



Camp Wild

Pam Withers

Reading level: 3.8

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AR Quiz # 87344

Book Summary

Wilf is convinced his parents want nothing to do with him. When he isn't in school, he is left to his own devices or shipped away to camp. Wilf is adamant that at age fourteen he is too old for summer camp. When his parents ignore his protests and send him to camp anyway, he discovers a way to get their attention: He will escape from camp by canoe and spend the rest of his vacation alone in the woods, proving to his parents that he deserves his independence. His plan begins to unravel when his cabinmate forces Wilf to take him along. Things go from bad to worse when a younger camper follows them and they all end up in a fight for their lives with an unforgiving river.

Author Biography

Pam Withers is the author of the Take it to the Extreme series of books for teens, as well as *Breathless* and *Daredevil Club* published by Orca Book Publishers. Pam is also a former summer camp coordinator, white-water kayak instructor and river raft guide. She lives in Vancouver with her husband and teenage son when not touring North America giving presentations to students.

Connecting to the Text

Point of View

In *Camp Wild*, our understanding of the story comes from the narrator, Wilf. We see and experience each of the events through Wilf's eyes. This allows the reader a particular kind of intimacy with the main character. Lead a group discussion on point of view and the use of first person in *Camp Wild*.

1. Consider the following sentences taken from *Camp Wild* (they are the first and the last sentences of the novel). They are written using first person. Ask students to rewrite these sentences using the voice of third person. How are the voices of first person and third person different? With which one do you feel closer to the main character?

(ch. 1) *"Summer Camp!" I roar at my startled parents. Anger surges through my cracked voice with such electricity that I don't even blush about the vocal chord break.*

"Why don't you just send me to Siberia? If you're so set on always getting rid of me, why did you even have a kid?"

(ch. 13) *Claire gave me a glowing smile that makes me think I'm going to capsize in my canoe right then and there and need a deep-water rescue if not mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.*

2. Invite students to write a page or two using first-person narrative. Examples could be a letter, a journal entry or short story, or they may wish to write a few paragraphs in the voice of Wilf from *Camp Wild*.

Character

The character of Wilf develops significantly in *Camp Wild*. He begins by resenting going to Camp Wild and plots to run away, but by the end of the novel vows to return as a junior counselor.

- As a group, consider these "before" and "after" quotations. You may wish to ask students to read these passages aloud:

Before

(ch. 1) *"Oh, that's rich, Dad," I explode back. "My dream job, looking after a bunch of brats. That would be even worse than being the only four teen-year-old at a little kids' summer camp. Don't make me do this, Mom and Dad."*

After

(ch. 13) *"But I'd like to come back next year," I announce. "Then Claire could train me up as a junior counselor."*

- In your group discussion, answer the following questions, using examples from *Camp Wild* where possible:
 - ◆ What happened that changed Wilf's feelings about going to camp next year?
 - ◆ Wilf describes his "attitude adjustment" (ch. 12). Has Wilf grown as a person because of what has happened?
 - ◆ Can you think of experiences from your own life that helped you grow as a person, like Wilf did?
 - ◆ Invite students to consider the development of the other characters in *Camp Wild*.
 - ◆ Initially, Wilf's parents never seem to take time away from their work. Wilf says they are "addicted to insane workloads" (ch. 1). But at the end of the novel, Wilf's Dad decides to "stay on a few days, roast some marshmallows, get some mosquito bites, do some hiking and canoeing..." (ch. 13). What happened to change his mind? Do you think Wilf's parents' attitude about work will change now? Do you think Wilf's scheme to run away worked?
 - ◆ For the first few days at Camp Wild, Herb has a great time and enjoys the activities, food and people. Later, when he becomes bored and wants to escape with Wilf. It took Herb two years to convince his parents to let him go to Camp Wild. How do you think they'll feel about Herb going to Camp Wild next year?

Language

Metaphors and similes connect ideas, giving us pictures which expand our understanding of situations and characters.

1. Read the following examples aloud to the class or write them on the board. After each, discuss the connection that is being made and how it lends meaning to the text:
 - (ch. 2) *My respect for Patrick drops like a boulder off a cliff.*
 - (ch. 2) *Is Claire in training to become a brainwashed tool of the regime too?*
 - (ch. 3) *Like a sea lion, he's awkward as heck on land but astonishingly strong and smooth the minute he hits water.*
 - (ch. 7) *"Whoa," I tell my canoe. "Slow down." I don't think it trusts me at the reins. It plunges into the white and starts bucking.*
 - (ch. 8) *"Shut it, Herb. Both of you are gatecrashers on my party. Don't be anchors too, or I'll cut the chain."*
 - (ch. 9) *Like a stone in a slingshot, I'm launched out of the canoe and into the drink before I can register a thing.*
2. Invite students to write a short paragraph describing their typical school day using similes. For example: *I got out of bed as slowly as a slug. I had a shower and the water was as cold as ice.* Encourage students to be creative and humorous in their writing. Invite students to share their writing with the large group. Other options could be to write about a typical day for a television, movie or music celebrity or a character from *Camp Wild* or another novel.

Connecting to the Curriculum

Vocabulary

The following words/terms are used in *Camp Wild* in the context of Wilf's escape plan. Invite students to write a journal entry, letter or short story using some or all of these words. To connect to their reading of *Camp Wild*, encourage students to use a first person narrative. Ideas/themes could include crime, spy or mystery genres.

agenda	departure	hideaway	plotting
blackmailer	diversion	filched	strategies
code	escape plan	stashed	top-secret

Language Arts

- Adverbs are the parts of speech which modify verbs. They tell us how and in what way things happen. *Camp Wild* is a high-action adventure story and there are many examples of powerful adverbs that expand our meaning of the verbs they modify.
 - Prepare the following activity by cutting out the two sets of words below. Keep both sets separate. Using a desk that students can walk around, arrange the first set, ADVERBS, on one half of the desk, and the second set, VERBS, on the other half of the desk. You may wish to use two baskets or two box lids so that the cards do not get mixed up.
 - Ask students to match the adverb to an appropriate sentence (there may be a variety of correct answers). Encourage students to first ascertain the meaning of each adverb by reading it in context using the chapters from *Camp Wild* indicated on each card.

Option: Write the adverbs and verbs on the board. As a group, determine each of the adverb's meanings by the context given in the novel. Then complete the matching exercise.

Option: Create a grab bag of common verbs, such as looks, feels, jumps, sees, stands, laughs, etc. Arrange them on a table or write them on the board. Ask students to pair the common verbs with an appropriate adverb from the list. Then ask them to write a sentence using each verb and adverb combination.

Adverbs

hesitantly	curiously	precariously	silently
listlessly	indulgently	leisurely	vigorously
amazingly	impatiently	solemnly	carelessly
sluggishly	reluctantly	groggily	

Sentences

He was a little scared. _____, he began.

This is a special treat. _____, I tried it.

This is very serious. _____, we spoke.

Feeling ill, he sat _____.

I must hurry, I can't wait! _____, I started.

She just woke up. _____, she spoke.

She couldn't believe it! _____, it started.

She didn't want to do it. _____, she began.

They had to be quiet. _____, they walked.

She didn't feel like studying. _____, she started reading.

It looks like it might fall! It's balanced _____.

They were strong and ready. _____, they began.

I wonder what that is! _____, I looked.

We had lots of time. _____, we walked.

He didn't care about it. _____, he threw it.

2. The word kayak is a palindrome, which is a word that reads the same way forward as backward. Challenge students to find other palindromic words (examples could be: civic, eve, level, madam, racecar, radar, and so on) and share them with the class. You may wish to begin with three-letter words and then move to four-letter and five-letter words, and so on.
3. The words/terms listed below are used in *Camp Wild* in the context of Wilf, Herb and Charlie's experiences canoeing and kayaking along the river. Invite students to write a "how to" instruction booklet which teaches basic kayaking or canoeing skills. Students will need to refer to the lists below and to *Camp Wild* to complete this exercise. Encourage students to illustrate their booklets with diagrams of the different strokes and parts of the kayak or canoe. Students' booklets should include:
 - ◆ A list of the different strokes (with diagrams)
 - ◆ A list of safety tips for safe kayaking or canoeing
 - ◆ A list of what to take on a kayak or canoe trip

For additional resources on canoeing and kayaking, see the list of web resources on the last page of this teachers' guide.

Kayak or Canoe—General Terms

aluminum canoe

flotation bags

paddles

stern

bailer

foam knee pads

rescue rope

waterproof gear bags

bow

helmet

ropes

wetsuit

dry-bag

life jacket

solo canoe

Kayak and Canoe—Strokes, Techniques

back strokes	ferry	obstacles	slalom
capsizing	J-strokes	pivot	spilling over
crossbow strokes	launching	righting	sprint
draw	lean hard	rolled	sur/spin
ejects	meander	ruddering	surface
exit technique	portage	sighting rocks	sweep strokes

Science

1. Wilf, Herb and Charlie know that the risk of hypothermia from falling in the river is very serious. When Wilf and Herb first see Charlie, he is shivering and his hands are blue. Have students work in pairs to research hypothermia. What happens when people have hypothermia? When in the outdoors, what can people do to prevent hypothermia? What can be done to treat it?
2. Many wildlife animals are mentioned in the novel, including a deer, duck, eagle, heron, river otter, sea lion and turkey vulture. Have students research one (or more) of these species. What parts of North America are they indigenous to? What are their habitats like? What do they eat?

Geography

The river plays a key role in *Camp Wild*. It is described as having “nice, gentle-flowing water” in some places, and is “foaming, pitching and seething” with “whitewater” and “rapids” in other places. Ask students to work in small groups to follow the river’s path in *Camp Wild* using the novel as a guide. What is it like when Wilf begins his journey? Draw a map that describes visually the different parts of the river’s path. Label the different forms the river takes. Begin where Wilf starts his journey and end where Wilf, Herb and Charlie meet their parents. You may need to use additional resources to identify the parts of the river. See the list of web resources at the end of this teachers’ guide.

Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

1. Coping with parents who have a lot of work responsibilities can sometimes be a challenge. Wilf thinks his parents always [have] “clients to tend to, important clients. Always more important than [him]” (ch. 1). Ask students what advice they would give to Wilf on how to cope with his workaholic parents. They might choose to write a letter to Wilf, explaining how he might cope with his situation at home.
2. Wilf retaliates against his parents by running away from camp. We know that running away can be an extremely dangerous thing to do. Have students work in pairs to brainstorm two lists: first, some of the dangers involved with running away; and second, some of the resources in your school and community for kids who are struggling and may want to run away. Where can they go for help? Invite students to make a poster that advertises these resources and post it in a prominent location in your school.

3. After his experience with Herb and Charlie, Wilf learns a lot about his limits. He says, "I've tasted freedom and tested my limits, and I'm getting stronger and prouder by the minute." Have students work in pairs to research opportunities in your school and community where they can safely stretch their limits. Ideas might include joining a school or community sports team or drama club, or an outdoors club, such as a running or hiking group. Invite them to make a presentation to the class on at least two examples of possible opportunities.
4. Wilf decides to come back to Camp Wild next year to train to be a junior counselor. Sometimes, being a leader to others helps us grow. Have students work in pairs to research opportunities in your school and community where they could be a volunteer leader to younger kids. Ideas might include reading buddies, school monitors, school clubs, youth organizations like Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and so on. Invite them to make a presentation to the class on at least two opportunities in your area. Encourage them to talk about what being a youth leader can offer—both to the youth leader and to the younger kids.
5. Some of the outdoor activities at Camp Wild included canoeing, archery, wilderness survival, sailing, kayaking and tennis. Have students choose one of these activities and, in pairs, research the activity, answering the following questions: What is involved in participating? What are the basic rules? What equipment is needed? Where could you participate in this activity in your community? Be prepared to report your findings to the large group.
6. Some of the indoor activities at Camp Wild included arts and crafts, first aid, and knot tying. Invite students to choose one of these activities and, in pairs, research the activity. Encourage them to prepare a short presentation for the large group, talking about the activity they have chose and have them include a demonstration (for example, demonstrate how to make a small craft, a first-aid kit, or different knots).
7. At Camp Wild, they do not allow kids to bring CD players or handheld video games. Invite the students to discuss why this is. Ask students if they were interested in going to a summer camp, perhaps to participate as a junior counselor, how would they go about this? Where could they look for potential camps?

Web Resources

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kayak>

www.redcross.org/services/hss/lifeline/fakit.html