

**SAM GRIBLEY'S STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE IN JEAN CRAIGHEAD GEORGE *MY SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN***

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**ABSTRACT**

This study describing the motive of Sam Gribley's struggle to survive in the wilderness and how does Sam Gribley's struggle to survive in the novel written by Jean Craighead George entitled *My Side of the Mountain*, that was published in 1950s.

This study is descriptive qualitative research, which employs content analysis. To accomplish this study the writer applies intrinsic approach, applying the theories of character, setting, survive and struggle as a tools. The technique of collecting data is reading and noting down from the novel *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George.

In the analysis, the writer describe about Sam Gribley's a 12 year old boy who survive in the wilderness. He leaves with only penknife, a ball of cord, and forty dollars. He has told his father that he plans to find his great grandfather's farm in the Catskill Mountain and live there. In his struggles to live in the wild, Sam faces many problems especially on his first day such as unable to make a fire or unable to able locate his great grandfather farm.

After analyzing Sam Gribley's struggle to survive, the thesis writer concludes that Sam Gribley's living and struggling in the wilderness brings a lot of problems to him and those problem can make his life more meaningful. He realized the truth that in his struggle in the wilderness he needs someone's presence to accompany him.

**Keywords: struggle, survive, motive**

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Struggle in human life appears when someone faces problems. The problems can come and go unpredictably and it will make the life of the individual more various. The problem that appears toward his or her life can be caused whether by his family, environment, culture, or even from the individual himself. The problem that comes can influence the person who experiences it and solution is required to overcome because problem sometime can make someone frustrated, desperate or depressed. In this case the individual has to struggle to find out the way out. Through the struggle he or she can get spirit and an attempt to get his or her dreams, so he or she will get a better life in the future.

Someone needs to struggle to achieve what he or she wants but not all people can struggle to face their problems. They who can't struggle will surrender soon, but the strongest will be survived. According to Webster Dictionary, survive in the act of surviving or continuing to exist, to live or last longer than out live" ( Webster's *New World Dictionary*. 1979:750). In surviving people usually will do everything like hiding, killing for food, and disguising. They disguise so they would not be seen by the other people or preys whether the goal is to hunt or escape. The fact above also happens to Sam Gribley's in Jean Craighead George's *My Side of the Mountain*. Sam Gribley's has desire to live at his Great-grandfather land at the Catskill Mountains, surviving and struggle in the wild, away from the life of the city because he feels in his real life in city is dull and boring. He hides out in the woods for an entire year, eating food he finds in the wilds, building his own shelter inside a tree, tanning the deerskin for his clothes, coping with snow and ice storms, and evading the curiosity of outsiders. The novel is a convincing story, complete with detailed instructions for a large variety of survival skills such as starting a fire without matches, making salt, boiling water in a leaf, and preserving food. Living and struggling in the wild brings a lot of problems to him. Those problems make his life more meaningful. It shows the truth in himself, although he has to struggle for it. Before living in the wilderness, Sam has so many plans to do but sometimes some of them do not work and his struggle becomes harder because life is unpredictable and full of struggle.

In this thesis, the writer would explain why Sam Gribley wants to live in the wild, moving from a city to the Catskill Mountains, and how he struggles to face problems he has while living in the wilderness. The writer is interested in conducting the study because Sam Gribley's struggle to survive is the main idea of this novel. This story inspires the writer to analyze the novel written belong it features a boy who learns about courage, independence, and the need for companionship while attempting to live in a forested area of New York State. In 1960, it was one of three Newbery Medal Honor Books (runners-up)<sup>[2]</sup> and in 1969 it was loosely adapted as a film of the same name.

## METHODS

### 1. Research Approach

The thesis writer applies intrinsic approach in analyzing the novel. The intrinsic approach means that the discussion of the study is based in the elements within the novel itself such as point of view, setting, character, and with their international relation (Abrams. 1979:26). In this case the thesis writer only focuses on the discussion of the character, because the character itself represents the trait inner quality of Sam as the main character in the novel.

### 2. Research Design

In this research the thesis writer uses a qualitative research is fundamentally interpretative ( Creswell, 2003 : 128). It means that the thesis writer makes an interpretation of the data. The thesis writer uses novel written by Jean Craighead George as the source of the data. The data emerge from a qualitative study are descriptive (Creswell, 2003:199). It means the data are reported in words rather than in numbers. It also means that the data are analyzed by using evidences in the form of quotations taken from the novel itself and other references. The thesis writer uses other references such as dictionary, internet, some books about literature and material which are related to Jean Craighead George work especially *My Side of the Mountain*.

### 3. Research Instrument

The instrument of this study is the thesis writer herself since all of the assembled data are collected without any other equipment such as recorder or questioner and it's only the writer who plays a part in analyzing this study. Jean Craighead George "*My Side of the Mountain*" is a novel which is read by the thesis writer to accomplish the process of data collecting. The writer uses this fictional text as a data source.

### 4. Source of the Data

The data sources in this research are taken from the novel written by Jean Craighead George entitled *My Side of the Mountain*, that was published in 1950s. the data are quoted from the text in the novel and directly concerned with the objective of the research.

### 5. Data Collection Procedure

The thesis writer used several steps to collect the data. The writer reads the novel *My Side of the Mountain* and tries to understand it. From this understanding, the writer underlines the quotation that are related to the topic of the research, Sam Gribley's struggle to survive. The collected data that have been gathered are then defined as the data that will be analyze in this research.

## **6. Data Analysis Procedure**

The writer uses three steps to analyze data. Firstly, the writer analyses the identified data and relates the data with theories. Secondly, the thesis writer writes down the analysis. The lastly, the writer draws conclusion based on the data analyzed.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Motive of Sam Gribley's Struggle in the Wilderness**

Sam Gribley's would not try to leave his life at New York City and live in his Great-grandfather's farm if he never listens to the story about the farm from his father. According to his father, they used to have their own land at Catskill Mountain and they have their own farm called Gribley's Farm.

In the novel, it is said that Sam lives in a family of eleven, a father, a mother, four sisters, four brothers and himself. In the New York City is a common thing to have a big family and live together under one roof but at the same time this kind of living style is not healthy for a family.

Sam lives in a cramped, uncomfortable place that filled with his brother and sister. Therefore it is no wonder for a boy with great sense for adventure to live alone. Another prove to show that he wants to live alone is when he hears the sound of police siren and it makes him afraid because he think they would bring him back if he were found.

Sam Gribley's is a very independent boy. He has to be in order to survive on his own in the mountains with little to no help from anybody. Simply to even consider doing it shows Sam's independence, but his follow through proves his independence. The follow through also shows another characteristic of Sam and that would be determination. Some might call it stubbornness. That is why in the novel, there just is no such word as "quit" for Sam Gribley.

Another reason that causes Sam Gribley's to run away from home in New York and live the wild is because he is curious as to what it's like being a runaway. Running away from home makes Sam Gribley's to face things that is entirely new to him. Facing new things is a perfect thing for a boy with a great sense of adventure like Sam Gribley's and to him this is a great opportunity and experience that he would remember for the rest of his life. For example, Sam experiences the taste of fresh mussel that he found in the stream, the same place where he got his first fish in the wild.

In his run away in the wild, Sam able to experience the taste of fresh mussel and according to him, it is more delicious than clams. Therefore, Sam Gribley's curiosity to run away from home in New York and live the wild, in his case, gives him a benefit because he is able to experience a taste that he never tasted before.

### **Gribley's struggle to survive in the wild**

In order to survive the wild, Sam needs a place to live, a place where he can sleep, store his foods, or hiding from others, and many others. In *My side of the mountain*, the place that Sam chooses as his house is an old, big Hemlock Tree. It is a perfect house because no one would

have guess that a man lives in a tree. It is not an easy thing to prepare the tree to be his house. He has to struggle to make that tree to be a proper house for him because that tree is a problem itself.

Due to the tree condition, Sam has to clean the tree before using it as house where he can live in it. In the course of the book, Sam uses his ax that he brought with him from his home in New York to dig out the insect and dust and rotten parts of the tree.

Before Sam found the Hemlock tree as his house, it is said in the book that Sam made a tent to spend night before he continues his journey to find his Great-grandfather's farm. ! In the book *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George, Sam made a tent before eventually making his tree home.

When Sam arrived in the wilderness, he made a tent for his first night there. He made his first tent by learning old limbs against a boulder that he found in the wilderness. Subsequently, he also covered the limbs with more limbs from a hemlock tree. Although he made this tent, he was quite cold throughout the night. He was unable to make a fire, despite numerous attempts. Thus, he spent the entire night in his new tent while being "hungry, cold, and miserable." Therefore, Sam's first tent was quite different than his eventual tree home. Although the tent offered some protection, it was inadequate (especially without a fire) to keep him warm. However, as the story progressed, Sam eventually learned how to make better shelters and how to start fires.

Sam doesn't take off in the Catskill Mountains on a whim. He decides to leave the big city after having read a magazine on wilderness survival. He also reads nature guides and books that discuss living in the wilderness. For an example when he needs to learn about catching and training birds of prey and heads to a library to gather more information.

Water is also important in every daily life. Without water, we cannot survive. In *My Side of the Mountain*, Sam looks for a river to be next to a drinkable water source but also to be next to a food source, as he plans to fish. Streams, rivers and lakes are obvious sources of water in the wild, as well as rainwater and it is not an easy thing for Sam to find these especially on his first day in the wild where he has to walk for a mile into the woods before find a stream.

Surviving in the wild requires good skill and wits but it also requires support tools that can help in gathering food supply or many other obstacles. In *My Side of the Mountain*, Sam makes some tools like fish hooks. Sam relies on fish as one of his major sources of food. Fish provides necessary protein and most types of fish are less fatty than red meats. Sam knew that fish would be important to his diet until he learned how to catch other animals. Since Sam did not bring fish hooks with him from New York, he had to make his own hooks from the materials that were available to him in the wilderness. Fortunately, Sam had read about how to make hooks while he was in the library.

By following the instruction in the book, Sam made a fishing hooks and he able to catch a fish. Sam also has a way to keep track date. In order to keep track of the time and date, Sam use his wits by cutting notches on aspen pole. If he doesn't keep track the date, there is a chance that he would never know the coming season which would influence his food supply.

Regarding about food supply, meat is a great choice in the wild. In order to hunt an animal such as rabbit or deer, it would be difficult to do it alone especially for a kid like Sam Gribley's because animal such as rabbit is quick and good at hiding. Therefore, Sam needs a hunting animal that can help him track those animals. In the novel, it is said that Sam trains a falcon which he calls Frightful to help him but it is not an easy matter for him to get a falcon in the novel Sam doesn't have much money to buy a falcon so he has to catch one by himself. After getting the falcon, Sam has to rises the falcon properly so she can be a trained-hunting falcon that follow Sam's instructions and also Sam has to makes sure that the falcon would not be a wild falcon that can run away from him anytime. Surely that this training a falcon is not an easy thing because Sam has to struggle for it so he can get the result he wants. Before even catch the falcon, Sam makes some preparation by going to library and learn about falcon. The Librarian, Mrs Tuner, help him by giving him some books about hawks and falcon. Later by using the knowledge he gained in the library, Sam Gribley train the falcon who named Frightful every day. Sam struggle to get and train his falcon, Frightful, is not in vain. Although he was attacked by the mother Falcon when he tries to steal Frightful, his struggle to get her and spent every day to train her gives a good result. The falcon that he stole becomes a hunting falcon that help him in tracking and hunting animal.

In the wild, Sam Gribley's is also learned few things about food like how to preserve them and how to make them more delicious. ), Sam tries to make seasoning. In this part of the book, the seasoning that Sam made is salt. Normally, salt is extracted from sea water by boiling it until all the water is gone. In Sam's case, he lives in a mountain and far away from sea water. Therefore, Sam uses his wits and come with a different method to produce salt. He puts some hickory sticks in a tin can and set it to boiling. As the result, Sam gets some salt.

Foods that Sam gained in order to survive in the wild are not just from the nature, sometime he needs to compete with hunter too in order to gain foods supply. In the course of the book, there's one time where Sam Gribley's has to compete with the hunter that come to hunt in Catskill Mountain during hunting season that happened in November.

Surviving winter season is also a quite challenge and struggle for Sam Gribley's. Since Sam has decided to live alone in the wilderness, he needs to ready his home for the winter. He hunts many different kinds of meat, and finds a dead deer that a poacher killed to make warm clothing and a door for his tree.

Winter seems to be a hard season for Sam, the season where he has to struggle harder than any other season before. Sam Gribley, the main character, is good at problem solving. He has to be. He ran away from home in the city to live in a hollowed-out hemlock tree in the Catskill Mountains. He has very few resources to rely on, other than what he can find around him. Sam sees animals beginning to harvest and collect seeds and nuts. They're getting ready for

winter, and he realizes that he should be thinking about how will he heat his tree home during the cold months. He rigs up a fireplace, using the clay pot technique that Bando showed him, with clay from the riverbank. He starts his first fire then sees Frightful collapse. Sam realizes that the living space was being overcome by fumes and did not have enough oxygen. He pokes ventilation holes in the tree. Frightful responds well. Sam is good at problem solving, and he learns from his mistakes. Sam is also good at making his own new clothing, too. He now wears rabbit fur underwear and deerskin outer clothing, from dead deer carcasses that hunters didn't find. Sam is resourceful. He has found multiple ways to stay warm for the upcoming winter.

In the wild, Sam is not just encounter some animal, he also encounter people, like Ms. Turner the librarian, Bill who help him to master the way to make fire; Bando, the English teacher who lost in the mountain while hiking; Mrs. Thomas Fiedler, the 97 year old woman that forces Sam to help her pick strawberries and makes him go down the mountain to Delhi with her; Matt Spell the teenage news reporter who wants to write an article about Sam in the local newspaper. He becomes Sam's friend, but ends up betraying him; Tom Sidler, a young boy about Sam's age who lives in Delhi. He is mean and somewhat of a bully at first, but later Tom becomes one of Sam's friends. Sam refers to Tom as "Mr. Jacket" and Mr. Gribbley, Sam's father. He allows Sam to run away from home because he believes that Sam doesn't really want to run away and he believes Sam will come back home after just a day or two. He is surprised at Sam's independence and determination to live on his own at Gribbley's farm.



## CONCLUSION

From the research findings that have been discussed earlier, it can be concluded that :

The motives Sam to run away from his home at New York City and live in his Great-grandfather land is the story about his Great-grandfather's land at Catskill Mountain that he heard from his father. If Sam never heard the story about his Great-grandfather land, he would never want to run away.

Sam wants to be an independent person. Although he realize that living in the wild as a twelve year boy is a scary idea and could cause harm to himself. Sam always challenge himself to surpass his own ability in order to be independent person. By challenging himself, Sam would know his own limit. By knowing his own limit, it helps him to develop him to be a stronger version of himself. Another reason that causes Sam Gribley to run away from home in New York and live the wild is because he is curious as to what it's like being a runaway. Running away from home makes Sam Gribley to face things that is entirely new to him. Facing new things is a perfect thing for a boy with a great sense of adventure like Sam Gribley and to him this is a great opportunity and experience that he would remember for the rest of his life.

Living in the wilderness surely makes Sam have to struggle in order to survive Sam learns how to survive by making use of his knowledge. Sam eventually learned how to make shelters and how to start fires. Surviving in the wilderness requires good skill and wits but it also requires support tools that can help in gathering food supply, meat is a great choice in the wilderness. Sam's food including fish that he can find in the stream, animals like rabbit that caught together with Frightful, or plants that he can found in Catskill Mountain. Living in the wilderness makes Sam learns many things in nature about animal and people. Sam also has to deal with news about him that printed in the news paper about him as *the wild boy*. Healso has to deal with a teenage boy called Matt Spell who worked at local newspaper. Finally Sam family's and few people that came along his family even moved to Sam's house in the wilderness and decide to stay in there where they begin to build civilization in the wilderness, starting by building house to stay.

Finally it can be concluded that the explanations on Sam Gribley's motive and struggle in My Side of the Mountain gives better understanding and knowledge of the story especially on *how to survive in the wild tactics and passion* of 12 years old boy to live in the wilderness.

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