

Impossible Creatures



By
Katherine Rundell

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	76

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

Each chapter of the novel study focuses on several chapters of *Impossible Creatures* and is comprised of four distinct sections:

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

A **portfolio cover** (page 7) as well as a **Checklist** (page 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 courage and heroism, good versus evil, Greek mythology, power and corruption, imagination, personal growth.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Identify *similes*
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. Identify *personification*

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. Create a synopsis
5. Identify the climax of the novel

Character Activities

1. Determine perspectives
2. Identify the protagonist
3. Relating personal experience
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. Create a journal entry
9. Opinion writing
10. Create a friendly letter

Art Activities

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

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Synopsis

The day that Christopher saved a drowning baby griffin from a hidden lake would change his life forever.

It's the day he learned about the Archipelago—a cluster of unmapped islands where magical creatures of every kind have thrived for thousands of years, until now. And it's the day he met Mal—a girl on the run, in desperate need of his help.

Mal and Christopher embark on a wild adventure, racing from island to island, searching for someone who can explain why the magic is fading and why magical creatures are suddenly dying. They consult sphinxes, battle kraken, and negotiate with dragons. But the closer they get to the dark truth of what's happening, the clearer it becomes: no one else can fix this. If the Archipelago is to be saved, Mal and Christopher will have to do it themselves.

[Courtesy of the Publisher]

Author Biography

Katherine Rundell

Katherine Rundell is a bestselling writer and a Fellow of St Catherine's College, Oxford. Her books have sold millions of copies, been translated into 40 languages and have won, among others, the Baillie Gifford Prize for non-fiction, the Boston Globe Horn Book Award, the Waterstones Book of the Year, the Costa Children's Book Award, the Andersen Prize in Italy and Le Prix Sorcières in France. She lives mostly in London and a little in Oxford, where she works on research into the Renaissance poet John Donne and occasionally goes climbing on rooftops late at night. (Courtesy of the Publisher)



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[illegible]

Impossible Creatures



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Name:

Impossible Creatures

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1. The Beginning – The Murder (Including)



Before you read this section:

The **protagonist** of *Impossible Creatures* is Christopher Forrester, a 12-year-old boy who discovers a hidden and mysterious world called the **Archipelago**. Why do you think heroes of fantasy novels like *Impossible Creatures* are so popular among young readers? What might there be about unusual characters that makes them so appealing?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

retrospect	archipelago	enchanted	subtlety
infinitesimally	phosphorescence	absurd	raucous

1. The giant was known more for his abruptness than his _____.
2. She saw, underwater, sudden darting flecks of _____.
3. It seemed _____ that such a large boy was afraid of a tiny cat.
4. It had been easy, in _____, for the murderer to find her.
5. An _____ is a group of islands clustered together in a sea or ocean.
6. The city was established with a long seawall and a _____ port.
7. The shaking began _____ at first but then became more violent.
8. The children were soon aware that they had entered an _____ forest.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of the chapter, *Arrival*?

2. There are a number of unusual mythical creatures mentioned in this section. Match each creature with its description.

1	ratatoskas		a	A benevolent sea nymph.
2	griffin		b	A tiny poisonous water-shrew.
3	nereid		c	Harvested gum from the sea.
4	avanc		d	Green and squirrel-like.
5	sylph		e	Mythical sea creature with a body of a horse.
6	gagana		f	Aquatic humanoid.
7	hippocamp		g	A horned horse-like creature.
8	lavellan		h	It bit Mal.
9	unicorn		i	Bird with an iron beak and copper claws
10	mermaid		j	Head of a lion, wings of an eagle.

3. How does the novel's opening sentence grab the reader's attention?

4. The chapters basically alternate between two different characters, Christopher and Mal. Do you think this is a good technique used by the author? Why or why not?

5. **Foreshadowing** is defined as a literary device in which the author gives clues about events that will happen later in the novel. Explain why the conclusion of the Chapter "Arrival" fulfills this definition.

6. Describe your impressions of Mal and Christopher to this point in the story.

Christopher	
Mal	

7. Describe what Mal bought at the market (appearance and purpose). Why did she value this item?

8. How do we know that the murderer was not acting on his own?

9. Describe how Leonor proved her devotion to Mal.

Language Activities



A. Alliteration

Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Alliteration is usually seen as a series of words beginning with the same consonant (i.e. *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers*). The following from this section also serves as an example: ... *Christopher didn't . . . snell significantly different from other boys his age.*



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

A large dragon.	
A sunset.	
Your choice.	

B. The Good Old Indispensable Adverb!

An **adverb** is a part of speech defined as *a modifier (or helper) of a verb* (usually an action word). Often an adverb will end in the letters **ly** (i.e. **slowly**). Our novel features a good many creative adverbs.



1. *He'd been sent abruptly on his way.*

→ In this sentence, which verb does **abruptly** modify? _____

2. *If, as occasionally happened, someone in town shook their head . . .*

→ In this sentence, what verb does **occasionally** modify? _____

3. *He smelled strongly of alcohol; she darted past him, further on.*

→ In this sentence the adverb _____ modifies the verb _____

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 this section of *Impossible Creatures*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
wrist		Legal documents.
forest		Less hard.
cinema		Lacking blood or vitality.
smile		Oozy mud.
faces		Small restaurants.
breath		Someone in a tub.
tones		You might take these in class.

D. Caviar Words

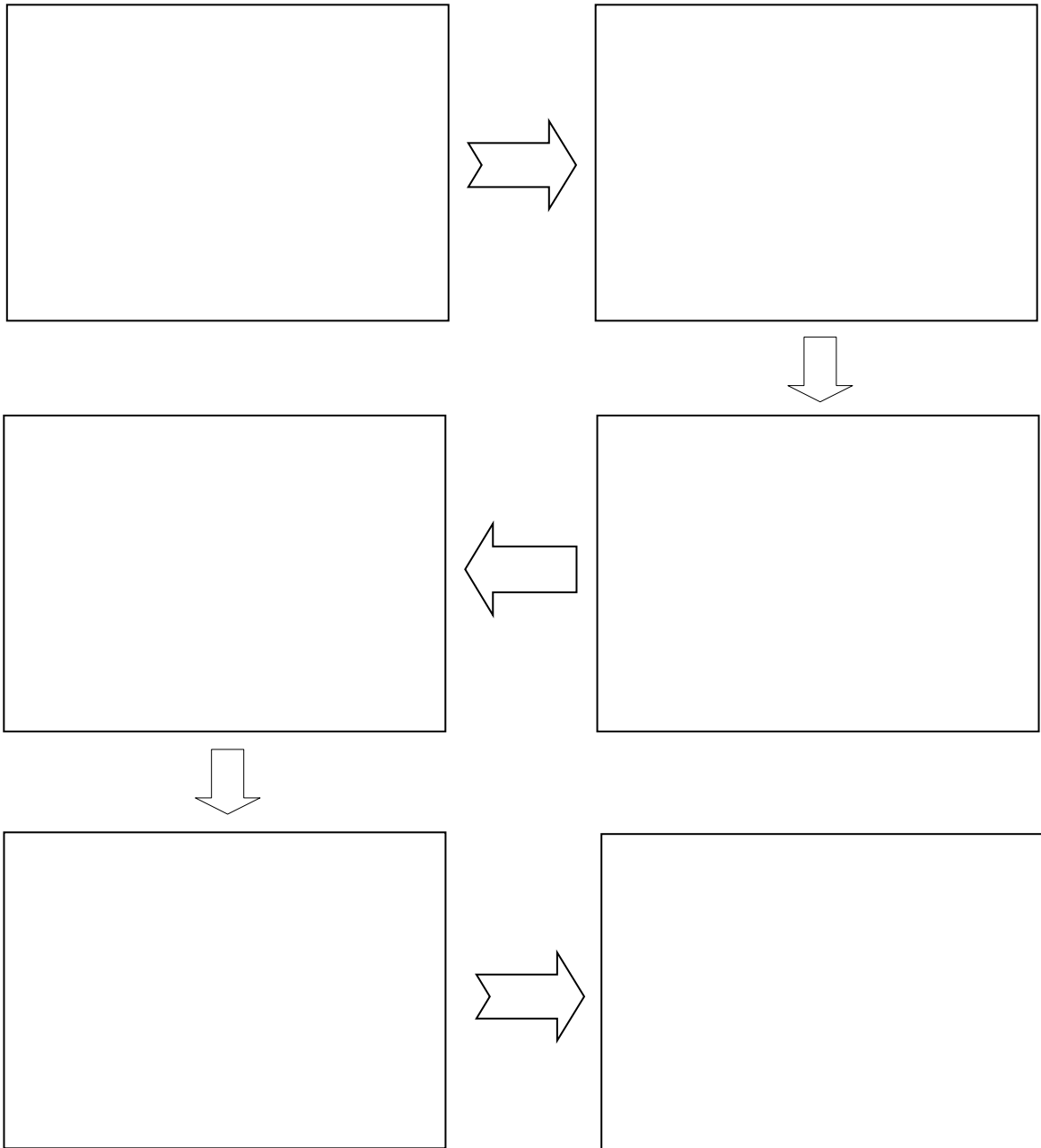
The author of this novel is noted for her use of elegant, tasteful words. Someone once stated that some words have the sound of **caviar** (rich and elegant) and others are more common (**peanut butter** words). With a colleague come up with 6 examples of each type of word. You may use any chapter of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



Caviar Words	Peanut Butter Words

E. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in this section. In each of the six boxes below list the six events that you have chosen, describing what happened and telling why you consider this to be an essential part of the story.



Extension Activity



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words

Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and end of this section.



Beginning Picture:	Beginning:
Middle Picture	Middle:
Concluding Picture:	Concluding: