

Fuzzy Mud



By

Louis Sachar

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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Table of Contents

Suggestions and Expectations	3
List of Skills	4
Synopsis / Author Biography	5
Student Checklist	6
Reproducible Student Booklet	7
Answer Key	79

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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Revisions Completed in 2021

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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 three chapters of *Fuzzy Mud* and is comprised of these 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 conservation and the environment, bullying, the importance of friends and family, perseverance and personal growth, courage.

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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/antagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

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

Fifth grader Tamaya Dhilwaddi and seventh grader Marshall Walsh have been walking to and from Woodridge Academy since elementary school. But their routine is disrupted when bully Chad Hilligas challenges Marshall to a fight. To avoid the conflict, Marshall takes a shortcut home through the off-limit woods. Tamaya, unaware of the reason for the detour, reluctantly follows. They soon get lost. And then they find trouble. Bigger trouble than anyone could ever imagine.

In the days and weeks that follow, the authorities and the U.S. Senate become involved, and what they uncover might affect the future of the world. [Courtesy of the publisher]

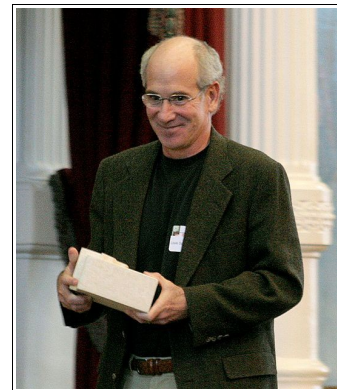
Author Biography

Louis Sachar

I was born in East Meadow, New York on March 20, 1954 and lived there until third grade. When I was nine years old, we moved to Tustin California. At that time, there were orange groves all around, and the local kids would often divide up into teams and have orange fights.

I enjoyed school and was a good student, but it wasn't until high school that I really became an avid reader. After high school, I attended Antioch College in Ohio. My father died during my first semester, and I returned to California to be near my mother. I returned to college, this time to the University of California where I majored in Economics.

When I graduated in 1976 I decided to try to write a children's book, which eventually became *Sideways Stories From Wayside School*. It took me about nine months to write the book. I wrote in the evenings. I decided to go to law school. *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* was accepted by a publisher during my first week at Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. I finished law school, graduating in 1980, but it wasn't until 1989 that my books began selling well enough that I was finally able to stop practising law and devote myself fully to writing. (Courtesy of Wikipedia)



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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

Flush



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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-3



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *Fuzzy Mud* is Tamaya Dhilwaddi, a fifth grade student attending the prestigious private school, Woodridge Academy. 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 memorable **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

elegant	deranged	excerpted	eccentric
viable	abomination	integrity	instinctively

1. Many people think that mutants are an _____ of nature.
2. Janie knew _____ that what her cousin was suggesting was wrong.
3. Solar power is a _____ energy source.
4. When the children encountered the hermit in the forest, his rantings seemed to indicate that he was completely _____.
5. My aunt lives in a very _____ mansion.
6. Despite his genius, some people believed the scientist to be quite _____.
7. One's _____ is a person's most valuable asset.
8. The critical passage was _____ from the manuscript.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the novel at the beginning of:

Chapter One	
Chapter Two	

2. Match each name with the proper description:

1	Marc Humbard
2	Tamaya Dhilwaddi
3	Jonathan Fitzman
4	Monica
5	Heath Cliff
6	Summer
7	Marshall Walsh

A	Tamaya's prettiest friend.
B	The inventor of Biolene
C	Introduced Tamaya to the headmistress
D	A town in Pennsylvania
E	Worked at SunRay Farm for 2 years
F	The novel's protagonist
G	Tamaya's best friend

3. **Atmosphere** is described as a literary technique in which the story's setting and the author's choice of descriptive words (for instance) influences the reader's mood. What kind of mood do you think the author is trying to create by including the following sentence in the last few paragraphs of Chapter Three: *But now the colors had faded and the trees looked dark and gloomy?*

4. Why do you think Marshall is taking a short cut in Chapter Three?

5. What is your impression of Tamaya so far?

6. It is already evident from the story that Tamaya has good observational skills. How does she prove this after hearing the story about the boy being attacked by a wolf?

7. The scientists who invented Biolene were hoping it would be a viable alternative to _____.

8. Describe the concerns that Dr. Marc Humbard had with regard to Biolene.

Language Activities



A. Exaggeration

Exaggeration in a literary device defined as *a statement that represents something as better or worse than it really is*. The tough-looking kid with the short black hair in Chapter Two, seems to enjoy using exaggeration in his stories.

Think of an exaggerated way of describing the following

A teacher's angry voice.	
A roller coaster ride.	
Your choice.	

B. Alliteration

The author seems to enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. An example from Chapter One is: ... *she made the drastic decision to chop it off.*



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

The howl of a wolf.	
A firefly.	
From your imagination	

C. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. In this section of the novel the author writes, *The school was supposed to teach them how to be good people.* In this example it seems that the school building itself is busy teaching the students.

a) Why do you think personification is a literary device used by many authors?

b) Create your own example of personification.

c) Rewrite the above example about the school without changing the overall meaning so that the school itself is no longer personified.

D. A 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 of the famous poem, ***A Walk in the Woods***, written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*I went for a walk in the woods today,
Where the bears hide out and the dragons play,
It was spooky and scary, I'll plainly say,
But when going to town it's the only way.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - A - A - A**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AABB, 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 three chapters of our novel.

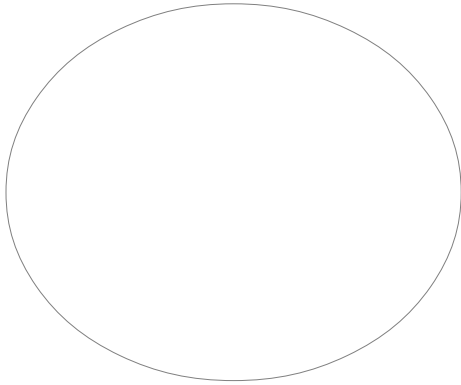
The Quatrain Poem

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

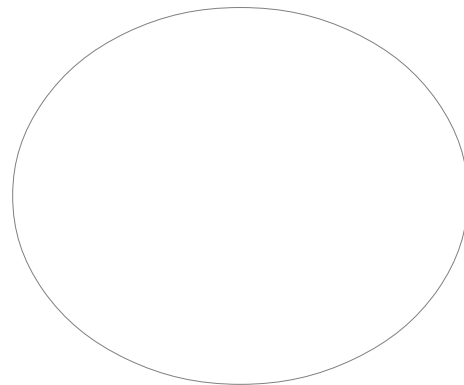
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E. 5 Ws and an H.

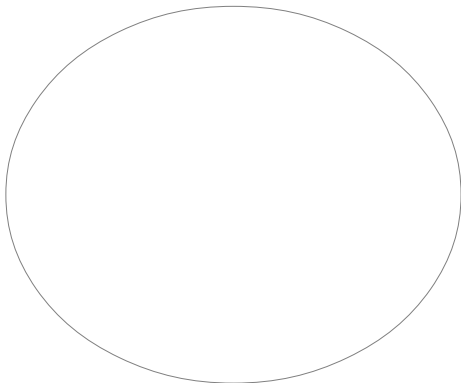
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



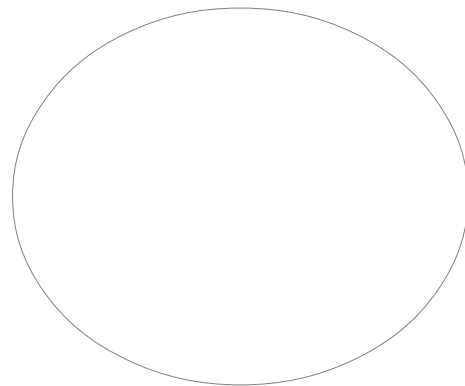
WHO?



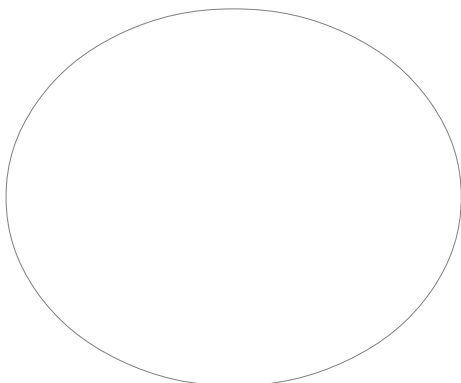
WHAT?



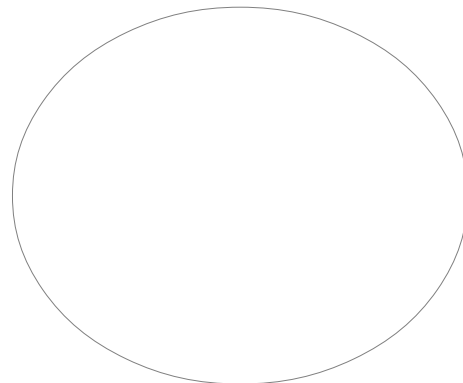
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

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 three chapters of *Fuzzy Mud*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6