

Seeking independence

Business



Have you ever wanted to run away from home? That's what Sam Gibley did in *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George. Sam ran away in May with \$40, a penknife, a ball of cord, an ax, and some flint and steel with tinder. He then boarded a train to the Catskill Mountains, where he walked to his great grandfather's plot of land. A place he had imagined during his father's stories about the Gibley Farm. The theme of "My Side of the Mountain" is, as people grow up they desire self-sufficiency and independence. On Sam's first night in the wilderness he is unable to make a fire and he shivers through the night with no food.

The next day, he sees a house and runs to it so he can cook the fish he caught. Luckily the occupant was kind and helpful. Bill gave Sam a warm place to rest and taught him how to make fire. This knowledge makes him feel powerful and independent. After he cooks his first meal he says, (on page 31) "never have I enjoyed a meal as much as that one, and never have I felt so independent again.

"He also felt more self-sufficient by being able to catch and cook his own food. Once Sam settles in to his life on the mountain he begins to make a house. This house is made in the biggest hemlock tree in the forest. He excavates the rotting wood out of a cavity in the tree with his hands and an ax. Once the rot was out it was big enough to sit in. However, here Sam encounters a problem as he said (on page 38)" I was now in the good hard wood, and chopping it out was work.

"He is not making much progress and is worried he won't have his home ready for winter. He is about to abandon the project when he comes up with

an idea, (on page 42)" The fire! Indians made dugout canoes with fire. They burned them out, an easier and much faster way of getting results." Sam lights a branch and burns out the hollow of the tree. He finally finishes it at the beginning of June. There was room for a bed and even a stool to sit on.

He looked forward to the opportunity to watch a cloudburst wet everything but him. He also felt independent because he now had his own house, and felt self-sufficient because he made it himself. In the book *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George the reoccurring theme is, as people grow up they desire self-sufficiency and independence. This is illustrated in the book when he cooks his first meal and finishes his house. However, there is another theme that occurs in the book. This is that people need human interaction no matter how independent they are.

An example is when Sam befriends a stranger named Bando instead of hiding from him. Sam chooses to visit the library and looks forward to talking to the librarian. Sam missed human interaction but also wanted to continue his life of independence. During Christmas Sam's father looks for Sam on the Gribley Farm. When Sam hears his father calling he runs to him. Sam is happy to see his dad and shares his new life with his father.

Mr. Gribley then returns with his family in the spring. When they come Sam debates with himself about running away when he says, " I was self sufficient; I could travel the world over... I could cross to Asia in a canoe via the Bering Strait. I could raft to an island." He decides to stay because he realizes that he does not need to be alone to be independent anymore.