

# Minecraft: The Mountain

## An Official Minecraft Novel

by Max Brooks

Del Rey

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### ABOUT THE BOOK

In the new official Minecraft novel from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Minecraft: The Island*, a stranded hero stumbles upon another castaway—and discovers that teamwork might just be the secret to survival.

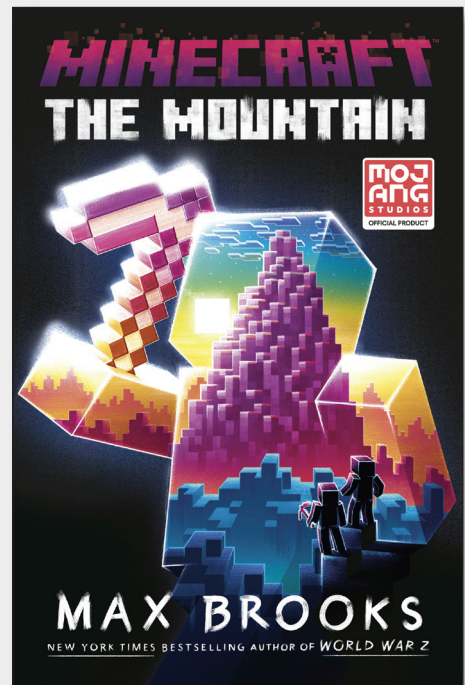
Wandering a vast, icy tundra, the explorer has never felt more alone. *Is there anything out here? Did I do the right thing by leaving the safety of my island? Should I give up and go back?* So many questions, and no time to ponder—not when dark is falling and dangerous mobs are on the horizon.

Gurgling zombies and snarling wolves lurk in the night, and they're closing in. With nowhere to hide, the lone traveler flees up a mountain, trapped and out of options . . . until a mysterious figure arrives, fighting off the horde single handedly. The unexpected savior is Summer, a fellow castaway and master of survival in these frozen wastes.

Excited to find another person in this strange, blocky world, the explorer teams up with Summer, whose impressive mountain fortress is a safe haven . . . for now. But teamwork is a new skill for two people used to working alone. If they want to make it home, they will have to learn to work together—or risk losing everything.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MAX BROOKS is a senior nonresident fellow at the Modern War Institute at West Point and the Atlantic Council's Brent Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. His bestselling books include *Minecraft: The Island*, *The Zombie Survival Guide*, *Devolution*, and *World War Z*, which was adapted into a 2013 movie starring Brad Pitt. His graphic novels include the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *The Harlem Hellfighters*.



## NOTE TO THE TEACHER

*Minecraft: The Mountain* is a highly engaging novel for upper elementary and middle school students (Grades 5–8). The author uses the popular video game as a setting for lessons about friendship, teamwork, and resilience. The messages delivered in *Minecraft: The Mountain* closely align with many advisory programs that focus on social-emotional learning, including healthy relationships and the importance of a positive self-image. This guide provides ideas for vocabulary acquisition, questions for in-class discussions, fun interactive lessons, team-building activities, and writing exercises. Where appropriate, the Common Core State Standard (CCSS) in language arts and the Next Generation of Science Standards (NGSS) Disciplinary Core Ideas are referenced. The five-broad social-emotional competencies identified by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Core Competencies are embedded for the questions and activities that promote social-emotional learning.

VOCABULARY ACQUISITION  
AND USE

The novel is peppered with rich academic vocabulary and the high interest content provides the motivation for students to master the new terms given the right conditions. For implementation of effective vocabulary development, you may want to consider [Five Research-based Ways to Teach Vocabulary](#) as students navigate their way through the novel. These strategies are appropriate for all grade levels and content areas including STEM, language arts, and advisory courses. Employing deliberate instruction to develop students' vocabulary will accelerate learning for all students, including English Learners and reluctant readers. Implement these strategies throughout each unit of study on *Minecraft: The Mountain*. Consider clumping vocabulary words when chapters have fewer new words for students (e.g. Chapters 15–18).

- **CCSS-LITERACY.CCRA.L.4** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown or multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
- **CCSS-LITERACY.CCRA.L.5** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meaning.
- **CCSS-LITERACY.CCRA.L.6** Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when consider a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

KEY VOCABULARY WORDS  
BY CHAPTER

**Chapter 1:** frazzled, impulsive, provisioning, navigation, mineshaft, tinged, crescent, hesitation, veer, bypass, interactive, static, mechanical, psychological, obsessively, expedition, encountered, taunted, salvation, submerged, chanted, retracing, re-booting, distinctively, nullified, plunged, eternally, chattered, generated, clenched, thrashing, sparsely, millisecond, writhed, frantically, clarity, hyper-healing, banish, devising

**Chapter 2:** gravely, slouching, skidding, feud, carrion, deflect, overconfidence, summit, landscape, irony, stunted, alien, tundra, roving, converging, rotated, wobbly, hummocks, gulleys, halt, assumption, castaways, carnivore, ferocious, frigid, hulking, skitter, brute, utterly, pulverized, tormentor, reckoned, salvation, tatters, sloshed, slogging, trudging, molten, groped, instinct, burrowing, diagonally, rejuvenating, premade, sensors, quest

**Chapter 3:** spasming, plank, earthen, blundering, banishing, whined, assault, obscuring, infinite, gingerly, incessant, deflected, spontaneously, disconcerting, expanse, assortment, rousing, wriggle, frostbite, nibblers, morosely, prickling, sensation,

**KEY VOCABULARY WORDS  
BY CHAPTER  
(CONTINUED)**

perimeter, conceal, lethal, barren, poppy, geologist, whiff, detected, inhales, nostrils, audible, imperceptible, distracted, erupt, summit, muddling, morsel, envisioning, console, savagery

**Chapter 4:** sterile, manuals, concentrated, mansion, saplings, lurk, legions, canopy, visibility, underbrush, snout, darted, retreated, batons, quizzical, stomping, retrieve, content, randomly, luxury, stampede, nuzzled, grouched, bleats, twinge, ambling, rationally, canine, adrenaline, ebbing, rending, refuge, reality

**Chapter 5:** suffice, hallucination, hovering, flexibility, stupor, ecstatic, stammered, sputtered, monologues, resigned, guffawed, disclosure, goatee, literally, sarcastically, gestures, rigid, angular, complicated, hazardous, alienate, gist, toxic, ghoul, taiga, nomadic, shambled, agriculture

**Chapter 6:** discounted, recess, compound, camouflaging, cooed, embraced, obligatory, primary, morality, defensiveness, incentive, coincidence, hesitantly, unemotional, abrupt, validated, musings, crooned, temperate, engrossed, encasing, submerged, piston, relishing, scalding, muffled, dietary, delectable, morsel, lyrical, zed, vestibule, fatigue, contradicting, eggy, sulphurous, stammered

**Chapter 7:** flicker, partition, irrigated, barged, decadent, momentum, splotches, nether, mutton, redirect, ornate, traitorous, desperation, euphoria, bounty, compliments, unresponsive, blathered, queasiness, anvils, palatial, amenities, versions, portal

**Chapter 8:** balked, interjected, mollifying, proclaimed, compiling, diorite, transparent, singed, brandishing, mundane, granules, carbonated, jetting, obstacle, verve, vile, corroding, halt, taunt, pursuers, deflating, invincible, vigorously

**Chapter 9:** galore, obsidian, vortex, stench, rasp, halted, orient, arid, ration, enchanted, recede, stalagmites, tightrope, rebelling, precarious, phobia, sizzle, symphonic, pivoted, conviction, suffocating, audible, abominable, luminous, sheen, nonchalant

**Chapter 10:** clairvoyant, landmark, signposts, taunting, ethereal, cryptically, doused, depression, pillar, dram, stammered, detected, annoyance, blighter, detonated, awe, tentacles, conviction, hideous, crystalline, regeneration, levitation

**Chapter 11:** materialized, celebratory, cacophony, hypocritical

**Chapter 12:** montage, ballistics, terse, monotonous, lucrative, taunted, invigorate, disintegrating, spontaneously, vaguely, pacifying, deprived, verve

**Chapter 13:** frantically, trek, physics, inarguable, sniped, stifled

**Chapter 14:** aptly, retractable, vestibule, cauldron, scrounging, diplomatic, emphatically, brutes, gestured, infernal, isthmus, ominous, frazzled, ruddy, taunted, evading, catwalk, incendiary, torturous, fray, foe

**Chapter 15:** dissipating, berth, hover, preempted, exultant, menacing

**Chapter 16:** parodies, debris, meticulously, procrastinate, receded, charade, rouge

**Chapter 17:** horde, besieging, conked, dejectedly

**Chapter 18:** ick, metaphorically, alternative, recoiled, exultant, brute, deterred, barbs, desolate, foreboding, landmass, fortress, catastrophe, maneuver, inaudible, parched

**Chapter 19:** hallucination, deprivation, crimson, verdant, biome, luminous, stubby, angular, levity, catapulted, pivoting, melee, porcine, juggernaut, lorry, taunted, audible, cavorting, mused, sweltering, detour, expletive, peninsula

**Chapter 20:** battalion, stampeded, monotony, morality, perseverance, sauntered, astute, exasperated, avalanche

**Chapter 21:** dubiously, roiling, mundane

**KEY VOCABULARY WORDS  
BY CHAPTER  
(CONTINUED)**

**Chapter 22:** bastion, keeps, preempting, tantalizing, concur, illuminating, scampering, hazard-laden, rummage, meandering, passive, cacophony, devised, taunted, griped, nock, horde, elixir

**Epilogue:** angelic

**KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS**

- **CCSS-Literacy RL.1** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **SEL Competency-Self Awareness** The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. (CASEL 2020)
- **SEL Competency-Relationship Skills** The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups. (CASEL 2020)

1. Why do you think the author gave Summer different physical, cultural, and personality characteristics from Guy? Craft a fresson based upon the author's purpose in this decision.
2. How did Summer and Guy discover their own strengths and weaknesses as team members by the end of the novel? What evidence can you cite that demonstrates they *learned* to be a team?
3. What makes the dynamics of a team different from the dynamics of a group? In Chapter 10, find evidence of the turning point when Summer and Guy shift from two individuals on the same journey into two teammates? Have you ever experienced working or playing on a high functioning team? What are the characteristics that made it high functioning?
4. Why would the author use the setting of a video game to teach important life lessons? Why does Guy refer to these lessons learned throughout the novel as fressons?
5. Throughout the novel, Summer gives the reader several clues that she is British by her use of certain expressions, cultural references, and even a geographical reference to another country located nearby Great Britain. Find at least five of these expressions or references. Record their meanings and significance. Be prepared to share and compare your answers with the class.
6. Guy displays a "**growth mindset**" throughout the novel. Find quotes from Guy that demonstrate his growth mindset. How does his mindset or attitude about facing ongoing challenges help Summer with her attitude about friendship in the new world and at home? Think about a time you experienced success due to your own growth mindset about a game, skill, sport, new language or concept. Describe the experience to a partner.

- **CCSS-ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3** Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

1. Guy states in Chapter 12, "*When the world changes, you have got to change with it.*" The COVID-19 pandemic has cut us off from our friends, family, and school in varied and impactful ways. Compare and contrast how Guy changes to adapt to the conditions in his new world and how you have adapted to new conditions in your world. Include a description of the different emotions Guy and Summer experience as they navigate their new world and the emotions you have experienced during the pandemic.

## KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS (CONTINUED)

- Guy reflects on Summer's time alone on the Mountain, "*Being cut off from the natural world must have been a brutal experience.*"
  - What did Summer do to combat this isolation while on the Mountain before Guy arrived? Include three specific examples.
  - Use the picture prompt ([tiny.cc/PicturePrompt](https://tiny.cc/PicturePrompt)) to write about what is the best virtual experience you have engaged in this year to stay safe, deal with isolation, and still have fun. Include how your experiences compare with Summer's.

## INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

- CCSS-ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9** Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches authors take.
  - Responsible Decision-Making** The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. (CASEL 2020)
- Minecraft: The Mountain* has a central theme related to lessons about self-sufficiency, friendship, and growing up. Select another novel (e.g. *Alice in Wonderland*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Minecraft: The Island*, *The Wizard of Oz*, etc.) and compare and contrast the theme and lessons learned developed in that novel with the theme and lessons learned in *Minecraft: The Mountain*.

## TEXT TYPES AND PURPOSES

- CCSS-ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or text using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- In Chapter 13, Summer and Guy have a debate about the new world and its connection to video games. Use a graphic organizer to document what each character's argument is about the world and how each will prove their theory to be true. In writing, defend one character's position and the reasons why you believe him or her.
- CCSS-ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.
- The author used the setting of the game of Minecraft to tell a story about friendship and teamwork; try your hand at crafting a short story using the "18 Images to Inspire Your Own Short Story" ([tiny.cc/18Images](https://tiny.cc/18Images)) to do the same.

## PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Answer the following questions through a dialogue with your peers as you rotate through a series of stations. A different question will be at each station. Your teacher will use the format outlined in the "World Cafe Conversation Tips" ([tiny.cc/WorldCafe](https://tiny.cc/WorldCafe)) for this discussion.

**PRESENTATION OF  
KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS  
(CONTINUED)**

- What self-doubts did Guy and Summer reveal to one another that strengthened their friendship? Why were they resistant to do so initially?
- What traditional gender barriers do Guy and Summer break and what can you learn from their friendship?
- If friendship means you always have the other person's best interest at heart, how can that lead to disagreements or misunderstandings?
- Where do you think Summer and Guy will go next and what do you predict they will learn?
- What lessons did you learn from reading about Guy and Summer friendship?

**RESEARCH TO PRESENT  
AND BUILD KNOWLEDGE**

- **CCSS-ELA- LITERACY.CCRA.W.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- **SEL Competency-Self-Management** The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. (CASEL, 2020)

1. In Chapter 10, Summer sings a song called "Run, Rabbit, Run" while Guy battles a ghost for the first time successfully. Research the historical significance of the song and song lyrics, then explain in writing what the author's purpose was in including this detail at this juncture in the novel. State your claim, evidence, and reasoning.

**RELATED TEAM BUILDING  
AND STEM ACTIVITIES**

1. As the story progresses Summer and Guy not only become friends, but learn how to effectively work as a team. Each character brings different strengths and weaknesses to the challenges faced throughout the novel. Review the four different work preference styles and complete the Compass Activity with your classmates: [www.nsrffharmony.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/north\\_south\\_0.pdf](http://www.nsrffharmony.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/north_south_0.pdf)
2. Now that you are familiar with the compass points of work preference styles, identify what the dominant style is for each of the characters, Summer and Guy, in the novel. Use specific examples to support your answer.
3. Once you have discovered how you contribute to team work and what your peers contribute, determine your ideal team according to work preferences. Then try some team challenges including one Guy mentions called "the Floor is Lava" at Crossing the Lava, Challenge #7: [www.bestkidssolutions.com/team-building-activities-for-middle-school](http://www.bestkidssolutions.com/team-building-activities-for-middle-school)
4. Game designers know a thing or two about motivational theory. They use these basic components in the design process to ensure you return to your favorite game time after time. Here are the four basic components of motivational theory:
  - Personal autonomy: a sense of choice or control in decision-making
  - Community: a sense of belonging
  - Optimal challenge: an opportunity for growth that is not too easy and not too difficult (academic, athletic, recreational)
  - Interest and purpose: a reason and a captivating context for engaging in an activity



**RELATED TEAM BUILDING  
AND STEM ACTIVITIES  
(CONTINUED)**

- i) In groups of three, share the characteristics of your favorite game (board game, yard game, video game, or card game). What makes it enjoyable for you? Do you notice similar characteristics among the games you and your peers identified?
- ii) How does the game of *Minecraft* address these components to engage Guy in the game/story? If you play *Minecraft*, describe how these components related to you as a player.

■ **NGSS- LS1.D: Information Processing** Each sense receptor responds to different inputs (electromagnetic, mechanical, chemical), transmitting them as signals that travel along nerve cells to the brain. The signals are then processed in the brain, resulting in immediate behaviors or memories. (MS-LS1-8)

1. Guy makes connections between odors/scents he experiences in the game world and memories from his “home” throughout the story. Find some examples in Chapters 3– 7, 11, and 22 and read them closely.
  - What do those memories reveal about Guy’s life “at home”?
  - In groups of three, share your favorite scent and the connections you make when you recognize it. How do you feel when you smell your favorite scent? Why?
  - Examine how the sense of smell is connected to memory and emotion by viewing the short video “5 Weird Facts About Smell, Epic Science #55”: [tiny.cc/5WeirdFacts](http://tiny.cc/5WeirdFacts). Or if time allows, view another short video and investigate the sense of smell in the laboratory setting to learn even more at [tiny.cc/HowDoWeSmell](http://tiny.cc/HowDoWeSmell).

■ **NGSS-PS3.A Definition of Energy** Temperature is a measure of the average kinetic energy of particles of matter. The relationship between the temperature and the total energy of a system depends on the types, states, and amounts of matter present. (MS-PS3-3) (MS-PS3-4)

1. Summer and Guy travel through extreme environments throughout the novel, sometimes battling extreme heat and other times enduring harsh conditions imposed by the taiga. How are heat and temperature related and yet different? If you are not sure, your teacher may provide you with several objects for you to touch, record your observations, take the temperature of each object, and explain your observations. Or you may investigate the misconceptions about heat and temperature by viewing this short YouTube video: [tiny.cc/TemperatureVid](http://tiny.cc/TemperatureVid).
  - Stop the video at the 55-second mark and predict the temperature of each object and discuss with a partner.
  - Play the video and stop at the 1:35 minute mark
  - Explain the phenomenon and discuss with a partner
  - Watch the remainder of the video to see if you are correct
2. Once you have explored the difference between heat and temperature, explain how Guy and Summer regulate thermal energy to stay comfortable in extreme environments. Provide specific examples of materials and resources they use to generate thermal energy and insulate themselves from thermal energy.

RELATED TEAM BUILDING  
AND STEM ACTIVITIES  
(CONTINUED)

- **NGSS-ETS1.C Optimizing the Design Solution** The iterative process of testing the most promising solutions and modifying what is proposed on the basis of test results leads to a greater refinement and ultimately to an optimal solution.
  1. You have played games that motivate you to keep returning to level up, practice skills, strategize, and have fun. Visit the site Games for Change and Student Game Design ([tiny.cc/Games4Change](http://tiny.cc/Games4Change)) to take a turn at designing a prototype for a game. You may do this alone or with a team. Compare the iterative process of game design with the problem solving by Guy and Summer as they navigated their way through *Minecraft: The Mountain*.
- **NGSS LS4D: Biodiversity and Humans** Changes in biodiversity can influence humans' resources, such as food, energy, and medicines, as well as ecosystem services that humans rely on—for example, water purification and recycling. (MS-LS2-5)
- **Social Awareness** The abilities to understand the perspectives of empathize with others, include those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. (CASEL 2022)
  1. Examine the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at [www.globalgoals.org](http://www.globalgoals.org) and watch the introductory video. Do any of these goals and the supporting targets align with the lessons Guy and Summer have learned? Which ones are they important to Guy and Summer in their game world and why should the SDGs be important to us?
  2. Choose a SDG that interests you and develop three open-ended questions about that goal. Find another person or people in your class that selected the same goal and exchange questions with them. Together select one of the questions you want to investigate together. As a team, craft and record a public service announcement about the goal for your school community.
  3. Guy and Summer have learned to respect their environment regardless of the biome in which they travel. What conservation and sustainability lessons have they learned? What resources do they take deliberate action to protect, conserve, and sustain? Do they exploit any resources, if so, why?

RESOURCES

Minecraft: Education Edition Lesson Plans for *Minecraft: The Mountain* ([aka.ms/TheMountainLessons](http://aka.ms/TheMountainLessons))

These five new standards-aligned lesson plans for Minecraft: Education Edition offer unique writing opportunities for educators to use in conjunction with reading Max Brooks' *Minecraft: The Mountain*. Students explore different styles of writing while adventuring through a custom-built Minecraft world featuring locations from the book.

**On the Web:**

Bales, K. "10 Fun Team-Building Activities for Middle School." ThoughtCo., Aug. 28, 2020. ([tiny.cc/TeamBuilding4MS](http://tiny.cc/TeamBuilding4MS))

Stathakis, R. "Five Reasons to Use Games in the Classroom." Education World in Partnership with Eye on Education, 2013. ([tiny.cc/GamesInTheClassroom](http://tiny.cc/GamesInTheClassroom))

"Lesson 3.2: Team Work and Planning", *PBS NewsHour*: Another team building activity of interest using journalism, language arts, and social studies content area connections. ([studentreportinglabs.org/lesson-plans/lesson-3-2-team-work-and-planning](http://studentreportinglabs.org/lesson-plans/lesson-3-2-team-work-and-planning))



## RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

### In Print:

Minahan, J. "Maintaining Relationships, Reducing Anxiety During Remote Learning": *Trauma Sensitive Schools, Educational Leadership*, ASCD, Alexandria, VA, October 2020, pp. 20–27.

The October 2020 issue of *Educational Leadership* features many articles and resources that support social-emotional learning.

Wiggins, A. *The Best Class You Never Taught: How Spider Web Discussion Can Turn Students into Learning Leaders*, ASCD Publications, Alexandria, VA, 2017.

If you are interested in teaching your students how to operate as a team in academic conversations, read *The Best Class You Never Taught* by Alexis Wiggins for a roadmap.

## OTHER WORKS OF INTEREST

*Minecraft: The Crash* by Tracey Baptiste

*Minecraft: The Island* by Max Brooks

*Minecraft: The Dragon* by Nicky Drayden

*Minecraft Dungeons: The Rise of the Arch-Illager* by Matt Forbeck

*Minecraft: The Voyage* by Jason Fry

*Minecraft: The Lost Journals* by Mur Lafferty

*Minecraft: The Shipwreck* by C. B. Lee

*Minecraft: The End* by Catherynne M. Valente

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE'S WRITER

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