

In the second half of the summer, read [Jon Krakauer's article](#) "Death of an Innocent." Originally published in *Outside Magazine* in 1993, it tells the story of Christopher McCandless, a well-educated young man from an affluent family who abandoned his possessions, left his family unannounced, and began an uncharted journey into the Alaskan wilderness. Within a year, his decomposing body was found by local hunters in a converted bus that he has been using as a shelter.

When the story was released, some saw McCandless as hero who bravely led the life he wanted to lead. Others lashed out, calling him a reckless fool whose lack of preparation hurt himself and other people. Viewed objectively, McCandless was a grown man with the ability to make his own decisions, which he did.

As you read the article, keep track of the many decisions McCandless made, the reason he made each decision, and the effect these decisions had on himself other people. Then, consider how you feel about McCandless based on this information. How, for example, might you have felt were he a friend or a relative of your own, or even just someone you meet in passing?

Next, compose a 2-3 page, thesis based essay in which you argue whether or not McCandless did the 'right' thing when he ventured into the wild. Consider not only what you personally feel to be the 'right' thing, but also what present-day society would deem 'right'. Your writing should address those factors and circumstances that have contributed to your own--and society's--definition of the 'right' thing to do. Ultimately, it should allow readers to conclude whether or not the 'right' thing changes over time, or instead remains more or less constant.

Your essay must have a strong guiding thesis, cohesive topic sentences, meaningful and relevant textual support that is correctly cited using MLA format, and a conclusion that explores the broader implications of your topic. This assignment will provide your teacher with a sample of your writing and will help identify those skills that need to be emphasized and reviewed in order for you to have a successful year.

Completion of this assignment provides you the opportunity to earn up to four points of extra credit on your first marking period grade. If, for example, you earn a 3 on this paper and an 87 for the first marking period, your first marking period grade would be a 90.

All words and ideas that are not your own, but that you use in your essay, must be properly cited. If you choose to use outside sources, cite them accordingly. Should you have any questions regarding what to cite and how to cite it, visit [Purdue University's Online Writing Center](#) for an overview of the MLA format.

If you have any questions, please email Ms. Freese ([sfreese@hvrhs.org](mailto:sfreese@hvrhs.org)) or Ms. Monico ([tmonico@hvrhs.org](mailto:tmonico@hvrhs.org))

Enjoy your reading!