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D I S T R I B U T E D   B Y :



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# Introduction

*Desolation Canyon* offers readers an opportunity to experience an original story and illustrations through the local newspaper. This story combines high adventure and strong characters. Set in a challenging canyon in Utah, the story follows three fathers who take their children on an exciting white-water rafting expedition. The story was written by Jonathan London with illustrations by Maile Pickett. This guide provides the following background material, instructional plans, and educational activities:

## **About Desolation Canyon, Utah**

This section provides some background on the setting of the story and useful websites on the real Desolation Canyon. The websites include a history of the area and a map of the Green River.

## **White-Water Rafting**

This section describes the rating system used to measure the difficulty of rafting on rivers and some basic vocabulary terms used in the story. Several websites are suggested. These websites provide more detailed information about white-water, including safety guidelines.

## **Lesson Plans**

This guide includes a lesson for each chapter of the story. The chapter lessons are divided into five parts:

**Just the Facts** are literal-level questions. Students will find the answer stated in one sentence in the chapter being examined.

**Between the Lines** questions require students to make connections between information that appears in two or more sentences.

**Let's Discuss** questions encourage students to think about what is happening in the story. One question invites students to make a prediction about what is going to happen in the next chapter.

**In the Real World** activities allow students to make connections between the events and topics in the chapter and in the real world through newspaper activities.

**Vocabulary words** are identified in each chapter. Teachers may use instructional vocabulary activities of their choice, such as for identifying phonic elements, using root words and affixes, or determining meaning from context.

## **Additional Instructional Activities**

This guide includes several ideas for extended activities based on the story content.

## **Games**

This guide includes a crossword puzzle and a word search based on the vocabulary in the story.

## **Acknowledgments**

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Use The News Foundation seeks to develop educational projects that provide resources addressing human rights issues such as diversity, character education, health and nutrition, safety, disaster preparedness, the environment, and the elimination of prejudice. Founded in August 1998, the Foundation is a nonprofit public benefit corporation that fosters partnerships with schools, Newspaper in Education programs and their business sponsors. For information, contact Dr. Betty L. Sullivan at (415) 826-3154 or via e-mail at [BETTYSNIE@aol.com](mailto:BETTYSNIE@aol.com). Also, log on to [www.usethenews.com](http://www.usethenews.com).

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# About Desolation Canyon, Utah

Desolation Canyon, in eastern Utah, is the state's deepest canyon. The Green River runs through the canyon and is bordered by sandy beaches, cottonwood glens and towering buttes. Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch really did ride in the canyon. There are remains of buildings and American Indian sites. Desolation Canyon is a registered National Historic Landmark.

The canyon got its name from John Wesley Powell. He and his party of explorers had just completed a near-fatal passage through Lodore Canyon. They were tired and short of supplies. When they entered this series of canyons, they seemed barren and evoked feelings of loneliness and grief in the men, so they named the area "Desolation Canyon."

Several websites provide information about this fascinating location:

## **Desolation Canyon River Information**

<http://www.blm.gov/utah/price/riverinf.htm>

This is the site of Utah's Bureau of Land Management. It provides information about guidelines and policies related to river use in the state.

## **Desolation Canyon River Rafting**

<http://www.raft-colorado.com/desolation.htm>

This site provides a map of the Green River and a great deal of additional information on river expeditions, including a packing list and illustrations of proper rafting attire in summer, fall and spring.

## **GORP – Desolation Row – Running the Green River in Utah's ...**

[http://www.gorp.com/gorp/location/ut/pad\\_deso.htm](http://www.gorp.com/gorp/location/ut/pad_deso.htm)

This site provides a detailed description and history of the canyon.

# White-Water Rafting

The white-water river expedition described in the story reflects actual locations and authentic experiences. Rapids are rated on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 being easiest and 6 unrunnable. There are 60 rapids on the Green River, ranging from Level 1 to Level 3. Information about white-water rafting, locations, safety guidelines and river ratings can be found at the website of the American Whitewater Association:

## American Whitewater

<http://www.americanwhitewater.org>

The following site provides two white-water glossaries and additional information on rivers and rafting:

## Whitewater Voyages Online Reference

<http://www.whitewatervoyages.com/reference/reference.html>

## River Ratings

A complete description of international river ratings for Levels 1 through 6 can be found on the American Whitewater site.

Here is a brief explanation:

Level 1: Easy

Small waves, clear passages, few obstacles.

Level 2: Medium

Medium and irregular waves, clear passages.

Level 3: Difficult

Many high, irregular waves, rocks, eddies. Requires some expertise in maneuvering.

Level 4: Very Difficult

Powerful and irregular waves, many rocks, difficult passages. Requires precise maneuvering.

Level 5: Extremely Difficult

Long, difficult and violent rapids in quick succession; big drops, many obstacles. Paddlers must have passed the Class 5 Paddler Test and have experience on Level 4 rapids.

Level 6: Unrunnable

Runs are extreme and have almost never been attempted; unpredictable and dangerous; for experts only, at favorable water levels. After a Class 6 rapids has been run many times, the rating may be changed to a Class 5.

## White-Water Words in the Story

Several white-water terms are used in the story *Desolation Canyon*:

**Eddy:** Water flowing opposite the river, behind a rock or other barrier. Eddies provide a safe place to stop and rest.

**Haystack:** Standing wave formed by obstacles on the river bottom.

**Keeper hole:** A place where water flows over a rock, then down and back on itself, creating something like a vertical whirlpool; sometimes called a hydraulic.

**Rock garden:** A rapid with many exposed or partially exposed rocks; such an area requires precise maneuvering.

**Tongue:** A smooth “v” of water at the beginning of a rapids.

# WHITE-WATER!

## CHAPTER 1

### Just the Facts

1. What did Aaron see in his nightmare?
2. What did Cassidy do as soon as he woke up?
3. What knocked Aaron out?
4. Why did Aaron say the coffeepot could have been dangerous?

### Between the Lines

5. Why did Aaron's dad warn him to stay away from Cassidy?
6. What did Aaron's dad teach him about rowing the raft?

### Let's Discuss

7. How do you think Aaron felt when Cassidy did a good handspring and landed well?
8. How did Aaron feel about Lisa?
9. Why would Aaron be bored on the trip?
10. Make a prediction: What will happen to Aaron?



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### IN THE REAL WORLD

Plan an adventure vacation. Find three people in the newspaper you would want to have with you. Find someone who is strong, someone who is smart, and someone who would have a lot of fun.

Write a paragraph explaining why you selected those people.

### VOCABULARY

- **buttes**, n  
isolated hills or mountains with steep dangerous sides; the top (summit) is usually small
- **canyon**, n  
a deep, narrow valley with steep sides; often with a river flowing through it
- **goatee**, n  
a small, pointed beard on the chin
- **juvie**, n  
A slang term for juvenile detention; an institution where juveniles are placed for breaking the law
- **towers**, n  
rock formations shaped like a tall column
- **white water**, n  
water that is frothy, such as rapids or falls

## CHAPTER 2

# THE WILD BUNCH

### Just the Facts

1. How much water was in the bottom of Aaron's raft?
2. What size rapid had caused Aaron to lose his grip on the oar?

### Between the Lines

3. What animals did Aaron warn Lisa to watch for?
4. How did Aaron feel after he was hit by the oar handle?
5. How did early settlers react to Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch?
6. Why did Lisa lead the way into the cave?

### Let's Discuss

7. Why do you think Aaron turned red when he saw Lisa looking at him after the accident?
8. How do you know Willie was in good physical shape?
9. Why do you think Aaron felt icy shivers up and down his spine when he entered the cave?
10. Make a prediction: What is causing the dark shadow?



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### IN THE REAL WORLD

Look through the newspaper for names or pictures of wild animals. Use news stories, sports stories and ads. Cut out the words and use them to make a collage.

### VOCABULARY

- **battered**, adj  
beaten up, old
- **flailing**, v  
moving and swinging arms rapidly
- **flecks**, n  
flakes, particles
- **outlaw**, n  
someone who breaks the law; a fugitive from the law

## Just the Facts

1. What did Aaron's laugh sound like?
2. Where did the campers keep their clothes?
3. Where was Aaron supposed to jump if the raft hit a boulder?

## Between the Lines

4. How did Aaron respond when Cassidy and Lisa were playing around?
5. How could the campers tell that they were approaching rapids?
6. What caused Aaron's raft to spin and bounce?



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9. What would it be like to be skidding on an icy road?
10. Make a prediction: What will happen to Aaron and the raft this time?

## Let's Discuss

7. How do you think Aaron felt when he realized that the shadow was caused by Cassidy?
8. What made Lisa and Aaron feel uncomfortable about Cassidy?

## IN THE REAL WORLD

Find a story in the newspaper about someone who has a dangerous occupation. Make a list of five things that person must do to work as safely as possible.

## VOCABULARY

- **churned**, v  
moved in an agitated, violent way
- **lash**, v  
tie together with a rope or line
- **lobbing**, v  
throwing easily, in a high arc
- **pylon**, n  
a post that supports a bridge
- **taut**, adj  
drawn tight, with no slack