

The King's Fifth



By
Scott O'Dell

A Novel Study
by Nat and Joel Reed

The King's Fifth

By Scott O'Dell



Table of Contents

Suggestions and Expectations	3
List of Skills	4
Synopsis / Author Biography	5
Student Checklist	6
Reproducible Student Booklet	7
Answer Key	77

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.

Copyright © 2024 Nat Reed
Revisions Completed in 2025
All rights reserved by author.

Permission to copy for single classroom use only.
Electronic distribution limited to single classroom use only.
Not for public display.

The King's Fifth

By Scott O'Dell



Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Most chapters of the novel study focus on 3 chapters of ***The King's Fifth*** 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 (page 7) as well as a Checklist (page 6) are included so that students may keep 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 16th Century North America; Spanish Conquistadors' exploration of the New World; greed and betrayal; endurance; nobility; courage, compassion; heroism, sacrifice; friendship, personal growth.

The King's Fifth

By Scott O'Dell

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

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/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 about 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

The King's Fifth

By Scott O'Dell



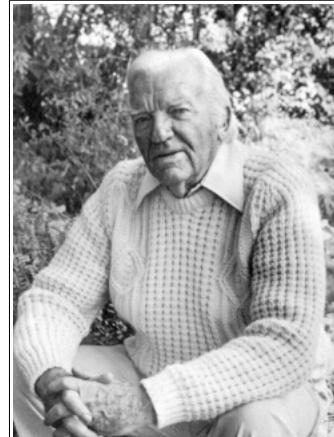
Synopsis

The King's Fifth is an historical fiction novel for Young Readers written by Newbery winner, Scott Odell. The novel was the inspiration for the cartoon TV series The Mysterious Cities of Gold. It describes, from the point of view of a teenage Spanish Conquistador, how the European search for gold in the New World of the Americas affected people's lives and minds. The title refers to the one fifth share of spoils expected by the Spanish Crown.

The story takes place in a time when the Spanish adventurers, known as Conquistadors, colonized and devastated the New World of the Americas in search of the mythical gold treasures. [Adapted from Wikipedia]

Author Biography Scott O'Dell

Scott O'Dell (1898 – 1989), one of the most respected authors of historical fiction, received the Newbery Medal, three Newbery Honor Awards, and the Hans Christian Anderson Author Medal, the highest international recognition for a body of work by an author of books for young readers. His many books include *Island of the Blue Dolphins*; *Black Star, Bright Dawn*; *Streams in the River*, *River to the Sea*; and *The Black Pearl*. He was born O'Dell Gabriel Scott in Los Angeles, but when his name appeared incorrectly on a book, he decided to keep the name Scott O'Dell. He served in the air force during World War I. Before becoming a full-time writer he was a cameraman and technical director.
(Biography adapted from the publisher)



The King's Fifth

By Scott O'Dell



Student Checklist

Student Name

The King's Fifth



By Scott O'Dell

Name:

The King's Fifth

By Scott O'Dell

Chapters: Prologue to end of 3



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *The King's Fifth* is a 17-year-old cartographer, Estéban de Sandoval living in 16th Century North America. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you've seen. Who would you say is your *most favorite* character ever? What made you select this person?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

labyrinth	evasive	garbanzos	cudgel	scrivener
minotaur	Cordonazo	elaborate	transom	countenance

1. The _____ winds are southerly hurricane winds along the Pacific coasts.
2. Weston threatened to beat his friend over the head with a _____.
3. A _____ is a monster which is half bull and half man.
4. Her _____ turned bright red when Robbie complimented her.
5. “You will have to _____ on your answer, Marsha,” Mrs. Lewis said.
6. If you are not careful, you can easily get hopelessly lost in the _____.
7. He earned his living as a public copyist or what is known as a _____.
8. Many Americans refer to _____ as chick peas.
9. When questioned, the police found Martin's responses to be quite _____.
10. A _____ is the flat surface forming the stern of the boat.

Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story at the beginning of The Prologue (Time and Place).

2. The length of a **league** seems to vary depending upon the definition of a particular country. It was loosely based on the distance a person could walk in one hour. In England, what is considered the length of a league in miles (or kilometers) at sea (nautical miles)?

--

3. What did the jailer, Don Felipe, propose to Estéban with regard to the hidden gold?

4. Answer True or False:

- a) Estéban received a diploma in cartography. True or False
- b) To reach the treasure Estéban realizes he must find a way through the labyrinth which leads to the lair of the dragon. True or False
- c) Estéban swore an oath to be loyal to Admiral Alarcón. True or False
- d) The Mar de Cortés on the novel's map is today called the Gulf of California. True or False

5. Although it appears that explorers reached Cíbola, the Seven Cities of God, what has so far prevented others from reaching this area?

6. How does Mendoza distinguish between a cartographer and a copyist?

7. What scheme is proposed to Estéban by Mendoza. Why does he need Estéban along?

8. Describe how the Admiral outfoxed Mendoza.

9. Describe what occurred shortly after Mendoza and the others left the ship that put their lives in peril.

10. What do the events of these chapters reveal about the character of Mendoza?

Language Activities



A. The City of Ronda

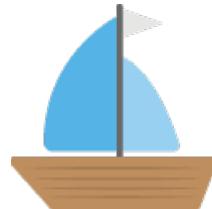
Estéban states that he is from the mountaintop city of Ronda, in Spain. Ronda is a spectacular-looking community set on the edge of a deep gorge. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three additional facts about this city and record them below.

1	
2	
3	

B. Personification

is giving human qualities to something that is not human.

The following is an example taken from Chapter Three: *Either one by one we would be plucked from the boat by the steel fingers of the Cordonazo, or we would founder at once, together.*



Describe how the Cordonazo (a great wind) is 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.

C. A Quatrain Poem Celebrates Buried Treasures.

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 of the famous poem, *Treasure Trove*, written by the renowned poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*Would you like to find a treasure,
In the woods, by your house in July?
Buried in the stream, by that old oak tree,
Gotta get it when the stream bed's dry.*



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, 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 topics established in the first few chapters of our novel (like *mutinies* or *lost treasures*).

The Quatrain Poem

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

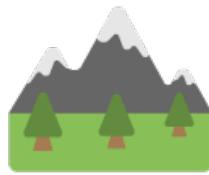
Title: _____

D. Next to each pair of words indicate whether each is an example of a Synonym (S), Antonym (A), or Homophone (H).

1	country - nation		6	provisions - supplies	
2	elaborate - plain		7	cartographer - map-maker	
3	flagon - container		8	shallows - depths	
4	bore - boar		9	time - thyme	
5	countenance - visage		10	enliven - dishearten	

E. 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 2? Why do you think the author ended the chapter this way?



F. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from the prologue is: *He is tall, with a long, thin forehead and a jaw like a cudgel.*

What is being compared in this example?

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

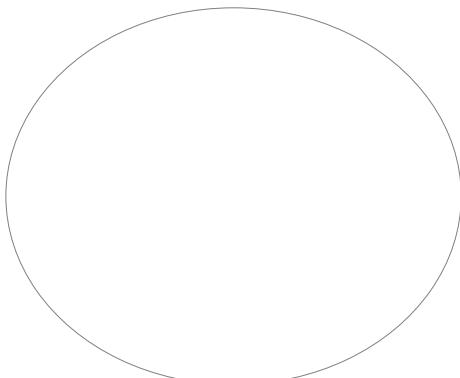
a) an owl sitting in a tree at night

b) a sailing ship in a storm

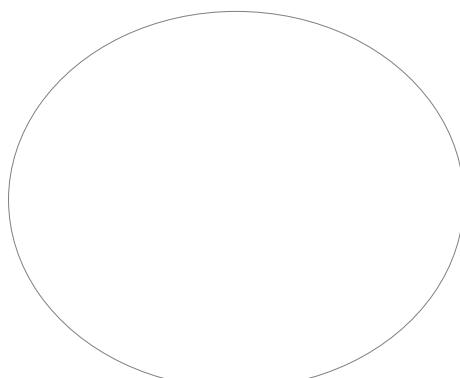
c) your choice

G. 5 Ws and an H.

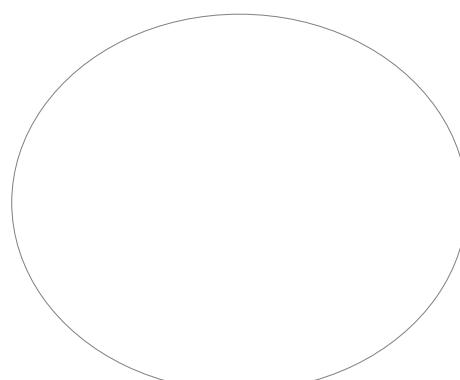
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



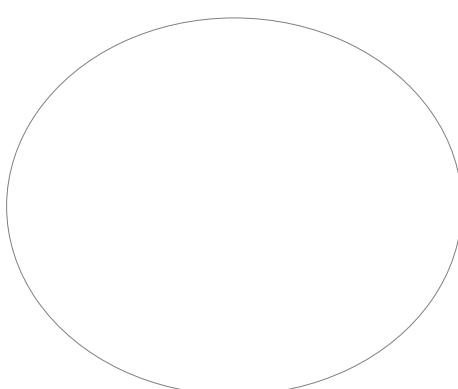
WHO?



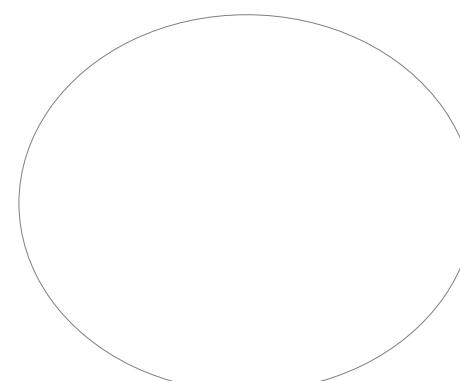
WHAT?



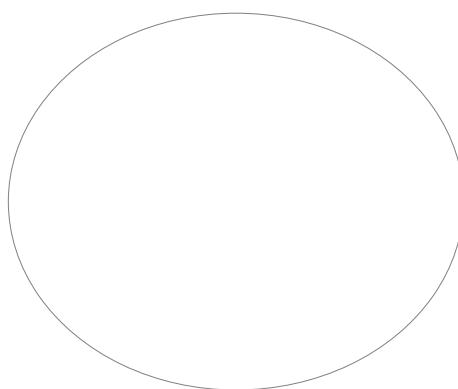
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A story-board can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel. Complete the story-board below illustrating the events described in this section our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6