**Discussion Journal Assignment – *Into the Wild***

In order to discuss elements of the novel, *Into the Wild*, you will have a journal discussion partner. Complete 4 journal discussions to turn in for a grade. For each, do the following:

1. Choose any 4 Journal Response Questions below. Answer the questions in complete, well-written paragraphs (2-4 paragraphs for each). Your answer can be personal and reflective. I encourage you to be creative (but appropriate) in response to the answer. Be sure to include specific details from the text to demonstrate that you have read the book.
2. Leave space in between each entry for your partner.
3. For each Journal entry, you are to switch with your Journal Partner. As the responder to the Journal, comment on the thoughts of the Journal owner in a paragraph. Understand that you are analyzing the story, and commenting on thoughts; not analyzing how or why your Journal Partner wrote what he/she wrote. Essentially, *play nice.*
4. Turn in the completed Journal for credit.
5. Please turn in Journal Entry #1, prepared and ready for your partner to respond in class: \_\_\_November 30, 2015\_

Journal Response Questions

1. What do you think caused Chris to embark on his journey? (beginning of the novel)
2. What mistakes, if any, did Chris make before going to Alaska?
3. In a review of the book by Library Journal, one complaint about it was that Krakauer “never satisfactorily answers the question of whether McCandless was a noble, if misguided, idealist or a reckless narcissist who brought pain to his family.”  Which, in your opinion, was he?  Was he both?
4. McCandless was also greatly influenced by Henry David Thoreau. What did he borrow from Thoreau’s interaction with nature? How did he differ from Thoreau?
5. The author claims that *Into the Wild* is very much a story about a son’s relationship with his father. What conclusions did you make regarding McCandless’s response to his family? What did you learn about parental relationships from the narrative?
6. One Alaskan Park Ranger has made [some comparisons](http://nmge.gmu.edu/textandcommunity/2006/Peter_Christian_Response.pdf) between himself and Chris.  He wrote:

*“Essentially, Chris McCandless committed suicide while I apprenticed myself to a career and a life that I wanted more badly than I can possibly describe in so short an essay. In the end I believe that the difference between us was that I wanted to live and Chris McCandless wanted to die (whether he realized it or not). The fact that he died in a compelling way doesn’t change that outcome. He might have made it work if he had respected the wilderness he was purported to have loved. But it is my belief that surviving in the wilderness is not what he had in mind.*

*I did not start this essay to trash poor Chris McCandless. Not intentionally. It is sad that the boy had to die. The tragedy is that McCandless more than likely was suffering from mental illness and didn’t have to end his life the way he did. The fact that he chose Alaska’s wildlands to do it in speaks more to the fact that it makes a good story than to the fact that McCandless was heroic or somehow extraordinary. In the end, he was sadly ordinary in his disrespect for the land, the animals, the history, and the self-sufficiency ethos of Alaska, the Last Frontier.”*

Do you feel that McCandless was either mentally ill or suicidal? Use evidence from the text.

1. What is Truth? Where did you get your sense of Truth? What is McCandless’s sense of Truth? How do you know?
2. What significance, if any, do you attach to the note Chris left in the margins of Dr. Zhivago:  “Happiness only real when shared” as he neared the end of his life? (end of book, pg. 189)
3. Interview your parents/ guardian about something they always wished they would have done. Find out why they haven’t done it? What stopped them?
4. At the end of the reading, Krakauer asserts that one reason adults have so much difficulty understanding McCandless’s actions is that they struggle “to recall how forcefully [they] were once buffeted by the passions and longings of youth.” To understand this observation, one must be able to define what “the passions and longings of youth” are. What do these passions and longings have to do with escape? With the natural world? And if one can recall such passions and longings, how might this change the way one looks at McCandless’s death?

**Sample Journal Entry  
Jimmy Neutron; October 17th**

**As I begin to read the book, *Into the Wild*, I wonder exactly what caused Chris McCandless to embark on his journey. Jon Krakauer challenges the reader in his Author’s Note at the beginning of the book, to question Chris’s motives. As a result, his character must also be in question. Knowing what I know about young adults, as I am one, it seems that he wasn’t prepared to go home after he graduated from college. It could be possible that Chris was feeling the strain to conform to the rituals of college graduates: leave school, find a job, settle down. In some cases, people who are unsuccessful at finding a job and becoming independent fear that they will be forced to regress by moving home. In either case, I don’t think Chris was ready for life after college. He doesn’t seem like he is one who wants to conform to the American way of living, or even worse, return to his family home and wait out the job search.**

**Krakauer suggests on the second page of the Author’s Note that he comes to wonder a different motive. He questions if McCandless was in the grip of the wilderness. To further explain, maybe McCandless was drawn by his adventurous side to go off into nature. Demonstrating a Thoreau-like character, McCandless may have wanted to get personal with nature, maybe as a way to find out who he truly is. Erik Erikson, a psychologist of the 20th century, identifies the adolescent to young adult developmental stage as a time of finding one’s true identity. Maybe McCandless is still in that stage, and feels that the wilderness is a place where he can truly come to understand who he is, and what he wants to live for.**

**Nevertheless, McCandless made the decision to go off on his own, leaving his family in the dark. Obviously, at least from what I know at this point in the book, his choice was deadly. What I am most curious to find out is whether McCandless sees his death as a disappointment, or whether he comes to accept his choices because that was what he wanted all along. Of course, I may need to answer whether his choice was deliberate in order to fully comprehend why he embarked on such a dangerous journey.**

**Response:**

**Dora D. Explora; October 20th**

**Jimmy makes several good points in his journal reflection. I also questioned if McCandless’s choice to give his savings to OXFAM and leave his family behind was some sort of demonstration of his frustration with the world. He couldn’t have been prepared to leave the comfort of his college experience and enter a new phase in life. I know that I am also scared about the process of leaving my friends here in Bath, and going to college. I completely agree with Jimmy as McCandless’s behavior must be a result of his “fear of becoming independent,” as Jimmy stated in his entry. While it is exciting to become my own person, and experience the world outside of this small town, there are some concerns I have about what exactly it will be like.**