

Elijah of Buxton



By

Christopher Paul Curtis

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 78 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on two chapters of *Elijah of Buxton* and is comprised of four sections:

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 which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include hope, courage, choice and freedom; slavery in 19th Century America; rural life in 19th Century North America; Frederick Douglass; coming of age.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms & antonyms
3. Identifying/creating *onomatopoeia*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Listing compound words
7. Identifying/creating *similes*
8. Identifying/creating *personification*.
9. Use of singular/plural nouns
10. Using content clues: analogies
11. Identifying parts of speech
12. Determining alphabetical order
13. Identification of root words
14. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
15. Identifying anagrams.
16. Use of *exaggeration*.

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a 5 W's Chart
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify *cliffhanger*
4. Identify the climax of a novel
5. Write a synopsis
6. Predict an outcome
7. Complete a Sequence Chart
8. Identify *foreshadowing*.

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Compare two or more characters
3. Understand concepts such as *meeting a challenge*
4. Relating personal experiences

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper article
3. Crossword puzzle/word search.
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a Book Review
8. Complete a journal entry.

Art Activities

1. Design a cover for the novel
2. Design an information card.
3. Create a Storyboard.
4. Create a comic strip.

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Synopsis

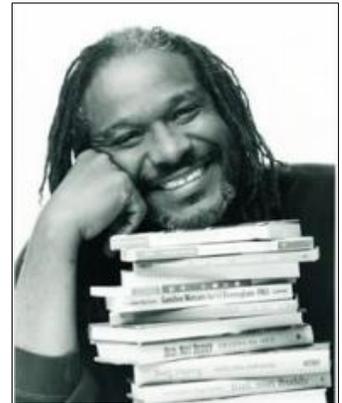
Eleven-year-old Elijah lives in Buxton, Canada, a settlement of runaway slaves near the American border. Elijah's the first child to be born free, and he ought to be famous for just that - not to mention for being the best at chunking rocks and catching fish. Unfortunately, all that most people see is a "fragile" boy who's scared of snakes and tends to talk too much. But everything changes when a former slave steals money from Elijah's friend, who has been saving to buy his family out of captivity in the South. Now it's up to Elijah to track down the thief - and his dangerous journey just might make a hero out of him. [Courtesy of the publisher]

Author Biography

Christopher Paul Curtis

Christopher Paul Curtis was born in Flint, Michigan in 1953. Here he attended both elementary and secondary school. He later graduated from the University of Michigan and the University of Windsor. Christopher spent thirteen years working in a car assembly plant and assorted other jobs.

He took a year off work to write his first novel, ***The Watsons go to Birmingham - 1963***. Other award-winning book by Mr. Curtis followed, including ***Bud, Not Buddy*** and ***Elijah of Buxton***, which were both Newbery winners. Christopher and his wife, Kaysandra, live in Detroit. They have two children.



Elijah of Buxton



By Christopher Paul Curtis

Name: _____

Elijah of Buxton

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Chapter 1 - 2



Before you read the chapter:

Elijah of Buxton takes place in a small settlement in Canada more than a century ago. Name three things about Elijah's home which would probably be different than your own. What would be one advantage and one disadvantage to living during this time period?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence. [Be careful, some words may be appropriate for more than one sentence - try to pick the best fit.]

torment	vile	prolonged	tolerate	daft
stoop	commotion	tragedy	permanent	beacon

1. Our whole family was awakened from our sleep by a great _____ in front of our house.
2. Everything seemed fine until Marvin was suddenly smitten with a _____ coughing spell.
3. In the evening Elijah's parents sit out on their _____ passing the time away.
4. The lighthouse acted as a safety _____ to countless sailors traveling that way.
5. "I never expected this blasted cold to be such a _____," my grandfather said angrily.
6. Everyone thought the old woman was _____ to make such a wild prediction.
7. The collision of the two passenger trains represented the town's worst _____.
8. "I won't _____ any back talk from you," the coach told his star player.
9. "Cigarette smoking is a _____ habit," the nurse exclaimed.
10. Mustard will sometimes leave a _____ stain.

Questions



1. Getting to know the characters of a story can be challenging. In the first two chapters of *Elijah of Buxton* the reader is introduced to those in Elijah's family and a couple of other important characters. In the chart below see if you can identify one characteristic (physical or pertaining to his/her personality) for each character.

Character	Characteristic
Elijah	
Elijah's Mom	
Elijah's Dad	
Cooter	
The Preacher	

2. The **setting** of a story includes not only where but when the story takes place. What do we know about the setting of the story from the first two chapters?

3. *Every good story involves a crisis.* Describe the **crisis** which Elijah faces in Chapter One.

4. What is your personal impression of The Preacher? What caused you to form this impression?

5. Describe the prank that Elijah and Cooter played on Elijah's mom, and how she got revenge.

6. Two famous people who visited Buxton were _____ and _____.

7. Why did Elijah consider himself *special person number three*?

8. What tragic event had scarred Elijah when Frederick Douglass came to visit their settlement?

Language Activities



A. Many English words can have more than one meaning. This is especially true of words that can be used as both a noun and a verb. For the following examples create sentences to illustrate the meaning of each word as a noun and as a verb.

Word: free

Noun	
Verb	

Word: slave

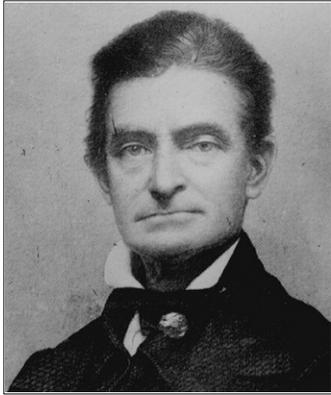
Noun	
Verb	

Word: place

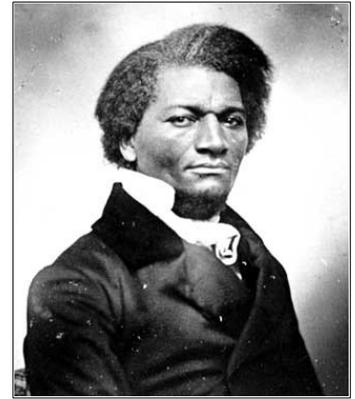
Noun	
Verb	

B. Investigation

Two very famous historical figures are mentioned in Chapter Two: **Frederick Douglass** and **John Brown**. Both of these men were devoted to the cause of ending slavery in the United States during the 19th Century. Both chose very different means to accomplish their goals. One paid the ultimate price.



Using resources in your school library or the Internet, choose one of these men, then prepare an information card on your selection which includes at least one picture (can be downloaded and printed out from the Internet or hand-drawn) and at least four interesting facts pertaining to his life and/or accomplishments. The purpose of your information card is to share with your classmates so that others will be better



informed about this important figure from American history.

C. Exaggeration

The author uses exaggeration very humorously in these chapters, this is especially true when describing the stories resulting from Elijah throwing up on Frederick Douglass: "Some folks swear I throwed up so hard that desks and chairs rose up and floated out of the schoolhouse".

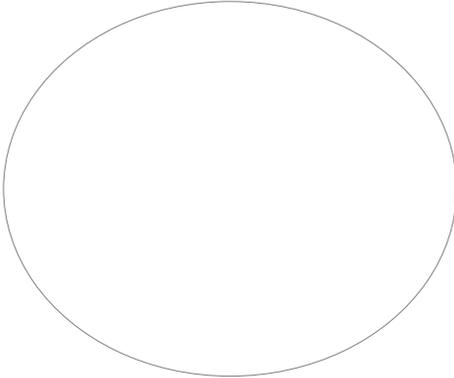
Define *exaggeration*.

Give another example of exaggeration - either from the novel or your own imagination.

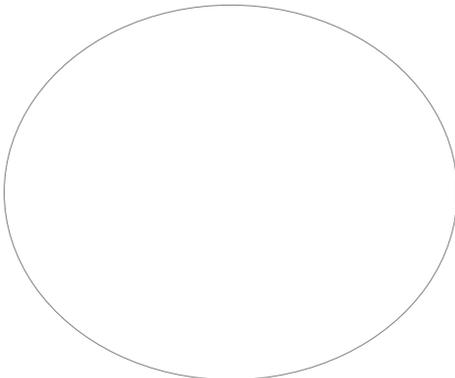
Why do you think an author might use this device?

D. 5 Ws and an H.

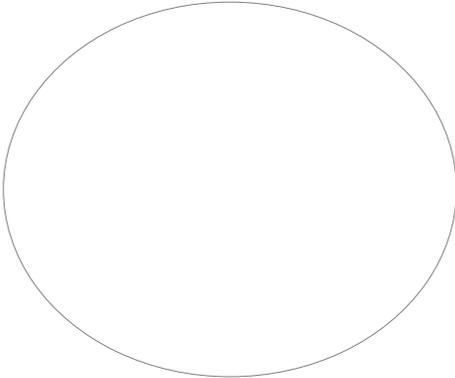
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



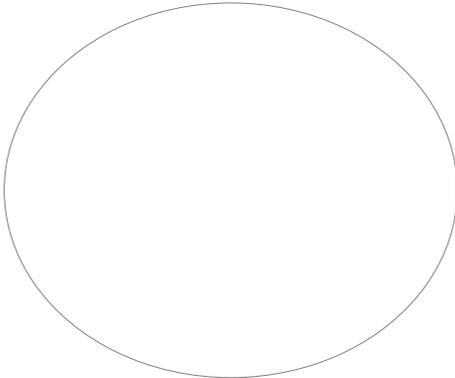
WHO?



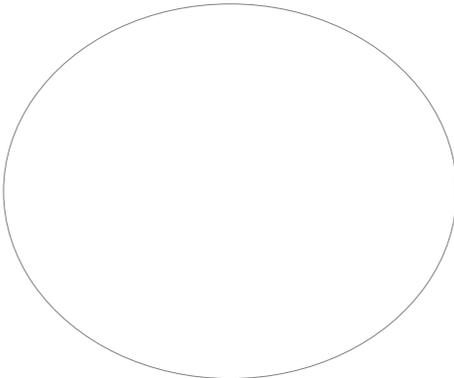
WHAT?



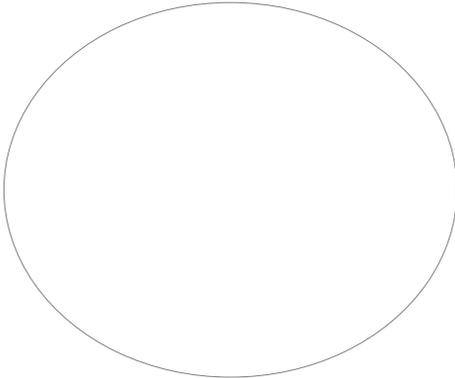
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

E. Quintet

Unlike **quintuplet** (a set of five children born to the same mother at one birth), a **quintet** is a five-line verse that tells a story. The quintet has a syllable pattern and has the wonderful ability of bringing a visual image to life for the reader.

Here is the structure of the quintet:

A Creative Title

Line 1 – tells **when** ~ and has 3 syllables

Line 2 – tells **where** ~ and has 5 syllables

Line 3 – tells **what** ~ and has 7 syllables

Line 4 – describes **activity** ~ and has 9 syllables

Line 5 – contains a relevant **thought** ~ and has 3 syllables



An Example!

Here is an example of a Quintet take from the poem, *Jack and Jill*.

Jack and Jill

*Dinner time,
Up a hill they went,
To fetch a pail of water,
Then Jack and Jill tumbled down the hill,
Poor old Jack.*

Now try your hand at writing a quintet which contains some of the important details from this section of the novel.

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. [You may wish to postpone the completion of this assignment until you have read further in the novel.]



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events of your favourite scene from the novel thus far. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6