

Squirm



By

Carl Hiaasen

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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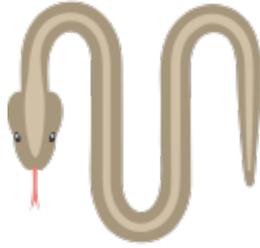


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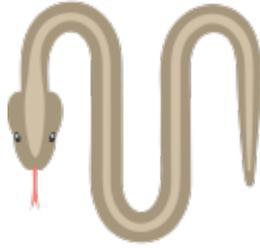
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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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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 *Squirm* and is comprised 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 ecological themes such as the conservation of wildlife (i.e. Florida panthers, grizzly bears) and wilderness areas, the Crow Nation, courage and persistence, bullying, families, loyalty and friendship.

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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

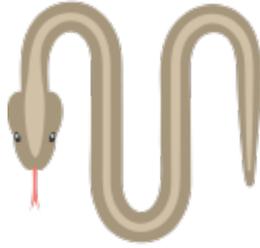
1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

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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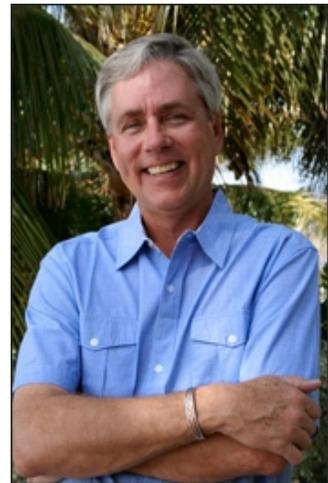
Synopsis

Newbery Honor-winning and #1 New York Times bestselling author Carl Hiaasen--beloved for his modern classics like *Hoot* and *Chomp*--delivers a wildly entertaining novel involving snakes, grizzlies, a missing dad, a menacing drone, and more! This summer, Billy will fly across the country, hike a mountain, float a river, dodge a grizzly bear, shoot down a spy drone, save a neighbor's cat, save an endangered panther, and then try to save his own father. Carl Hiaasen tells a wickedly funny, slightly twisted tale about families, figuring out what's really important, and knowing when to let things go. [Courtesy of amazon.com]

Author Biography

Carl Hiaasen

Carl Hiaasen was born and raised in Florida, where he still lives with his family. A graduate of the University of Florida, he wrote for *The Miami Herald* as an investigative reporter. In the early 1980s, he began writing novels with his good friend and a distinguished journalist, the late William D. Montalbano. Together they produced three mystery thrillers -- *Powder Burn*, *Trap Line* and *A Death in China* -- which borrowed heavily from their own reporting experiences. *Tourist Season*, published in 1986, was Hiaasen's first solo novel. Since then, Hiaasen has published *Skin Tight*, *Native Tongue* and eight national bestsellers -- *Strip Tease*, *Stormy Weather*, *Lucky You*, *Sick Puppy*, *Basket Case*, *Skinny Dip*, *Nature Girl* and, most recently, *Star Island*. Hiaasen made his children's book debut with *Hoot* (2002), which was awarded a Newbery Honor and spent more than two years on the *New York Times* bestseller lists. For young readers he went on to write *Flush* (2005), *Scat* (2009) and *Chomp* (2012).



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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 main character of *Squirm* is snake-loving Billy Dickens, whose trip to Montana to meet and spend some time with his mysterious father turns out to be much more eventful than even he could have imagined. It is very important that the main character of a story is appealing in some way, and be able to hold the reader's interest. What's one book (or movie) that you've read (or seen) which features an unforgettable protagonist? What was it about this character that made him/her so memorable?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

squeamish	cyber	primal	claustrophobic
sarcasm	resemblance	humongous	fledged

1. Experts say that ophidiophobia is a deep _____ fear.
2. Eagles usually have two babies, both _____ and gone by midsummer.
3. He could be a bank robber, for all they know, or a _____ hacker.
4. I began to feel quite _____ when they turned off all the lights in the cavern.
5. Our teacher feels that _____ is a form of bullying.
6. “Don't tell me you're _____ about earthworms,” the scientist stated loudly.
7. There's not much in the way of _____ between Jeremy and his brother.
8. Some of the cornfields had been harvested in _____ perfect circles.

Questions



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

2. Describe how Billy put a stop to people going into his locker uninvited.

3. What is your impression of Billy's dad? What factors helped you form this impression?

4. How would you describe Billy's personality?

5. What obsession did Billy's mother have? Why was this very inconvenient for Billy?

6. Billy's dad certainly is a man of mystery and Billy can only imagine what he does for a living. What do you think he does for a living in Montana? Think of three possibilities.

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7. Define *ophidiophobia*. Do you feel you classify as having this particular phobia?

8. Keeping snakes for a pet is a most unusual hobby. Think of one good thing about this hobby and one *not so good* thing.

9. What was there about living in Everglades City that appealed to Billy?

10. Who did Billy's mom get to meet him at the airport in Billings?

11. Who met Billy at his dad's house? Why wasn't she surprised to see him?

12. How did Summer know the amount of money that Billy's dad sent to them each month?

Language Activities



A. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is ... *his eyes bulge out like a constipated bullfrog's*. In this example, what are his eyes being compared to?



--

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

a) the rattle sound of an Eastern diamondback

b) the taste of a Carolina Reaper hot pepper

B. Eastern Diamondback

Billy describes the Eastern diamondback as a serious reptile with eight buttons on the rattle.

Have you ever encountered a rattlesnake? Yes No

Using resources in your school library or on the Internet research three fun facts about the Eastern diamondback (i.e. diet, enemies, etc.)

1.	
2.	
3.	

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:



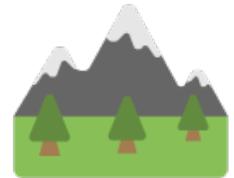
a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

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 two chapters of *Squirm*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
steady		Remained.
point		A type of horse.
sister		Withstand.
turns		Animals that are smaller than average.
snakes		Daggers.
stink		Makes a garment of interlocking loops of wool.
table		Sheep sound.

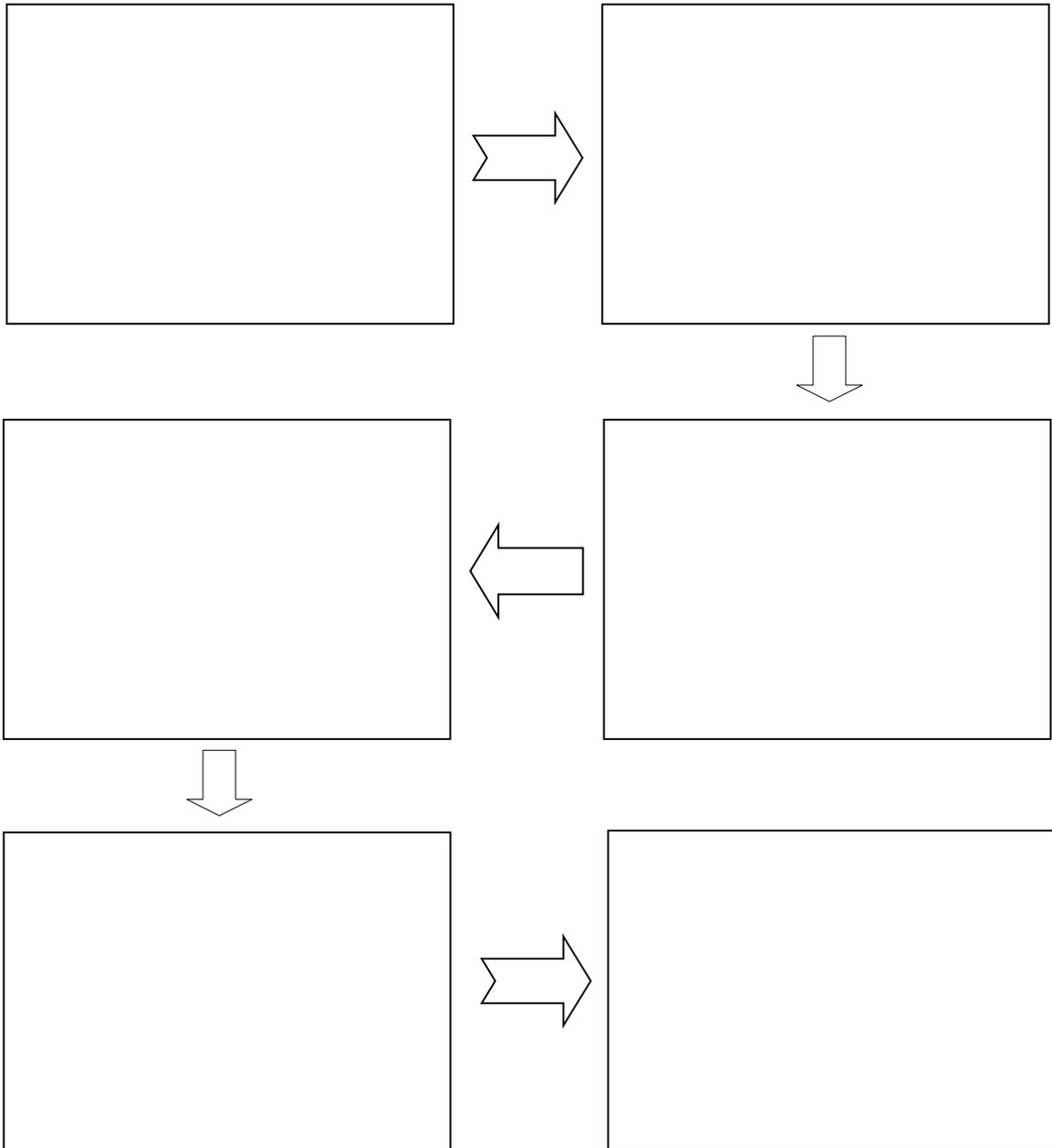
D. Cliffhanger

Chapter Two 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 Two? Why do you think the author ended the chapter in this way?



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. 5 Ws and an H.

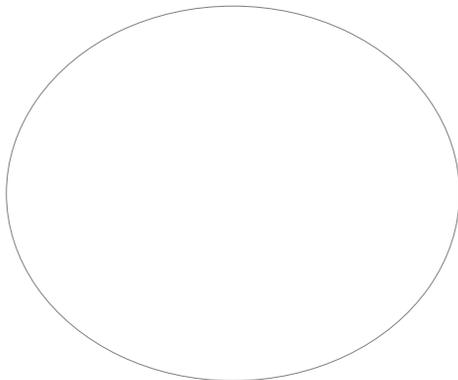
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



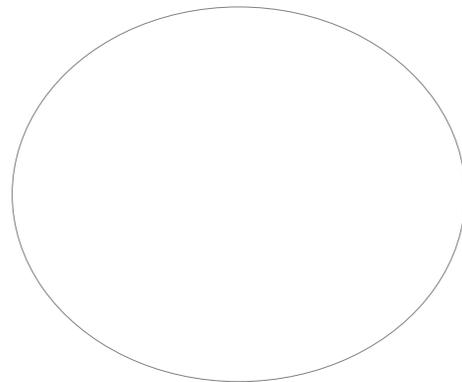
WHO?



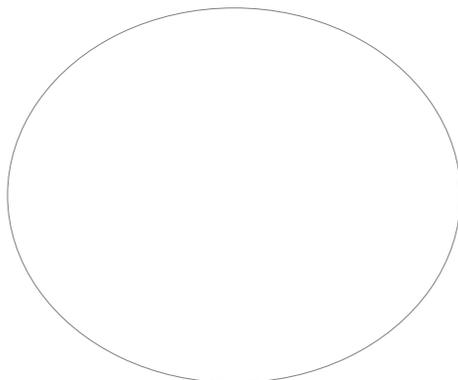
WHAT?



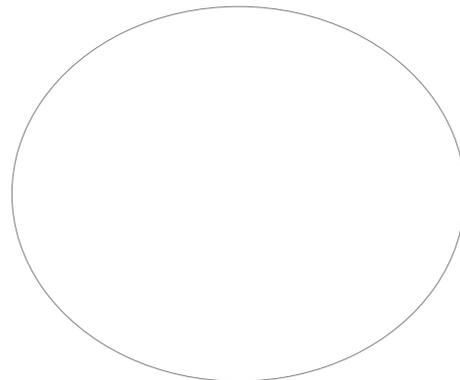
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

G. 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: _____

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 two chapters.

Beginning Picture:	Beginning:
Middle Picture:	Middle:
Concluding Picture:	Concluding: