

## **A Week in the Woods by Andrew Clements**

### **Chapter 8 Summary**

#### **“Discoveries”**

The first weekend at their new house, Mark's mom and dad arrived and planned a “family weekend”, which was one of his mom's code phrases that meant that they would soon be leaving again. That weekend they drove together around Whitson and took a quick stop to see Mark's new school. His dad thought it was pretty small, but his mom said that it was just for a few months. Since there wasn't a lot to see in Whitson they drove to Alfinboro and drove around. That night they ate steaks and watched a movie, ate popcorn and drank strawberry soda. Finally, his dad went to sleep and Mark's mom told him that they were leaving again the next day in the afternoon. She was sorry they wouldn't be there for Mark's first day at his new school. Nevertheless, Mark was glad they had come to spend the weekend with him.

The next day, while his dad was still sleeping, Mark and his mom had breakfast together. Then they went to explore the room where they say the runaway slaves hid in the past. It was a tiny room, made of rough pine boards, and the only light came filtering up from the cupboard door below. That afternoon his parent left again. Leo and Mark drove them to the airport. His mom promised they would try to be back to spend the next weekend with him and wished him a good first day at his new school.

Since they had arrived to the new house, Mark wanted to go outside to explore. That Monday afternoon Mark got home from his first day at the new school, and finally got to set off into the great outdoors, after sneaking away from Anya. He came back 15 minutes later, wet and covered in snow. Leon was waiting for him. He asked him to take off his boots and put on Anya's snowshoes, which were very light. They are special shoes designed to walk in the snow. He showed him how to walk with those shoes over the snow without sinking. Mark learned how to do it pretty fast. When his mom called that night he told him all about the snowshoes, but he didn't mention anything about his new school. His mom told him he could buy some snowshoes with Leon then next day. Mark's spent his first week exploring the woods with his new snowshoes.

The second week, Mark went to explore the barn. He went around it, but he couldn't find a way to get in. The following week, Mark decided to ask Leon for help. They both shoveled all the snow away from a small entrance and Mark finally got in. Everything was rusty and old, and Mark found a broom handle or a piece of pipe turned into a walking stick, which he started using. He also found a thick rope in the middle of the room and he swung on it. He realized that barn hadn't been

used over thirty years. Mark visited the barn every single day, he loved it there. Each day he found new things and added them to his collection. Besides his discoveries in the barn, Mark found other links with the past during those two first weeks. He even found a family cemetery.

Without even knowing, Mark made his most important discovery: time. Mark couldn't have explained why he had stopped feeling mad about moving to this place, but after two weeks, he had. He couldn't have explained why he wasn't upset that his parents had gotten so busy that they wouldn't be coming back until March twentieth, but he didn't mind at all. True, Mark still resented having to go to school five days a week, but he didn't feel neglected or isolated anymore. Mark had discovered his own sense of time and how much this time was worth. This time belonged to him, not for tutors or nannies, or teachers or coaches, trainers or counselors. This time was valuable and belonged to him and he could spend it any way he wanted to. And for the first time in his life Mark felt excited and happy.

On the Friday afternoon of his second week in New Hampshire, Mark felt especially excited. Ridding home in the car after school, he'd gotten an idea, and the idea had grown to become a plan. Now it was time for action.