

Woods Runner



By
Gary Paulsen

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](https://www.novelstudies.org).

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each of the ten chapters of the novel study focuses on two chapters of **Woods Runner** 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 the American War of Independence; coming of age; survival; courage; family; endurance; inner growth.

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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 about 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. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

Samuel, 13, spends his days in the forest, hunting for food for his family. He has grown up on the frontier of a British colony, America. Far from any town, or news of the war against the King that American patriots have begun near Boston.

But the war comes to them. British soldiers and Iroquois attack. Samuel's parents are taken away, prisoners. Samuel follows, hiding, moving silently, determined to find a way to rescue them. Each day he confronts the enemy, and the tragedy and horror of this war. But he also discovers allies, men and women working secretly for the patriot cause. And he learns that he must go deep into enemy territory to find his parents: all the way to the British headquarters, New York City. [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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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-2 (Including “Communication”)



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of **Woods Runner** is Samuel Lehi Smith, a courageous 13-year-old boy living in far western Pennsylvania in 1776. Think back on some of your favorite characters from 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.

meandered	courteous	subdued	contemplation
pulverize	ornate	convulsive	marauding

1. With a _____ explosion of muscle, it jumped straight in the air.
2. Susan put the rock sugar into a sack and began to _____ it.
3. They moved to the wilderness so they could lead a quiet life of physical work and _____.
4. The princess was accustomed to wearing _____ gowns.
5. There was a _____ green light over everything.
6. Jack was very _____ to his elderly grandmother.
7. The settlers were always on the watch for _____ bands of outlaws.
8. The paths wandered and _____ so much that they were impossible to use.

Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One.

2. Samuel's family farm was 12 acres, which is about the size of 12 football fields. List two things about farming at this time which would be very challenging.

3. "Nothing dies of old age in the forest." How is this statement true? Or is it?

4. What reason(s) did Samuel's parents give for settling in such a remote region of Pennsylvania?

5. Why didn't Samuel kill the deer?

6. Summarize in one or two sentences the information contained in *Communication*.

7. How would you describe Isaac's personality? What news did he bring to Samuel's family?

8. What seemed to be the general attitude of the settlers in that part of Pennsylvania?

Language Activities



A. Your Favorite Genre Of Books

Woods Runner might be classified as a historical fiction novel for Young Readers. What genre of books do you enjoy the most? (i.e. mystery, humor, biography, romance, fantasy, historical fiction, science fiction, poetry, etc.) Why do you especially enjoy this type of book?



B. A simile is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from this section is: ... *moving through the woods like a knife through water ...*

What is being compared in this example?

--	--

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

a) a deer

b) a forest fire

C. Foreshadowing

Chapter 2 may contain an example of an important literary device called **foreshadowing**. Foreshadowing is defined as *a warning or indication of a future event*. Reread the last paragraph in Chapter 2. How might this remark be an example of foreshadowing? If it is an example of this literary device, predict what might be in Samuel and his family’s future.



Prediction:

D. 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, *The Hunter*, written by the renowned poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*I live real close to Kenny's Marsh,
It's full of bugs and snakes.
I like to hunt them when I can,
'Cause they make delicious steaks.*



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 nine chapters of our novel (like **The American War of Independence, deer, bear, swamps, or hermits**).

The Quatrain Poem

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

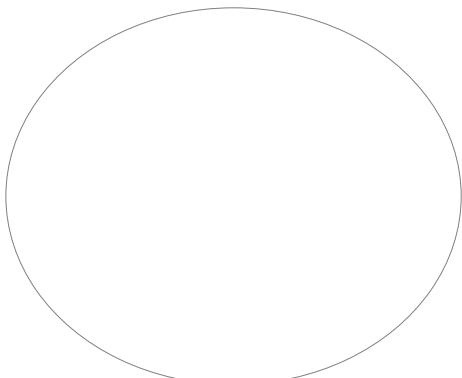
Title: _____

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

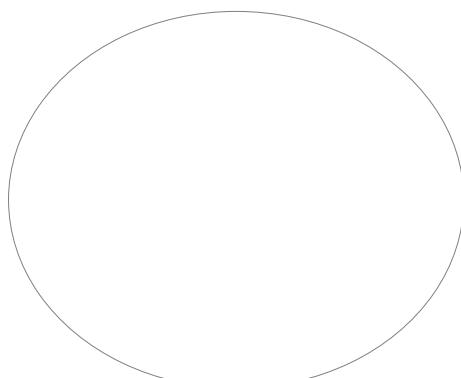
1	patient - restless		6	mere - bare	
2	homestead - residence		7	petticoat - underskirt	
3	distant - approachable		8	pear - pare	
4	hair - hare		9	caution - negligence	
5	joyous - ecstatic		10	gracious - cordial	

F. 5 Ws and an H.

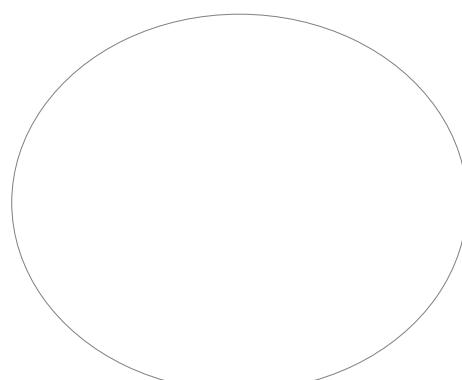
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



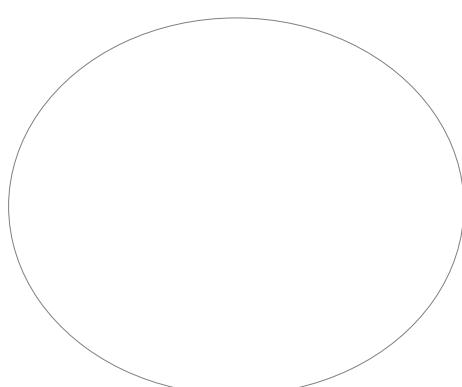
WHO?



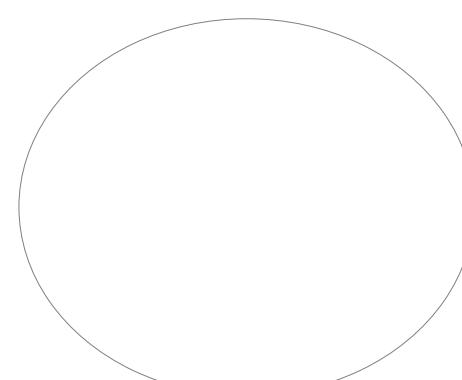
WHAT?



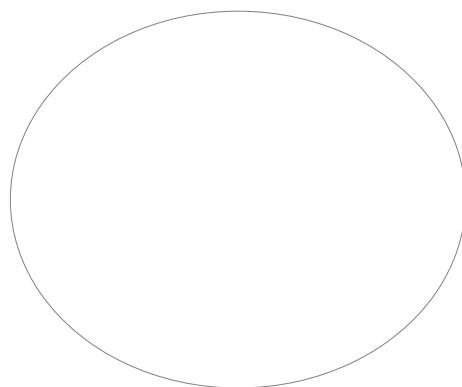
WHEN?



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