

Wrecker



By
Carl Hiaasen

A Novel Study
By Nat Reed

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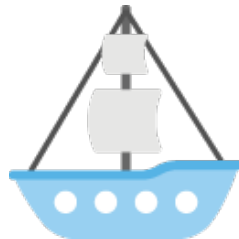


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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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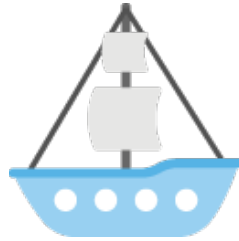
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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one or two chapters of **Wrecker** and is comprised of these 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 the following:

- 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 and **topics** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include environmentalism, the history and culture of Key West, individualism and friendship, personal growth 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 *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/antagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

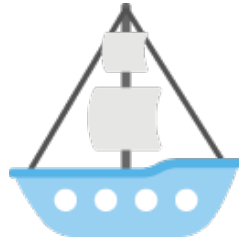
1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

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

Valdez Jones VIII calls himself Wrecker because his great-great-great-great-grandfather salvaged shipwrecks for a living. So is it destiny, irony, or just bad luck when Wrecker comes across a speedboat that has run hard aground on a sand flat? The men in the boat don't want Wrecker to call for help—in fact, they'll pay him to forget he ever saw them. Wrecker would be happy to forget, but he keeps seeing these men all over Key West—at the marina, in the cemetery, even right outside his own door. And now they want more than his silence—they want a lookout. He'll have to dive deep into their shady dealings to figure out a way to escape this tangled net. [Courtesy of the Publisher]

Author Biography

Carl Hiaasen

Carl Hiaasen was born and raised in Florida, where he still lives with his family. A graduate of the University of Florida, he wrote for *The Miami Herald* as an investigative reporter. In the early 1980s, he began writing novels with his good friend and a distinguished journalist, the late William D. Montalbano.

Together they produced three mystery thrillers -- ***Powder Burn***, ***Trap Line*** and ***A Death in China*** -- which borrowed heavily from their own reporting experiences. ***Tourist Season***, published in 1986, was Hiaasen's first solo novel. Since then, Hiaasen has published ***Skin Tight***, ***Native Tongue*** and eight national bestsellers -- ***Strip Tease***, ***Stormy Weather***, ***Lucky You***, ***Sick***

Puppy, ***Basket Case***, ***Skinny Dip***, ***Nature Girl*** and, most recently, ***Star Island***. Hiaasen made his children's book debut with ***Hoot*** (2002), which was awarded a Newbery Honor and spent more than two years on the *New York Times* bestseller lists. For young readers he went on to write ***Flush*** (2005), ***Scat*** (2009) and ***Chomp*** (2012).



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Name:

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *Wrecker* is Valdez Jones, known as *Wrecker* because his great-great-great-great-great grandfather salvaged shipwrecks for a living. 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 interesting and memorable **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

shoal	bootlegger	sanctuary	amberjack
throttle	lavender	crevice	epitaph

1. The _____ is a large vigorous sport fish found in the western Atlantic.
2. Jon found that he attracted more attention when he wore his _____ sweater to school.
3. The iguana retreated into a _____ beneath the broken grave vault.
4. Jack's uncle was a _____ who operated a still in the Nelson's Swamp.
5. The speedboat was stranded on a _____ not far from land.
6. Wrecker shoved the _____ forward and the boat quickly surged ahead.
7. The _____ read, “I told you I was sick”.
8. The villagers used the church as a _____ during the bombing.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the novel at the beginning of Chapter One?

2. What was there about the stranded men on the shoal that raised Wrecker's suspicions?

3. Why weren't there as many wrecks in that area anymore?

4. Describe your impression of Wrecker's dad.

5. What did the old British man pay Wrecker to do? Why did he perform these services at night?

6. Describe Wrecker's unusual experience that evening in the cemetery.

Language Activities



A. What Do You Know About Iguanas?

Iguanas play a rather significant role in this chapter. Wrecker describes them as gnarly green lizards that love to sun themselves on the stone markers in the cemetery. But what do you know about this gnarly creature? Did you know, for instance, that they can shed their tails and skin? Or that they can live to be 20 years old? Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three additional fascinating facts about the Iguana and record this information below.



1	
2	
3	

B. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. In Chapter One the author writes, *Chickens also roam the cemetery and disrespectfully deposit their droppings on the departed*. In this example the chickens takes on human characteristics by being *disrespectful*.



a) Why do you think personification is a literary device used by many authors?

b) Create your own example of personification.

C. 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.

Each of the words in the left-hand column are found in this section of our novel.

Word	Anagram	Clue
exist		Ways out.
early		Pass on; transfer.
trees		Abrupt.
marker		Comment.
listen		Join up.
marble		One who roams.

D. Alliteration

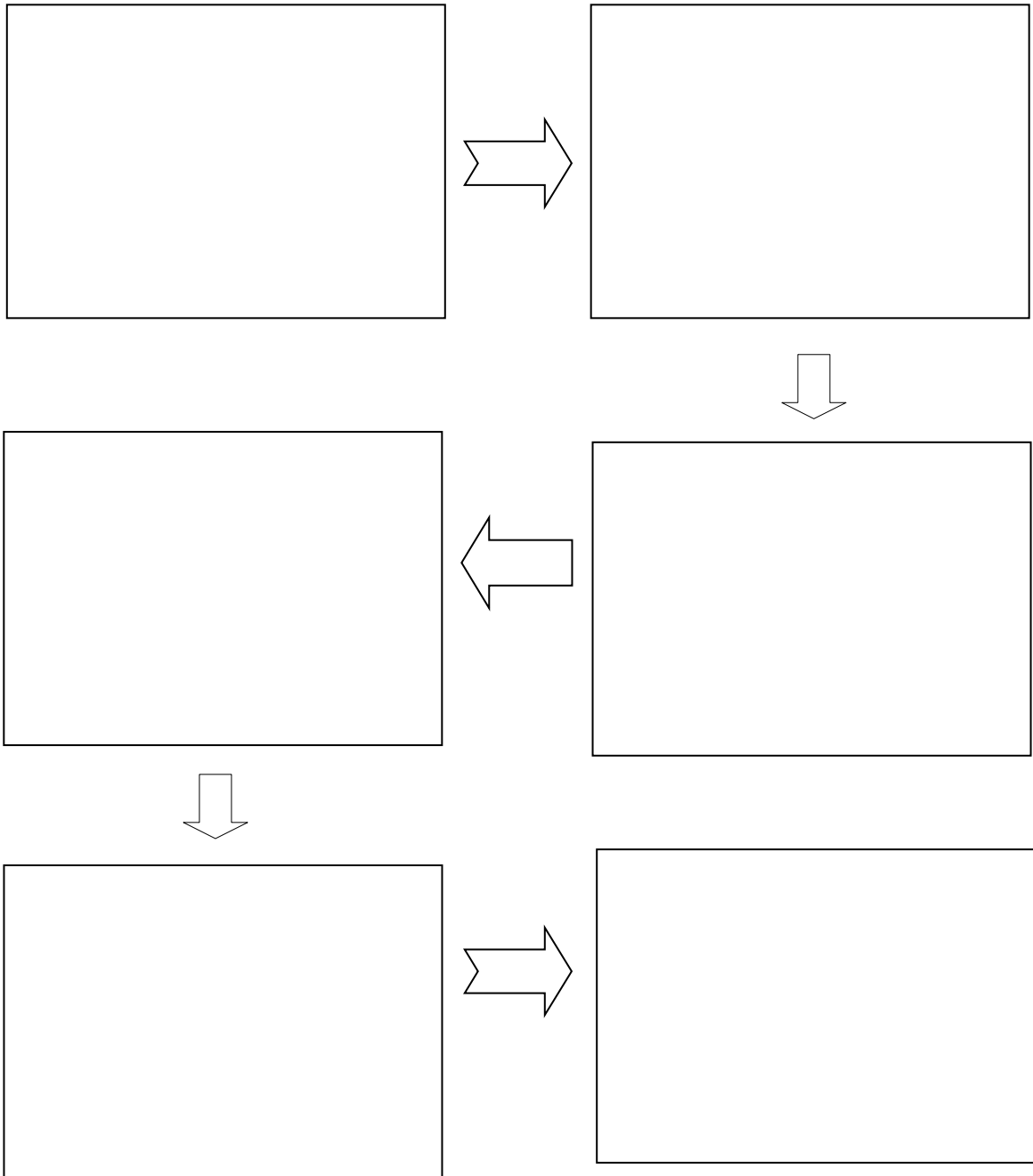
The author seems to enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the same sound is repeated at the beginning of several words. An example from Chapter One is, ... *following the sorrowful sounds . . .*

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

The roar of a speed boat.	
A shattered window.	
From your imagination	

E. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in this chapter. In each of the six boxes below list the six events that you have chosen, describing what happened and telling why you consider this to be an essential part of the story.



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

1	2
3	4
5	6