

# The Shakespeare Stealer



By

Gary Blackwood

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 between two and three chapters of **The Shakespeare Stealer** and is comprised 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 belonging, honesty, loyalty to one's friends, Shakespeare, Elizabethan England, the theater and acting.

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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

“Steal Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*... or else” That's the order from his fearsome master. And Widge – a poor orphan with the rare ability to write a unique coded shorthand – has no choice but to follow orders. So Widge works his way into the Globe Theater, where Shakespeare's troupe rehearses and performs. The players take him in and treat him as one of their own. Afraid to disappoint his master, but unwilling to betray his new friends, Widge is torn. Will he secretly copy down the lines? Until he decides, he must play the part of his life. (Courtesy of the publisher)

A complete synopsis can be found online at such sites as the following:  
[https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/42057.The\\_Shakespeare\\_Stealer](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/42057.The_Shakespeare_Stealer)

## Author Biography

*Gary Blackwood*

Gary Blackwood grew up in Cochran, Pennsylvania and attended school in a one room schoolhouse. He graduated with a B.A. in English from Grove City College in Pennsylvania. While a college student, Blackwood published his first short story, *Cliffs of Gold*, in *Twelve/ Fifteen* magazine. Blackwood's first book was *The Lion and the Unicorn*, which he published when he was nineteen. He has sold dozens of stories to children's magazines, and has published twenty-one novels for young adults and middle readers. Over the years, he has travelled all over the country, spreading his stories and answering the questions of young readers about his books. Blackwood has also written half a dozen plays which have been produced in regional and universities theaters.



Biography adapted from [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)

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## Student Checklist

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

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

# The Shakespeare Stealer



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

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## Chapters 1-2



### Before you read the chapter:

No doubt most authors put a great deal of thought into the titles they give to their books. On a scale of 1-10 ( ten being the best), how would you rank *The Shakespeare Stealer* as a title? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the title of your favorite novel? Why?




### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

transcribe	reprimand	frugal	grotesque
indecipherable	exception	adept	expediency

1. Jonas asked me to \_\_\_\_\_ the poem into my notebook word for word.
2. Mackenzie was very \_\_\_\_\_ at juggling bowling pins.
3. His Halloween mask was the most \_\_\_\_\_ I have ever seen.
4. His penmanship was almost \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Scrooge McDuck is so \_\_\_\_\_ that he hardly ever buys anything new.
6. Every waking decision is governed by \_\_\_\_\_ and good judgment.
7. Kelly received a stern \_\_\_\_\_ for being out so late.
8. "I will not make an \_\_\_\_\_ to the rule," she exclaimed loudly.



# Questions



1. What is the **setting** for most of Chapter Two?


2. Describe how Widge got his name.


3. Widge was trained in the art of **charactery**. Describe what is meant by this term.


4. What were the circumstances which caused Dr. Bright to receive a reprimand from the church?


5. How many years did Widge spend with the Bright family? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Think of three appropriate **adjectives** which would describe each of these three characters:

Widge	1.	2.	3.
Dr. Bright	1.	2.	3.
The stranger	1.	2.	3.

7. For what purpose did the stranger visit Dr. Bright and was was the result of their meeting?


8. Describe how Widge was feeling at the end of Chapter Two.


### Good to Know

The author mentions that the novel takes place in the year 1587, in the 29<sup>th</sup> year of Queen Elizabeth I's reign. (Queen Elizabeth makes an appearance later in the novel.) **Queen Elizabeth I** reigned 1558 -1603, during one of the most illustrious periods in the history of England. She was England's longest serving queen (44 years, 127) for many years until surpassed by Queen Victoria who reigned for 63 years, 216 days. Queen Elizabeth II surpassed her great great grandmother, Victoria, on 9 September 2015 to become England's longest-serving monarch.



### Language Activity



**A. Personification** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here's an example from Chapter Two: *To the unschooled eye....*

Describe how the eye is personified in this example.


Create your own example of personification.


**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 Two "... the art of short, swift, and secret writing..."



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

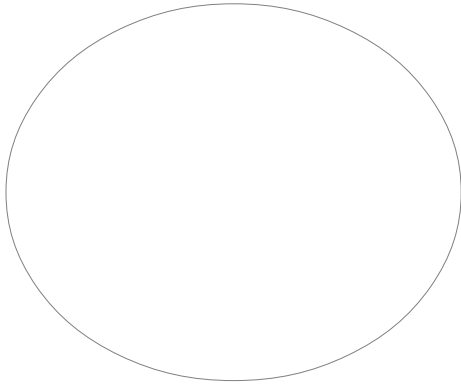
The sound of an ambulance siren	
A moss-covered rock	
Your own example	

**C.** Place the following words from these chapters in **alphabetical order**.

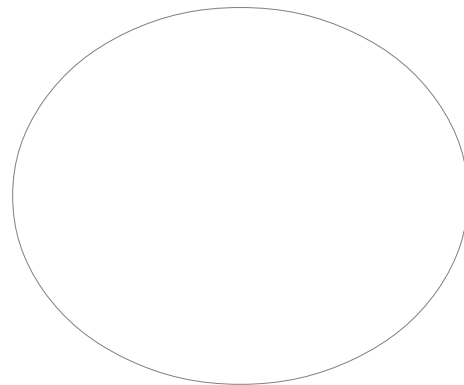
pigwidgeon	1.
possible	2.
pitch	3.
prospects	4.
person's	5.
north	6.
pig	7.
prepare	8.
secretly	9.
potion	10.

## D. 5 Ws and an H.

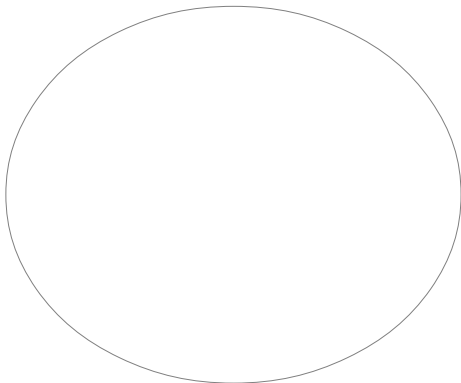
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



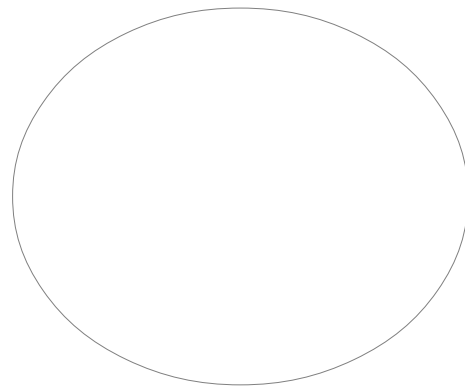
***WHO?***



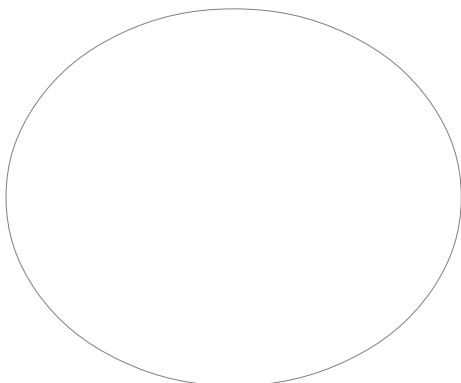
***WHAT?***



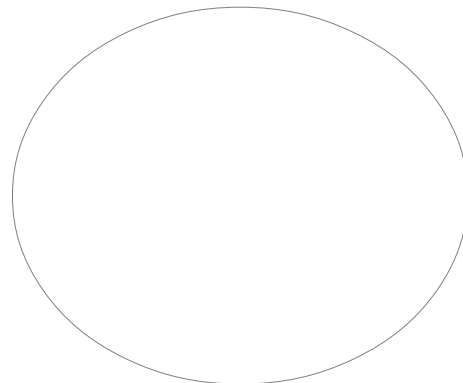
***WHEN?***



***WHERE?***



***WHY?***



***HOW?***

## Extension Activities



### A. 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 Shakespeare Stealer**. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6

## B. The Shakespearean Sonnet

The sonnets of Shakespeare are referred to in this exciting novel. A sonnet is a poem which expresses thought, emotion or idea. It has a very distinct form, usually of 14 lines which are formed by three quatrains with a rhyming couplet for the last two lines.

### An Example! - A Shakespearean Sonnet Poem

(The rhyming scheme has been placed in brackets at the end of each line.)

#### Sonnet 130

My Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;	(a)
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;	(b)
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;	(a)
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.	(b)
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,	(c)
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;	(d)
And in some perfumes is there more delight	(c)
There in the breath that from my mistress reeks.	(d)
I love to hear her speak; yet well I know	(e)
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;	(f)
I grant I never saw a goddess go;	(e)
My mistress, when she walks' treads on the ground.	(f)
Any yet, by heaven, I think my love is rare	(g)
As any she belied with false compare.	(g)

Now try your hand at writing the first stanza of a sonnet which follows the above format.
