

Lawn Boy



By

Gary Paulsen

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 1 or 2 chapters of *Lawn Boy* 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 and **topics** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include initiative and enterprise, perseverance, owning a business, the stock market and investment.

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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. Identify foreshadowing
9. Use of singular / plural nouns
10. Listing compound words
11. Identifying parts of speech
12. Determining alphabetical order
13. Identification of root words
14. Identify/create *similes*
15. Identification of a *cliffhanger*
16. Identification of a metaphor

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *sequence chart* 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 about 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

I set out to mow some lawns with Grandpa's old riding lawn mower. One client was Arnold the stockbroker, who offered to teach me about: The beauty of capitalism. Supply and demand. Diversified labor. Distributing the wealth. "It's groovy, man," Arnold said.

The grass grew, and so did business. Arnold invested my money in many things. One of them was a prizefighter. All of a sudden I was the sponsor of my very own fighter, Joey Pow. That's when my summer got really interesting.

Gary Paulsen's comic story about a summer job becomes a slapstick lesson in business as one boy turns a mountain of grass into a mountain of cash. [The Publisher]

Author Biography

Gary Paulsen

Gary Paulsen, a renowned author of novels for young people, presently lives in New Mexico. Three of Gary Paulsen's novels have been acclaimed as Newbery Honor Books: **Hatchet**, **Dogsong**, and **The Winter Room**. **The River** is Gary's exciting sequel to **Hatchet**. His other novels include: **Brian's Winter** (sequel), **Brian's Return** (sequel), **Canyons**, **The Crossing**, **Dancing Carl**, **The Island**, **Popcorn Days** and **Buttermilk Nights**, **Sentries**, **Tracker**, **Woodsong**, **The Legend of Red Horse Canyon**, **Escape From Fire Mountain**, **Danger on Midnight River**.



Gary Paulsen is an avid outdoorsman who competed in the Iditarod, a dog sled race across Alaska. He also frequently sails the Pacific Ocean.

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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

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Name: _____

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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 protagonist of **Lawn Boy** is an enterprising young boy who goes through a number of extremely unusual experiences as the story unfolds. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels that you have read. What do you think makes for an interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

sprouted	connection	clutch	leverage	hesitated
logic	throttle	admission	capitalism	economy

1. Having the seat so close to the steering wheel gave the driver better _____.
2. Even though the _____ was pushed to the max, the mower still refused to go fast.
3. The flowers _____ to a magnificent height after the rainstorm.
4. It is important to learn how to operate the _____ properly when shifting gears.
5. My brother _____ briefly when he was picked to lead the expedition.
6. Carol's ability to spin that yoyo simply defies _____.
7. _____ is an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership.
8. If the _____ does not improve soon, many more people will be out of work.
9. The mayor's _____ that he accepted bribes was a real bombshell.
10. Does anyone here see the _____ between hard work and rewards?

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of this novel?

2. What was unusual about Grandma's way of communicating?

3. Describe how the main character came to possess a lawn mower.

4. Grandma described her husband as a:

- a) hoarder
- b) tinkerer
- c) gardener
- d) mechanic

5. Chapter One ends on a rather suspenseful note when the author states, "And that was how it all started."

a) What event is the author referring to as having *got it all started*?

b) What do you think it was that *got started* by this seemingly simple event?

c) Investigate: Some would see the conclusion to Chapter One as being an example of a literary device known as **foreshadowing**. What is **foreshadowing**, and how might this statement be an example of it?

6. Think of one good **adjective** which would accurately describe the personality of the main character. _____

7. What previous event had made the men of the neighborhood rather eager to hire a kid to cut their grass?

8. Why didn't he tell his parents about all the money he earned on that first day?

Good to Know

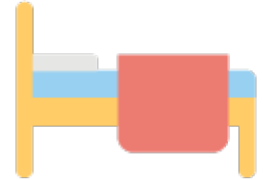
Eden Prairie, Minnesota is a real town. It is located 12 miles (19 km) southwest of downtown Minneapolis and is the 13th largest city in Minnesota. Its population stands at about 60,000 people.

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 **PAN** can also form the word **NAP**. 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.

The words in the left-hand column are found in Chapters 1 and 2 of our novel.

Word	Anagram	Clue
brake		One who works in a kitchen
lever		Frolic; spree.
pedals		Ceased to be active.
simple		Forces.
cost		Narrow beds.
ears		Long time periods

B. Place the following words from this chapter in **alphabetical order**.

economic	1.
expansion	2.
enough	3.
everywhere	4.
fancy	5.
elm	6.
funny	7.
eat	8.
cut	9.
eight	10.

C. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. In Chapter One the author states, “The mower seemed to give a happy leap forward...” In this sentence the mower is given human characteristics (it gives a *happy* leap forward).

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

b) Create your own example of personification.

D. Cliffhanger

A **cliffhanger** is a popular device used by both writers of novels and movies. The conclusion to Chapter 2 is an excellent example of this.

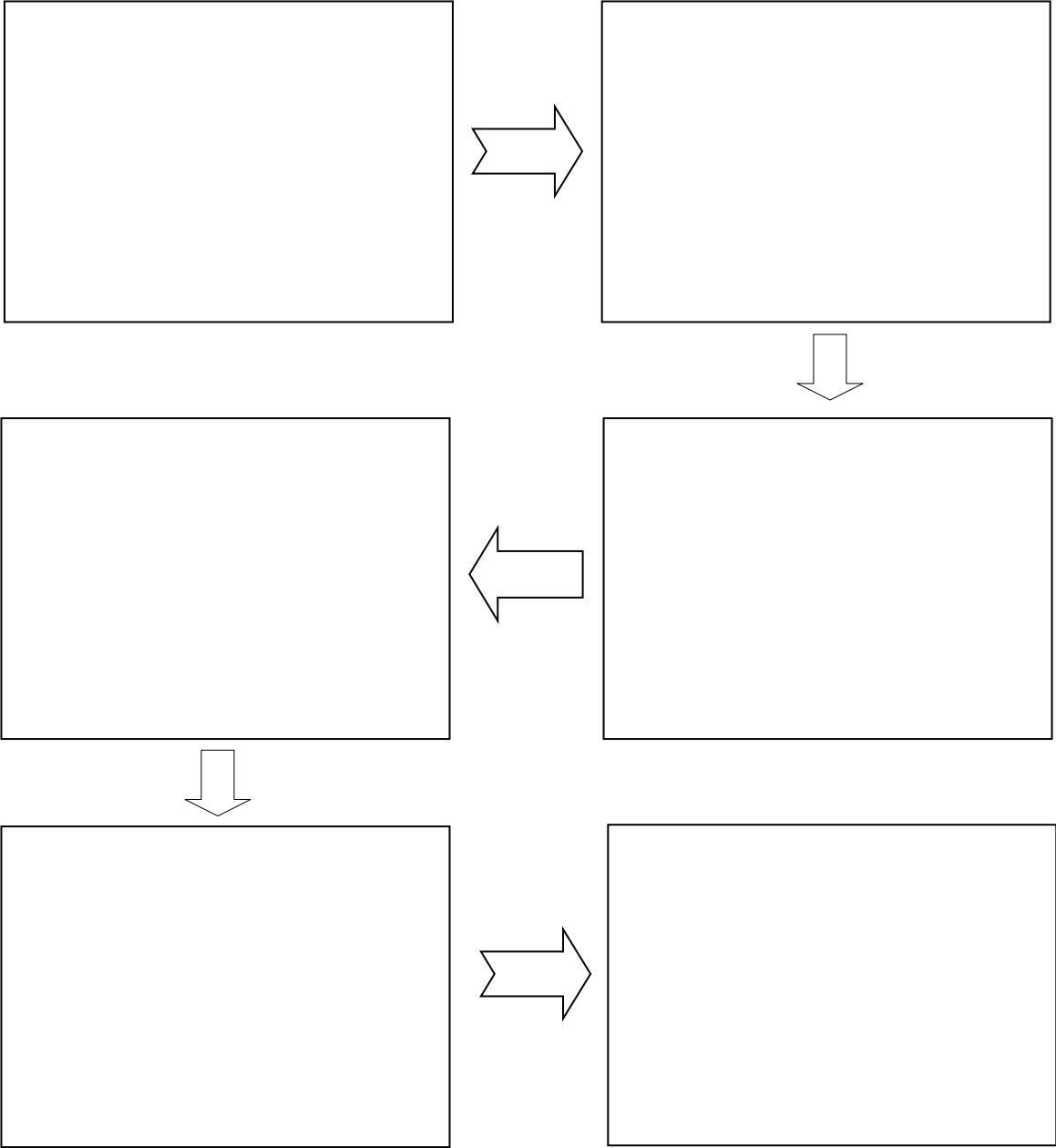


What is a cliffhanger?

Why do you think it is so popular with writers like Gary Paulsen?

E. 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.



F. The Diamante Poem.

There are many forms of poetry available to the aspiring poet other than the rhyming poem. One of the forms of poetry that is the most fun to tackle is the **Diamante** poem.



The Diamante Poem

The diamante poem has a distinct form and a distinct shape. Directions for creating one is as follows:

Line 1 - Noun or subject - one word.

Line 2 - Two adjectives that describe Line 1.

Line 3 - Three **'ing** words that describe line 1 (i.e. *playing*).

Line 4 - Four nouns - the first two are connected with Line 1, the last two are connected with Line 7.

Line 5 - Three **'ing** words that describe Line 7.

Line 6 - Two adjectives that describe Line 7.

Line 7 - One noun synonym for the subject.

Following the above instructions, try your hand at writing a diamante poem using an idea, event or character from the first two chapters as your inspiration.

Title: _____

Extension Activities



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 *Lawn Boy*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6