

UNIT 13

Hatchet

An excerpt from a novel by Gary Paulsen (born 1939)

Students Learning Outcomes:

On the completion of this unit, the students will be able to:

- scan to answer questions.
- deduce meaning of difficult words from context.
- utilize appropriate informational sources including encyclopedias and internet information.
- comprehend various job advertisements to write in response, an effective job application, a resume and a covering letter.
- demonstrate use of appropriate conventions to give a job interview.

Pre-reading:

- What is a forest?
- If you were alone in a forest, what would you do to survive?

Prologue

(In this story, the main character is a teenager named Brian Robeson. He is on a plane to visit his father in the oil fields in Canada. The only other person on the plane is the pilot. When the pilot has a heart attack, Brian must guide the plane to land. After he lands on a lake, he finds himself alone and scared. The only belongings he has are his clothing and a small axe called a hatchet. Brian must find a way to survive alone in the wilderness.)

Brain found it was a long way from sparks of fire.

Clearly there had to be something for the sparks to ignite, some kind of tinder or kindling – but what? He brought some dried grass in, tapped sparks into it and watched them die. He tried small twigs, breaking them into little pieces, but that was worse than the grass. Then he tried a combination of the two, grass and twigs.

Nothing. He had no trouble getting sparks, but the tiny bits of hot stone or metal – he couldn't tell which they were – just sputtered and died.

He settled back on his haunches in exasperation, looking at the pitiful clump of grass and twigs.

He needed something finer, something soft and fine and fluffy to catch the bits of fire.

Shredded paper would be nice, but he had no paper.

"So close," he said aloud, "so close..."

He put the hatchet back in his belt and went out of the shelter, limping on his sore leg. There had to be something, had to be. Man had made fire. There had been fire for thousands, millions of years. There had to be a way. He dug in his pockets and found the twenty-dollar bill in his wallet. Paper. Worthless paper out here. But if he could get a fire going ...

He ripped the twenty into tiny pieces, made a pile of pieces, and hit sparks into them. Nothing happened. They just wouldn't take the sparks. But there had to be a way—some way to do it.

Not twenty feet to his right, leaning out over the water were birches and he stood looking at them for a full half-minute before they registered on his mind. They were a beautiful white with bark like clean, slightly speckled paper.

Paper.

He moved to the trees. Where the bark was peeling from the trunks it lifted in tiny tendrils, almost fluffs. Brian plucked some of them loose, rolled them in his fingers. They seemed flammable, dry and nearly powdery. He pulled and twisted bits off the trees, packing them in one hand while he picked them with the other, picking and gathering until he had a wad close to the size of a baseball.

Then he went back into the shelter and arranged the ball of birch bark peelings at the base of the black rock. As an afterthought he threw in the remains of the twenty dollar bill. He struck and a stream of sparks fell into the bark and quickly died. But this time one spark fell on one small hair of dry

bark – almost a thread of bark – and seemed to glow a bit brighter before it died.

The material had to be finer. There had to be a soft and incredibly fine nest for the sparks.

I must make a home for the sparks, he thought. A perfect home or they won't stay, they won't make fire.

He started ripping the bark, using his finger nails at first, and when that didn't work he used the sharp edge of the hatchet, cutting the bark in thin slivers, hairs so fine they were almost not there. It was painstaking work, slow work, and he stayed with it for over two hours. Twice he stopped for a handful of berries and once to go to the lake for a drink. Then back to work, the sun on his back, until at last he had a ball of fluff as big as a grapefruit – dry birch bark fluff.

He positioned his spark nest – as he thought of it – at the base of the rock, used his thumb to make a small depression in the middle, and slammed the back of the hatchet down across the black rock. A cloud of sparks rained down, most of them missing the nest, but some, perhaps thirty or so, hit in the depression and of those six or seven found fuel and grew, smoldered and caused the bark to take on the red glow.

Then they went out.

Close – he was close. He repositioned the nest, made a new and smaller dent with his thumb, and struck again.

More sparks, a slight glow, then nothing.

It's me, he thought. I'm doing something wrong. I do not know this – a cave dweller would have had a fire by now, a Cro-Magnon man would have a fire by now – but I don't know this. I don't know how to make a fire.

Maybe not enough sparks. He settled the nest in place once more and hit the rock with a series of blows, as fast as he could. The sparks poured like a golden waterfall. At first they seemed to take, there were several, many

sparks that found life and took briefly, but they all died.

Starved.

He leaned back. They are like me. They are starving. It wasn't quantity, there were plenty of sparks, but they needed more.

I would kill, he thought suddenly, for a book of matches. Just one book. Just one match. I would kill.

What makes fire? He thought back to school. To all those science classes. Had he ever learned that made a fire? Did a teacher ever stand up there and say, "This is what makes a fire..."

He shook his head, tried to focus his thoughts. What did it take? You have to have fuel, he thought – and he had that. The bark was fuel. Oxygen – there had to be air.

He needed to add air. He had to fan on it, blow on it.

He made the nest ready again, held the hatchet backward, tensed, and struck four quick blows. Sparks came down and he leaned forward as fast as he could and blew.

Too hard. There was a bright, almost intense glow, then it was gone. He had blown it out.

Another set of strikes, more sparks. He leaned and blew, but gently this time, holding back and aiming the stream of air from his mouth to hit the brightest spot. Five or six sparks had fallen in a tight mass of bark hair and Brain centered his efforts there.

The sparks grew with his gentle breath. The red glow moved from the spark themselves into the bark, moved and grew and became worms, glowing red worms that crawled up the bark hairs and caught other threads of bark and grew until there was a pocket of red as big as a quarter, a glowing red coal of heat.

And when he ran out of breath and paused to inhale, the red ball suddenly burst into flame.

"Fire!" he yelled. "I've got fire! I've got it, I've got it, I've got it..."

About the Author

Gary Paulsen (Born 1939)

has written many novels for young readers. Several involve young characters facing challenges. Paulsen also faced some difficult problems as a child. His father was in the army, and Paulsen had to change schools often. Paulsen was a shy boy and changing schools was very hard for him. One day, a librarian gave him a library card and books, and he found a new world. Paulsen said, "I write because it's all I can do... (because I want my) years on this ball of earth to mean something. Writing furnishes a way for that to happen."



Reading and Thinking Skills

1. Answer the following questions.

- i) Who is the main character in the story "Hatchet"?
- ii) What problem did Brian have?
- iii) What was the first thing Brian tried to burn?
- iv) What happened when Brian tried to light his twenty-dollar bill?
- v) Why was Brian exasperated?
- vi) What happened when Brian made a home for the sparks?
- vii) Why did Brian hit his hatchet against the rock?
- viii) Why did Brian chop the peeled bark into smaller pieces?
- ix) How did Brian feel at the end of the story?
- x) What do you think Brian will do now that he has a fire going?

2. Mark the sentences as true or false.

- i) Brian is on a plane to visit his father in the oil fields in Canada.
- ii) The pilot of the plane did not have a heart attack.
- iii) Brian tried to ignite grass at first.
- iv) Brian was successful to burn small twigs.
- v) Brian needed something finer, soft and fluffy to catch the bits of fire.

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- vi) Brian found thirty-dollar bill in his wallet. ☐
- vii) Brian at last gave up to make a fire. ☐
- viii) Brian made a nest for the sparks. ☐
- ix) Brian recalled his school lessons as to what made a fire. ☐
- x) Brian remembered that fuel and oxygen are needed for a fire. ☐

3. Choose the correct answer.

- i) Brian is lost in the woods with only:
 - (a) a spade as a tool. (b) a hatchet as a tool.
 - (c) a hammer as a tool. (d) a dagger as a tool.
- ii) Brian wanted to have:
 - (a) a shelter. (b) a fire.
 - (c) fresh food. (d) a fine home.
- iii) Brian moved to the trees to pluck:
 - (a) branches of trees. (b) fluffy bark.
 - (c) leaves. (d) roots of trees.
- iv) Brian wanted to find out the way how to:
 - (a) burn fire. (b) cook food.
 - (c) row a boat. (d) make a shelter.
- v) When Brian ran out of breath and paused to inhale:
 - (a) the red ball burst into pieces
 - (b) the red ball broke into pieces
 - (c) the red ball burst into flames
 - (d) the red ball blasted

Writing Skills

Curriculum Vitae

It is a summary of an applicant's professional experience and educational background, alongwith other relevant information regarding the candidate's qualifications. The curriculum vitae is similar to a résumé, but is used more frequently by candidates who have published works in journals, such as scientists or academic professionals.

Format for curriculum vitae

Name

Address:

Cell No:

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Father's Name : _____

Date of Birth : _____

Nationality : _____

Domicile: _____

CNIC No. _____

Religion: _____

Marital Status: _____

OBJECTIVE

-
-

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION

Education	Year	Institution	Marks

WORK EXPERIENCE

-
-

LANGUAGES

-
-

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS

-
-

REFERENCE

-
-

Activity

Prepare your curriculum vitae by following above format.

VOCABULARY

Use context to understand Vocabulary

The context of a word is the other words around it. You can use the context to help you understand new words.

For example:

In “Hatchet”, the sparks made by Brian in the story “just sputtered and died”, you can use the word “died” to guess what “sputtered” means.

The word “died” is context for “sputtered.”

Activity

Guess the meanings of the following words from the context and write down in your notebooks.

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| (i) exasperation | (ii) pitiful | (iii) registered |
| (iv) tendrils | (v) wad | (vi) painstaking |
| (vii) positioned | (viii) tensed | |

Oral Communication

Interview

An interview is a series of questions and answers. The interviewer asks the questions, and the interviewee answers them. The interview usually gives information about the interviewee's life, experience or opinions.

Tips for giving a job interview

1. **Conduct Research on the Employer, Hiring Manager, and Job Opportunity:** You should understand the employer, the requirements of the job, and the background of the person (or people) interviewing you. The more research you conduct, the more you'll understand the

employer, and the better you'll be able to answer interview questions.

2. **Review Common Interview Questions and Prepare Your Responses:** Another key to interview success is preparing responses to expected interview questions. Prepare a list of expected questions with responses and practise orally.
3. **Dress for Success:** Wear neat and clean clothes and polished shoes for the interview. Try not to smoke or eat right before the interview, brush your teeth or use mouthwash.
4. **Arrive on time, be relaxed and prepared for the interview:** to avoid any trouble, strive to arrive about 15 minutes before your scheduled interview. Arriving a bit early is also a chance to observe the dynamics of the workplace.
5. **Make Good First Impressions:** A cardinal rule of interviewing is to be polite and offer warm greetings to everyone you meet.
6. **Be Authentic, Upbeat, Focused, Confident, and Concise:** Once the interview starts, the key to success is the quality and delivery of your responses. Your goal should always be authenticity and responding truthfully to interview questions. Provide solid examples of solutions and accomplishments but keep your responses short and to the point.
7. **Remember the Importance of Body Language:** Effective forms of body language include smiling, eye contact, solid posture, active listening, and nodding.
8. **Thank Interviewer(s):** Common courtesy and politeness go far in interviewing; thus, the importance of thanking each person who interviews you should come as no surprise. Start the process while at the interview, thanking each person who interviewed you before you leave.

Activity

Work in groups of five to ten. Prepare some questions with their answers. Take the interview of each other one by one.