

The Mouse With The Question Mark Tail



By

Richard Peck

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

The Mouse With The Question Mark Tail

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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 *The Mouse with the Question Mark Tail* and is comprised of five of the following different 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 Great Britain's royal family, mice and bats, friendship, loyalty, personal growth, trust, heroism and courage.

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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 *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 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

The Mouse With The Question Mark Tail

By *Richard Peck*



Synopsis

The tiniest mouse in the Royal Mews is such a mystery, he doesn't even know his own name. He scampers off on an epic adventure in and around Buckingham Palace with a plan to seek the advice of Queen Victoria. The exhilarating journey takes him to strange and wonderful places, but will it help him discover who he is and where he came from? This delightful follow-up to the acclaimed *Secrets at Sea* from Newbery Medal winner Richard Peck is full of laughs, surprises and excitement. [The Publisher]

Author Biography

Richard Peck

Richard Peck was born and brought up in Decatur, Illinois, about a three-hour car ride from Chicago. His first writing job was in the United States army in Germany where he was assigned the job of ghost-writing sermons for chaplains.

His four most recent novels are set in the part of the world that the author most likes to celebrate. In Mr. Peck's own words: "*Strays Like Us* is a story about a girl being fostered in one of those small, old-fashioned towns where it's hard to be a stranger. *A Long Way From Chicago* and *A Year Down Yonder*, two books that have changed my life, are set in the farm town where my father grew up. Grandma Dowdel's house is the house where my grandmother lived: a tall jigsaw gothic with lightning rods. My newest novel is *Fair Weather* in which three farm kids see the future unfolding before them at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893."



The Mouse With The Question Mark Tail



By Richard Peck

Name: _____

The Mouse With The Question Mark Tail

By Richard Peck

Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *The Mouse with the Question Mark Tail* is a tiny mouse without a name who lives in the Royal Mews during the reign of Queen Victoria. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

occasional	flailing	remnants	upholstery
pathetic	curiosity	pleated	valuable

1. When my mother attended high school _____ skirts were quite popular.
2. Betty was filled with _____ when she was told she was going to summer camp.
3. Except for the _____ visitor, no one ever went near the old farmhouse.
4. The old sofa's _____ is in need of repair.
5. Without warning Chelsea began _____ her arms and legs.
6. The _____ of the quilt were strewn all over the bedroom floor.
7. Kelly gave such a _____ performance that the audience began to boo and hiss.
8. The urn was a _____ Chinese artifact.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story for much of the first chapter?

2. Define **mews** (as in Royal Mews).

3. List two things which were unusual about Mouse Minor's appearance.

1.	
2.	

4. Aunt Marigold loves to use **expressions**. Finish the following: *Least said, soonest _____*.

5. What was the Great Truth and the Central Secret of the British Empire?

6. What did Mouse Minor believe was the true story of how he came to be in the Mews?

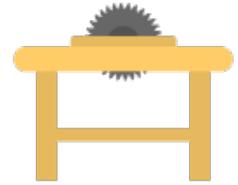
7. What was rather mysterious about Mouse Minor's mother?

Language Activities



A. 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 *The Mouse with the Question Mark Tail*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
horse		Where the lake meets the land.
lump		A fruit.
starve		Bigger than.
doors		Smells.
slept		Furs.
words		An ancient weapon.
lived		Satan.

Now find two additional words from the first chapter which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.

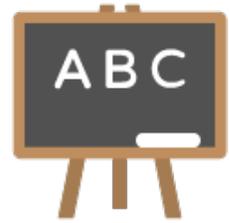
Word	Anagram	Clue

Good to Know ~ Queen Victoria

Queen Victoria (the great-great-grandmother of **Queen Elizabeth II**) is an important character in this novel. Queen Victoria was the Queen of Great Britain and the British Commonwealth from 1837 to 1901. Victoria married her first cousin, Prince Albert and together they had nine children. When her husband died in 1861, Victoria was devastated and wore black for the rest of her life. On Sunday, June 20, 1897 the nation celebrated Victoria's jubilee (60 years on the throne) – this is about when our novel takes place.



B. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's one such example: from Chapter One: *For every job a human holds....*



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

A galloping horse.	
A cardinal in flight.	
Your choice.	

C. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is: *It (the mouse's tail) was taut as a fiddle string.*

What is being compared in this example?

--	--

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

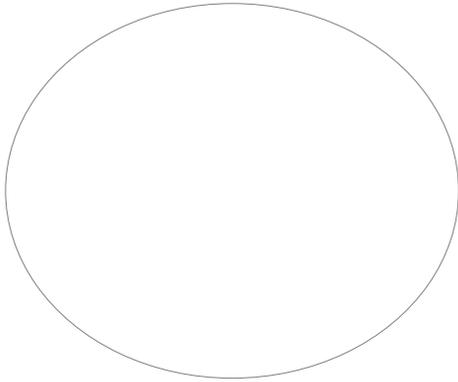
a) a duck taking to flight

b) the sound of a car horn

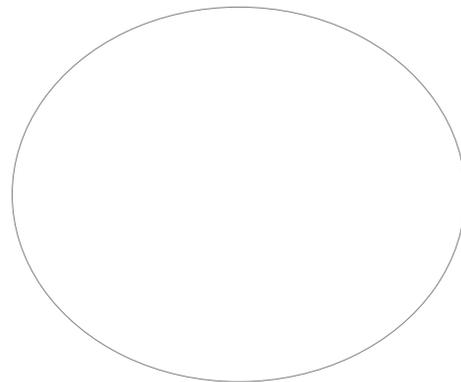
c) your choice

D. 5 Ws and an H.

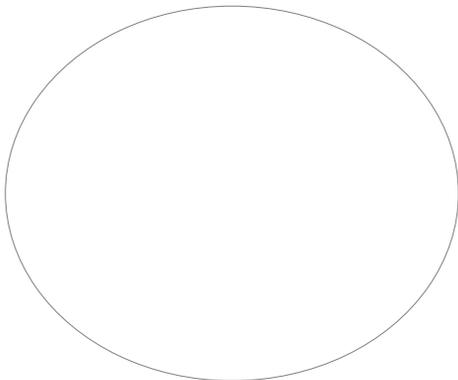
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



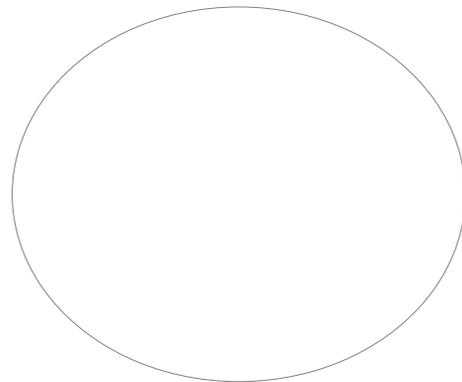
WHO?



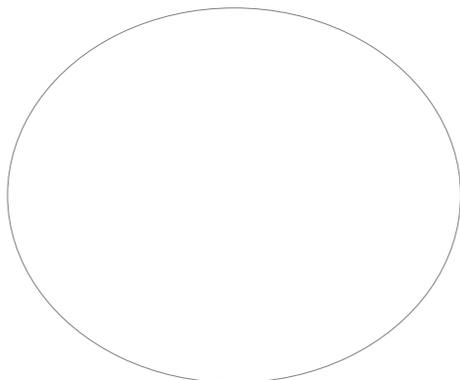
WHAT?



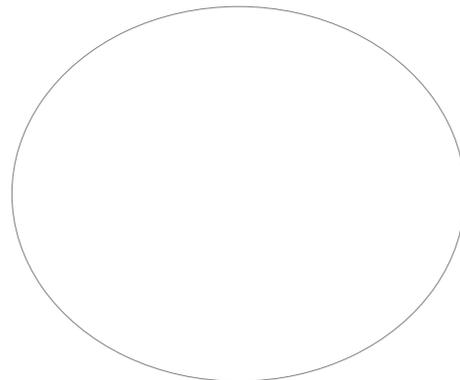
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

E. 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



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 the first chapter of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6