

Nim's Island



By

Wendy Orr

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 one or two chapters of *Nim's Island* and is comprised of five of the following 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 friendship, personal growth, courage/heroism, confronting one's fears, independence.

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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 *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

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. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

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. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

Art Activities

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

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Synopsis

Meet Nim – a modern-day Robinson Crusoe!

She can chop down bananas with a machete, climb tall palm trees, and start a fire with a piece of glass.

So she's not afraid when her scientist dad sails off to study plankton for three days, leaving her alone on their island. Besides, it's not as if no one is looking after her – she's got a sea lion to mother her and an iguana for comic relief. She also has an interesting email pal.

But when her father's cell phone calls stop coming and disaster seems near, Nim has to be stronger and braver than she's ever been before.

And she'll need *all* her friends to help her. [The Publisher]

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found online at such sites as the following: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nim's_Island

Author Biography

Wendy Orr

Wendy Orr is a Canadian-born Australian writer born in Edmonton, Alberta. She is probably best known as the author of *Nim's Island*, which was made into a film in 2008 starring Jodie Foster, Abigail Breslin and Gerald Butler.

Wendy Orr wrote her very first draft of *Nim's Island* at age nine. An action-packed sequel, *Nim at Sea*, brings Nim to an even bigger island, when the intrepid island girl stows away on a cruise ship bound for Manhattan. Wendy Orr is also the author of *Peeling the Onion*, an ALA Best Book for Young Adults. [Courtesy of the Publisher]



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Name:

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist in *Nim's Island* is Nim, a wild-looking young girl who lives with her dad on a lonely island. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels that you have read or movies you've seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

iguana	experiment	emergency	frigate
plankton	machete	tropical	barometer

1. The fire department will respond very quickly to an _____.
2. The pirates all fled when they saw the _____ sail into the harbor.
3. Many sea animals are adapted to feed on _____ by filtering the water.
4. A _____ is a scientific instrument used to measure air pressure.
5. An _____ is a large, tropical American lizard.
6. It is the dream of many Canadians to live in a _____ climate.
7. The science _____ required a lot of beakers and test tubes.
8. We used only an old, dull _____ to carve a path through the jungle.

Questions



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

2. Describe what was attached to the three cords which hung around Nim's neck?

1.
2.
3.

3. What two creatures responded to Nim's whistle?

4. Describe what happened to Nim's mother.

5. Nim's father, Jack, had gone out to sea and wouldn't return for _____ days.

6. How were Jack and Nim able to get power to charge their cell phone and laptop computer?

7. Describe any two of the *scientific* tasks that Jack performed on the island.

8. Why did Jack never tell anyone where their island was located?

9. Nim's favorite tool was a _____.

10. How did Jack plan on keeping in touch with Nim during his trip? What was she to do if she didn't hear from him for three days?

Good to Know ~ The Top Ten Tropical Islands

Tourists and travellers have long been attracted to the warm, beautiful islands of the tropics. Here are the top ten tropical islands as compiled by the website, *Ordinary Traveler*.



- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Bali, Indonesia | 2. Maui, Hawaii |
| 3. Bora Bora | 4. Fiji |
| 5. Aruba | 6. The Bahamas |
| 7. Turks and Caicos | 8. Maldiv Islands |
| 9. Seychelles Islands | 10. Fernando de Noronha, Brazil |

For an extra challenge – investigate one of the above tropical islands and list three fascinating facts about this popular tourist destination.

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 **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 chapter of *Nim's Island*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
sign		Make musical sounds.
greet		A heron.
rock		A bottle-stopper.
open		A slangy negative.
told		Goofball.
tides		Watches one's food intake.
mothers		Suffocate.

Now find four additional words from the first chapter which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.

Word	Anagram	Clue

B. Island Map

Check out the map of Nim's Island found in Chapter 1 the answer the following questions.

1. Using the compass rose as a guide, in which direction would you walk if you were going from Tabletop Garden to Hissing Stones? _____
2. What feature on the map is probably the highest point on the island?
_____.
3. In which direction is the ocean current traveling? _____
4. If you were Nim's dad, what two areas of the map would you tell Nim to stay away from?

5. Where might Nim take shelter in the event of a hurricane? _____

C. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter 1 is, *Fred was an iguana, spiky as a dragon...* What two things are being compared in this example?



--	--

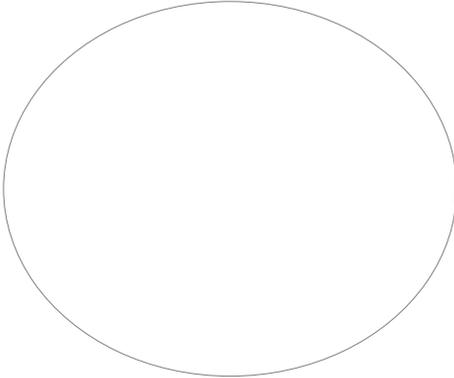
Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your own imagination:

a) a volcano erupting

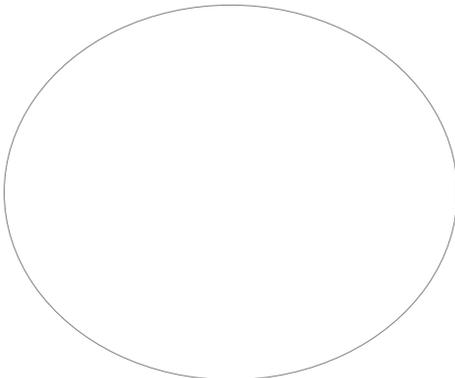
b) the bark of a sea lion

D. 5 Ws and an H.

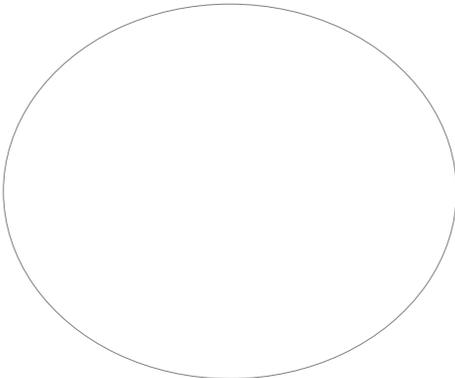
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



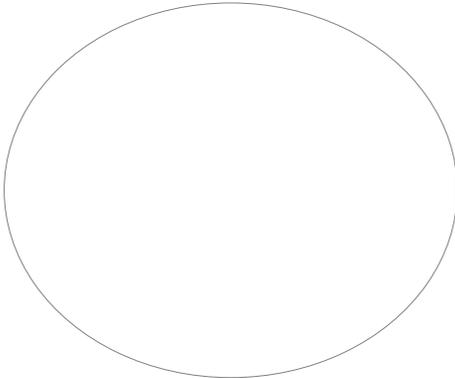
WHO?



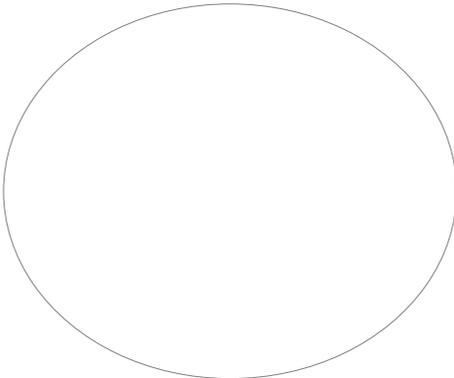
WHAT?



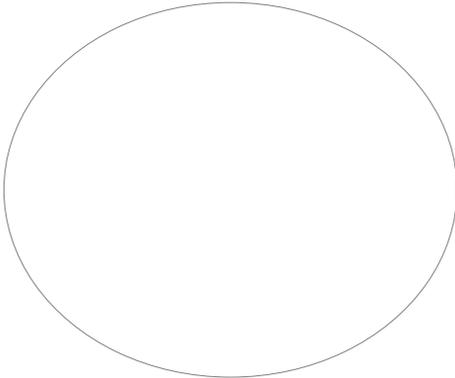
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activities

A. Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A story-board can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel. Complete the story-board below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6

B. A Poem Even Nim Would Enjoy

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 actually one verse of a much longer poem called **I Wish I Could Dine with a Porcupine** by Brian Moses which is found on the poetryarchive.org website.

*So we make it to the beach
my iguana and me,
then he sits on my shoulder
as we stroll by the sea...*



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, 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 chapter of our novel.

The Quatrain Poem

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

Title: _____
