

# Books Like Hatchet: 10 Wilderness Survival Stories Kids and Teens Will Love



Books Like Hatchet

# Introduction

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Gary Paulsen's classic *Hatchet* remains a rite-of-passage read for many young adventurers. Brian Robeson's battle against the raw Canadian wilderness speaks to something primal in all of us: the need to test our limits, to improvise under pressure, and ultimately to discover who we are when there's no one left to lean on but ourselves. If you—or the readers you guide—have finished those final pages hungry for more grit, resilience, and nature-powered adrenaline, the titles below will keep the fire burning. Each selection echoes one or more of *Hatchet*'s hallmarks: a resourceful protagonist, a life-or-death setting, finely observed outdoor details, and an emotional arc that goes far beyond “Will they make it out alive?” Alongside every recommendation you'll find a vivid picture concept you could hand straight to an illustrator or AI image generator, plus genre tags drawn from an expanded library taxonomy so you can shelve or search with confidence. Ready to load your backpack? Let's turn the page.

## 1. *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George

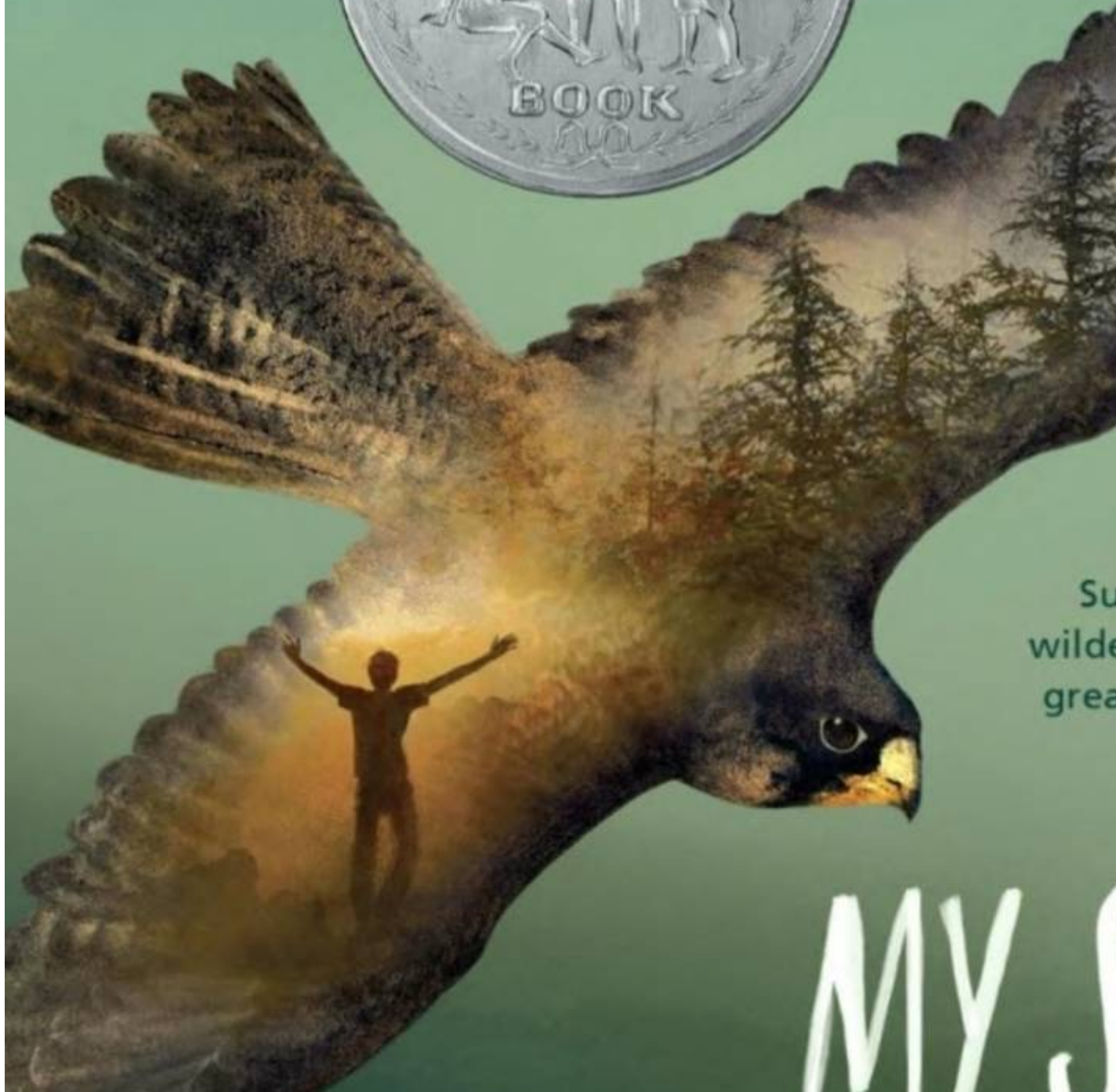
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# JEAN CRAIGHEAD G

NEWBERY AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF *JULIE*



Summary



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## My Side of the Mountain by Jean Craighead George

**Genres:** Fiction • Children's Fiction • Young Adult • Travel & Adventure • Novel

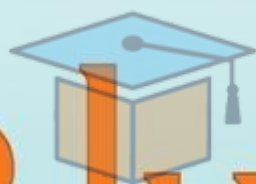
Imagine a wrap-around scene of twelve-year-old Sam Gibley crouched beside the flickering embers of a Catskill Mountains campfire as twilight purples the sky. A slim peregrine falcon, wings half-spread, perches on his buckskin-clad arm while he splits acorns with a handmade knife. In the background, sturdy hemlocks frame a hollowed-out tree—the boy's ingenious home—its bark glowing gold. This image captures the novel's celebration of self-reliance, ecological curiosity, and quiet courage. Like Brian in *Hatchet*, Sam flees modern distractions to forge his own path, learning edible plants, weather signs, and the delicate balance between taking from and caring for wild spaces. George's sensory prose turns every birdsong and brook into an invitation to slow down and notice.

## 2. *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell

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SCOTT O'DELL

# Island of the Blue Dolphins



Summary

THE COMPLETE READER'S EDITION

EDITED BY SARAH



## Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell

**Genres:** Fiction • Historical Fiction • Children's Fiction • Young Adult • Travel & Adventure • Novel

On a craggy Pacific shore, lone Karana strings sinew to a spear while sea lions sprawl on sun-warmed rocks below. Her dog, a black-and-white wild canine she tamed, guards a thriving garden ringed with whale-rib fencing. The turquoise bay shimmers with promise and peril: sharks swirl beneath the surface and colonial ships loom on the horizon. O'Dell's Newbery winner parallels *Hatchet* in its realistic survival tactics—drying abalone, weaving cormorant feathers—while adding historical depth drawn from the true story of Juana Maria, an Indigenous woman left on San Nicolas Island for eighteen years. Readers witness not just endurance but the cost of colonial intrusion and the power of cultural memory.

### 3. *The Cay* by Theodore Taylor

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# THEODORE TAYLOR THE CA



Summaryer



## The Cay by Theodore Taylor

**Genres:** Fiction • Historical Fiction • Children's Fiction • Young Adult • Travel & Adventure • Novel

Picture a makeshift raft adrift on cobalt waters under an unforgiving Caribbean sun. Eleven-year-old Phillip, eyes blindfolded from a concussion, feels for the hand of Timothy, the weathered West Indian sailor teaching him to “see” through sound, scent, and touch. Towering hurricane clouds bruise the distant horizon, foreshadowing a fight for survival that demands trust across racial lines. Taylor’s novella blends vivid disaster imagery—a torpedoed ship, salt-rimed skin—with an introspective examination of prejudice and interdependence. As with *Hatchet*, the greatest transformation happens inside the protagonist, where fear is tempered into resilience.

## 4. *I Am Still Alive* by Kate Alice Marshall

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"It's *Hatchet* m  
infused with fierce,  
– S. A. BODEE  
author o



Summaryer

KATE ALICE  
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## I Am Still Alive by Kate Alice Marshall

**Genres:** Fiction • Thriller / Mystery • Young Adult • Travel & Adventure • Novel

Visualize a snow-swept boreal forest at blue-hour dawn. Jess Cooper, one arm in a homemade sling, crouches beside the smoking wreckage of her remote cabin. Her only companion—a restless husky—leans into the wind while distant snowmobile tracks hint at the armed men who left her for dead. Unlike Paulsen's hero, Jess must survive both elements and human hunters, giving the narrative a modern thriller pulse without losing the raw how-to details (setting snares, signaling planes, managing wound infections). Trauma, grief, and fierce determination entwine as she retraces her late father's footsteps to claim justice.

## 5. *Be Not Far from Me* by Mindy McGinnis

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Author of *The Female of the Species*

MINDY MCGINNIS



Summary

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**Genres:** Fiction • Young Adult • Thriller / Mystery • Psychology • Novel

Under a canopy of Appalachian hardwoods, eighteen-year-old Ashley trudges barefoot, her shredded socks trailing blood along mossy stone. Parched lips and a festering ankle wound contrast with the lush midsummer green closing in around her. Lightning bugs scatter like sparks from her feverish hallucinations—a haunting reminder that isolation can be as psychological as it is physical. McGinnis amplifies the survival genre with visceral body horror and deep introspection about self-destructive choices. Readers who admired Brian’s resourcefulness will appreciate Ashley’s near-clinical assessment of edible plants and improvised splints—even as they flinch at every snapped twig.

## **6. *Lost in the Barrens* by Farley Mowat**

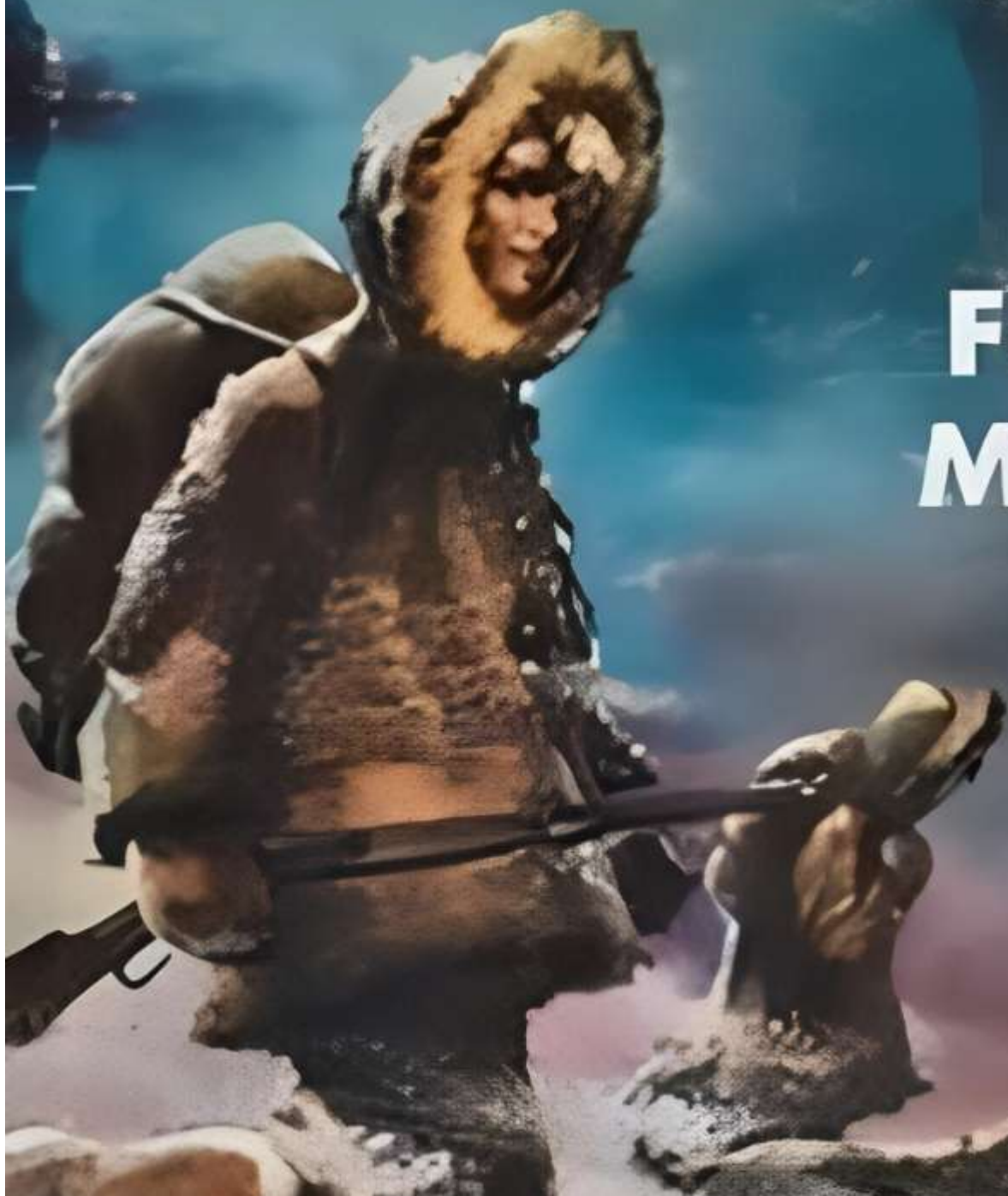
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# LOST IN THE BARR



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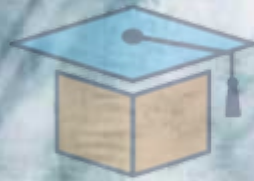
## Lost in the Barrens by Farley Mowat

**Genres:** Fiction • Young Adult • Travel & Adventure • Novel • Politics & History  
(Northern peoples)

Set against the vast sub-Arctic tundra, orphaned Jamie and Cree teenager Awasin paddle a birchbark canoe through mirror-still water reflecting autumn's first aurora. A collapsed sled dog harness and dwindling pemmican hint at brutal winter ahead. Mowat balances suspenseful hunts for caribou and musk ox with tender cross-cultural friendship, showcasing how shared knowledge—Inuit stone traps, Scots engineering tricks—can bridge worlds. The novel's respect for Indigenous skills offers an ethical framework missing from many older adventure tales and complements *Hatchet's* focus on ingenuity over brute strength.

## 7. *Touching Spirit Bear* by Ben Mikaelson

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Summaryer



# TOUCHING SPIRIT BEAR

BEN MIKAELSEN

Can a mythical bear  
help someone beyond



## Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelson

**Genres:** Fiction • Young Adult • Psychology • Health & Wellness • Novel

Envision storm-lashed Alaskan islands beneath low-hanging fog. In the foreground, sixteen-year-old Cole Matthews kneels in soaked denim, face-to-face with a towering white bear whose breath clouds the air. Broken ribs, mangled leg, and shattered arrogance signal a different kind of survival story—one that fuses wilderness hazards with restorative-justice healing circles. Mikaelson pairs step-by-step survival (building shelters from driftwood) with psychological reckoning, arguing that conquering anger is often harder than outlasting cold. Perfect for readers craving the emotional depth that *Hatchet* only begins to touch.

## 8. *Wildfire* by Rodman Philbrick

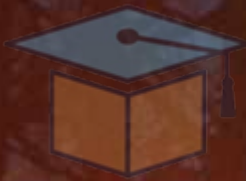
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NEWBERY HONOR WINNER

RODMAN PHILB

Author of the classic bestseller *FREAKY*



Summary

WILDFIRE



**Genres:** Fiction • Young Adult • Thriller / Mystery • Science & Technology (fire behavior) • Novel

An orange wall of flames chews through pine crowns as twelve-year-old Sam Castine sprints across a charred logging road, smoke swirling like angry ghosts. Beside him, a savvy campmate clutches a map flecked with burning embers. The artwork should capture ember-lit faces streaked with soot, a stark contrast to the pastel dawn behind them. Philbrick's narrative clocks in at breakneck pace, detailing the physics of crown fires, the importance of wind direction, and ingenious fire shelters. Readers who loved *Hatchet*'s real-time problem-solving will race through this contemporary disaster thriller.

## **9. *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* by Aron Ralston**

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THE BASIS FOR THE  
MAJOR MOTION PICTURE 127 HOURS

# BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER



## Between a Rock and a Hard Place by Aron Ralston

**Genres:** Non-Fiction • Biography & Memoir • Travel & Adventure • Health & Wellness  
• True Crime

A hyper-realistic illustration captures Ralston wedged in Utah's Bluejohn Canyon, his right arm trapped beneath a half-ton boulder. A pocket-sized camcorder on a tripod records his video diaries while dwindling water and a dull multi-tool sit at the canyon floor—grim foreshadowing of the amputation decision that shocked the world.

Ralston's memoir is as meticulous about geology, desert weather, and calorie budgeting as *Hatchet* is about lakeside survival, but its adult perspective broadens the conversation to risk assessment and personal accountability.

## **10. *Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors* by Piers Paul Read**

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#1 NEW YORK TIMES BEST

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Summaryer

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## Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors by Piers Paul Read

**Genres:** Non-Fiction • Biography & Memoir • Travel & Adventure • Psychology • Politics & History

The sweeping final tableau shows a shattered Fairchild aircraft tail jutting from Andean snowfields while a rope line of emaciated rugby players descends toward hope. Frost-nipped beards, makeshift snowshoes, and salvaged seat-cushion packs convey the dire ingenuity required after seventy-two winter days. Read's journalistic reconstruction goes beyond sensational headlines about improvised rations to explore group psychology, leadership conflicts, and faith under duress. Fans of *Hatchet* will recognize the same themes scaled up: how ordinary people summon extraordinary resolve when civilization disappears overnight.

## Conclusion

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Whether you prefer the hushed stillness of a northern lake or the roar of a wildfire, these ten titles prove that the survival narrative is endlessly adaptable—and never merely about staying alive. Each author frames the wilderness as both adversary and teacher, revealing truths about prejudice, grief, friendship, and moral courage. Hand one of these books to a young reader who just closed *Hatchet*, and you'll watch them discover that the story doesn't end with Brian; it echoes across islands, deserts, mountains, and time itself. Adventure, after all, is a renewable resource—one sturdy paperback and an open mind away.