

Some Kind of Courage



By

Dan Gemeinhart

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 *Some Kind of Courage* and is comprised of these 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 courage and persistence, loyalty and friendship, racial prejudice, independence and survival, the importance of family and home.

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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. Identify *personification*.
10. 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. Complete a Plot Outline for a Sequel
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. 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

“Joseph Johnson has lost just about everyone he’s ever loved. He lost his pa in an accident. He lost his ma and his little sister to sickness. And now, he’s lost his pony - fast, fierce, beautiful Sarah, taken away by a man who had no right to take her. Joseph can sure enough get her back, though. The odds are stacked against him, but he isn’t about to give up. He will face down deadly animals, dangerous men, and the fury of nature itself on his quest to be reunited with the only family he has left. Because Joseph Johnson may have lost just about everything. But he hasn’t lost hope. And he hasn’t lost the fire in his belly that says he’s getting his Sarah back-no matter what.”

Some Kind of Courage received starred reviews from Kirkus Reviews and Booklist, and was an Amazon Book of the Month. The audiobook version won an Earphones Award from AudioFile Magazine. (From the author's official website <http://dangemeinhart.com>)

Author Biography

Dan Gemeinhart

Dan Gemeinhart lives in a small town smack dab in the middle of Washington state with his wife and three young daughters. He was lucky and grateful to be a teacher-librarian in an elementary school for fourteen years, where he got to share awesome books with awesome kids. He loves camping, cooking and traveling. He also plays guitar (badly) and reads (constantly). His house is always a mess. He is really pretty darn happy. [From the author's official website <http://dangemeinhart.com>]



Some Kind of Courage



By Dan Gemeinhart

Name:

Some Kind of Courage

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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 *Some Kind of Courage* is twelve-year old Joseph Johnson, who is about to embark on a quest which will lead him into all sort of adventures. It is very important for the main character of a story to be appealing in some way, and be able to hold the reader's interest. What's one book that you've read which features an unforgettable protagonist? What was it about this character that made him/her so memorable?

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Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

| | | | |
|--------|-----------|------------|----------|
| embers | convinces | greenbacks | grimaces |
| planks | whine | crates | quivers |

1. The frightened boy handed a handful of _____ to the highwayman.
2. You will note how her lip _____ whenever she is nervous.
3. The _____ from the fire slowly lost their glow.
4. Only the faint _____ on his face revealed the man's pain.
5. “Please haul those _____ to the back of the store,” the manager ordered.
6. I hope this video _____ the jury that my client is innocent.
7. The carpenter removed each of the sixteen foot _____ from the job site.
8. We heard the _____ from the incoming missile long before it arrived.

Questions



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

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2. What had Mr. Grissom done which upset Joseph?

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b. What did Joseph intend to do about it?

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3. Joseph's dad told him, *A man's only as good as he treats his enemies*. Defend or refute this statement with one solid reason for the position you have taken.

| |
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| |

4. How did Joseph justify taking the greenbacks and gun?

| | |
|------------|--|
| Greenbacks | |
| | |
| The gun. | |
| | |

5. How did Grissom justify selling the horse?

| |
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| |

Language Activities



A. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is, *The old man grimaced like he'd just taken a suck on a fresh lemon.* In this example, what is the old man's grimace being compared to?

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

a) shooting a pistol

| |
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| |
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b) riding a fast horse

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B. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here is such an example from Chapter One: *I licked my lips and crept closer....*

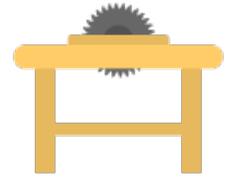


Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| A late night snore. | |
| A rainbow. | |
| Your choice. | |

C. 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:



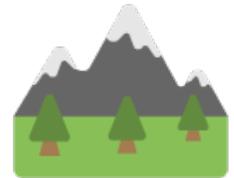
a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

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 *Some Kind of Courage*.

| Word | Anagram | Clue |
|-------|---------|--------------------------------------|
| worth | | Hurl. |
| devil | | Remained alive. |
| straw | | Small benign growths under the skin. |
| crate | | Respond. |
| shelf | | The piranha is a ___-eater. |
| lemon | | A large round fruit. |
| horse | | Seaside. |

D. Cliffhanger

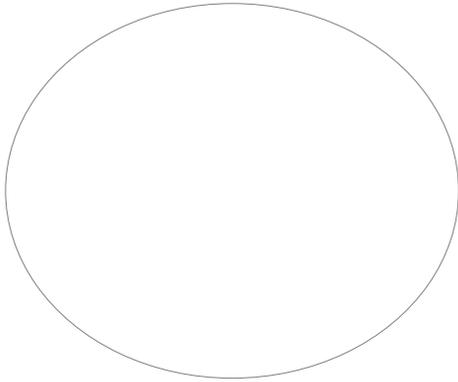
Chapter One contains an important literary device called a **cliffhanger**. A cliffhanger usually occurs at the end of a chapter when the author leaves the reader in suspense. How is this true in Chapter One? Why do you think the author ended the chapter this way?



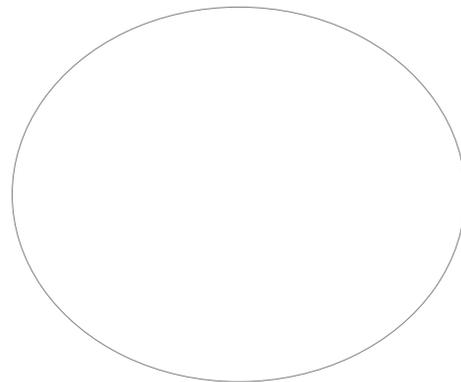
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E. 5 Ws and an H.

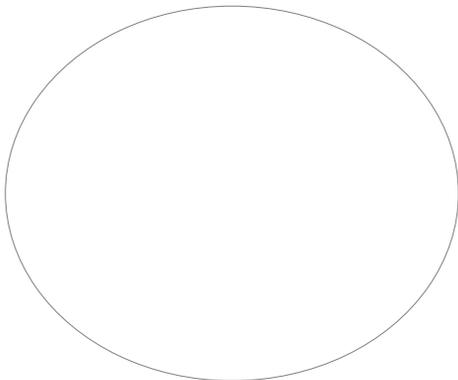
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



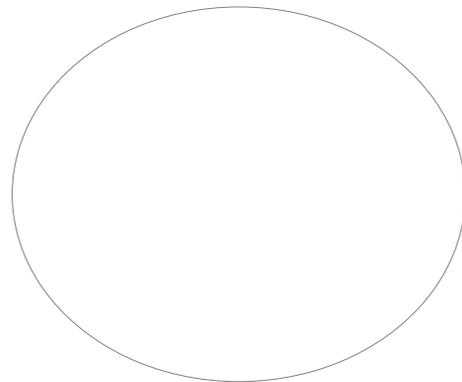
WHO?



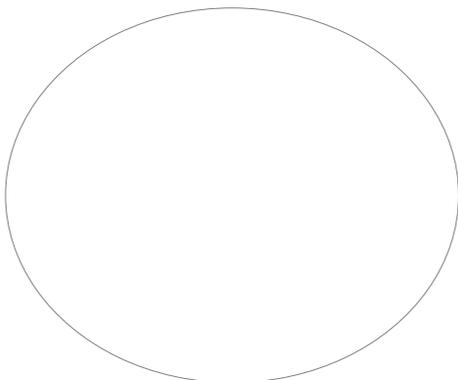
WHAT?



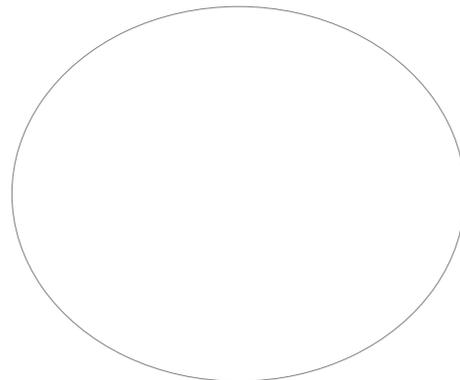
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

F. An Acrostic Poem

There are many forms of poetry available to the aspiring poet other than the rhyming poem. An ACROSTIC poem is one example. In an acrostic poem the first letters of each line are aligned vertically to form a word. The word often is the subject of the poem. Here is an example written by the acclaimed poet, Atrocious Halitosis:

The Firefly

Freaky-looking
Itches me when I touch
Restless at night
Early or late
Fearless
Little
Yellowfly



The Acrostic Poem

Now create your own Acrostic Poem on a subject featured in this novel. Your poem must have at least four lines (and doesn't need to rhyme).

Title: _____

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Extension Activity



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words



Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and end of the first chapter.

| | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Beginning Picture: | Beginning: |
| | |
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| | |
| Middle Picture: | Middle: |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| Concluding Picture: | Concluding: |
| | |
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