

Ragweed



By

Avi

A Novel Study
by Joel Michel Reed

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Suggestions and Expectations

Note: The questions and activities in this workbook are intended to be done in an *open book format*. You may wish to complete all of the activities, or only those that interest you.

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each section of the novel study focuses on three chapters of *Ragweed* and is comprised of five of the following activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language Activities
- Extension Activities

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities in this 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.**

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. Students will also be expected to provide clear answers to questions and well-constructed explanations. It is critical as well that students be able to relate events and the feelings of characters to their own lives and experiences and describe their own interpretation of a particular passage.

A strength of the unit is that students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included (p.7) so that students may organize their work and keep it all in one place. A **Student Checklist** is also included (p.6) so that a record of completed work may be recorded.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Identify *exaggeration*
5. Identify/create *similes*
6. Use of singular / plural nouns
7. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. Identifying syllables
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 Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Story summary pyramid.

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Character comparison
3. Relating personal experiences

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research assignments
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Write an author biography
6. Write about personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Sheet
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Research assignments

Art Activities

1. Complete a storyboard
2. Create a collage & mural
3. Cast a film adaptation
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Create a comic strip
6. Design a diorama.

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Synopsis

A small golden mouse with big dreams, Ragweed leaves his family and cozy country home for the big city. His journey brings music, excitement, and new friends into his life, but a cunning group of crafty cats threatens to ruin all his fun. With the help of a motley yet musical crew of city mice—Clutch, Dipstick, Lugnut, and Blinker—Ragweed prepares to battle his feline foes. (Courtesy of the publisher – Harper Collins Childrens)

Author Biography

Avi (Edward Irving Wortis)

I was born in New York City, along with a twin sister. I am five minutes older than Emily. It was Emily, for reasons no one knows — she certainly doesn't — who called me Avi. It stuck. It's the only name I use now.

When I went to high school I wanted to be a designer of airplanes. But flunking out of the science high school brought me to a small private school that provided some of the attention I needed. I got it when an English teacher insisted I get some help with my writing.

I did get help, and that help led me to think that I might become a writer. I made up my mind to focus on this when I was 17 and a senior in high school.

I began by writing plays, and wrote a lot of bad ones. It was only when my eldest son, Shaun, was born, that I took to writing for kids. Since then, I've never written anything else. My first book was published in 1970. I've published over 30 books since.

For some 25 years I worked as a librarian, first at the New York Public Library, then at Trenton State College. My life has always been with, around, and for books.



(Courtesy of the publisher Scholastic – www.scholastic.com)

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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

[illegible]

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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-3



Before you read the chapter:

The main character of our story is a mouse named Ragweed. Using resources from your school library or the Internet, write a list of three other novels where the main character is a mouse.



Vocabulary:

Draw a straight line to connect the vocabulary word to its definition. Remember to use a straight edge (like a ruler).

1. Prodigious
2. Imminent
3. Sheepish
4. Embedded
5. Relish
6. Brazen
7. Sensation
8. Gratitude
9. Sprawled
10. Presume

- A. To fix something firmly into a substance or solid object.
- B. A feeling that you get when something affects your body.
- C. To get great pleasure from something.
- D. Open and without shame, usually about something shocking.
- E. Very large or powerful and causing surprise or admiration.
- F. To suppose that something is true without actual proof.
- G. The feeling of being grateful and wanting to express thanks.
- H. Something likely to happen very soon.
- I. Sitting or lying with your arms or legs spread out awkwardly.
- J. Looking or feeling embarrassed because you have done something silly or wrong.

Questions



1. Describe the setting of the story as Chapter One begins.

2. How many brothers and sisters does Ragweed have?

--

3. Where was Ragweed planning to go when he left home?

--

4. What was Ragweed's favourite food?

--

5. Which creature did the vole warn Ragweed to keep an eye out for?

--

6. What did Silversides say were two things that made the mice from Amperville different from the mice before them?

7. Why do you think Silversides was so bothered by the kitten playing with the mouse?

--

8. What did the acronym F.E.A.R. stand for, and what was the motto of this club?

F.E.A.R.	
MOTTO	

Language Activities



A. Exaggeration

Exaggeration is a literary device defined as *a statement that represents something as better or worse than it really is*. One such example is: *When I opened the box of chocolates, a mouse the size of a small dog leaped out, wearing a top hat and carrying a tiny cane, ready to lead a rodent revolution against the tyranny of the feline overlords!*



Think of an exaggerated way of describing the following

The smell of old car.	
The hissing of a cat.	
Your choice.	

B. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's an example of an alliteration: "... screaming, shrieking, shouting about something scary."



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

The sights of a city.	
The sounds of a concert.	
Your own choice.	

C. Compound Words

Find ten compound words from the last three chapters and separate them into two parts.

	Word	Part 1	Part 2
01			
02			
03			
04			
05			
06			
07			
08			
09			
10			

D. Write a Lipogram

Your task is to write a paragraph summarizing the events from these Chapters. But wait, there's a catch! Your paragraph cannot contain the letter B, and it must remain grammatically correct!

[illegible]

E. Observation Chart

Ragweed is a novel filled with strange sights and sounds. Look back over the first three chapters and find as many examples of the five senses as you can, listing them in the chart below with a description about where each is found. You may wish to choose your examples from one scene, or a number of different scenes.



Sight	Sound	Touch	Taste	Smell