

# The Cay



By

Theodore Taylor

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](http://novelstudies.org).

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## Suggestions and Expectations

This 68 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one or two chapters of *The Cay* and is comprised of four sections:

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 **racial prejudice**, World War II, submarines, hurricanes, blindness, coral reefs, the Caribbean.

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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 *foreshadowing*.
7. Identify *personification*.
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*

### 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. Identify the climax of the novel.
4. Complete a 5W's Chart

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Compare two characters
3. Relating personal experiences

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Sheet
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

### Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design a Collector's Card

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## Synopsis

Phillip is excited when the Germans invade the small island of Curaçao. War has always been a game to him, and he's eager to glimpse it firsthand—until the freighter he and his mother are traveling to the United States on is torpedoed.

When Phillip comes to, he is on a small raft in the middle of the sea. Besides Stew Cat, his only companion is an old West Indian, Timothy. Phillip remembers his mother's warning about black people: "They are different, and they live differently."

But by the time the castaways arrive on a small island, Phillip's head injury has made him blind and dependent on Timothy. [The Publisher]

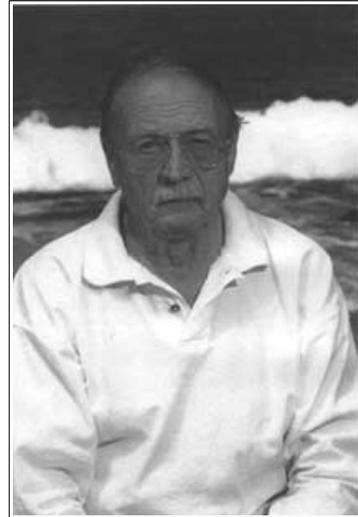
### Author Biography

*Theodore Taylor*

Theodore Taylor (June 23, 1921, - October 26, 2006) was born in North Carolina and began writing at the age of thirteen. Leaving home at seventeen to join the Washington, D.C. Daily News as a copyboy.

During World War II, he first served as a cadet-AB seaman on a gasoline tanker, then became a naval officer in the Pacific Theater.

In 1955, a year after his first book, *The Magnificent Mitscher*, Taylor joined Paramount Pictures as a press agent; then became a story editor, finally, associate producer. "Often exciting, often insane, film work provided opportunity to work with some interesting and unique people — Clark Gable, Henry Fonda, Frank Sinatra, Shirley MacLaine, William Holden, Steve McQueen, Charlton Heston, Raquel Welch, and others, on seventeen major pictures." Following the filming of *TORA! TORA! TORA!*, he turned full-time to novels, non-fiction books and screen plays.



Courtesy of Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore\\_Taylor\\_author](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_Taylor_author))



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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 of *The Cay* is a rather unusual character living a different kind of life than most boys his age. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read. What do you think makes for an especially memorable protagonist?




### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

refinery	galleon	schooner	massive	stern
conquer	gravely	aviation	production	complain

1. I thought it would be much easier to \_\_\_\_\_ my feelings of nervousness.
2. The ship took on a \_\_\_\_\_ amount of water when it struck the reef.
3. The natives were extremely nervous when the Spanish \_\_\_\_\_ appeared.
4. Phillip’s father worked at the oil \_\_\_\_\_ on the island.
5. Four hundred gallons of \_\_\_\_\_ fuel was spilled near the schoolyard.
6. The factory ceased \_\_\_\_\_ sometime in January.
7. The two brothers sailed a \_\_\_\_\_ across the bay.
8. The captain filled the \_\_\_\_\_ of the ship with food supplies.
9. “I don’t mean to \_\_\_\_\_,” she said. “But I think this steak has gone bad.”.
10. My Aunt Freda was \_\_\_\_\_ ill.

# Questions



1. An element of danger or peril is something that will often make for a more interesting story. What element of danger is lurking in this first chapter?


2. Describe the **setting** of the story for Chapter One.


3. Phillip lived in the town of \_\_\_\_\_, on the island of \_\_\_\_\_ which was just off the coast of \_\_\_\_\_. The island belonged to the country of \_\_\_\_\_.

4. What made that particular area such a strategic region as far as the Germans were concerned?


5. Despite the fact that Phillip was told by his mother to remain near home he chose to disobey her. Where did he go, with whom and why?


6. Phillip finds Henrik irritating at times because he *had an annoying way of sounding official*. Why do you think most people find “know-it-alls” to be so annoying?


7. Holland had been captured by the Nazis. T or F

8. Why had Phillip’s dad been so busy at the oil refinery lately?


9. When Phillip’s mother talks about moving back to Virginia because it is safe there, Phillip’s dad says that no place is now safe. Do you agree? Explain your answer.

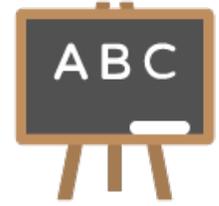

10. **Foreshadowing** is a literary device defined as *a hint or clue provided by the writer to tip the reader as to what is to come later in the story*. If the final paragraph of Chapter One is an example of foreshadowing, what is the author hinting at in terms of the future of Curacao?


# Language Activities



## A. Alliteration

The author seems to enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. An example from Chapter One is “... the sorrowful sound of his voice ...”



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

The giggle of a small child	
A vacuum cleaner	
From your imagination	

## B. The Dreaded U-Boat

**Submarines** struck terror in the hearts of those crossing the Atlantic Ocean during the Second World War. The crews of these vessels had a number of special challenges to contend with on these lengthy and dangerous excursions. Use resources in your school library or on the Internet and research three interesting facts about the German submarine of the 1940's.



1.	
2.	
3.	

## C. The Quatrain Poem.

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 the first four lines from a poem called ***The Three Voices*** by Robert Service.

*The waves have a tory to tell me,  
As I lie on the lonely beach;  
Chanting aloft in the pine-tops,  
The wind has a lesson to teach;*



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: ABAB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBA, 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 seven chapters of our novel.

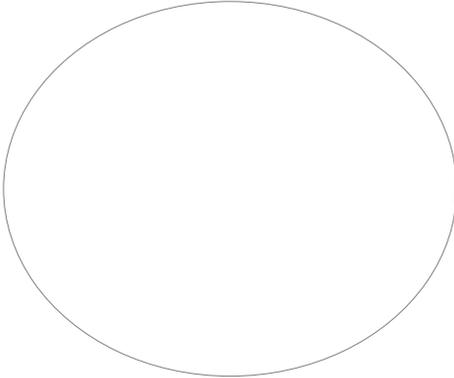
### The Quatrain Poem

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

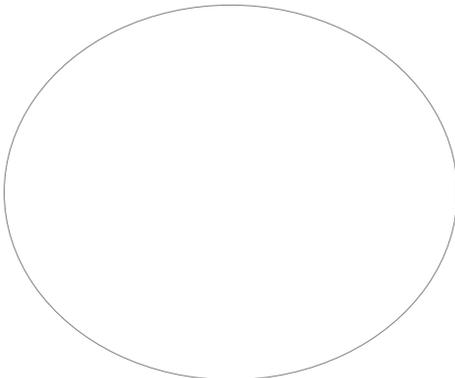
**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_


**D. 5 Ws and an H.**

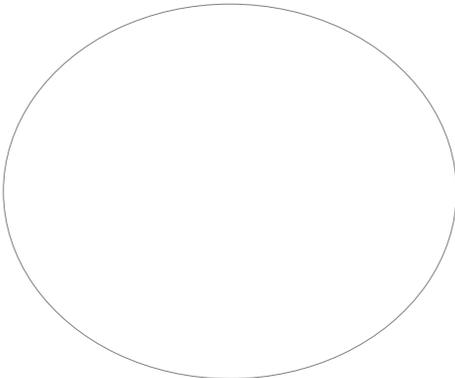
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



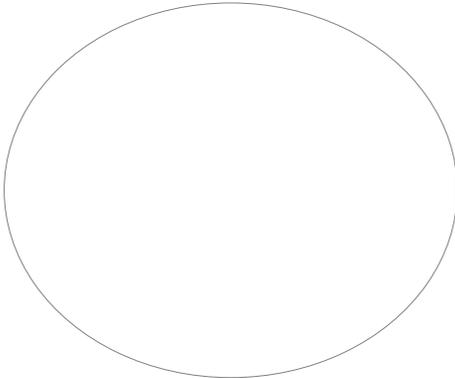
**WHO?**



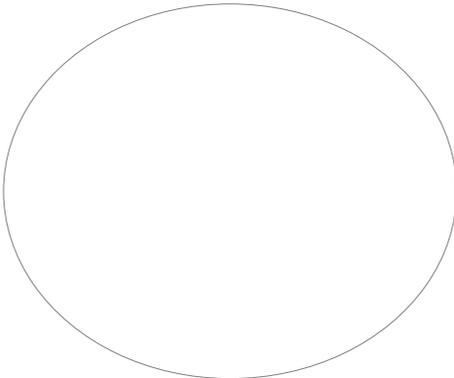
**WHAT?**



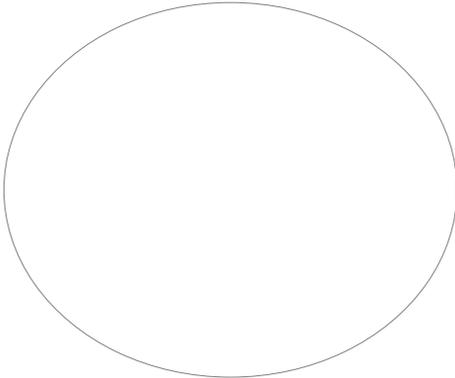
**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**



**WHY?**



**HOW?**

## Extension Activities



### 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 storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of *The Cay*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6