

- **Brief Description of the Group:** I chose to work with a small group of eight rising sixth grade boys that are in a pull-out class for behavior problems. Each of the boys is one to two years behind grade level, so they ranged in age from twelve to fourteen. These boys are not learning disabled, but receive extra assistance in order to behave in a way that helps them have more success in school. Most of these boys are resistant readers, although they are mostly on-track with ability level. These are the types of kids that I would like to develop outreach programs for in a public library. For confidentiality reasons, I will not use the boys' names in this report.

The focus of my book talk was three-fold: increased interest in a book from their summer reading list; generate interest in a novel; provide a tie-in with the boys' upcoming class camping trip.
- **Date and Location of the Book Talk:** Wednesday April 15, 2009 at Barnett Shoals Elementary School in my classroom during ASP (After School Program).
- **Author:** Gary Paulsen
- **Title:** *Hatchet*
- **Publisher:** Bradbury Press
- **Publication Date:** 1987
- **Visual Aids Used:**
 - Book Cover
 - Smart Board with display of the author, Gary Paulsen:
http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/2006/08/26/arts/26paul_CA1.600.jpg
 - Smart Board with display of Cessna 406:
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/95/Reims_Cessna_F406_Handling_instructions_USAF.png = plane diagrams;
http://media.photobucket.com/image/Cessna%20406%20photos/WorldTraveller/AirStPierreCessnaF406FOSPJ_cockpit.jpg = plane control panel;
<http://www.worldofstock.com/slides/TRA1141.jpg> = stock photo
 - Smart Board with Canadian wilderness photos:
http://photos.igougo.com/images/p131345-Northwest_Territories-stopping_for_lunch_in_First_Canyon.jpg;
<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/imagedata/0,,5185800,00.jpg>;
http://www.trekamerica.co.uk/images/big_H2669.jpg
 - Smart Board with hiking/survival hatchet photos:
<http://www.nextag.com/Camping-Hiking--zzsurvival+hatchetz2701033zB6z5---html>
 - Smart Board with photo of fierce Canadian bear:
<http://images.smarter.com/blogs/grizzly.jpg>
 - Smart Board with photo of tornado/storm:
<http://jaller154.files.wordpress.com/2007/04/tornado.jpg>;
http://farm1.static.flickr.com/18/23708241_b64d765b0f.jpg?v=0;
http://weathersavvy.com/waterspout2_OPT.jpg
- **Accompanying Activities:** I read two excerpts from *Hatchet* – one focusing on the heart-attack of the pilot and Brian's realization that he was alone and that his life was in his

hands and one that focused on Brian's experience with the tornado that nearly took his life. I practiced reading aloud at home several times and ended up editing my excerpts to be shorter than I had originally intended in order to provide a more "cliffhanger" aspect to the readings. I had originally thought that I might incorporate a writing/journaling activity after some sharing of initial emotional responses and predicting from the readings, but decided to take advantage of the technology that I had available to me in the classroom with the Smart Board and five computer stations with Internet access. I used the Smart Board to show photos of the author and Cessna in split screen during the first reading and Canadian wilderness and tornado photos during the second reading. After a brief discussion, I showed photos of the type of hatchet being referred to in the title, some more Canadian wilderness photos, and a snarling Canadian bear photo for a little foreshadowing and a teaser of "coming attractions" if they chose to read the novel on their own.

The real fun started when I paired the boys up on computers and had them visit an online website called *Wilderness Survival*. I had previously created bookmarks for the boys to use in order to save time. The links I created were for the following topics:

- Home: <http://www.wilderness-survival.net/>
- Shelters: <http://www.wilderness-survival.net/chp5.php>
- Water Procurement: <http://www.wilderness-survival.net/chp6.php>
- Food Procurement: <http://www.wilderness-survival.net/chp8.php>
- Signaling Techniques: <http://www.wilderness-survival.net/chp19.php>
- Survival Use of Plants: <http://www.wilderness-survival.net/chp9.php>
- Survival Quiz: <http://www.wilderness-survival.net/quiz/quiz.php>

I conducted the website surfing/reading as a challenge. The boys were timed (about 3 minutes each page – give or take a half minute here or there based on their progress) at each page and told that they needed to collect as much information as possible in order to win the "Survivor" contest quiz – which was available on the website and consisted of 21 questions and automatically scored participants. I allowed them to take notes if they wanted. (I took the quiz myself and did a fair job for a novice – 14/21 for a 67%.) The prize was a coupon for a free Chik-Fil-A meal for each boy in the pair and the glory of being the top survivor. The boys really enjoyed reading the information available on the website and there were plenty of gut reactions from them as they read the different ways to procure food in the wild. I ended the session with a pep talk about the novel and a short discussion about their class camping trip and how it would differ from being stranded in the wild with no supplies. One boy borrowed my copy of *Hatchet* right after the Book Talk. He still has it. I have not checked with our media specialist to see if any of the other boys have checked out the book since the Book Talk.

- **What worked well?** The Smart Board was so much fun to have and the photos helped the boys develop a better understanding of the setting of the novel. The *Wilderness Survival* website was a real hit with the boys. I hope that the website stays active as I would like to use it again. (Side note: the website does have annoying pop-ups, but they

are easily clicked off.) I believe that *Hatchet* is a great choice for male readers and the excerpts I chose did evoke emotion from the boys.

- **What will you change next time?** I would like to have better prizes for the winners of the survival quiz – something that mimics the immunity necklace or the “buffs” from the show *Survivor*. I would like to have more time for the procurement pages on the *Wilderness Survival* website so that the kids can do better on the quiz and we can have lengthier discussions about the information. I should have brought snacks for the boys. I did scrounge up some graham crackers from our cabinet, but only the really hungry boys ate those. It might be fun to bring in some “survival” themed foods items – wild berries, etc. (Just a thought.)

Information from my earlier submitted module:

Paulsen, G. (1987). *Hatchet*. New York: Bradbury Press.

This title is recommended for ages nine through twelve and has an Accelerated Reader level of 5.7. *Hatchet* was a one-time sit-down read for me as it held my attention from the beginning. Brian Robeson is a wonderful protagonist and I can see why this has been a favorite for teachers and kids over the years. I actually had this novel in my classroom, but I never found the time to read it and it wasn't on the list for whole class instruction. I think in many ways, children's librarians have a real advantage over classroom teachers in that they have many more opportunities to read a greater volume of books with children. I was lucky to fit in two novels per semester along with all the other standards to be taught. I never hesitated to grab *Hatchet* when I had a reluctant male reader that needed a book for silent reading, but my enthusiasm was based on Paulsen's reputation and the reviews I had read for *Hatchet*.

The story starts with very graphic imagery of being trapped in a plane with a dead pilot. There aren't so many details to provide a gross out to the reader, but enough to let the imagination go wild and provide oneself with one's own gross out. The tension is thick as Brian must figure out how to survive a crash and how to manipulate the navigation enough to land on water. He is able to do so, but the crash is much more violent than I had expected. Brian's first few days surviving in the Canadian wilderness were extremely authentic. I did not feel that there was any suspension of disbelief required of me as in so many “boy-against-the-wild” storylines. Brian hangs on to life by a thread and is in and out of consciousness for the first few days. When he finally decides to stumble around in survival mode, he does so at an infant's pace and makes many mistakes. We live “the awakening” with Brian as he develops his instincts and hunter's mentality. Every scene is purposeful and makes total sense.

The way the story brings itself to a conclusion is so perfect. Brian is finally a survivalist and is beginning to flourish rather than eek out an existence when a moose attacks and a tornado strikes, wipes out his hard work, and nearly kills him. Ironically, this same storm uncovers the tail-end of the plane wreck and Brian works diligently to make his way deep down into the wreck to retrieve the survival pack. He unwittingly switches on the emergency transmitter as he inventories his booty and, surprise, he is rescued – just that fast. It was a very real ending to a very real story. I appreciated the honesty of the Epilogue too. There was no sugar-coating.

I am not sure of the value of the subplot of the divorced parents and extra-marital affair. I imagine that Paulsen wanted to analogize the internal struggle with the external. It would be interesting to explore the relationship between the literal survival with the figurative, the physical challenges with the emotional, and the civilized world versus the wild. This novel almost makes me want to teach middle school Language Arts again so that I can use it in the classroom – or, even better, work in the youth/teen department of a library! (195 pages)