

# Masterpiece



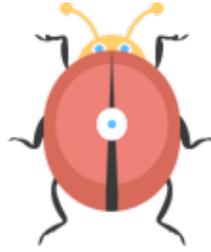
By

Elise Broach

A Novel Study  
by Nat Reed

# Masterpiece

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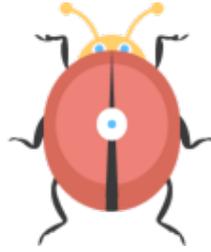
**About the author:** Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit [novelstudies.org](http://novelstudies.org).

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## Suggestions and Expectations

This 82 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on two or three chapters of *Masterpiece* and is comprised of four sections:

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 art and art forgery; beetles and bugs; adjusting to new surroundings; the importance of friendship, family and family relationships.

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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms & antonyms
3. Identifying/creating *onomatopoeia*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Listing compound words
7. Identifying / creating similes
8. Use of singular/plural nouns
9. Using content clues: analogies
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
14. Identifying anagrams.

### Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

### Plot Activities

1. Complete a 5 W's Chart
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify *cliffhanger*
4. Identify the climax of a novel
5. Write a synopsis
6. Predict an outcome
7. Complete a Sequence Chart

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Compare two characters
3. Understand concepts such as *meeting a challenge*
4. Relating personal experiences

### Creative and Critical Thinking

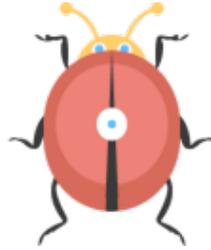
1. Research
2. Write a newspaper article
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a Book Review

### Art Activities

1. Design a cover for the novel
2. Design a brochure.
3. Create a Storyboard.

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## Synopsis

**Masterpiece** is the story about an unusual friendship between a lonely boy, James, and a beetle, Marvin, who lives in the walls of James' apartment in New York City. For his eleventh birthday James' artist father gives him a pen-and-ink set. With James' gift Marvin creates an amazing miniature drawing, for which James receives credit. His family naturally assume that their son is a talented artist and expect these works to be repeated.

The lives of both Marvin and James take an unexpected, dramatic twist when James' father takes James (with Marvin along for the ride) to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where they are caught up in an art heist. James is asked to duplicate a drawing by the renowned Renaissance artist, Albrecht Dürer to be used as bait in an elaborate scheme to catch the thieves. When the plot goes terrifyingly array, both Marvin and James end up alone in the apartment of the man who has masterminded the theft.

## Author Biography

*Elise Broach*

**Elise Broach** was born in Atlanta Georgia during the 1960's, but grew up in Georgia, Alabama, New York New Jersey, Virginia, England and California. She graduated from Yale University with a B.A., M.A. and a M. Phil in History. She now lives in Easton, Connecticut with her family. In addition to **Masterpiece**, she has also written **Shakespeare's Secret**, and **Desert Crossing**, as well as picture books including **When Dinosaurs Came With Everything**, **Cousin John is Coming**, **Wet Dog** and **Hiding Hoover**.





# Masterpiece



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

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## Chapters 1 - 2



### Before you read the chapters:

Marvin is a young beetle and the novel's main character. He and his family live in the apartment of the Pompadays. Why might it be dangerous for a family of beetles to live in such a setting?

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### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence. [Be careful, some words may be appropriate for more than one sentence - try to pick the best fit.]

|          |        |             |          |           |
|----------|--------|-------------|----------|-----------|
| embedded | forage | exceptional | vigorous | infinite  |
| grim     | vile   | reluctant   | amble    | turquoise |

1. Marjorie thought she might \_\_\_\_\_ on down to the corner store before breakfast.
2. Marvin smelled quite \_\_\_\_\_ after his dip in the smelly drain.
3. Times were so difficult for the family that even the children had to \_\_\_\_\_ for food.
4. Where did you get the lovely \_\_\_\_\_ scarf?
5. The arrow was \_\_\_\_\_ deeply within the bale of straw.
6. My grandmother is a very \_\_\_\_\_ woman for someone of such advanced years.
7. Charlie didn't seem the least bit \_\_\_\_\_ to swim the English Channel.
8. The prospects for victory looked exceptionally \_\_\_\_\_ after the Bruins scored with a minute to play.
9. When she won the beauty pageant, her prospects seemed almost \_\_\_\_\_.
10. He had an \_\_\_\_\_ talent for track and field.

# Questions



1. Getting to the know the characters of a story can be challenging. In the first two chapters of *Masterpiece* the reader is introduced to those in Marvin's family as well as their hosts - the Pompadays. In the chart below see if you can identify one characteristic (either physical or regarding his/her personality) for each character.

| Character     | Characteristic |
|---------------|----------------|
| Marvin        |                |
| Mama          |                |
| Edith         |                |
| Mrs. Pompaday |                |
| James         |                |

2. The **setting** of a story includes not only where but when the story takes place. What is the setting of the story in the first two chapters?

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3. *Every good story involves one or many crisis.* Describe the **crisis** which Marvin and his family are plunged into in these first chapters.

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4. What do you think Mama meant by her comment "It reminds me of my days in the ballet"?

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5. What are your thoughts on the family's suggestion that Marvin should go down the drain pipe to retrieve the contact lens?

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6. What kind of relationship do you think Marvin has with his cousin, Elaine?

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7. Marvin decided to take along a \_\_\_\_\_ to use as a \_\_\_\_\_.

8. Why was James infinitely preferred to the rest of the Pompaday family?

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9. What consequences did Marvin suffer as a result of his adventures in the sink drain?

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10. What would be one advantage and one disadvantage to having a beetle for a pet?

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# Language Activities



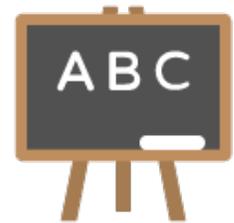
## A. Beetlemania

**Beetles** are the group of insects with the largest number of known species (350,000). The largest family also belongs to this order - the weevils, or snout beetles. Certain species of beetles are pests - such as the boll weevil. Other species of beetles, however, are important because they control agricultural pests ("ladybugs", for instance eat aphids, scale insects, thrips, and other plant-sucking insects that damage crops).



Using resources in your school library or the Internet, choose a particular species of beetle. Prepare an information card on your selection which includes at least one picture (can be downloaded and printed out from the Internet or drawn) and four interesting facts. The purpose of your information card is to share with your classmates so that others will be better informed with regard to this oft-misunderstood creature.

**B.** The author seems to enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same consonant sound at the beginning of several words in close succession. An example from Chapter Two is: “turquoise dishwashing detergent”.



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

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| A bat's nighttime flight -  |  |
| The crack of lightning -    |  |
| The sobs of a young child - |  |

## 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 Pet Beetle, Fred** written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*I keep a beetle 'neath my bed,  
He's pretty sharp, I call him Fred.  
He goes to school with me each day,  
My teacher says that it's okay.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - A - B - 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 two 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:** \_\_\_\_\_

|  |
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## D. 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. [ You may wish to postpone the completion of this assignment until you have read further in the novel.]



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events of your favorite scene from the novel thus far. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |