

# Crash



By

Jerry Spinelli

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](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 between three and five chapters of **Crash** 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 bullying, sportsmanship, peer pressure, the environment, consumerism, American football, mortality.

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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 *onomatopoeia*.
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*
14. Identify *personification*.

### 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. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

### 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 wanted poster

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## Synopsis

Everybody knows Crash Coogan, seventh-grade sensation. He's been mowing down everything in his path since the time he could walk – and Penn Webb, his dweeby, vegetable-eating neighbor, is his favorite target. After all, Webb's not just a nerd, he's a cheerleader too.

Crash and his best buddy, Mike, can't think of anything more hilarious than making Webb's life miserable. But Crash starts to realize that Webb has something he may never gain, no matter how many touchdowns he scores. And when Mike takes a prank too far, maybe even for Crash, the football star has to choose which side he's really on.

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found online at such sites as the following: <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/87226.Crash>

## Author Biography

*Jerry Spinelli*

Born in 1941 in Norristown, Pennsylvania, Jerry Spinelli discovered his calling in 1957 when his high school football team won a big game. The town celebrated, his fellow students raced through the streets, but Jerry sneaked back home and marked the occasion in his own way. He wrote a poem. Later the town newspaper published it. "And," he reports, "I've been a writer ever since."

Married to Eileen Spinelli, who is also a writer, Jerry was for many years an editor for the Chilton Company. Now a full-time writer, he lives in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.

Jerry Spinelli's popular books include *Space Station Seventh Grade*, *Jason and Marceline*, *Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush?*, and *Maniac Magee*, which has won more than fifteen state children's book awards in addition to the Newbery Medal. [The Publisher]



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## Student Checklist

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

# Crash



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

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## Chapters 1-4



### Before you read the chapter:

No doubt most authors put a great deal of thought into the titles they give to their books. On a scale of 1-10 ( ten being the best), how would you rank **Crash** as a title? \_\_\_\_\_  
What is the title of your favorite novel? \_\_\_\_\_  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

personally	gawking	scrawny	moron
violence	practically	dinky	bamboozled

1. Chester was so \_\_\_\_\_ that when he wore his bathing suit you could see his ribs.
2. My father was \_\_\_\_\_ by the slick-talking salesman.
3. She is such a generous person she will give you \_\_\_\_\_ anything she owns.
4. "I would like to thank each of you \_\_\_\_\_," the mayor said.
5. "Don't be such a \_\_\_\_\_," Jeff said with a snarl.
6. Jasper is always \_\_\_\_\_ at Sara whenever he sees her near the ball field
7. The teachers were quite concerned about the level of \_\_\_\_\_ on the playground.
8. My little brother did not expect the toy from the cereal box to be so \_\_\_\_\_.



# Questions



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


2. Describe how Crash got his nickname.


3. Why did Crash find Penn Webb so odd? (Give two reasons.)


4. Who named Penn and how did he get his name?


5. Why wouldn't Penn use a water gun?


6. Why do you think Crash got so angry when Penn refused to shoot him with the water gun?


7. What was the one thing that Crash discovered Penn to be good at?


8. Why was Penn so upset when he lost the race?


## Language Activity



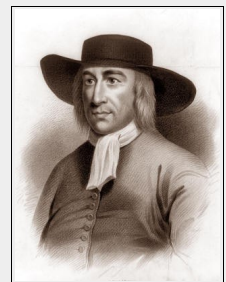
**A. Personification** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here's an example from Chapter One: *I plucked the silly button off his shirt...*

Describe how the button is personified in this example.

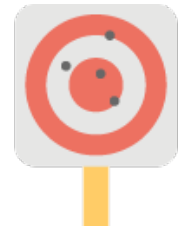

Create your own example of personification.


### Good to Know

**Quakers** (or Friends) are a Christian group which originated in England during the mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century. One of the chief founders was George Fox. By 1680 they numbered 60,000. They are known for their plain dress, refusal to participate in war or swear oaths, oppose the drinking of alcohol. In the late 1600s many emigrated to the United States where they sought freedom to worship as they pleased. There are people of the Quaker faith in most countries of the world. Presently there are about 90,000 Quakers in the United States, 16,000 in Britain and 33,000 in Bolivia.



**B. Onomatopoeia** is a literary device which refers to a word whose sound is very close to the sound it is meant to depict. An example of this is found in chapter four where Crash mimics the sound of a gun – *Bam! Bam!*



Create four more examples of this literary device.

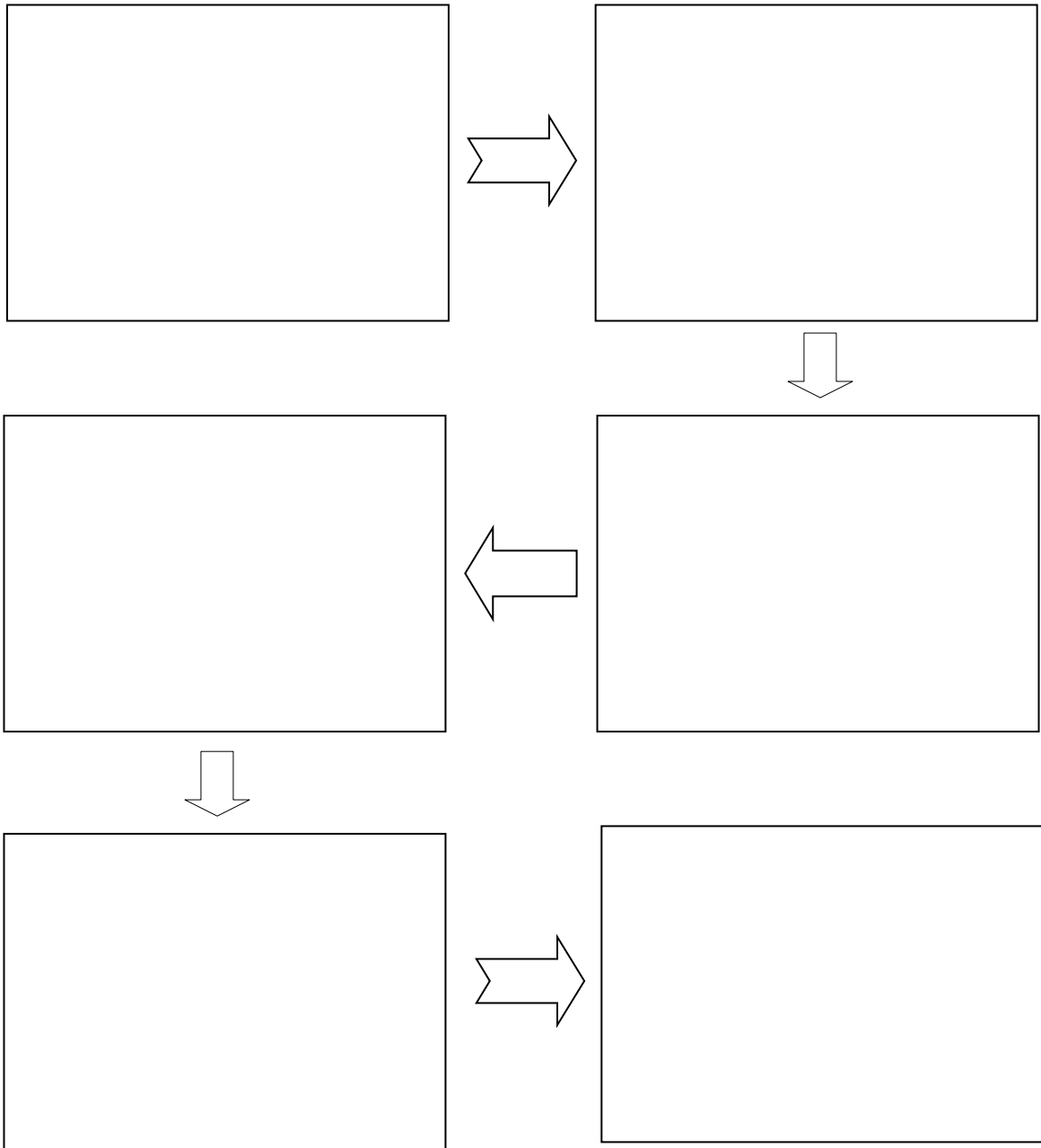
1	
2	
3	
4	

**C.** Place the following words from these chapters in **alphabetical order**.

Penn	1.
pointed	2.
race	3.
pistol	4.
plastic	5.
pocket	6.
Pennsylvania	7.
looking	8.
practically	9.
pistols	10.

## D. 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.



## Extension Activities



### A. 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 this section of **Crash**. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6

## B. Quintet

Unlike **quintuplet** (a set of five children born to the same mother at one birth), a **quintet** is a five-line verse that tells a story. The quintet has a syllable pattern and has the wonderful ability of bringing a visual image to life for the reader.

Here is the structure of the quintet:

### A Creative Title

- Line 1 - tells **when** ~ and has 3 syllables
- Line 2 - tells **where** ~ and has 5 syllables
- Line 3 - tells **what** ~ and has 7 syllables
- Line 4 - describes **activity** ~ and has 9 syllables
- Line 5 - contains a relevant **thought** ~ and has 3 syllables



### An Example!

Here is an example of a Quintet take from the poem, *Jack and Jill*.

#### Jack and Jill

*Dinner time,  
Up a hill they went,  
To fetch a pail of water,  
Then Jack and Jill tumbled down the hill,  
Poor old Jack.*

Now try your hand at writing a quintet which contains some of the important details from the first four chapters of this novel.
