

Woodsong



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.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Most chapters of the novel study focus on one or two chapters of *Woodsong* and are comprised of four different activities:

- b. Before You Read
- c. Vocabulary Building
- d. Comprehension Questions
- e. 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 overcoming difficulty, courage and endurance, the environment, and personal 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 *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 and antagonists
3. Relating personal experiences

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
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

Gary Paulsen, the three-time Newbery Honor author, is no stranger to adventure. He has flown off the back of a dogsled and down a frozen waterfall to near disaster, and waited for a giant bear to seal his fate with one slap of a claw. He has led a team of sled dogs toward the Alaskan Mountain Range in an Iditarod – the grueling, 1180 mile dogsled race – hallucinating from lack of sleep, but determined to finish.

Here in vivid detail, Paulsen recounts several of the remarkable experiences that shaped his life and inspired his award-winning writing. [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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By Gary Paulsen

Name: _____

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels or works of nonfiction features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of **Woodsong** is actually Gary Paulsen, the author of this exciting book. 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.

paradox	tandem	precise	intent	predator
preconceived	carcass	clambering	frequent	virtually

1. Jon's _____ was to make everyone think he was left-handed?
2. The children were upset to see the _____ of a deer beside the highway.
3. It was quite a _____ that such a talented team had never won.
4. Gary Paulsen spent _____ all of his time hunting.
5. The old trapper harnessed his dog team in _____.
6. My aunt and uncle were _____ visitors of the local museum.
7. The children were all _____ to see Santa Claus.
8. Do you think she had any _____ idea of who the burglar was?
9. It is critical for an architect to be extremely _____.
10. The grizzly bear is an especially ferocious _____.

Questions



1. What is the setting of Chapter One?

2. Chapter One begins with an example of **foreshadowing** (a literary device in which the author provides clues as to upcoming events). Find an example of foreshadowing in the opening paragraphs.

3. The author believed in the fairy tale version of the forest until he was __ years old.

Good to Know - The Gangline

The **gangline** is a single line to which each dog is attached, usually in pairs, and it keeps the dogs in a tight formation ahead of the sled. This is better for forested areas or narrow trails, and is the typical harness system used in sled dog races such as the Iditarod or Yukon Quest. (<http://www.athropolis.com/arctic-facts/fact-dogs-hitch.htm>)

4. At first the deer and the wolves didn't even notice the author and his dog team.

True or False

5. What event slowed the deer down enough so that the wolves were able to catch up to it?

6. What did the man do to interrupt the wolves and what was the result?

7. Describe your impression of the first chapter?

Language Activities



A. Investigate: Brush Wolves

The author explains that the wolves he saw in this chapter were not the big timber wolves that the north country is so famous for, but **brush wolves**. Brush wolves are described in this chapter as being smaller than timber wolves, weighing about 40-50 pounds each. Your task is to do an investigation of this sometimes misunderstood creature. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research the brush wolf and record three fascinating facts from your research to share with your classmates.



1	
2	
3	

B. Choose ten words from this chapter with two or more **syllables**. Indicate the syllables by drawing a line between each syllable. **Example:** good / bye.

C. The Quatrain Poem.

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 from a poem called **My Dog Mike**, written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*I got a dog, I call him Mike,
He pulls my sled to town.
I climb on back and say "get up",
He ain't never let me down.*



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, ABBA, 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 themes established in the first seven chapters of our novel.

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	racing - meandering		6	tandem - unit	
2	close - near		7	intent - engrossed	
3	paradox - enigma		8	hole - whole	
4	innocence - corruption		9	prepared - unwilling	
5	right - rite		10	outwit - support	

E. Caviar Words

The author of this novel is noted for his use of elegant, tasteful words. Someone once stated that some words have the sound of **caviar** (rich and elegant) and others are more common (**peanut butter** words). With a colleague come up with 5 examples of each type of word. You may use any chapter of the novel to find these words.



Caviar Words	Peanut Butter Words

F. My 02¢ About Chapter 1.

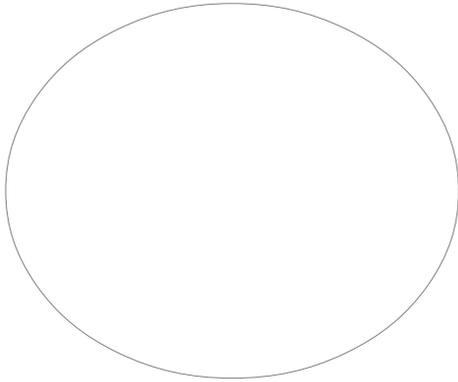
What I Liked Best:

I Didn't Like The Part:

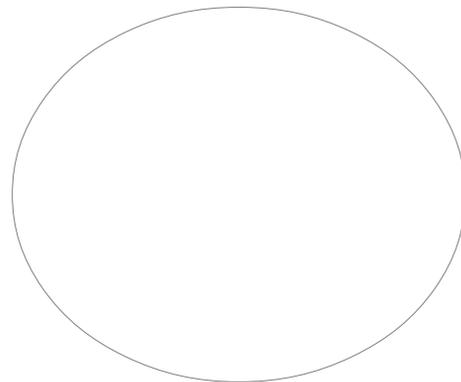
I Didn't Like It Because:

G. 5 Ws and an H.

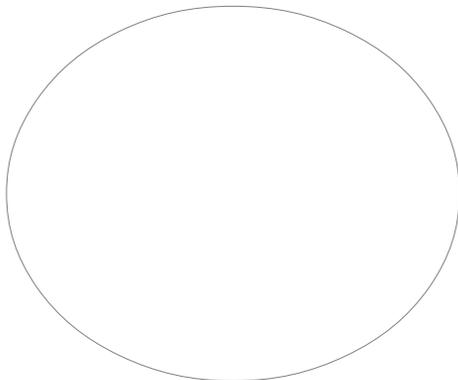
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



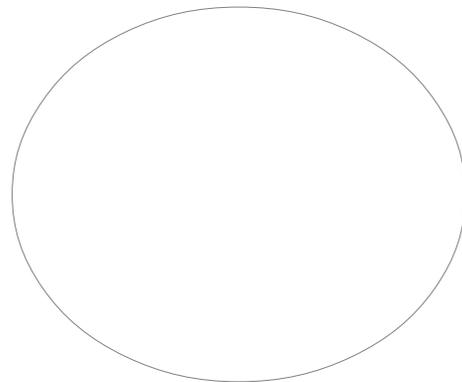
WHO?



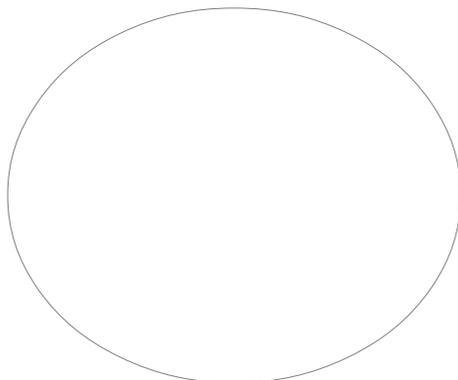
WHAT?



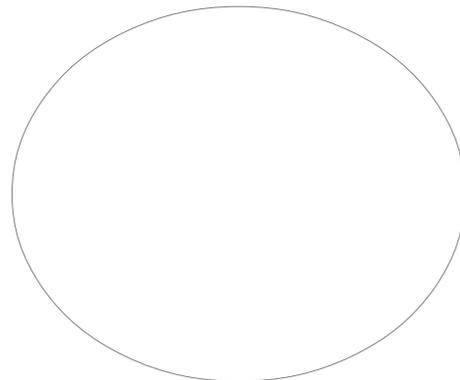
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A 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 *Woodsong*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6