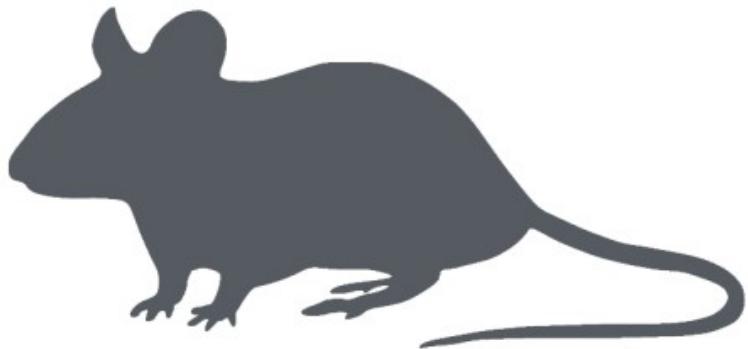


Runaway Ralph



By
Beverly Cleary

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

Runaway Ralph

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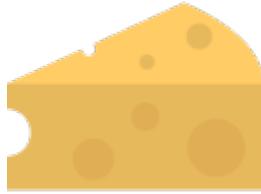
About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org

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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 chapter of *Runaway Ralph* and is comprised of five of the following 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 mice, hamsters and other pets, loyalty and friendship, the responsibilities of owning a pet, the enterprising spirit and the importance of having a sense of adventure throughout life.

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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
12. Identification of *exaggeration*.

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 a cliffhanger.
5. Identify the climax of the novel.

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

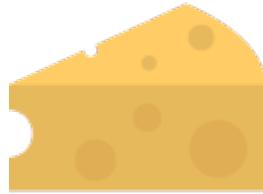
1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart

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

Fed up with his timid mother and uncle and his squirmy little cousins, Ralph hops onto his toy motorcycle and zooms down the road to summer camp. It turns out camp is not all peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and fun. A strict watchdog, a mouse-hungry cat, and a troubled boy named Garf lead Ralph on some fur-raising escapades. Perhaps home isn't such a bad place to be, if only Ralph can find a way to get there again. (*Courtesy of the publisher.*)

Author Biography Beverly Cleary

Beverly Cleary was born in McMinnville, Oregon and spent the first years of her life on a farm near the town of Yamhill. Even at an early age Beverly loved books, and although the town had no library, her mother had books sent to the family from the library in Yamhill for her young daughter. When the family moved to Portland, Beverly found herself in the school's low reading circle, an experience which gave Beverly a life-long empathy for the problem of struggling readers. Encouraged by the local librarian, where she was a constant visitor, Beverly decided that she would one day like to write the books she longed to read but was unable to find in the library - funny stories about her neighborhood and the sort of children she knew. This ambition led to the creation years later of the beloved characters Ramona Quimby, Henry Huggins, Ellen Tebbits. Her first book, **Henry Huggins**, was published in 1950. The book **Beezus and Ramona** was written five years later, in 1955, and introduced the Quimby sisters to the world. Beverly Cleary Passed away in 2021 at the age of 104.



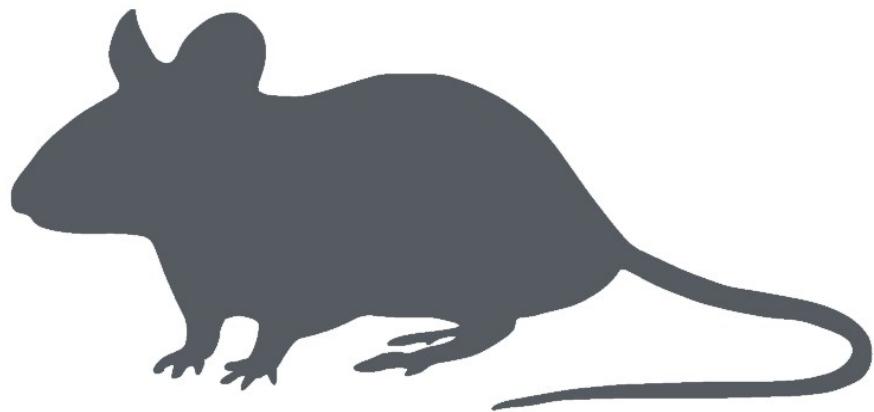
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Student Checklist

Student Name

Runaway Ralph



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Name:

Runaway Ralph

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *Runaway Ralph* is Ralph, a tiny mouse who loves a big adventure. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think made these characters so unforgettable?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

linger	mysterious	exhilarated	perilous
venture	scrounge	rousing	rebellious

1. The choir gave a _____ rendition of the school song.
2. “Please don’t _____ in the halls between classes,” Mrs. Smith urged.
3. The twins found that climbing the cliff was a _____ undertaking.
4. It is important that you don’t _____ too close to the haunted house.
5. We received a very _____ phone call last night.
6. Ralph found that he had to _____ the campground for something to eat.
7. Charlie is a very _____ little boy.
8. We were _____ to discover that the Jays had won the World Series.

Questions



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

2. How would you describe Garf's attitude about going to camp?

3. How did Ralph get the motorcycle to begin with?

4. What clue is there in the story that Ralph's motorcycle didn't actually have a motor?

5. Match each name with the proper description:

1	Ralph		A	Always liked by children.
2	Garf		B	Stayed in Room 215.
3	Matt		C	Very fearful and nervous.
4	Uncle Lester		D	Longed for a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.
5	Ralph's Mother		E	Ralph thought he was a crumb-scrounging mouse.
6	Keith		F	An unhappy camper.

6. Describe your impression of Ralph's little brothers and sisters and cousins.

7. What did Ralph decide to do at the end of Chapter One? Do you think this is a good idea? Please explain your answer.

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:



- read the clue in the right-hand column.
- 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 are found in the Ch 1.

Word	Anagram	Clue
smiled		Lead astray.
faster		Something a fighter plane might do.
thing		A time of day (sort of).
evil		Kicking and screaming.
lead		You do this with a deck.
Lester		You might do this with an apartment.
breath		Rub-a-dub-dub.

B. A Poem About a Mouse.

The **quatrains** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain entitled *My Free Mouse*, was written by the renowned poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*My mom said I could have a pet,
To keep around the house.
So I kept the cash she gave to me,
And scrounged myself a mouse.*



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

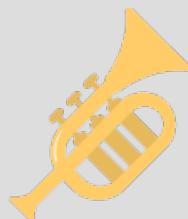
Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____

Taps

At the end of every day that summer, Ralph hears the notes of the camp bugler playing **taps**. There are several renditions of taps on youtube. The link to an especially moving version is included below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WChTqYIDjtl&spfreload=10>



C. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here is an example from Chapter One: *The slow sad notes of music that lingered and died mysteriously in the distance...*



How are the notes of music personified in this example?

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.

D. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here is an example from the Chapter One: "... chocolate cake...." Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.



Ralph riding his motorcycle	
The crash of thunder	
Your choice.	

E. Ralph becomes very discouraged with family members in Chapter One, but a family can be a wonderful thing. See if you can uncover this thoughtful quote by former baseball player, Willie Stargell by crossing out these letters: **Z, X, Q, B, G, J**

G	T	H	E	R	E	J	I	S	Z	G	X	Q	J	X	Z	G	Q	B	J
J	Z	G	Q	X	J	Q	Z	B	N	O	T	H	I	N	G	Z	X	G	Q
I	X	V	A	L	U	E	J	M	O	R	E	G	X	Z	J	Q	B	X	G
J	Q	Z	G	T	H	A	N	J	T	H	E	X	G	Z	Q	B	J	B	Z
C	L	O	S	E	N	E	S	S	X	O	F	Z	F	R	I	E	N	D	S
G	Z	A	N	D	J	F	A	M	I	L	Y	,	Z	J	X	Q	G	Z	B
X	G	Q	Z	J	X	Q	G	A	Z	S	M	I	L	E	G	Z	Q	X	J
Z	Q	J	X	A	S	G	I	J	P	A	S	S	G	B	X	B	J	Q	Z
J	S	O	M	E	O	N	E	G	O	N	J	X	B	Z	G	X	Q	B	G
X	G	Q	Z	J	X	T	H	E	J	S	T	R	E	E	T	J	Z	Q	X

Answer:

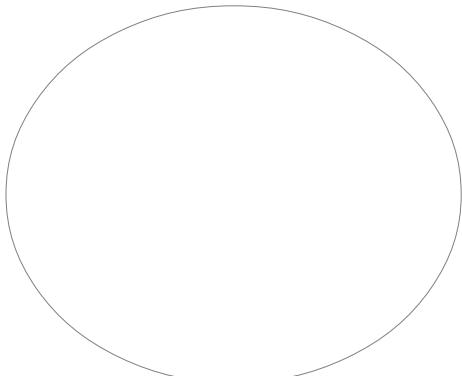
F. Assemble the word parts below into ten compound words found in this chapter.

father	boy	handle	motor	under
cycle	end	nuts	way	pop
hills	corn	grand	stand	speed
week	bars	pea	foot	bell

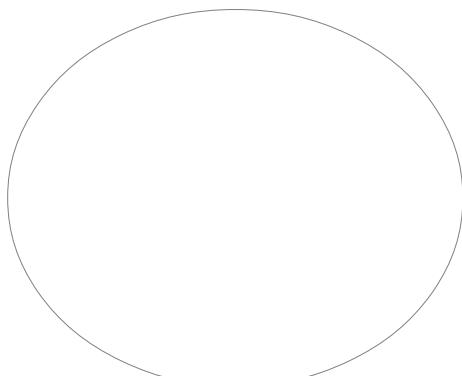
1		6	
2		7	
3		8	
4		9	
5		10	

G. 5 Ws and an H.

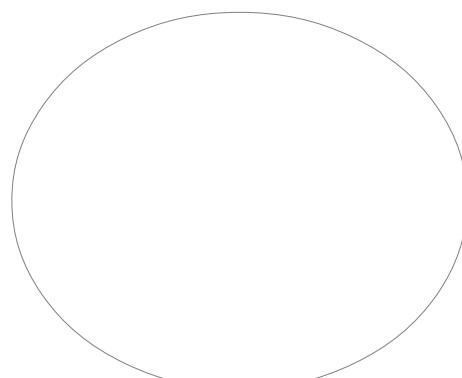
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



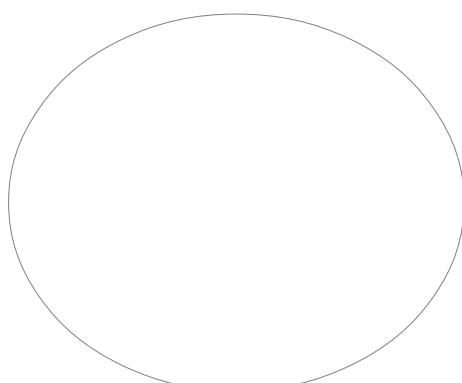
WHO?



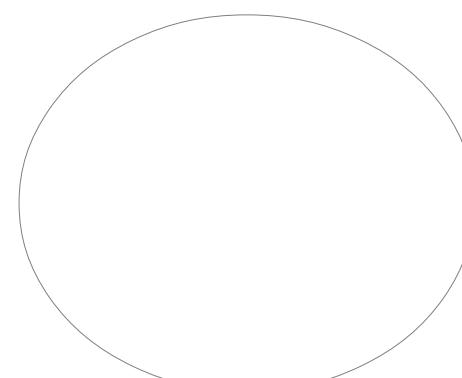
WHAT?



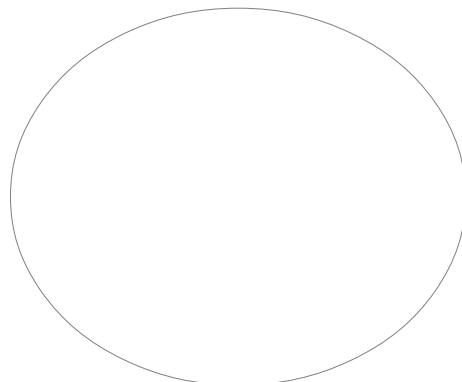
WHEN?



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 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