

Encyclopedia Brown

Boy Detective



By

Donald J. Sobol

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 *Encyclopedia Brown* and is comprised of five of the following 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 which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include friendship, perseverance, and mystery stories.

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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 *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

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. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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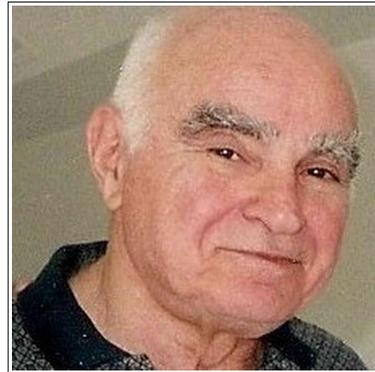
Synopsis

With a knack for trivia, Encyclopedia solves mysteries for the neighborhood kids through his detective agency. But his dad is also the chief of police, and every night, Encyclopedia helps him solve his most baffling crimes. Join Encyclopedia Brown as he solves ten confounding mysteries, including the theft of the diamond necklace, a bank robbery that happened in broad daylight, the case of the missing roller skates, and more. And with the clues given in each case, readers will have a chance to solve the mystery themselves! [Summary courtesy of the Publisher]

Author Biography

Donald J. Sobol

Donald J. Sobol was the author of more than sixty-five children's books, including the highly acclaimed Encyclopedia Brown series. He received many awards, among them a special Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America for his contribution to mystery writing in the United States, as well as the Pacific Northwest Library Association's Young Reader's Choice Award for *Encyclopedia Brown Keeps the Peace*.



[Biography courtesy of the publisher]

Encyclopedia Brown - Boy Detective -



By Donald J. Sobol

Name: _____

Encyclopedia Brown

By Donald J. Sobol

Chapter 1 – The Case of Natty Nat



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *Encyclopedia Brown* is, of course, Encyclopedia Brown, Boy Detective. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

dingy	mastermind	detective	comfortable
natty	observation	mystery	advice

1. Before watching the movie Gertie made sure that all her guests were _____.
2. The police chief suggested that they keep the suspect under _____ for a week.
3. The boys felt a bit frightened when they entered the _____ apartment building.
4. “We are going to assign our best _____ to this case,” the mayor announced.
5. It's a real _____ as to how the dog got into the refrigerator.
6. The best _____ I can give you is to stay away from her altogether.
7. Senator Greenfield has always been a _____ dresser.
8. I'm sure that Light Fingered Eddie was the _____ behind the string of bank robberies.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story for much of the first chapter?

2. Encyclopedia's real first name was _____.

3. Investigate: Encyclopedia impressed Mrs. Conway by knowing the name of the Swiss River beginning with the letter A. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet research the length of the Aar (or Aare) river and the approximate number of hydroelectric dams on the river.

Length of River	
Number of Hydroelectric Dams	

4. What important job did Encyclopedia Brown's father have?

5. The author states that no one knew that a boy was the mastermind behind the town's police force. Why do you think Encyclopedia's father didn't let everyone know that his son was such a great detective?

6. How did Encyclopedia know that Natty Nat had not robbed The Men's Shop?

7. Why did Mr. Dillon blame the robbery on Natty Nat?

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 **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. 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. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first chapter of *Encyclopedia Brown*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
street		To take an exam over again.
state		Flavor.
smart		Markets.
name		Sometimes said at the end of a prayer.
wrote		Often part of a castle.
read		Have the courage to do something.
solve		Holds dear.

Now find two additional words from the first chapter which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.

Word	Anagram	Clue

Good to Know ~ The World's Greatest Detective

Although he was a fictional character created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, **Sherlock Holmes** has been referred to by many as the *World's Greatest Detective*. Sherlock Holmes was known for his logical conclusions in arriving at solutions for many of his challenging cases as well as his uncanny ability to adapt a number of clever and convincing disguises. Dr. Doyle wrote these stories beginning in 1891. Since that time many of his stories have been made into successful movies and television programs.



B. Even Shakespeare liked to write Quatrain Poems.

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 famous quatrain was written by the great writer, William Shakespeare, and is taken from *Sonnet 18*.

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.*



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

C. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's an example from Chapter One: ... *the man the newspapers call Natty Nat.*



Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

The sound of a horse.	
The flight of a bumblebee.	
Your choice.	

D. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is: *He [Encyclopedia Brown] was like a complete library.*

What is being compared in this example?

--	--

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

a) a thick book (like a real encyclopedia)

b) the sound of rain on a tent roof

c) your choice

E. 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?



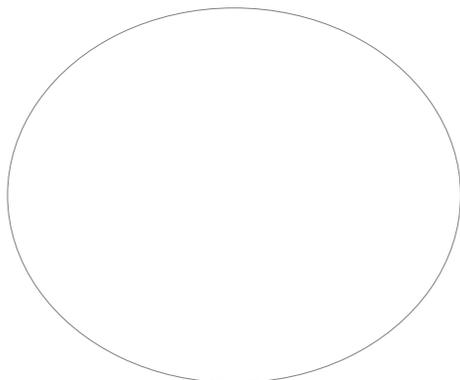
WHAT?



WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

F. My 02¢ About Chapter 1.

What I Liked Best:

I Didn't Like The Part:

I Didn't Like It Because:

G. Caviar Words

The author of this novel is noted for his use of elegant, tasteful words. Someone once stated that some words have the sound of **caviar** (rich and elegant) and others are more are common (**peanut butter** words). With a colleague come up with 6 examples of each type of word. You may use any chapter of the novel to find these words.



Caviar Words	Peanut Butter Words

Extension Activity

Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A story-board can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel. Complete the story-board below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6