

Chapter Charter: Questions to Guide Your Reading



The following questions will help you think about the important parts of each chapter.

Part I: Amaroq, the wolf

- What has happened to Miyax? How would you feel if you were in her situation?
- What is Alaska like? What words does the author use to tell us what it's like there?
- What has happened to Miyax's father? What does she tell the reader about him? How do you think Miyax feels about her father? How can you tell?
- Miyax has not eaten for three days. She had been certain the wolves would provide her with meat by now, but they have not. When she realizes she will still not have food for another day, she says to herself, "So I won't . . . and that's that." Would you have been as practical and calm if you were this hungry and still couldn't eat?
- Which wolf does Miyax identify as the leader? What does she learn about him that lets her know he is the leader? Whom does she compare this wolf to?
- How do the wolves seem to be communicating with one another? How does Miyax attempt to communicate with them?
- Who is Daniel? How do you think Miyax feels about him?

- Where is Miyax going when she runs away from home? Why do you think she is leaving her home to go to this place?
- Miyax calls the wolf leader the “wealthy wolf.” What does this mean to her as an Eskimo? What does the word *wealth* mean to you? Is your definition different from Miyax’s definition?
- What does Miyax name each of the wolves? What are her reasons for picking these names? Do you think the names are good ones? Why or why not?
- What does Miyax look like? Do you think she likes the way she looks? Who does she want to look like?
- What happens to Miyax the first time she runs off from her frost heave without watching where she is going? What lesson does she learn from this?
- Miyax makes up a song about Amaroq. What do you think its words mean?
- Why does Miyax worry so much about the approach of winter on the tundra? In what ways does the author tell you that winter is coming?
- What was the pecking order, or order of importance, of the wolves at the beginning of the section? What is the order like at the end of the first section?

Part II: Miyax, the girl

- What has happened to Miyax’s mother? What was her father’s reaction to this?
- To Miyax, the years she spent at the seal camp with her father “were beautiful color spots in her memory.” What different colors does Miyax associate with her different memories?
- Kapugen tells Miyax, “Wolves are brotherly. They love each other, and if you learn to speak to them, they will love you too.”

Based on what you have read so far, do you think this is true?
How so?

- What is Miyax's summer name? Why does she have a name different from the one the Eskimos use for her? Does she like this name?
- Overnight, Miyax's whole life changes when she is taken away from her father and the seal camp. Has something important in your family ever happened that fast? How did you react?
- The narrator tells the reader, "With that I became Julie." How is Miyax's life in Mekoryuk different from her life at the seal camp? Which one do you think is better? Which one does Miyax seem to think is better?
- What do you think it means when Miyax says, "Daylight is spelled A-M-Y"?
- Why does Miyax want to leave Mekoryuk? What allows her to leave and go to Barrow? Is she happy in Barrow?
- What does Miyax realize about Naka? How does this affect Miyax and Naka's family?
- What advice does Miyax remember after Daniel attacks her? What does she decide to do as a result?
- What does it mean when Miyax tells the reader, "Julie is gone. I am Miyax now." How does Miyax act when she uses that name? How does she act when she is being called Julie?

Part III: Kapugen, the hunter

- How is Jello acting toward Miyax? Why do you think he is acting this way? What does Miyax remember Kapugen saying about lone wolves?
- After Jello steals Miyax's pack with her supplies and food, how does she feel? How would you feel if this happened to you?

- How does Miyax feel about Amaroq? How do you know?
- What is Miyax's relationship like with Kapu? What things does the pup do that tell you this?
- How does Miyax feel when she sees the oil drum? Why do you think she feels this way?
- What does the oil drum mean for the fate of the wolves? What happens to Amaroq when he gets closer to the oil drums?
- Miyax says, "The pink room is red with your blood." Whom is she saying this to? What do you think she means?
- Who are Roland and Alice? Who are Atik and Uma? What does Miyax call them?
- How does Miyax find out that Kapugen might be alive?
- What does Miyax find that Kapugen's life is like when she goes into Kangik? What does she think about the way his life has turned out? How does she react when she sees the kind of life he is leading?
- What do you think Miyax is going to do in the end? Is it a good solution? What would you have done in her situation?



Plot: What's Happening?

"Julie pointed her boots toward Kapugen."

—*Julie of the Wolves*

J*ulie of the Wolves* is the story of a young Eskimo girl named Julie (or Miyax, in Inuit, the language of the Eskimo people) who gets lost on the Alaskan tundra all alone. She is able to survive using the lessons her father taught her and with the help of a pack of wolves.

The story opens in the middle of Miyax's adventure. Thirteen-year-old Miyax is closely watching a pack of Arctic wolves. Miyax is lost on the tundra on the northern slope of Alaska. Her father, Kapugen, taught her many lessons about survival. She knows that when he was lost once, he looked to the Arctic wolves for food and they provided it for him, allowing him to survive.

Miyax is studying a pack of wolves near the frost heave where she has set up a camp for herself. She is trying to figure out if they have a way of communicating with one another. She believes that if she can learn their language, she can ask them for food.

There is one very large, black wolf that Miyax names Amaroq. This wolf reminds her of her father because he walks with his head up high and the other wolves look to Amaroq for guidance.

In addition to Amaroq, the the wolf pack consists of a mother wolf, whom Miyax names Silver. There are two other adult wolves that she names Nails and Jello, and five wolf puppies, too. Miyax sees something special in the black pup and she names him Kapu.

The wolves begin to accept Miyax into their pack. When she is able, Miyax shares the meat hunted by the wolves.

Miyax realizes that once it is winter on the tundra, the wolves will leave to roam around looking for food. This scares her because she has come to depend on the wolves. She remembers something that Kapugen told her: "Change your ways when fear seizes, for it usually means you are doing something wrong." Miyax promises herself that she will change the way she depends on the wolves. She hunts for food on her own and is successful!

Winter arrives and the wolves leave their dens to wander the tundra. Miyax has flashbacks, or memories, about her life before she was lost on the tundra. She remembers the day her mother died. On this day, Kapugen zipped her up inside his parka with him and walked all the way to the seal camp, where the two lived for a while.

Miyax remembers loving her time with Kapugen at the seal camp. She has beautiful, colorful memories of the traditional Eskimos

there. The Eskimos there are at one with nature and their environment. Kapugen teaches her many things about how to survive off the land and the animals. He tells her, "Yes, you are Eskimo. And never forget it. We live as no other people can, for we truly understand the earth." They live very differently from the Eskimos in a town called Mekoryuk. In Mekoryuk the Americanized Eskimos called her and Kapugen by their English names, Julie and Charlie.

Miyax recalls the day her aunt, Martha, who lives in Mekoryuk, comes with orders to take Miyax away from Kapugen. Miyax does not want to leave her father. Before she is forced to leave with her aunt, Kapugen tells Miyax that if she is not happy in Mekoryuk, he will arrange it so that she can marry his friend's son, Daniel, when she turns thirteen. She will be able to go back to living like a traditional Eskimo. She never sees Kapugen again and suddenly finds herself living in an Americanized town where people call her Julie.

Miyax, now Julie, tries to accept her new life. It is hard for her because the urban Eskimos make fun of her for not knowing about their modern ways of living. One day a mainland American man drives up to her and hands her a letter from his daughter in San Francisco, California. His daughter, Amy, is looking for a pen pal in Alaska, and Miyax will be it! In her letter, Amy describes the mainland United States and invites her pen pal to come and visit her. Miyax sees the United States as a way out of Mekoryuk. She says, "Daylight is spelled A-M-Y."

Julie also wants to get away from Aunt Martha, who lives among the urbanized Eskimos. Martha does not like Miyax's hair, friends, and hobbies because they are becoming less and less traditional. One day a man arrives with a signed agreement between Kapugen and Kapugen's friend, Naka. It is the agreement that Kapugen told Miyax he would make when she was taken away from him. It says that Miyax can go and live with Naka and his wife if she marries their son, Daniel.

Miyax agrees to go to Barrow to marry Daniel. When she arrives, she is disappointed to find that Daniel is mildly mentally retarded. She is relieved when Nusan, Naka's wife, tells her that Daniel will be like a brother to her. But the next day, Miyax is surprised to find that she and Daniel are being married in an official ceremony.

Miyax becomes friends with a girl named Pearl, who introduces Miyax to other kids in town. Pearl tells Miyax not to worry about her marriage to Daniel—that it is just a formality that no one takes too seriously. Miyax settles into her life in Barrow. She continues receiving letters from Amy and dreams of living in San Francisco.

One night, Daniel comes home, where Miyax is alone. Daniel says that the other boys tease him about Miyax, and so he attacks her. Miyax is scared and upset and remembers Kapugen's wise words again: "When fear seizes, change what you are doing. You are doing something wrong."

She immediately packs up some of her belongings. She leaves Naka and Nusan's house and heads for San Francisco, declaring to herself that she is no longer Julie. Her name is Miyax.

Miyax's flashback is over and the reader is back on the tundra with her. The wolves are gone. She returns to her camp to find it has been destroyed and her food has been stolen. Jello appears and she realizes he is responsible for the damage. She has little food left, but remains hopeful. She packs up and leaves the site, heading toward Point Hope.

One night while she is asleep, Jello suddenly appears and steals her pack with all of her belongings in it! Miyax is scared and is almost ready to give up hope.

While in search of her pack, Miyax comes across Jello's dead body. Amaroq has killed Jello for acting out against Miyax. As she continues toward Point Hope, Miyax becomes close with the black wolf pup, Kapu. Kapu looks after her, just as Amaroq has done.

Miyax now loves and appreciates her surroundings. She sees how she and the wolves fit into nature. The author tells us, "Out here she understood how she fitted into the scheme of the moon and stars and the constant rise and fall of life on the earth."

Miyax finds a small young plover bird that is lost. She takes him in and names him Tornait. As she is walking she hears a plane overhead. She knows that in the plane are gussak hunters,

looking for wolves. Although she tries to protect them, Amaroq is shot and killed by the hunters, and Kapu is badly injured.

Miyax mourns the loss of Amaroq and knows that although he is gone, his spirit is with her. She decides that the American way of life isn't all good and prefers the life she's been living on her own—the life of a traditional Eskimo.

Miyax is getting closer and closer to Point Hope, but she no longer cares about reaching the settlement. She is happy spending her days with Kapu and Tornait, living off the land. One day a family comes upon Miyax's camp. Atik and Uma tell Miyax of the town they live in, called Kangik. They tell Miyax about Atik's mentor, the greatest of all Eskimo hunters, Kapugen. Miyax is shocked and confused. Could this be her father Kapugen? She decides to find out.

When Miyax gets to Kangik, she finds that the Kapugen living there is, in fact, her father. He explains that he tried to go back to Mekoryuk to find Miyax, but she was not there. Kapugen has married a gussak woman named Ellen and flies an airplane. Miyax leaves Kapugen's house and is confused about the changes in her father's life and how it differs from her experiences living alone on the tundra.

Miyax heads back out onto the tundra and Tornait suddenly dies. She buries him, then sings herself a song about Amaroq. Then she points her boots back toward Kapugen's house.

Thinking about the plot

- Why has Miyax (Julie) run away from home?
- How is it that she is lost on the tundra?
- How does Miyax (Julie) feel about American ways of life? How does she feel about traditional Eskimo ways of life? Do her feelings about these remain constant throughout the novel?
- What has Kapugen taught Miyax?