

# Jon Krakauer's into the wild

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There are so many unexplored areas of the United States, that many trek into the unknown. *Into the Wild*, by Jon Krakauer tells of the true story of a young Emory graduate named Chris McCandless who sets out to survive in the wilderness of Alaska without proper preparation. He is found dead in September 1992 at the age of 24.

The author retells the distressing yet inspiring events that led up to Chris McCandless' death. Jon Krakauer utilizes logos and ethos, vivid imagery, and anecdote to explain that McCandless' journey into the dangers of Alaska was not so unusual and crazy that others have perceived it to be.

One of the main reason on why Krakauer wrote this book was to show that Chris was not some reckless or arrogant kid but instead a smart, courageous man. In order to do this, Krakauer uses the rhetorical devices of logos and ethos. Krakauer notes that, Chris was an Emory Graduate where he had been a columnist for and editor for the school newspaper and distinguished himself as a history and anthropologist with a 3.72 GPA (Krakauer, 20). Krakauer does this in order to show to the audience that there was much more to Chris's story than him being completely insane. Chris was intelligent and was on the way to becoming an incredibly successful man. This shows a side of Chris that appeals to people's logos and makes them think differently of this boy.

The question that then pops into one's mind is, How could such a bright kid make such a thoughtless mistake? This intrigues the reader and keeps them immersed in the book. An example of ethos is in the fourth chapter of the novel where Krakauer describes Chris on his two-month journey in the United

States. He mentions how McCandless's parents hired a private detective. The investigator began an extensive search, and finally found information in December, he learned from an inspection of tax records that Chris had given away his college fund to OXFAM. (Krakauer 31). The fact that Chris donated his college fund to charity also casts him in a gracious, moral light. The ironic thing is that OXFAM is an organization dedicated to feeding starving people, and that Chris McCandless died of starvation. Either way, this appeal to ethos also makes people view Chris in a better light, perhaps to make them feel like he was a great person.

Another reason that Krakauer decided to write this novel is to show the audience who do not understand Chris's motives or are unsure to whether empathize or pity him, the reason why Chris had to go to Alaska. In the second chapter of *Into the Wild*, Krakauer begins describing the beautiful landscape of Alaska. Krakauer's detailed and graphic diction brings the state of Alaska to life. Krakauer adds an epilogue from *White Fang* by Jack London to describe the weather conditions and add to the imagery in the chapter. The landscape consisted of a Dark spruce forest frowned on either side the frozen waterway. The trees had been stripped by a recent wind of their white covering of frost (9). Alaska is described as the Wild, the savage, frozenhearted Northland Wild (9). The author adds the epilogue from *White Fang* to help the readers better visualize the arctic and freezing wilderness of Alaska.

The description creates a life-like image of the territory in the mind of the readers. Jon Krakauer makes use of dramatic imagery in order to effectively

emit the author's perspective of Alaska, give background information on the setting of McCandless' whereabouts, and make the readers feel as if they are freezing in the numbing cold of the Alaskan wilderness too. McCandless strategically planned his expedition across the country, starting by completely shredding his identity. But it begs the question 'why?' Why would someone give up their whole entire existence to live in solitude? Was it arrogance or was he an unrealistic idealist? What Christopher McCandless represents is solely up for interpretation. How the audience interprets this story is up to the individual who is reading the book. McCandless had always dreamed of just getting lost in the Alaska terrain but little did he know that would be his last adventure.

While reading about McCandless life and death, one can almost claim that McCandless purposely did what he did in order for his story to be told. He left his writings in hope that one day someone will find them. However, it is held that McCandless had no intention of dying in the bus. One will never know what his plan was after leaving Alaska, and if he ever even planned to leave Alaska. Krakauer includes his own anecdote to show that he understands what Chris went through because he went through a similar situation as well. He uses it in his novel in order to prove to the audience that Chris is not crazy since he isn't either. The hint of what was concealed in those shadows terrified. In sight of something in the glimpse, some forbidden and elemental riddle. (Krakauer 156). Both Chris and Krakauer were both at one point in their lives searching for something in the wild, which made his tone in the novel empathetic. Krakauer proposes this argument in order to prove to the

audience that McCandless was not insane for having this adventure due to the fact that Krakauer himself was not for having his.

Author Jon Krakauer effectively utilizes rhetorical devices such as logos and ethos, imagery, and anecdote in the novel *Into the Wild* in order to convince the audience that Chris McCandless was not the type of person, people made him out to be.