

Inkling



By
Kenneth Oppel

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 *Inkling* and is comprised of these different 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 coping with grief, family and belonging, creativity, imagination, compassion, personal growth, coming of age.

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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. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. Identification of root words
10. 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 and an H Chart
4. Complete a Story Pyramid
5. Identify the climax of the novel.

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. Create a friendly letter.

Art Activities

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

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Synopsis

The Rylance family is stuck. Dad's got writer's block. Ethan promised to illustrate a group project at school—even though he can't draw. Sarah's still pining for a puppy. And they all miss Mom so much more than they can say. Enter Inkling. Inkling begins life in Mr. Rylance's sketchbook. Then one night the ink of his drawings runs together—and leaps off the page! This small burst of creativity is about to change everything.

Ethan finds him first. Inkling has absorbed a couple of chapters of his math book—not good—and the story he's supposed to be illustrating for school—also not good. But Inkling's also started drawing the pictures to go with Ethan's story, which is amazing! It's just the help Ethan was looking for! Inkling helps the rest of the family too. For Sarah he's a puppy. And for Dad he's a spark of ideas for a new graphic novel. It's exactly what they all wanted. It's not until Inkling goes missing that this family is forced to face the larger questions of what they—and Inkling—truly need. (Courtesy of the Publisher)

Author Biography

Kenneth Oppel

Kenneth Oppel is a Canadian author born on August 31, 1967, in Port Alberni, British Columbia. He is widely recognized for his imaginative and award-winning novels for children and young adults. He is best known for "*Silverwing*" (1997), the first book in a popular fantasy series about a young bat named Shade. The *Silverwing* series has been translated into several languages and adapted for television. Another major success came with his **Airborn** trilogy, a steampunk adventure series, with the first book, *Airborn* (2004), winning the Governor General's Award for Children's Literature and the Michael L. Printz Honor Award. Oppel studied at the University of Toronto and also worked as an editor before becoming a full-time writer. His more recent works include ***The Boundless, Bloom, and Ghostlight***, continuing his reputation for blending science fiction, fantasy, and adventure with strong character development. He currently lives in Toronto with his wife and children. (Courtesy of the Publisher)



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Student Checklist

Student Name

Inkling



Kenneth Oppel

Name:

Inkling

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Chapters 1-2



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *Inkling* is 11-year old Ethan Rylance, son of a famous graphic novelist. Why might it be difficult for someone his age to have a parent who was a famous artist?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

tendril	arthritic	dignity	rhombus
tarantula	ricocheted	scrounge	inkling

1. The students all ran screaming from the classroom when the _____ got loose.
2. I don't have the slightest _____ as to what you're talking about.
3. Most members of the royal family are known for their steadfast _____.
4. The bullet _____ off the wall and lodged in the bookcase.
5. The plant's _____ reached upward toward the ceiling.
6. A _____ has four equal sides and opposite angles that are equal.
7. My grandmother's hands were swollen and quite _____.
8. “Go see if you can _____ up a pail,” the caretaker ordered.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One?

2. Why do you think the author didn't introduce the protagonist (Ethan) in the first chapter?

3. Describe the strange blob of ink's amazing powers.

4. What do you think? At one point the author states, *Nothing is more important to a cat than its dignity*. If that is true, what do you think is most important to a dog?

5. Describe the crisis that Ethan's dad was going through at this time.

6. What was your impression of Ethan's sister, Sarah?

7. In the mornings, Ethan referred to his dad as _____ Dad.
8. At one point, the author refers to Ethan as feeling *saggy*. What do you suppose he meant by this?

9. What was Ethan afraid the inkling was? What did Soren think it might be?

10. In the first two chapters we are introduced to several of Ethan's friends and colleagues from school: Soren, Pino, Brady, and Vika. If you were in Ethan's class, which of these students do you think you would like to be best friends with? Why?

Language Activities



A. Simile

A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is, *A thin tendril of ink lifted from the page, maybe half an inch or so, like a tiny arm desperate to escape quicksand.* In this example, what is being compared?

Invent your own **simile** comparing the following item with something from your own imagination:

a) the speed of a superhero

B. 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 *Inkling*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
linking		A hint.
great		Shred; pulverize.
minute		A slow, stately ballroom dance.
simple		Urges (someone) to do something.
stick		Click-clacks.
spread		Long curtains.

C. A Quatrain Poem Celebrating Tea in England.

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 was written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis. It is called, **What's with Ink**.

*"What's with ink," I ask myself,
It makes my fingers blue.
I'd rather use a pencil 'and,
I'm sure that you do too.*



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: ABAB, AABB, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, 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 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: _____

D. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. In the first chapter we find that the blob of ink not only takes on a life of its own, but also takes on human characteristics (i.e., laughing, giving a happy shimmer).

How does the author make the novel more interesting by personifying the ink blob?

Create your own example of personification.

As you continue to read through the novel be on the lookout for other examples of this literary device. If you should find one, come back to this question and enter it below.

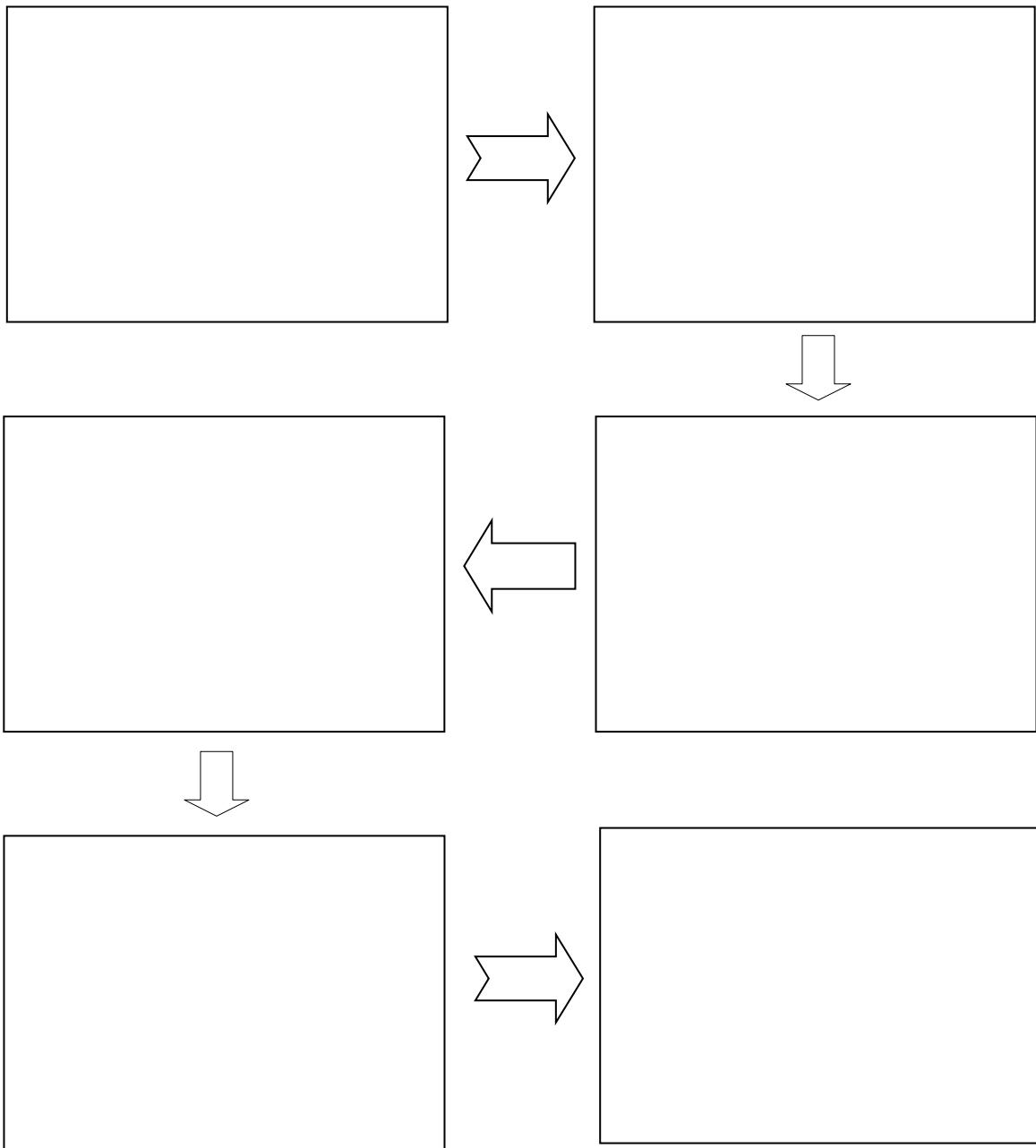
E. Your Favorite Genre Of Books

Inkling is usually classified as something of a fantasy (or science) fiction novel. What genre of books do you enjoy the most? (i.e. mystery, humor, biography, romance, fantasy, historical fiction, science fiction, poetry, etc.) Why do you especially enjoy this type of book?



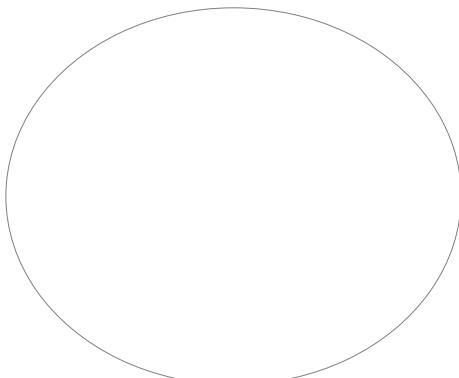
F. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in these chapters. 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.

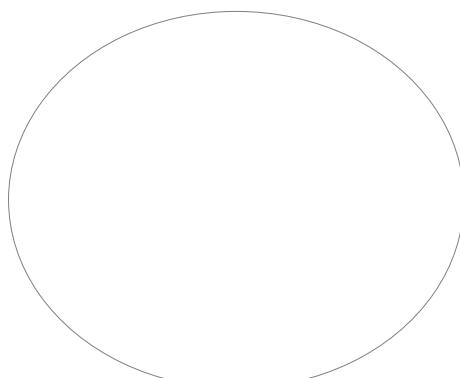


G. 5 Ws and an H.

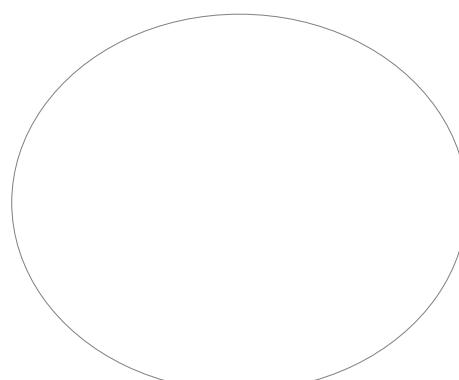
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



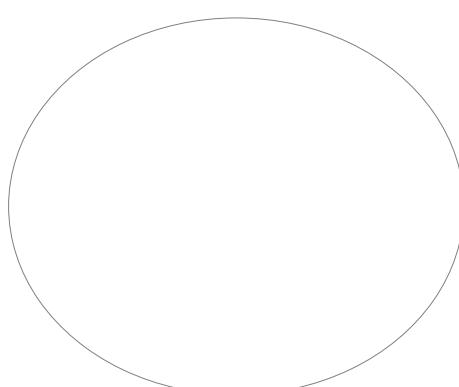
WHO?



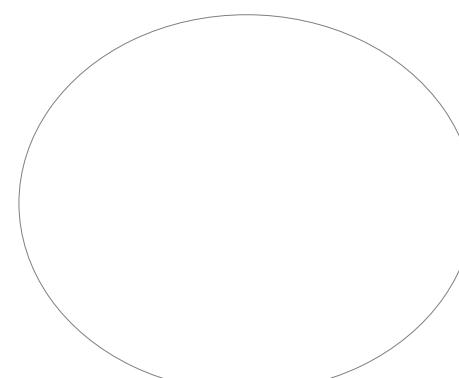
WHAT?



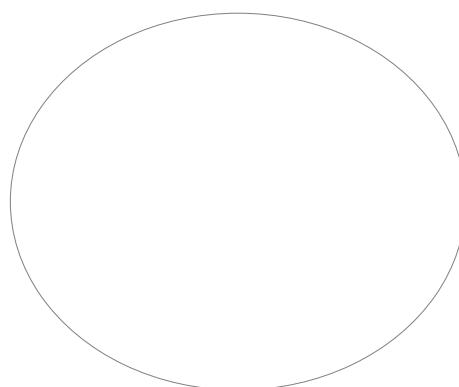
WHEN?



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 two chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6