



Living with Nature

1 Growing up in the middle of a huge forest in Ontario
meant Ella McCarthy was in touch with nature. She learned
the names of the wildflowers in the woods and meadows.
She learned the names of the trees. In the early spring, Ella
5 picked little dandelion leaves for salad. From the stream, her
mother brought home watercress. These greens were made
into delicious salads. By the end of May, Ella and her father
looked for berries on the Juneberry tree. They picked the
plump berries and took them home for a fine sauce. Next the
10 pin cherries were ripe for picking. They picked these tiny
bright red fruits from a tree in a meadow near the town. No
one else wanted the pin cherries, except some birds, so Ella
and her father picked them for cherry juice. These cherries
were sour but full of vitamins, her father said. The McCarthys
15 drank the juice to prevent colds.

In the summer, Ella went with her father to
pick wild strawberries, raspberries, blueberries,
and blackberries. They took the berries home
in baskets, sat at the kitchen table, and
20 cleaned them. Bits of leaves and stems
went into a pile, and the cleaned berries
went into an iron pot with sugar. Ella's
mother cooked the berries and made
jam for the winter. She poured the jam into clean pint jars.
25 She poured some hot wax into the jam jars to protect the
fruit from spoiling. These small jars waited on the basement
shelves.



In the fall, Ella and her father went to the wild apple
trees in the woods. They collected the fruit and carried home

30 bushel baskets full of apples. They peeled the apples for
canning. Ella's mother prepared the glass jars, and when the
apples were cooked, apples for winter pies and applesauce
went into the jars. The gleaming quart jars of apples went
to the shelves in the basement too, for winter meals. They
35 preserved the fruit for later use.

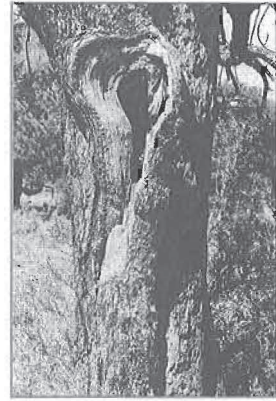
A month later, the wild nuts were ready to be gathered.
The McCarthys knew where there were hazelnut bushes, and



40 every year they picked the bushes clean before
the squirrels took them all. They also picked
the rose hips from the wild rosebushes. These
rose hips made a very good winter tea, and
they had lots of vitamins in them. Ella loved
the taste of the rose hip tea. It was a dark red
color, and it tasted wonderful with honey.

45 Fall was also the time for collecting wood for the winter.
The McCarthys gathered dead wood, of course, and had a
pile of logs ready to burn. They also gathered pine knots.
Several years earlier, there had been a forest fire near the
Pine River. Ella's family planned picnics there every fall.
50 They went to pick up the pine knots. The area where the fire
had burned was several acres in size, and all the pine trees
there had burned. But the places on the tree where the big
branches grew out from the trunk were harder than the rest
of the wood. These parts had not burned. These small pieces
55 of wood lay on the grass and in the sand, sometimes partly
buried. Ella, her mother, her father, and her younger brothers
all collected the pine knots in bags. They piled the pine knots
into the little trailer that was hitched to the back of the car.
Those pine knots would burn slowly all winter in the furnace
60 and keep them all warm.

One fall, Ella's dad found a wild beehive in a dead tree. He covered himself with thick clothes. He put on a big hat with a strong net and heavy gloves. He put a smoking piece of wood into the middle of the tree, and most of the bees flew away. He collected two gallons of wild honey, but he left a lot of honey for the bees. He didn't like to rob the bees, but the wild honey tasted sweet. He got some bee stings too, but the honey was worth it! Anyway, he said to himself, the bees had more honey than they needed.



In the winter, Ella was sometimes able to go fishing with her father. Of course, she had to go to school, but on weekends, they went to Ice Lake. The ice on this lake was four feet thick. It was cold for months at a time in their part of Canada. And there must have been millions of fish in that lake. Ella's father made a hole in the ice, and they lowered lines into the water.

The fish must have been hungry! They took the bait that Ella and her father put on their fishhooks. Their metal tubs were quickly filled with fish. Each person could take 100 fish home. Ella's father covered the fish in the tubs with snow. He tied ropes around the tubs, and together they pulled the tubs of fish to their car and took them home.

Then they had the job of cleaning the fish. Ella's father taught her how to remove the scales from the fish. Ella got very good at that part. But it can take a long time for one person to clean 100 fish, and twice as long to clean 200. So Ella's father taught her how to hold the fish, how to slit it up the belly with the tip of the knife, and how to scrape the fish clean. Soon Ella could keep up with her father, fish for fish.

When the fish were cleaned, they had to be washed and then wrapped in two kinds of paper. First Ella and her father laid about ten fish on a piece of waxed paper. The family usually ate ten fish for a meal, and they were making meal-size packages. Next that package went onto a piece of newspaper and was folded. The packages of fish were laid into a cardboard box in a neat way. The paper had to be dry. Otherwise all the packages would stick together. Then the box, covered with more newspaper, went into a gunnysack. Ella's dad put it on the roof to freeze. When the family wanted fish to eat, the packages of cleaned fish were ready.

Ella's family lived close to nature. They depended on nature for much of their food. They needed the forest to be able to live in comfort. They didn't think that their way of life was unusual. To them, it was how all people should live.



Words and Idioms List

You already know some of these words and idioms. Go through the list. Write a check (✓) next to each of those that you do not know.

Some of these words and idioms may be completely new for you. Find them in the reading. Use the sentences around them to understand what they mean. Note how they are used. These are the words and idioms to learn for this story.

1. _____ **bait** (non-count noun): food used to catch animals such as fish or mice
2. _____ a **beehive** (noun): a home for a community of bees, where there is a lot of honey
3. _____ **to be in touch with** (idiom): to communicate with easily; to be familiar with