

Big Red



By

Jim Kjelgaard

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. Each chapter of the novel study focuses one chapter of **Big Red** 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 Irish setters, survival in the wilderness, the importance friends and friendship, raising dogs – dog-breeding, dog shows, perseverance and courage when facing difficult circumstances.

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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 *foreshadowing*.
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. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Chart
8. Complete a KWS Chart

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 brochure

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Synopsis

Danny Pickett is too poor to own one of Mr. Haggin's champion Irish setters, but that doesn't stop him from losing his heart to a beautiful dog he calls *Big Red*. The two are drawn to each other from the start and soon become inseparable. But their loyalty and courage are tested as they face grave danger in the harsh wilderness, including Old Majesty, a massive bear, and a fierce snowstorm. (The publisher)

"Sure fire combination of boy and dog . . . It's love at first sight, and so it will be for all who read this story." *Library Journal*

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found online at such sites as the following: <http://jimkjelgaard.com/index.html>

Author Biography

Jim Kjelgaard

Jim Kjelgaard (1910-1959) was born in New York City but spent most of his childhood in the Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania. It was these adventures in the mountains that inspired many of his novels, including *Big Red*, and instilled in him a love of nature and animals.

Jim loved to read and began writing at a very early age. His first story was published when he was a senior in high school, and soon he sold many more.

In 1941 Jim's first novel was published. It was called *Forest Patrol*, based on his adventures with his brother in the Wisconsin forest. In Jim's short lifetime he wrote many novels, but the most beloved of all is *Big Red*, which was made into a movie in 1962 by Walt Disney Studios. (The publisher)



Big Red



By Jim Kjelgaard

Name: _____

Big Red

By Jim Kjelgaard

Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *Big Red* is Danny, a seventeen-year-old boy who lives in the wilderness with his father. 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.

apparent	grotesque	cunning	gait	unattainable
varmint	vociferous	interval	tantalizing	ravenous

1. His distinctive _____ when running is easily recognizable amongst the racers.
2. There will be an _____ of fifteen minutes while the stage is being reset.
3. The scar on his arm from the war is quite _____.
4. The aroma emanating from the stove was very _____.
5. It was _____ that Matilda had no interest in learning how to skip.
6. By the time we had walked home from town, we were both _____ with hunger.
7. “Some _____ has gone and sprung the trap,” Pappy exclaimed angrily.
8. She was most _____ in making her complaints known to everyone on the airplane.
9. With extraordinary _____ the fox was able to steal the meat from our fridge.
10. Georgia realized that her dream of winning a medal at the Olympics was _____.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of Chapter One?

2. Why hadn't Old Majesty eaten the bull?

3. Give one fact about the character of each of the following people - with proof.

Danny	
Mr. Haggin	
Robert Fraley	

4. Mr. Haggin had paid _____ dollars for Champion Sylvester's Boy.

5. What was Ross's opinion of a show dog? Why?

6. Why was Danny's dad so nervous when Red showed up at their place the next morning?

7. Describe how Red proved his courage and tenacity in this chapter.

8. Why didn't Danny shoot the bear when he had the chance?

9. What surprising two offers did Mr. Haggin make to Danny?

10. Do you think Danny should have hit Robert? How might this come back to haunt him?

Good to Know

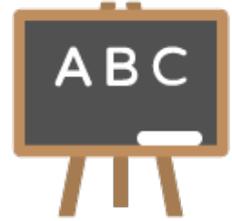
Champion Sylvester's Boy is certainly worth a lot of money - even by today's standard, but considering this book was written in 1945 - \$1000 would be worth approximately \$13,000 today. How much then would Champion Sylvester's Boy be worth in 1945 dollars today?

--

Language Activities



A. 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 One "He'd be lost in your woods, and wouldn't be worth a whoop. . . "



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

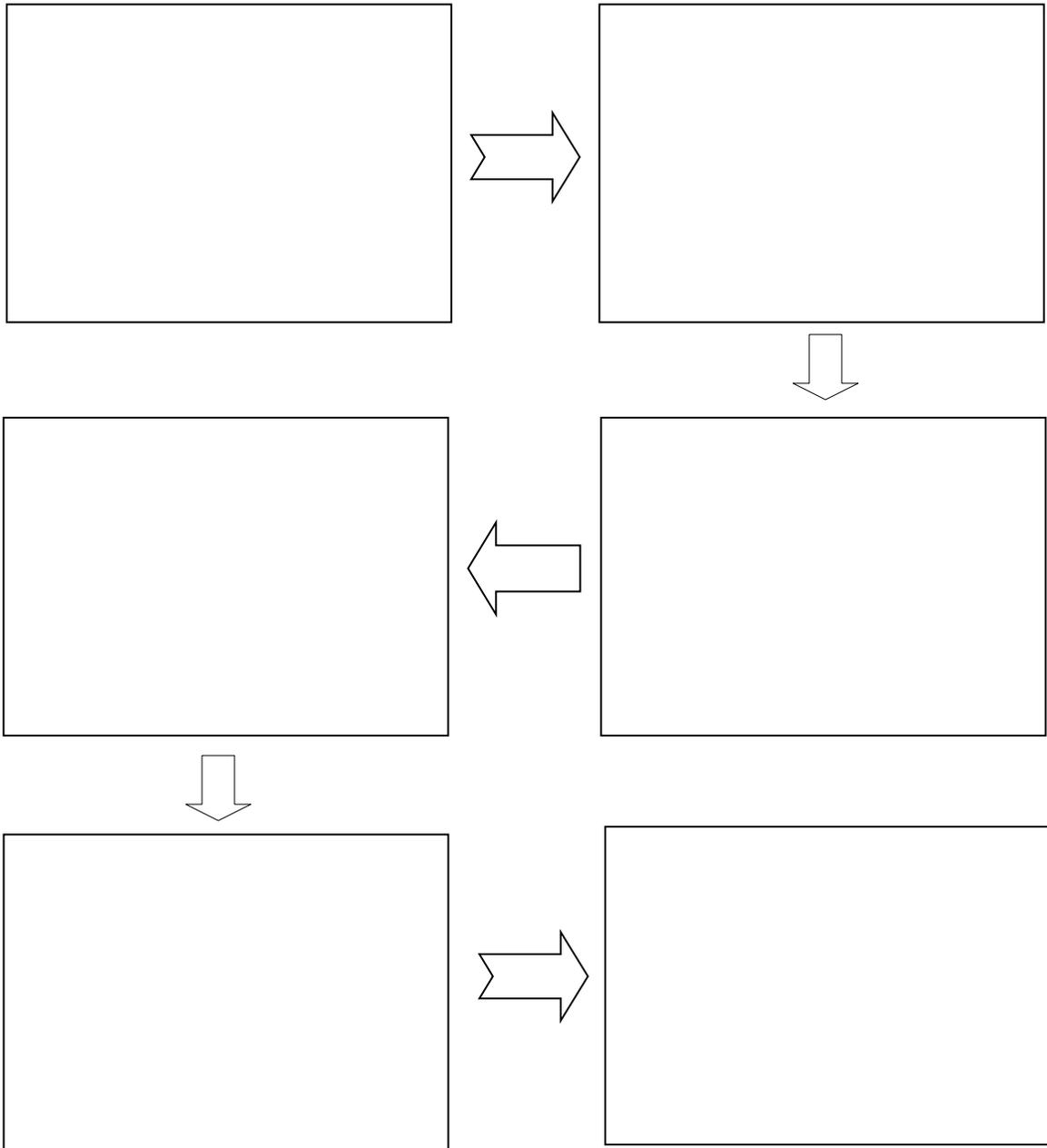
The sound of a rifle shot	
The cry of a wounded fox	

B. What is Your First Impression?

Danny and his father certainly lead lives which are very different from most people in North America. What is your first impression of Danny and Ross and the peculiar lifestyle they seem to enjoy? Predict what you think will happen to them as the novel continues.

C. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in these chapters. 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.



D. Cinquain Poems

A Cinquain poem has five lines and most often does not rhyme. Write two Cinquain poems describing two of the characters from **Big Red** using what you know about them from this novel. With your teacher's permission you may wish to collaborate with a colleague in the creation of these poems.

<p>Line 1 is one word. Line 2 is two words. Line 3 is three words. Line 4 is four words. Line five is one word.</p>	<p><i>Santa Saint Nick Long white beard Christmas Eve present-giver Jolly</i></p>
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Character 1 _____

Character 2 _____

E. 5 Ws and an H.

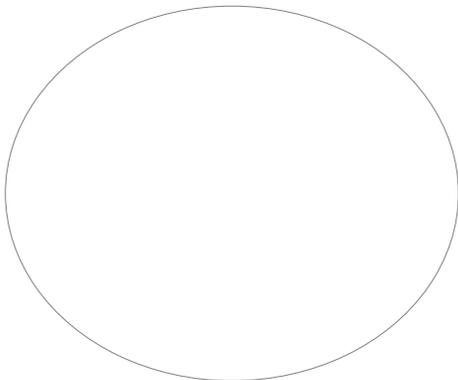
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



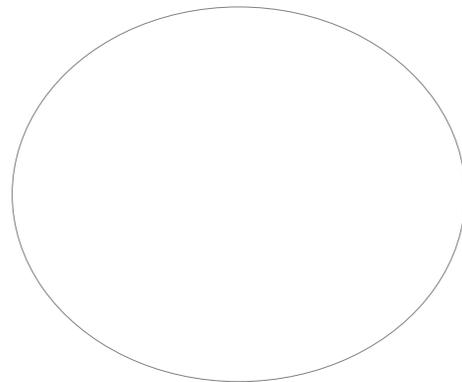
WHO?



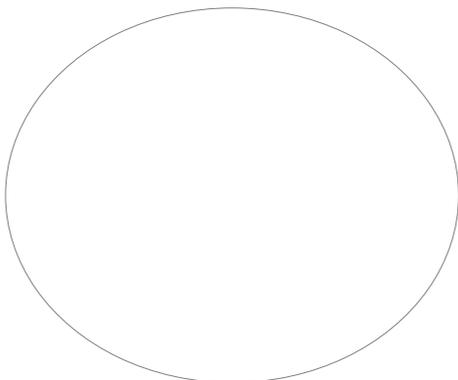
WHAT?



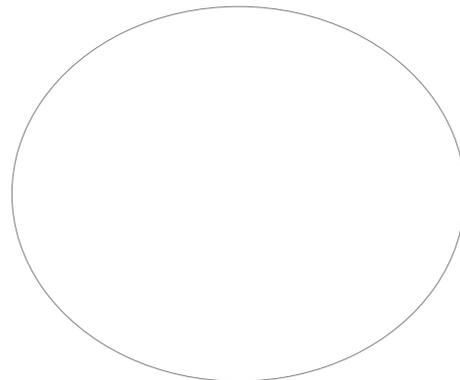
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

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 *Big Red*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6