

## Survival - Suggested Readings

A thematic unit on survival stories is an excellent way to engage students with high-stakes narratives that explore perseverance, resourcefulness, and human resilience. Here are a few short stories that would pair well with *Hatchet* and explore various aspects of survival, both physical and emotional:

### 1. "To Build a Fire" by Jack London

- **Why?** This classic story is a perfect match for a survival unit. It follows an unnamed man who is trying to survive in the Yukon wilderness despite his lack of proper preparation. The story explores themes of hubris, the unforgiving nature of the environment, and the struggle for survival against overwhelming odds. The man's slow realization that he has underestimated nature makes for a compelling discussion on human vulnerability and the importance of humility in survival situations.
- **Themes:** Nature's power, isolation, human weakness, the consequences of hubris, and the struggle to survive.

### 2. "The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connell

- **Why?** This thrilling short story features a man stranded on an island who becomes the prey of a sadistic hunter. It explores survival in a different way, as the protagonist must use his wits and cunning to outsmart a hunter who is also a skilled survivalist. The story raises questions about morality, the hunter-prey relationship, and how the human drive for survival can lead to ethical dilemmas.
- **Themes:** Survival against another human, morality, hunter vs. prey, human nature, and the concept of civilization vs. savagery.

### 3. "The Interlopers" by Saki (H.H. Munro)

- **Why?** While this story isn't about physical survival in the wilderness, it deals with a different kind of survival: survival in the face of hatred and human conflict. Two men, trapped under a fallen tree, are forced to reconcile with the consequences of their long-standing feud. This story can be used to discuss emotional survival, forgiveness, and the unpredictable outcomes of human conflict.
- **Themes:** Conflict, survival under duress, irony, human rivalry, and the unpredictable nature of fate.

### 4. "The Open Boat" by Stephen Crane

- **Why?** This story, based on Crane's own experience surviving a shipwreck, is a powerful account of the struggle for survival at sea. The story portrays four men trying to survive in a small dinghy after their ship sinks. It focuses on their physical struggle as well as their philosophical reflections on fate and nature's indifference to human life.
- **Themes:** Fate vs. free will, the power of nature, brotherhood, and survival against overwhelming odds.

### 5. "A Day's Wait" by Ernest Hemingway

- **Why?** This is a relatively short and simple story that still explores survival, but in an emotional and psychological sense. It involves a young boy who believes he is going to die from an illness, but his survival hinges more on his mental state than his physical one. This story can be paired with *Hatchet* to examine the psychological challenges of survival situations, especially for younger individuals.
- **Themes:** Fear, survival, miscommunication, emotional resilience, and the effects of mental state on survival.

## 6. "The Lady, or the Tiger?" by Frank R. Stockton

- **Why?** This story is more of a psychological survival tale that focuses on a young man's survival through a morally complex and emotionally charged situation. It's about a young man who must choose between two doors in an arena: one hides a lady he loves, and the other hides a tiger that will kill him. The story ends with an unresolved question, and it can be used to discuss the emotional and psychological toll of survival situations.
- **Themes:** Choice, fate, survival in moral dilemmas, human emotions, and love.

## 7. "The Sniper" by Liam O'Flaherty

- **Why?** Set during the Irish Civil War, this story follows a sniper as he tries to survive on a rooftop. It's a short but intense story about survival in a war zone, focusing on the psychological and emotional toll of war, as well as the brutal realities of combat.
- **Themes:** War, survival in extreme conditions, emotional and psychological toll of violence, and the alienation of soldiers.

## 8. "The Blue Hotel" by Stephen Crane

- **Why?** In this story, a group of men at a hotel get caught up in an altercation that spirals out of control, leading to the death of one of the characters. While not a traditional survival story, it explores themes of survival in a psychological and social sense, as the characters grapple with fear, violence, and the consequences of their actions.
- **Themes:** Fear, fate, human nature, and the effects of isolation.

## 9. "The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry

- **Why?** This story isn't about physical survival but emotional survival and the sacrifices people make for those they love. It's a good way to discuss the survival of human dignity and relationships in tough circumstances. It contrasts well with the more physical survival stories like *Hatchet*, offering a different perspective on what it means to survive.
- **Themes:** Sacrifice, love, poverty, emotional survival, and irony.

### Pairing with *Hatchet*:

You can structure the unit so that the more physically-oriented survival stories (*Hatchet*, *To Build a Fire*, *The Open Boat*) are balanced with those that explore the emotional, psychological, or moral aspects of

survival (*A Day's Wait*, *The Lady, or the Tiger?*, *The Gift of the Magi*). This can foster rich discussions on different types of survival, from raw physical endurance to complex emotional and moral decisions. By comparing and contrasting the ways in which characters survive in these various stories, students can gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of survival.

### Discussion Prompts:

- How do the characters in each story deal with isolation and fear?
- What role does human emotion or psychology play in survival situations?
- In what ways do the settings (wilderness, war, society) affect the characters' chances for survival?
- How does each story reflect or challenge our ideas of what it means to "survive"?

This combination of stories will help you cover a wide range of survival themes, ensuring that the unit remains dynamic, thought-provoking, and relevant to your students.