

Canyons by Gary Paulsen is a book written about a young boy who finds a skull on a camping trip and it seems to give him mental messages about where he should go and what he should do. It all starts when Brannon goes on a camping trip with his mom and her boyfriend. Brannon is having a bad time and is not very social. When he is trying to go to sleep, he feels something under his sleeping bag. When he finally gets it completely out of the ground, he realizes it's a skull with a bullet hole in it's forehead. Brannon hides the skull and takes it home with him. Later, he shows it to an old and wise professor of his and together, they try to figure out what happened to the person that the skull belonged to. Through days and weeks of research, they go through several files and stacks of newspapers. Brannon stayed up several nights reading articles about the timeperiod given to them by the pathologist who examined the skull earlier. Eventually, Brannon finds the exact article written about the young Apache warrior. The skull continues to talk to Brannon, about wanting it's soul to be where it can rest. Brannon runs away with the skull, about the time his mother called the police after finding it in his closet, and listens as the voice speaks to him. It wants to be returned to the Sacred Place. All the memories from the canyons the Apache warrior has come to Brannon, as though he experienced before, but hadn't. Once the skull is put in it's scared place in Dog Canyon, both Brannon and the skull can rest. Brannon starts to head home and is greeted by the police and his mother, who ask for an explanation. Brannon explains the whole thing to them, and they understand and appreciate him more. This book really explains the way that the Apaches lived and how hard it was to be accepted by the tribe as a 'man.' I feel that the Apache boy, Coyote Runs, was who Brannon was in a past life, and that is what the author is trying to get across.

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