

My Side of the Mountain Study Guide



by Carol Clark

For the novel by
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Synopsis

With 11 family members living in one apartment in New York City, it is way too crowded for young Sam Gribley, so he sets off on his own with \$40, a ball of cord, a penknife, an ax, and some flint and steel. He has heard many stories about how his great-grandfather built a farmstead in the Catskill Mountains, but failed and went to sea. “The land is no place for a Gribley,” Sam’s father tells him. But Sam determines to find the remains of his great-grandfather’s farm, and he is sure that the land is the perfect place for a Gribley to settle.

Arriving at the old Gribley farmstead, Sam hollows out a tree for his home and learns to hunt, fish, trap, and forage for edible plants. When he captures a young falcon, Frightful, and trains her to hunt, she becomes a good friend and a great help in supplying food.

However, as time goes on, Sam comes into contact with local people and some begin to search him out in his forest sanctuary. A few people, including his father, are welcome visitors to his sanctuary, but eventually stories of the “wild boy” begin to circulate and even make it into the newspapers, and reporters and photographers start to search the woods for him. Eventually, Sam has to decide whether he will stay away from people or whether people, and family, are also important to have in his life.

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15. Sam has now watched the animals, the changing weather, and the seasons change in his months on the mountain. Read Genesis 8:22, Psalms 104:19, and Ecclesiastes 3:1–13. What do these verses tell us? How is Sam’s daily life similar to Ecclesiastes 3:13?

Optional Projects and Activities:

1. *Health and nutrition:* Sam learns about specific vitamins he needs when he becomes tired, stiff, and suffers a nosebleed. Think about your own nutrition. Are there any areas of your diet that are not as healthy as they should be? Research some of the foods that provide the vitamins and minerals that a healthy body requires. Then, with the help of a parent or teacher, plan one day’s meals or three dinners of healthy meals.
2. *Health and nutrition:* You may wish to have a nutritionist speak to your class about food and the most nutritious things for us, or you can speak to a nutritionist at a local clinic or hospital and prepare a presentation on healthy eating or the biggest problems the nutritionist sees in his or her work with people and how they can be solved.
3. *Science connection:* Research great horned owls and put together an oral presentation. Options include creating a PowerPoint presentation, artwork, pictures, posters, or other visual aids. Include mention of their nests, eggs, and young and their calls in the spring.
4. *Food and field trip:* Sam discovers it takes 32 cups of maple sap to make one cup of maple syrup. Try maple syrup on pancakes or buy and try some maple sugar candy. If you live in an area that has maple syrup producers, go on a field trip to visit one while they are collecting and working, or to buy some of what they make. You may also read about maple syrup production or watch a video about making maple syrup. Here are two to start with:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SrdK1zvHSs>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzj_4-iqw1I

Section 8

I Cooperate with the Ending

The City Comes to Me

Vocabulary:

Fill in each sentence below with the correct vocabulary word from the Word Bank. Look up the meanings of any words you do not know.

Word Bank:

abundant	circumstances	cooperate	expression	occasionally
permanent	resounding	self-sufficient	sagely	sensational

1. Because of the _____ varieties of plants and fish, Sam has many choices of healthy foods to eat.
2. Sam enjoys living a _____ lifestyle, where he takes care of his own basic needs.
3. When his family arrives, Sam realizes that living on his own is not a _____ situation.
4. The noise of the forest is _____ with the cracking of trees in the ice storm, and Sam realizes he has no control over this situation.
5. Sam decides to _____ with the ending of his adventure when his family arrives.
6. Sam _____ has visitors, but at the end of his adventure, many people arrive, including reporters and photographers.
7. Sam _____ prepares for the future by gathering a stash of food and burning out other trees for guests.
8. Sam has learned to survive and enjoy the harsh _____ that come with the winter season in the Catskills.
9. Sam has a _____ time sliding down the frozen hills.
10. Sam's face shows a fearful _____ during the ice storm.

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Questions:

1. Why do the animals stop coming to Sam's tree when spring arrives?
2. Sam talks to a young man named Aaron. What common interest do they find they have? What are the results?
3. What does Sam realize about Frightful's words that she spoke at the forum? What has Sam done that he would not have a year ago?
4. Near Easter, Matt comes to visit Sam. Though Sam puts a handkerchief over Matt's eyes, he goes almost directly home. Why?
5. When Sam's family arrives in "The City Comes to Me," what immediately goes through Sam's mind?

Thinking About the Story:

6. When Matt asks him why he is up here, Sam keeps giving different answers. What are they? Which one is the real reason?
7. How is the forest becoming like a city to Sam? How is he beginning to be part of the town below?

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8. Sam uses a metaphor when referring to himself in the following sentence:

“I had the feeling that I was an old story somewhere beyond the foot of the mountain. I didn’t care.”

What is the metaphor and what two things are being compared? Why doesn’t Sam care any more that he is known?

Dig Deeper:

9. When Sam realizes it is almost Easter, he keeps his word to meet Matt and have him visit for a week. Did Sam have to do this? Why did he? Read Proverbs 12:22, Matthew 5:37, and James 5:12. What do these verses teach us?

10. Read Leviticus 19:3, Ephesians 6:1–3 and Colossians 3:20. What do these verses teach about the importance of obeying and respecting our parents? How does Sam show this in the last chapter of the book?

Optional Projects and Activities:

1. *Writing assignment:* Write a description of what you think the Gribley family’s new home in the woods will be like. Describe the rooms and furnishings as you imagine them. Then tell how you think the family will feel about this new home.
2. *Journal writing extension:* Pretend you are Sam and write a diary entry about moving into your new home and living in the woods with friends and family now.
3. *Art poster project:* Draw or create a poster or blueprints for Sam’s new home with his family.

My Side of the Mountain Study Guide Answer Key

7. He tracks the days by making notches on an aspen pole. Sam has been on his own for eight months when he starts the book with the snow storm.

8. Students should mention some of the following. He has been gathering nuts, acorns, and berries, chipping storage pockets in his tree, making his bed, burning out the tree for his home, learning how to light a fire, trapping animals, catching fish and turtles, and making acorn flour for pancakes.

Thinking about the Story:

9. *My Side of the Mountain* is written in first-person narrative. We can tell because the narrator uses the words *I*, *me*, and *my* often. Sam Gribley is telling his own story.

10. a. The first two pages are written in present tense. b. Examples may vary, but should include some of the following: is, am, eat, keep, guess, blows, moans, etc. c. In the rest of the chapter, Sam writes in the past tense. d. Examples may vary, but should include some of the following: wrote, was scared, thought, came, laughed, was, laced, shouted, poked, whistled, etc. e. The first two pages of the book are written in December as things were happening and Sam is in the middle of the snow-storm. It seems to be something like a diary entry. In the rest of the first chapter, Sam describes how he has worked since May and through summer and fall and how the snow storm at the beginning of the chapter arrives. The different parts of the chapter are written at different times.

11. the tree is not crying so much; the whole tree moans. Crying and moaning are things people or animals do, not plants or things.

12. Answers will vary. As soon as he left, Sam says he knew he would not be coming back to Bill's—he is determined to make it on his own. Perhaps Sam feels that he will have no problem surviving alone, since he has already done so for one night. Maybe he feels that going back to Bill's house would be an admission that he is unable to make it on his own. He wants to be independent!

13. Sam repeats out loud his father's statements that the land is no place for a Gribley, but he specifically came out to be on this land of his family's and he is actually doing well. It is ironic that his father's saying doesn't actually seem to be true.

Dig Deeper:

14. Answers will vary. All life—animal, plant, and human—and all the rest of creation show the glory and planning and creativity of God. In observing nature, we see God as the creator and sustainer of life; there is beauty and order to what he has made. Seeing God's creation can stir us to worship our creator. The verses in Colossians remind us that Jesus was and is the creator of everything, and through his power everything holds together.

15. These verses teach us that we can be brave because God is always with us no matter what. He takes care of the birds and plants, and he knows everything we need. He reminds us to follow him first and he will help provide what we need. We should not worry. Personal answers will vary.

Section 2

I Find Many Useful Plants

The Old, Old Tree

I Meet One of My Own Kind and Have a Terrible Time Getting Away

Vocabulary:

1. meaning: a hole, a sunken or decayed spot; clues: the heart rotting away. 2. meaning: tools; clues: iron, could use. 3. meaning: fertile, soft soil; clues: leaves fallen, plants died. 4. meaning: seasonal