

# The Incredible Journey



By

Sheila Burnford

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 curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one chapter of *The Incredible Journey* 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 loyalty, courage and perseverance, Northern Ontario, wilderness survival, personal devotion, unselfish love.

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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 *singular/plural*
8. Identify *anagrams*
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. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

### 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
10. Create a friendly letter.

### Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Create an Information Card
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Create a comic strip
6. Design a wanted poster

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## Synopsis

Three beloved pets – Luath, a young Labrador retriever; Tao, a Siamese cat; and Bodger, an old bull terrier – have been separated from their family. Luath makes the decision to head for home, setting out with his companions on an incredible journey through the wilderness of northwestern Ontario.

They do not know the dangers they will face. They do not know that winter is approaching, or that home is four hundred kilometers away. They will be separated by a rushing river and attacked by wild animals. They will face injury, starvation, cold and sheer exhaustion. Individually, they would never survive. But together, can they find their way home? (Courtesy of the publisher)

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found online at such sites as the following: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Incredible\\_Journey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Incredible_Journey)

## Author Biography

*Sheila Burnford*

Sheila Burnford (1918-1984) was born in Scotland and brought up in various parts of the United Kingdom. She was a volunteer ambulance driver during World War II and emigrated to Canada in 1951 with her husband and children. They settled in Port Arthur, now Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Though Sheila Burnford wrote fiction and non-fiction books for both children and adults, *The Incredible Journey* is her most well-known work. It was published in 1961, and won the 1963 CLA *Book of the Year for Children Award*. Basing the three animal characters on family pets, she created a Canadian classic. (The Publisher)



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## Student Checklist

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment	Grade/Level	Comments

# The Incredible Journey



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 1



### Before you read the chapter:

Our novel tells the tale of a most amazing trip taken by three pets – a cat and two dogs. Describe briefly the most incredible trip you have ever taken (or would like to take).




### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

irrepressible	solitude	migratory	austere
scandalized	scoundrel	distinguish	sedate

1. Most family members regarded Uncle Jameson as a real \_\_\_\_\_.
2. My grandmother was a most \_\_\_\_\_ and forbidding old lady.
3. The dentist decided to \_\_\_\_\_ the little boy before pulling his tooth.
4. Despite feeling ill, Janie was completely \_\_\_\_\_ once the curtain opened.
5. How are you able to \_\_\_\_\_ one twin from the other?
6. Everyone in town was \_\_\_\_\_ when the police found money missing from the church.
7. "After such a busy week, I would appreciate a little \_\_\_\_\_," Graham said.
8. Geese are \_\_\_\_\_ birds.



# Questions



1. What is the **setting** for Chapter One?


2. What is your personal impression of the personality (character) of John Longridge from this chapter.


3. Who looked after the more practical needs of John Longridge?


4. List three characteristics (either **physical** or that relating to **personality**) of the three main characters of the novel.

<b>Bodger,</b> the English bull terrier			
<b>Luath,</b> the Labrador retriever			
<b>Tao,</b> the Siamese cat			

5. From what you know of the three pets so far, which one would you prefer to have as your own pet – and why?


6. What was the reason behind John Longridge's departure?


7. How did he let Mrs. Oakes know of his plans?


8. Describe the members of the family that actually owned the three pets.


9. Why were they in the care of John Longridge at this time?


10. Describe how the young Labrador retriever took to his new home and master?


11. Why might the burned page from Mr. Longridge's note be important to the story?


### Good to Know

The setting of the novel is in the beautiful province of **Ontario**, Canada. Ontario is in the center of Canada and is over one million square kilometers (415,000 sq. miles) in area and has a population of more than 14 million people. Northwestern Ontario, where the novel takes place, represents about one-half the area of the province - approximate in size to the states of California and New York combined.



# Language Activity



**A. Personification** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here's an example from Chapter Two: ... *the pale fingers of the moon*....

Describe how the moon is personified in this example.


Create your own example of personification.


**B. Alliteration** - a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's an example from Chapter One "... his powerful build, broad, noble head..."



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

A dog barking	
A dog barking	
A cat fight	
A cat fight	
Your own example	
Your own example	

C. Place the following words from this chapter in **alphabetical order**.

docile	1.
degrees	2.
doorknobs	3.
eyes	4.
disturbing	5.
dog	6.
could	7.
draw	8.
door	9.
deer	10.

### D. KWS Chart

A number of animals native to the wilds of northwestern Ontario are mentioned in Chapter One. These include: **wild ducks, moose, deer, lynx, brown and black bear, fox, beaver, muskrat, otter, fishers, mink, and marten**. Choose one of these animals (or another which is native to this part of the world - and approved by your teacher) . In each of the columns below add helpful details which would assist someone who is researching your chosen topic.

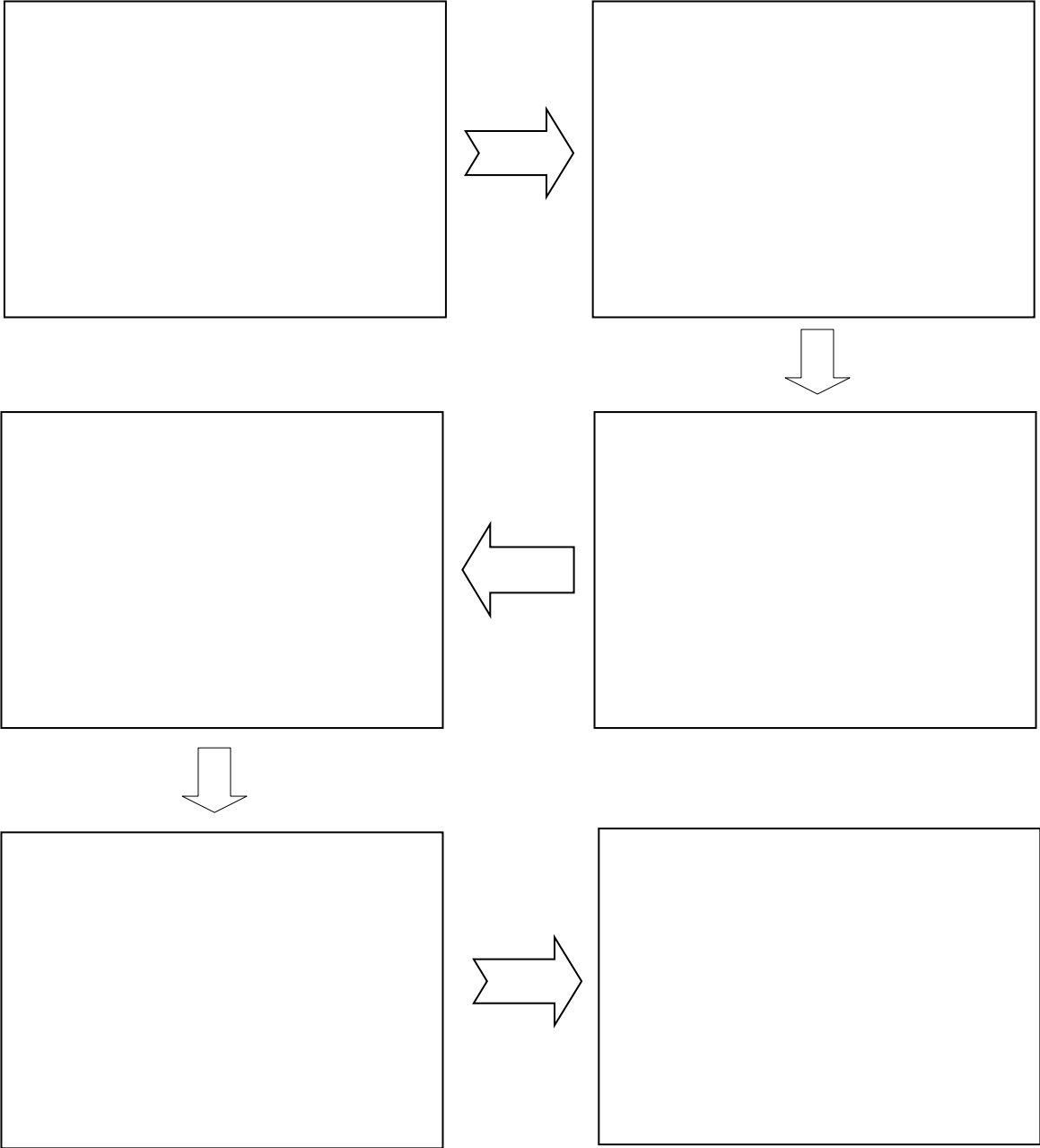


<b>Animal</b>	
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What I Know	What I Want To Learn	Possible Sources

# E. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in this chapter. 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. Poems of the North.

One of the great Canadian poets who loved to write about the north was Robert Service – known for such classic poems as *The Cremation of Sam McGee* and *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*.



There are many forms of poetry available to the aspiring poet other than the rhyming poem for which Robert Service was so adept at creating. One of the forms of poetry that is the most fun to tackle is the **Diamante** poem.

### The Diamante Poem

The diamante poem has a distinct form and a distinct shape. Directions for creating one is as follows:

**Line 1** - Noun or subject – one word.

**Line 2** – Two adjectives that describe Line 1.

**Line 3** – Three *'ing* words that describe line 1 (i.e. *playing*).

**Line 4** – Four nouns – the first two are connected with Line 1, the last two are connected with Line 7.

**Line 5** – Three *'ing* words that describe Line 7.

**Line 6** – Two adjectives that describe Line 7.

**Line 7** – One noun synonym for the subject.

Following the above instructions, try your hand at writing a diamante poem using an idea, event or character from Chapter One of the novel as your inspiration.

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


## 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 storyboard below illustrating the events described in this section of **The Incredible Journey**. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6