

Call It Courage



By

Armstrong Sperry

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one chapter of *Call it Courage* and is comprised of these different activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes and **topics** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include facing one's fears, courage, overcoming difficult circumstances, indigenous cultures of the South Pacific, the importance of perseverance, being different.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Identify *personification*
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identification of a *cliffhanger*

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists
3. Relating personal experiences

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design an Information Card

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Synopsis

Mafatu's name means "Stout Heart", but his people call him a coward. Ever since the sea took his mother's life and spared his own, he has lived with a deep fear. And even though his father is the Great Chief of Hikueru – an island whose seafaring people worship courage – he is terrified and so they hate him.

By the time he is fifteen years old, Mafatu can bear it no longer. He must conquer his fear alone . . . even if it means certain death.[The Publisher]

Check out the clips of the movie *Call it Courage* on [YouTube](#)

Author Biography

Armstrong Sperry

Armstrong Wells Sperry (November 7, 1897 – April 26, 1976) was an American writer and illustrator of children's literature. His books include historical fiction and biography, often stories of boys from Polynesia, Asia and indigenous American cultures. He is best known for his 1941 Newbery Medal-winning book *Call It Courage*.

An accomplished artist, Sperry attended the Art Students League of New York from 1915 to 1918, and the Yale School of Art. Following World War I, Sperry travelled around the islands of the South Pacific. In 1930 he married Margaret Robertson, a doctor, and was employed as an illustrator for an advertising agency. His first book, *One Day With Manu* appeared in 1933. *Call it Courage* was first published in 1940 and has since been translated into several languages.



Call It Courage



By Armstrong Sperry

Name: _____

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *Call it Courage* is an intriguing young boy who experiences many exciting adventures as the story unfolds. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels that you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

nondescript	profound	resentment	desolation
intimacy	ominous	convulsively	cowering

1. We found our little puppy _____ in a corner of the closet.
2. It was hard not to have a feeling of _____ when they ransacked our trailer.
3. The tornado left a path of _____ and destruction.
4. Surprisingly, the army general’s appearance was quite _____.
5. The students found the principal’s threats to be disturbingly _____.
6. A real _____ developed between Mafatu and the creatures of the island.
7. The octopus moved its tentacles _____ after being speared.
8. The young minister had a _____ influence on the youth group.

Words of the Islands

There are a number of words in the novel which have to do with the region that Mafatu called home. Use your dictionary to match each word on the left from Chapter One, with its correct meaning.



A	OUTRIGGER
B	BONITO
C	BARRIER-REEF
D	POLYNESIA
E	HIKUERU
F	ISLET
G	FRIGATE
H	PURAU

1	Coral running roughly parallel to the shore, separated by a wide, deep lagoon.
2	Today there are approximately 250 people who live on this island which covers an area of about 41 square miles (107 sq. km.).
3	A framework extended outboard from the side of a boat, especially in South Pacific canoes, supporting a float that gives stability.
4	A word meaning "very small island".
5	A type of bird resembling a pelican. They are also called <i>pirate birds</i> .
6	A shrubby tree whose tough wood is often used to build canoes.
7	A mackerel-like fish
8	A group of Pacific islands stretching from New Zealand to the Hawaiian Islands.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of Chapter One?

Good to Know

Thalassophobia is an intense and persistent fear of the sea. A common case of fear of the oceans is often triggered by fearing the sight of a large sea creature underwater.

Do you think this was the particular cause of Mafatu's intense fear of the ocean?

Yes No

2. What event caused Mafatu to be so terrified of the sea?

3. What do you think Mafatu found most difficult about his fear of the sea?

4. Mafatu tried to make up for his refusal to join the others on their fishing trip by:

- a) hunting wild boar instead
- b) becoming a medicine man and healer
- c) making spears and nets
- d) becoming an accomplished farmer

5. Mafatu's only friends were _____, his yellow dog, and Kivi, who was an _____.

6. What did Mafatu finally determine to do - and why?

Language Activities



A. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **PAN** can also form the word **NAP**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



- a) read the clue in the right-hand column.
- b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters.

The words in the left-hand column are found in Chapter 1 of our novel.

Word	Anagram	Clue
caring		Speeding.
dawn		Used to scan a bar code.
threat		One who makes head-coverings.
crash		Sears.
later		Aware.
shark		Listens.

B. The word “**spear**” (found in Chapter 1) can be used as a **noun** or a **verb**, depending on the sentence. Use your imagination and write sentences to illustrate how this word can be used as both a noun and a verb.

SPEAR

Noun	
Verb	

C. The Not-So-Lowly Adverb

An **adverb** is a part of speech which usually modifies (or helps) a verb. Often an adverb will end in the letters **ly** (i.e. **slowly**). We have many examples of adverbs in the chapter we just read. Here is one: In this sentence the adverb *convulsively* modifies the verb *gripped*. (How did he grip the paddle? He gripped it convulsively.) Chapter 1 features a good many creative adverbs.



1. *His fingers gripped the paddle convulsively.*

- In this sentence what word does **convulsively** modify? _____

2. *... he stopped, turned impatiently, then walked away.*

- In this sentence what verb does **impatiently** modify? _____

3. *The swift current bore directly down upon the inlet.*

- In this sentence the adverb _____ modifies the verb _____.

D. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. We find a number of examples of this in Chapter One. “The boy stood there taut as a drawn arrow...” In this example Mafatu’s tautness is compared to a drawn arrow.



Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your imagination:

a	the sound of waves crashing on the seashore
b	The barking of a dog
c	your own example

E. The Quatrain Poem.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain is the first four lines from a poem called **My Fifty Buck Canoe**, written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*I bought a canoe at the mall today,
'Tis fourteen feet and brown and gray.
It has four leaks and the paddle broke,
My fifty bucks went up in smoke.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - A - B - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the first seven chapters of our novel.

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____

F. 5 Ws and an H.

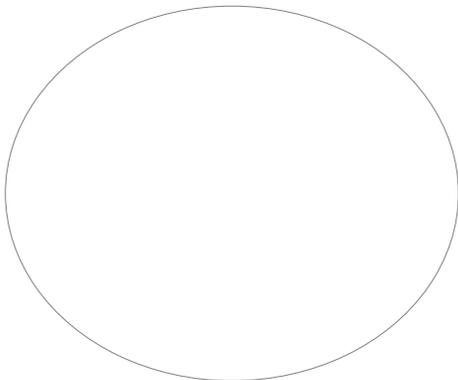
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



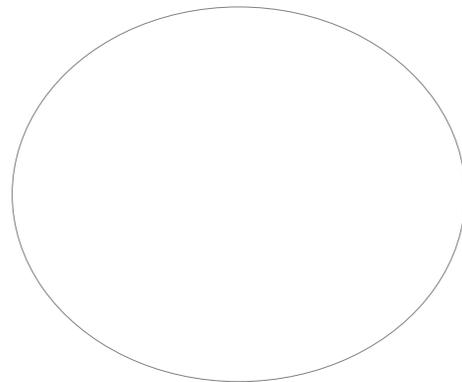
WHO?



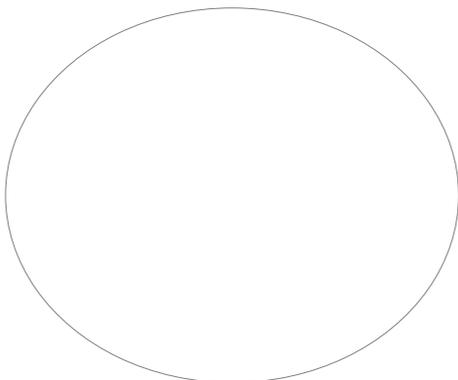
WHAT?



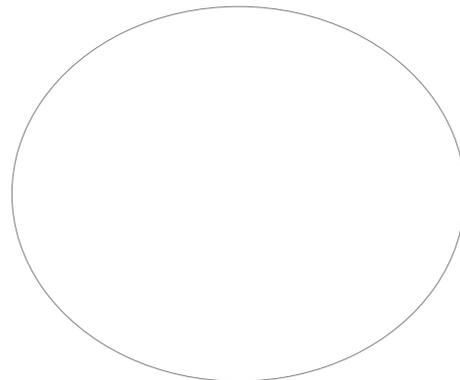
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activities



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of *Call it Courage*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6