

Fantastic Mr. Fox



By

Roald Dahl

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 two chapters of **Fantastic Mr. Fox** and is comprised of these different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- 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 survival, individual perseverance when facing difficult circumstances, the lives of burrowing animals, the importance of cooperation in a crisis, and bullying.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms & antonyms
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *foreshadowing*.
7. Use of singular / plural nouns
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Determining alphabetical order
11. Identification of root words
12. Uncovering anagrams.

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 *cliffhangers*
4. Identify the climax of a novel

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Compare two characters
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Protagonists and antagonists.

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Write a quatrain poem.
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Design a Collector's Card.
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Collage.

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Synopsis

Fantastic Mr. Fox is another captivating tale spun from the rich imagination of Roald Dahl. It is the story of Mr. Fox – regarded by his wife and four children as “fantastic” - although one might wonder about this appraisal judging from the number of desperate scrapes Mr. Fox seems to get his family into.

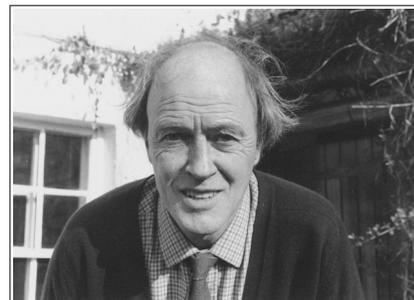
The novel opens with a dramatic confrontation between Mr. Fox and three local farmers – Boggis, Bean and Bunce, who are tired of the fox making off with their livestock, and decide to rid the area of the varmint once and for all. The three men swear an oath that they will not give up until Mr. Fox has been killed, then using their farm machinery, proceed to dig down into the fox’s den. Mr. Fox, however, succeeds in out-witting his pursuers, and in the process pulls off a series of magnificent raids on the storehouses of the three farmers.

The novel concludes with Mr. Fox inviting all of the other animals to a great feast. There they resolve to spend all their time from that point on in the safety of the *underground* – where they can live off the largest of the three farmers; Boggis, Bean and Bunce.

Author Biography

Roald Dahl

Few authors of children’s books have been as prolific or successful as **Roald Dahl** (1916-1990). His novels have been read and enjoyed by countless children the world over and include such classics as ***Charlie and the Chocolate Factory***, ***Danny the Champion of the World***, ***James and the Giant Peach*** and ***Matilda***. Shortly before his death, the top five selling children’s books in Great Britain were all authored by Dahl.



Born to Norwegian immigrants, Roald Dahl hailed from Llandaff, Wales. Despite losing his father when he was only four, Roald claimed to have had a most happy and eventful childhood. Although not a particularly good student, Roald did excel at athletics.

Dahl was married to the famous actress, **Patricia Neal**, for many years and they had five children together. The couple were, however, divorced after thirty years of marriage. Roald began his writing career as a short story writer, and didn’t pen his first children’s novel until 1961 – ***James and Giant Peach***. This was followed by several bestsellers. Roald Dahl passed away in 1990 at the age of 74. In Great Britain the anniversary of Dahl’s birthday on 13 September has become **Roald Dahl Day**.

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Name: _____

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Chapter 1 - 2



Before you read the chapter:

Most good stories have a character or two known as the **antagonist** – someone who makes life difficult for the hero of the story. In this novel there are actually three antagonists who try to get the better of Fantastic Mr. Fox. Think of a favourite book, movie or television program which had a bad guy (antagonist) that you really didn't like. Who was this and why did you feel this way about him / her?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

lurk	delicate	blighter	decent	enormous
crafty	dumplings	disgust	smother	beastly

1. Looking at all the little creatures under the stone filled Judy with _____.
2. If you ask her nicely, I'm sure my aunt will cook _____ to go with the roast beef.
3. It was the most _____ toad I have ever seen.
4. She poured so much gravy on her potatoes, I thought for sure she would _____ them.
5. "Burping in public is a _____ habit," Mrs. Braithwaite complained.
6. It is hard to make a _____ living on my salary.
7. "Be very careful," her mother urged. "That doll is most _____."
8. "If he was my son, I would ground the little _____ for a week," Mr. Timmins said angrily.
9. Watch out for shadows which _____ in the darkness of one's bedroom.
10. I think Mike is too _____ to be trusted.

Questions



1. In Chapter One the author introduces us to the three farmers, **Mr. Bunce**, **Mr. Boggis** and **Mr. Bean**. Using the chart below write two things about each of these men.

Mr. Bunce	Mr. Boggis	Mr. Bean

2. Why do you suppose the author chose such unusual names for these three men?

3. Why do you suppose that Bunce kept on eating such disgusting food when it made him so sick?

4. Describe the setting of the story.

5. Why did the farmers hate Mr. Fox so much?

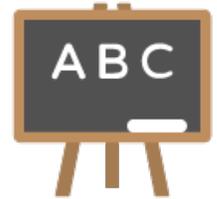
6. Describe how Mr. Fox avoided being caught by Mr. Boggis when he raided his chicken house.

7. How did the three farmers plan to catch Mr. Fox at the end of Chapter Two?

Language Activities



A. The author seems to enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. The following is an example from these chapters: “**B**oggis and **B**unce and **B**ean”.



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

The sound a chicken makes.	
The bubbling sound of something boiling on a stove.	
The sound of a ghost on Halloween.	

B. The Fox

The protagonist of our story is Mr. Fox, a very clever and determined character. The fox is renowned for being a sly, elusive animal – one that is hated by many farmers (especially chicken farmers). The fox, however has many positive and interesting qualities as well. Did you know, for instance that the whiskers on a fox's face and legs help it to navigate? Did you also know that a fox's hearing is so acute that it can hear a ticking watch from 40 yards (40 m) away? Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three additional fun facts about this animal.



1.	
2.	
3.	

C. 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 two chapters of *Fantastic Mr. Fox*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
owners		Aggravate.
bean		A cause of distress.
rage		One of a set of toothed wheels.
livers		A valuable metal.
nasty		Can't sit still.
time		A microscopic creature.
shotgun		Zeros.

D. 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 words found in the first two chapters create sentences to illustrate the meaning of each word as a noun and as a verb.

Word: water

Noun	
Verb	

Word: paste

Noun	
Verb	

E. The Fox ~ A Quatrain Poem.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse, four lines in length. Such poems are often light and humorous. Here is one by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis. The poem is called, **Smarty Pants**.

*I saw a fox behind our barn,
Red and sleek and sly.
He gave a look that said it all,
And then he passed on by.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - B - C - 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 Prologue and first two 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: _____

What do you think the poet meant by the line: He gave a look that said it all?

Extension Activity



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 two chapters of *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6