your life? Could it empower you to believe such a thought? Write freely, as if you were simply free-associating with the things that McCandless has said. Do not concern yourself with evaluating your thoughts; just express them.*SHOWING THE MOVIE*Show the film in its entirety, uninterrupted, as time allows. TWM suggests that after the introductory work described above, students will not need a movie worksheet. However, if the [Film Study Worksheet for a Work of Historical Fiction](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/film-study-worksheet-social-studies.html) is used, delete question #7. Use the following discussion questions to provoke thought and then assign the essays for assessment.  |   | **WORKSHEETS:** TWM offers the following worksheets to keep students' minds on the movie and direct them to the lessons that can be learned from the film.[Film Study Worksheet for a Work of Historical Fiction](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/film-study-worksheet-social-studies.html), deleting question 7 because the film closely follows the book which is the only reasonably available source of information on McCandless' life; [Worksheet for Cinematic and Theatrical Elements and Their Effects](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/cinematic-techniques-intro.html). Teachers can modify the worksheets to fit the needs of each class. QUICK DISCUSSION QUESTION:  Chris McCandless believed that his parents had wronged him and he despised them for their hypocrisy and their mistakes. He had the white-hot anger that some idealistic young men feel that often blinds them to more important feelings such as forgiveness and love. Both McCandless and his family were "stakeholders," people whose interests are affected by a decision. Given the interests of all of the stakeholders, was Chris McCandless justified in leaving and severing his ties with his parents and sister and going off alone on an adventure in which he put his life at risk? *Suggested Response:* There is no one correct answer to this question; there are only strong and weak responses depending upon the quality of the logic used and the evidence relied upon. Here are some thoughts: McCandless' anger blinded him to danger and to his love for Carine, his little sister. The Chris McCandless who walked into the wild would argue that due to the way they lived their lives and treated their children, his parents had forfeited their right to have any relationship with him. He would argue that they deserved to suffer. But whatever his parents had done, McCandless should not have sacrificed his sister's love. She was blameless, but by leaving, he deprived Carine of someone she loved. In risking his life, he put her love at risk. As a result of McCandless' actions, Carine suffered a major tragedy, and her entire life will be tinged with sorrow. The Chris McCandless who tried to leave the wild and who died in the bus, was a different man, as shown by his writings. A strong response would note that many people endure psychological, physical, and sexual abuse much greater than the abuse suffered by Chris McCandless, yet they do not react to it by hurting innocent members of their family and putting their own lives at risk. Excellent responses will explore the concept of the [stakeholder](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/standard-ethics-questions.htm#stakeholder). In order to make decisions that are caring and ethical and which will stand the test of time, we need to evaluate the interests of the stakeholders and how those interests are affected by the actions we take. The first and most important stakeholder in McCandless' decision to leave on the adventure and to reject his family was McCandless himself. It was his life, after all; he had a legitimate interest in living it in a way that satisfied him. McCandless had been hurt by his parents and had a strong interest in working it out. He also liked to go on adventures, to experience the wild, and to test himself against nature. The next most important stakeholder was Carine, Chris McCandless' sister. Then there were McCandless' parents, friends and society as a whole. An excellent response would take each in turn and evaluate their interests in McCandless' decision. **Common Core State (Curriculum) Standards:** *Use of Multimedia:* Anchor Standards #7 for Reading (for both ELA classes and other classes), and #2 for Speaking and Listening. See also their related specific curriculum standards. (The three Anchor Standards read: "Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media, including visually and quantitatively as well as in words.") See [CCSS](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/common-core-standards-annotated-and-highlighted.pdf) pp. 35, 48 & 60. *Writing:* Anchor Standards #s 1, 2, 4, 5, 9 & 10 for Writing and related standards. See [CCSS](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/common-core-standards-annotated-and-highlighted.pdf) pg. 41.  |
| ADVERTISEMENT*AFTER SHOWING THE MOVIE - DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**Note: Teachers may want to formulate written assignments based upon the discussions that ensue in response to the following questions.*1.   See the [Quick Discussion Question](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#QuickDq). 2.   Compare Chris McCandless to the man who froze to death in "To Build A Fire". What flaw did they have in common? *Suggested Response:* Their common flaw could be described as overconfidence, hubris, arrogance, or any combination of the three. Both also had bad luck. 3.   Some contend that McCandless was arrogant or stupid in going into the Alaskan wilderness only to die in an abandoned bus. Do you agree or disagree? State your reasons and back them up with direct reference to the film or with logical reasoning. *Suggested Response:* Answers will vary. Several critical analyses of McCandless' failure to prepare and educate himself before he went into the Alaskan wilderness are referenced in the [Links to the Internet](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#links) section of this *Guide*. 4.   Krakauer asks in his last chapter whether McCandless walked away from misery when he walked *Into the Wild* or whether he walked into happiness? How would you answer this question? *Suggested Response:* Answers will vary. Students will need to cite evidence to support their decision about whether or not McCandless was miserable. They will need to look at how happy he seemed to be in some of his experiences on the way to Alaska.5.   It seems that McCandless finally discovered the value of relationships and would have returned to become a part of society had he survived. What is your opinion of this idea? Your opinions must be backed up with support from the film and logical argument. *Suggested Response:* Answer will vary. Be sure students cite actions or comments in the film to prove their points. 6.   Irony can be found in the fact that once McCandless seemed to have discovered the value of family, he could not return to society because the stream he had crossed earlier at a place marked by his hat is no longer passable. He must wait out the rush of water from the spring run-off. He dies before he can make it back. Look at the stream as a metaphor. Compare the stream to something in McCandless' life. *Suggested Response:* Answers will vary. The stream could represent the past or the future or the nature of McCandless' struggle to find meaning in life. It could compare well to his lost opportunities to work out the problems with his family. It could be an impassible barrier created by his own neglect or his own immaturity. Or, the stream could simply be a fact, an obstacle that McCandless could not overcome or go around. See also the discussion questions in the *Social Emotional Learning* and *Ethical Emphasis*sections below. |   | **Select questions that are appropriate for your students.** [**Become a TWM Fan on**](http://www.facebook.com/pages/TeachWithMoviescom/125485121808)http://badge.facebook.com/badge/0.0.1095403110.png ***Reminder to Teachers:*** Obtain all required permissions from your school administration before showing any film. Teachers who want parental permission to show this movie can use TWM's [Movie Permission Slip](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/permission-slip.html). |
| **Social-Emotional Learning Discussion Questions:** TAKING CARE OF YOURSELFSee [Discussion Questions 2 and 3](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html#Dq) above. FAMILIES IN CRISIS1. Carine used crystal shattering as a metaphor in regards to her brother's reaction to their parents. Is this metaphor a good description of McCandless' personality? Can you think of a better one? *Suggested Response:* The crystal shattering metaphor is strong in that crystal is valuable and liable to shatter. It gives a good description of McCandless' personality before he had his epiphany in the woods, just before he died. It is also a good metaphor in that one does have to take care in handling crystal, just as one has to take care in raising a child. The deficiency in the metaphor can be described in several ways. Crystal is inert and Chris McCandless was a living being. Objects made of crystal are not actors in the world, but human beings, Chris McCandless included, are actors in the world. Crystal is never responsible for it being dropped and shattering. Chris McCandless overreacted to his parents' deficiencies and in that overreaction became partially responsible for what happened to him, to Carine, and to his parents when his risky behavior led to his death. 2. How does McCandless finally come to understand the value of family? *Suggested Response:*There is no one correct answer to this question; there are only strong and weak answers depending upon the logic used and the evidence marshaled to support the response. Here are a few ideas. One strong response is that McCandless matured in his several months in the wild. This is supported by the notes and underlines that he left behind and by his final picture. Another is that being alone for so long helped McCandless realize the importance of people. A third is that the cumulative effect of the suggestions of the people McCandless met on the way, many of whom challenged his decision to cut off his family, finally had an effect on him, and he understood the pain he was causing his parents and his sister. A fourth idea is that McCandless learned from the books he read. And, of course, it was probably all or several of these factors combined. 3. Do you agree with the statement that McCandless' family situation was a minor influence in McCandless' decision to go into the wild? Justify your answer. *Suggested Response:* There is no one correct answer to this question; there are only strong and weak answers depending upon the logic used and the evidence marshaled to support the response. A strong argument is that McCandless' family situation was a major factor in his decision to undertake the risk of going into the wild in the way that he did. Many people love the wild, and they love the challenges that it presents. However, they don't put themselves in the risky positions that McCandless did. Not only was the trip to Alaska risky, but McCandless' trip down the Colorado River was also risky. He just had better luck that time. A strong counter-argument can also be made: many people do foolhardy things and still survive. 4. Do you agree with the statement that in remaining incommunicado, McCandless was unnecessarily cruel to his family? Justify your answer. *Suggested Response:* Clearly, McCandless was unnecessarily cruel to his sister. As to his parents, there is no one correct answer to this question; there are only strong and weak answers depending upon the logic used and the evidence marshaled to support the response. For example, McCandless quotes a poem in which the author mentions banging people together like paper dolls. A strong response will mention this simile and explain it in the context of McCandless' life. 5. Should McCandless have forgiven his parents? *Suggested Response:* There is no one correct answer to this question; there are only strong and weak answers depending upon the logic used and the evidence marshaled to support the response. The strongest response is that he should have, but he needed time and maturity for this. Unfortunately, his efforts to find that in the wild caused his death and we'll never know if he would have taken this additional step. FRIENDSHIP6. Many of the people that McCandless met along the way wanted to take care of him almost as if he were a member of their family. Jan wanted to mother him, Westerman wanted to father him, Franz wanted to grandfather him, and the man who gave him the boots was concerned about his safety. What about McCandless' personality made them respond to him in this way? *Suggested Response:* The answer is that in many ways McCandless was obviously a hurt child. Many people respond to hurt children by trying to take care of them.  |   | **Selected Awards, Cast and Director:** *Selected Awards:* *2008 Academy Awards Nominations:* Best Achievement in Editing Jay Cassidy; Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role Hal Holbrook *Featured Actors:*   Emile Hirsch as Chris McCandless, Marcia Gay Harden as Billie McCandless, William Hurt as Walt McCandless, Jena Malone as Carine McCandless/Additional Narrator, Brian H. Dierker as Rainey, Catherine Keener as Jan Burres, Vince Vaughn as Wayne Westerberg, Kristen Stewart as Tracy Tatro, and Hal Holbrook as Ron Franz. *Director:*   Sean Penn. Are you concerned that time will be wasted if you are absent from class? Worry no more  **.  .  .** Check out TeachWithMovies'[Set-Up-the-Sub](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/set-up-the-sub.html). |
| <="" a="">**Moral-Ethical Emphasis Discussion Questions (Character Counts)**[Discussion Questions Relating to Ethical Issues](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/standard-ethics-questions.htm) will facilitate the use of this film to teach ethical principles and critical viewing. Additional questions are set out below. RESPONSIBILITY(Do what you are supposed to do; Persevere: keep on trying!; Always do your best; Use self-control; Be self-disciplined; Think before you act -- consider the consequences; Be accountable for your choices) 1. It has been said that when risky behavior results in death or permanent injury, the real victims are the people who loved the person who died or who is injured. Is there any truth to this statement? Explain and apply your explanation to the situation of Chris McCandless.*Suggested Response:* The truth in this statement lies in the fact that almost no person on this earth is without connections to people who will mourn their death. The people who love a person who engages in risky behavior do not decide to take the risk and have nothing to gain by the taking of the risk. Applying this to McCandless' situation, the primary example is his sister, Carine, who did nothing to deserve the misery that her brother caused her through his long absence without any word and his untimely death. The friends that McCandless made along the way and any friends he had made in college or as he was growing up, were also blameless but they, too, suffered, although to a lesser extent. It could be said that McCandless' parents were not blameless in this situation because he was reacting against their poor parenting, however, McCandless himself was overreacting. There were several better ways for him to deal with this situation, all of which did not include cutting off all contact with his sister and at least letting his parents know, periodically, that he was all right. He could have forgiven them. After all, they did love him, and it was clear by virtue of his anger that he still cared about them. He could have confronted his parents and expressed his anger directly. He could have sought therapy to deal with this situation and his reaction to it. He could have focused on helping Carine and making sure that the injuries he suffered did not poison her life. All of these responses would not have caused Carine and his parents the agony they have suffered. None would have caused sadness among his friends.  |   | Teachwithmovies.com is a [Character Counts](http://www.charactercounts.org/)"Six Pillars Partner" and uses [The Six Pillars of Character](http://www.charactercounts.org/defsix.htm) to organize ethical principles. Character Counts and the Six Pillars of Character are marks of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics. |
| *AFTER SHOWING THE MOVIE - ASSIGNMENTS* Any of the discussion questions set out above can serve as the basis for an essay using the essay rubric to which the class has become accustomed. Two additional possible assignments are set out below: 1. In the epilogue of Krakauer's book, he quotes Edward Whymper who gives the following advice: "Do nothing in haste; look well to each step; and from the beginning think what may be the end." Write an essay in which you illustrate how this advice could have prevented McCandless from dying alone in an abandoned bus. Be sure to reference episodes in the film in which this advice would specifically apply. 2. Write a critical review of the film in terms of its aesthetic appeal, its presentation of idea, and its impact on the viewer. Be sure to address the music, written and performed by Eddie Vedder, as well as some of the sweeping shots of nature. Determine whether the visuals, including the people as well as the places, create the tone that may or may not show McCandless' effort to seek meaning in life.  |   |  |
| **Bridges to Reading:** The book from which the film is derived is excellent reading for students at a 9th grade reading level and higher. |   | MOVIES ON RELATED TOPICS: For other films about |
| **Links to the Internet:*** + [Christopher McCandless aka Alexander Supertramp:](http://www.christophermccandless.info/) website of the foundation established by his parents with information about McCandless and his journeys;
	+ [Wikipedia Article on Chris McCandless](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_McCandless);
	+ [Biographical Sketch for Leo Tolstoy](http://www.classicallibrary.org/tolstoy/index.htm) from the Classical Library;
	+ [Wikiquote "Into the Wild" (film);](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Into_the_Wild_%28film%29)
	+ [Wikipedia article on the film](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Into_the_Wild_%28film%29);

The movie presents a romanticized view of Chris McCandless. There are many people who believe he was foolish and naive and basically committed suicide. See, for example:* + - [Chris McCandless from an Alaska Park Ranger's Perspective](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild-files/Peter_Christian_Response-1.pdf) by Peter Christian;
		- [10 True Facts about Chris McCandless](http://youdontknowish.tumblr.com/post/8122659932/10-true-facts-about-chris-mccandless-into-the) presents a different view of McCandless; note that this web page contains profanity;

\* + - [Into the Wild Debunked](http://www.tifilms.com/wild/call_debunked.htm);

Most of the songs from the film are available on YouTube or other Internet Sites. See for example:* + - [Eddie Vedder singing his song "Into the Wild"](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJB02JWp5Oo&feature=PlayList&p=0C2205324E9CDF2E&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=4)
		- [Eddie Vedder singing "Society" on YouTube](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVQEsKDcl2A)
		- [Eddie Vedder singing "Long Nights" on YouTube](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0V7WItOr4O8&feature=related)
		- [Eddie Vedder singing "No Ceiling" on YouTube](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHcZ1wPsJYY)
	+ [The Mystery of Everett Ruess](http://adventure.nationalgeographic.com/2009/04/everett-ruess/david-roberts-text) from National Geographic.
 |   |  |
| **Bibliography:** None. This *Learning Guide* was written by [Mary RedClay](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/who-we-are.htm#red-clay) with assistance from [James Frieden](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/who-we-are.htm#james). It was last modified on February 11, 2012. Spread the GOOD NEWS aboutTEACHWITHMOVIES.COM![Recomm](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/recommend.htm) |  |  |

Allusion to dark tower, childe roland

Allusion to walden

Irony – like his dad, finds value of happiness is in social, but he’s alone

How?

Camera shots

Structure; chronology, out of order; shows the ipact of his actions on others.

Does this mean the director is making a statement on leaving society? Is it narcissistic? Idealistic?

Chapter Titles / Diary Titles – these chart his ‘growth’ eg chapter 2 = adolescence

Music – Eddie Vedder’s Acoustic tells his story

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | "Setting Forth" | 1:37 |
| 2. | "No Ceiling[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Into_the_Wild_%28soundtrack%29#cite_note-25)" | 1:34 |
| 3. | "Far Behind" | 2:15 |
| 4. | "Rise" | 2:36 |
| 5. | "Long Nights" | 2:31 |
| 6. | "Tuolumne" | 1:00 |
| 7. | "Hard Sun" ([Indio](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indio_%28music%29) Gordon Peterson) | 5:22 |
| 8. | "Society" ([Jerry Hannan](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jerry_Hannan&action=edit&redlink=1)) | 3:56 |
| 9. | "The Wolf" | 1:32 |
| 10. | "End of the Road" | 3:19 |
| 11. | "[Guaranteed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guaranteed_%28Eddie_Vedder_song%29)[[nb 1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Into_the_Wild_%28soundtrack%29#cite_note-26)" | 7:22 |

Chris “moral code” – allusion to literary texts to demonstrate character.

<http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/into-the-wild.html>

<https://myportfolio.school.nz/user/alangrant/into-the-wild-achievement-standard-90850-1-2>

<http://inflexionplankton.blogspot.com.au/2011/11/notes-on-into-wild-film.html>

[http://st1english.wikispaces.com/Into+the+Wild](http://st1english.wikispaces.com/Into%2Bthe%2BWild)

<https://engrishforum.wordpress.com/2016/01/05/band-56-discovery-away-into-the-wild/>

“There seems to be two camps in terms of what people think about the movie: one that praises McCandless for his sense of adventure and another that feels anger toward him because he never contacted his family during his travels. Do you fall on one particular side?

Penn: "I'm on the side that doesn't put the white wig and the robe on. It's just people wanting to have something to criticize. It's courage envy. Everybody's got their own f---ing way of dealing with their family stuff, and it's nobody's (business) to judge on him like that. I think that if there's anybody I would listen to on the subject, it's his family."

Vedder: "I defer to them as well. I thought about them a lot. There's a line in 'Guaranteed' that says, "Don't come closer or I'll have to go/Owning me like gravity are places that pull/If ever there was someone to keep me at home/It would be you.' That line is for (McCandless' sister, Carine)."

<http://www.reuters.com/article/music-pennvedder-dc-idUSN2638530120071027?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>