

# The Winter Room



By

Gary Paulsen

A Novel Study  
by Nat Reed

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## Table of Contents

Suggestions and Expectations	3
List of Skills	4
Synopsis / Author Biography	5
Student Checklist	6
Reproducible Student Booklet	7
Answer Key	59

**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 Winter Room* and is comprised of four different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language and Extension Activities

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking.

### 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.**

Students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included as well as a **Student Checklist**.

**Themes** and **topics** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include farming, farm animals, Norway, lumbering, Minnesota, the importance of family and friendship, the value of hard work.

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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 *anagrams*
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*
14. Identification of a *cliffhanger*

### 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. Five W's Chart

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research/Research Organizer
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
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 an Information Card

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## Synopsis

Following the turn of the seasons, eleven-year-old Eldon traces the daily routines of his life on a farm and his relationship with his older brother, Wayne. During the winter, with little work to be done on the farm, Eldon and Wayne spend the quiet hours with their family, listening to their Uncle David's stories. But Eldon soon learns that, although he has lived on the same farm, in the same house with his uncle for eleven springs, summers, and winters, he hardly knows him. When Uncle David tells the story of "The Woodcutter", Eldon immediately understands that this story is different from any other. It is a powerful and terrible story that changes everything for the brothers. [Courtesy of the publisher]

## Author Biography

*Gary Paulsen*

Gary Paulsen, a renowned author of novels for young people, presently lives in New Mexico. Three of Gary Paulsen's novels have been acclaimed as Newbery Honor Books: **Hatchet**, **Dogsong**, and **The Winter Room**. **The River** is Gary's exciting sequel to **Hatchet**. His other novels include: **Brian's Winter** (sequel), **Brian's Return** (sequel), **Canyons**, **The Crossing**, **Dancing Carl**, **The Island**, **Popcorn Days** and **Buttermilk Nights**, **Sentries**, **Tracker**, **Woodsong**, **The Legend of Red Horse Canyon**, **Escape From Fire Mountain**, **Danger on Midnight River**.



Gary Paulsen is an avid outdoors-man who competed in the Iditarod, a dog sled race across Alaska. He also frequently sails the Pacific Ocean.



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

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## Chapter 1 - Spring



### Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *The Winter Room* is Eldon, an eleven-year-old boy who has spent his entire life on the family farm in Minnesota. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels that 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.

fertilizer	decoration	positioned	granary	stanchions
harmonica	separator	sidekick	posse	halter

1. Marshall Dillon assembled a large \_\_\_\_\_ to ride after the bandits who had robbed the local bank.
2. Sarah placed the colorful \_\_\_\_\_ in the middle of the birthday cake.
3. The cowboy grabbed the horse by its \_\_\_\_\_ and swung himself into the saddle.
4. Uncle David pulled the \_\_\_\_\_ out of his shirt pocket and played a soft mournful tune for the small audience.

5. Eldon always regarded himself as something of a \_\_\_\_\_ to his big brother, Wayne.
6. Charlie \_\_\_\_\_ himself beside the vaulting horse to spot for his sister.
7. It is important for a farmer to spread \_\_\_\_\_ on his fields so that his crops have a better chance of flourishing.
8. Farmer Petersen kept a good supply of his buckwheat crop in the \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ does a good job of dividing the wheat from the chaff.
10. The cows came into the barn and put their heads through wooden slots called \_\_\_\_\_.

## Questions



1. What is the **setting** of this novel?


2. What was one thing about spring that Eldon didn't like?


3. Practicing your math. Eldon says that their farm is 87 cleared acres. If an American football field is about 1.3 acres, about how many football fields would fit on their farm? Show your work below.

--

4. What five crops are grown on their farm?

- |                                      |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a) corn, tobacco, cotton, rye, wheat | b) corn, oats, barley, flax, wheat |
| c) oats, rye, flax, potatoes, barley | d) pumpkin, oats, rye, corn, agave |

5. Eldon gives a very detailed description of their home. Do you think you would enjoy living in such a home? Why or why not?


6. Think of one good **adjective** which would accurately describe the personality of the main character. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Describe why Wayne tried to get Eldon to feed one particularly difficult calf? What did the calf do that made Wayne so reluctant to feed it?


8. What brainwave did Wayne get after reading Zane Grey's book, ***Guns Along the Powder River?***


- b. Describe how Wayne attempted to duplicate this feat – and what actually happened when he did.


**Good to Know**

Eldon mentions a **popple stump** in this chapter. A popple tree (or populus tremuloides) is a deciduous tree native to cool areas of North America. *Popple* is a Swedish word for aspen trees.

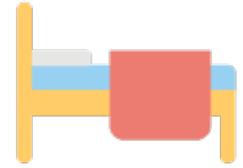


# Language Activities



## 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 **PAN** can also form the word **NAP**. 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.

The words in the left-hand column are found in Chapter 1 of our novel.

Word	Anagram	Clue
small		Shopping centers
clean		Short stabbing spear
grade		Was extremely angry
edges		A grass-like plant
manger		Males who collect discarded clothing
period		More sleepy

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

nose	1.
manure	2.
Nels	3.
nodded	4.
picture	5.
new	6.
none	7.
Norwegian	8.
knew	9.
Norway	10.

## C. The Simile.

A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. We find an example of a simile in this chapter: “... the wood is shiny and as glass smooth as the salt block in the south pasture....” In this example, the wood is compared to the salt block in the south pasture.

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

a	the roar of a passing freight train
b	the cry of a frustrated baby
c	your own example

## D. Homophones

This section includes a number of examples of words that have homophones. Examples of homophones include **horse** – **hoarse** and **way** – **weigh**. Two words are **homophones** if they have the same pronunciation but different meanings, origins, or spelling.



Think of two more examples of homophones and use each in a sentence showing the meaning of each word quite clearly.

### Example 1

Homophones	Sentence
1	
2	

### Example 2

Homophones	Sentence
1	
2	

## E. 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?**



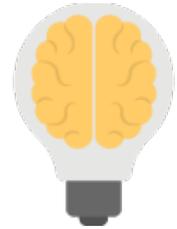
**HOW?**

## F. 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 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 Winter Room*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6