

Owls In The Family



By

Farley Mowat

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 on one chapter of *Owls in the Family* and is comprised of the following 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 owls, keeping wild animals as pets, wildlife of North America, family, friendship, bullying, loyalty, 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 *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

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/antagonist
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. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

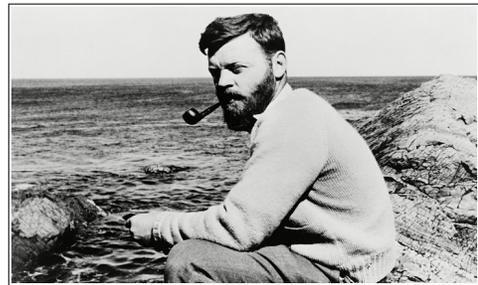
Every child needs a pet – no one could argue with that. But what happens when your pet is an owl, and your owl is terrorizing the neighborhood? In Farley Mowat's exciting children's story, a young boy's pet menagerie grows out of control with the addition of two troublesome pet owls. The story of how Wol and Weeps turn the whole town upside down is warm, funny, and bursting with adventure and suspense. [The Publisher]

A wonderful tale of boys, owls and warm family life in Saskatoon . . . Mowat's charm and humor make his pictures of boyhood and family life memorable. New York Times.

Author Biography

Farley Mowat

Farley Mowat was born in Belleville, Ontario, in 1921. He served in the Second World War from 1940 to 1945, and began writing for a living in 1949 after spending two years in the Arctic. He was the bestselling author of forty-two books, which have been published in translation in more than twenty languages in more than sixty countries. He died in May 2014. [The Publisher]



Owls In The Family



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Name:

Owls in the Family

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or 'good guy'. The main character of *Owls in the Family* is Billy, a young boy from Saskatchewan, who has a keen interest in wild animals. 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.

burrows	haversack	bluffs	snuffling
sardines	sloughs	pellet	doomed

1. On the prairies they call lakes and ponds _____.
2. An owl will spit out a ball of hair and bones, which is called an owl _____.
3. Bruce lost his brother's _____ somewhere out on the prairie.
4. A wood gopher came _____ along through the cottonwood snow.
5. My mother put a can of _____ in with my lunch.
6. The _____ rose high above our heads and seemed to blot out the setting sun.
7. Joanne was _____ to live in her older sister's shadow.
8. The gophers lived in shallow _____.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story for much of the first chapter?

2. Why were the boys looking for an owl's nest?

3. Investigate: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, is an important city in central Canada. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, investigate Saskatoon, and record three interesting facts about the city.

1.	
2.	
3.	

4. Describe Bruce's misadventure with the crows' eggs.

5. Crows and owls generally hate each other. True or False

6. How did the boys know that they had found an owl's nest? (Please give two reasons.)

7. Why didn't the boys climb the tree to see if there were any owlets in the nest?

Language Activities



A. 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 **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. 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. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first chapter of *Owls in the Family*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
sweat		___ not, want not.
snow		Possesses.
lost		A small entrance for a coin.
desert		Relaxed.
nest		A monetary unit of Estonia.
crash		Sears.
shoot		Sounds an owl might make.

Now find two additional words from the first chapter which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.

Word	Anagram	Clue

Good to Know ~ The Great Horned Owl

Also known as *the tiger owl* or *tiger of the air*, the great horned owl is native to the Americas. Its primary diet seems to be rabbits, rats, mice and voles, various birds, reptiles and amphibians. It is one of the earliest nesting birds in North America, often laying its eggs weeks or even months before many other birds. Its closest American cousin is the snowy owl.



B. Even Shakespeare liked to write Quatrain Poems.

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 famous quatrain was written by the great writer, William Shakespeare, and is taken from *Sonnet 18*.

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - B - A - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: AABB, 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 chapter 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: _____

C. 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: ... *like warm sun shining on soft mud.*



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

A rooster's crow.	
A loud sneeze.	
Your choice.	

D. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is: ... *and there you were – free as the gophers..*

What is being compared in this example?

--	--

Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your own imagination:

a) the Incredible Hulk

--

b) the sound of a cricket

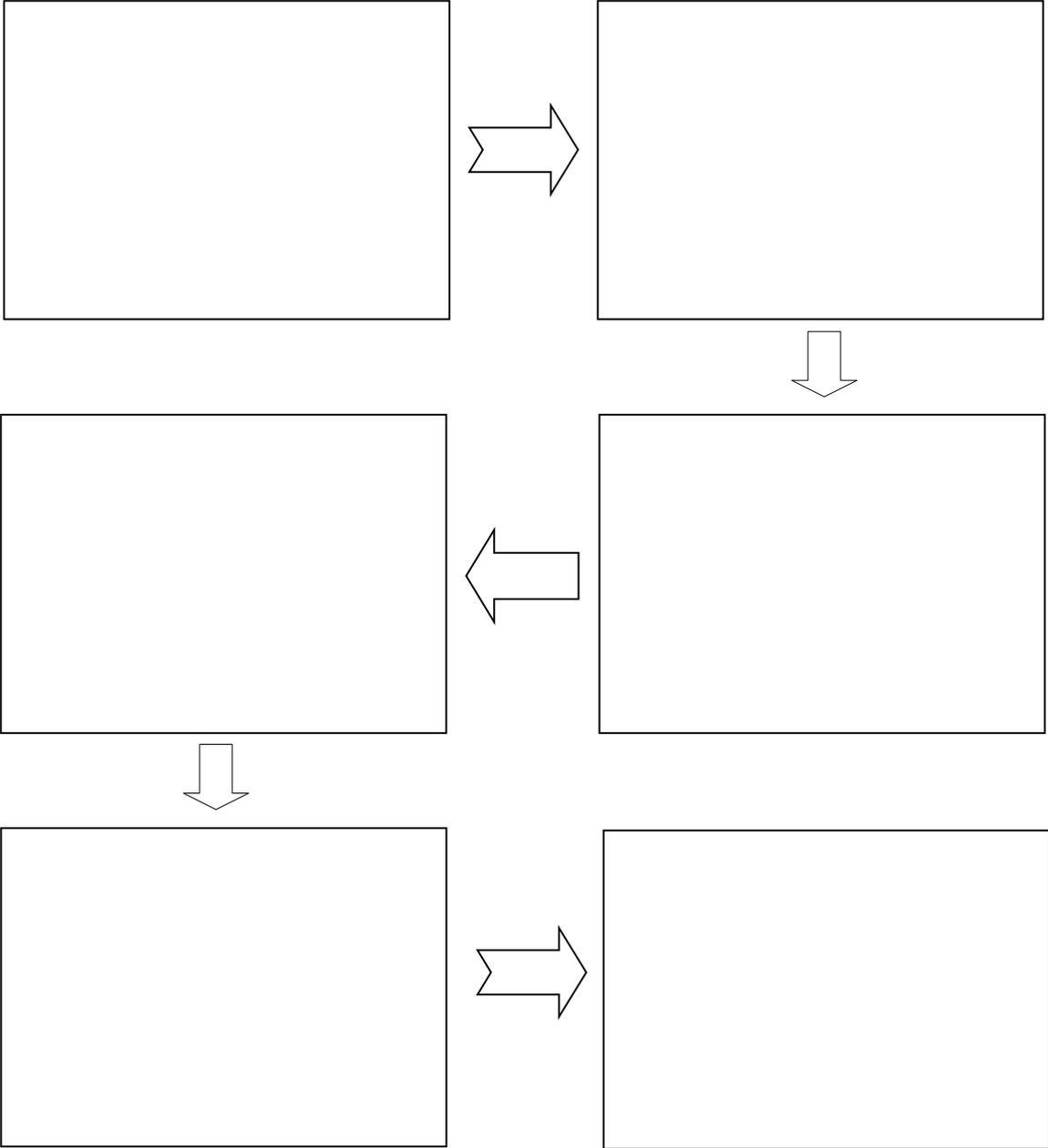
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c) your choice

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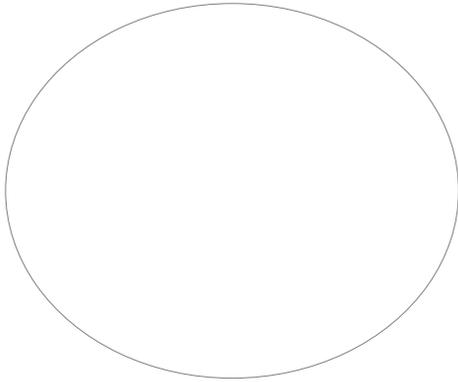
E. Sequence Chart

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.

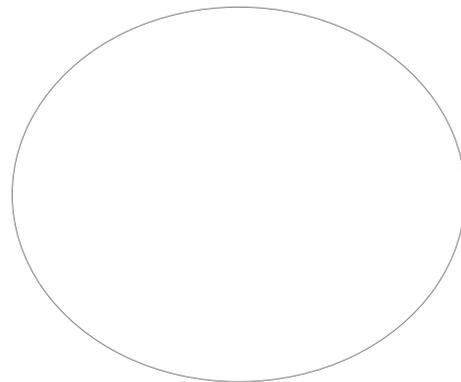


F. 5 Ws and an H.

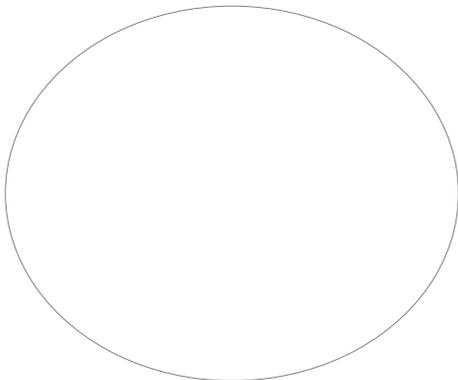
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



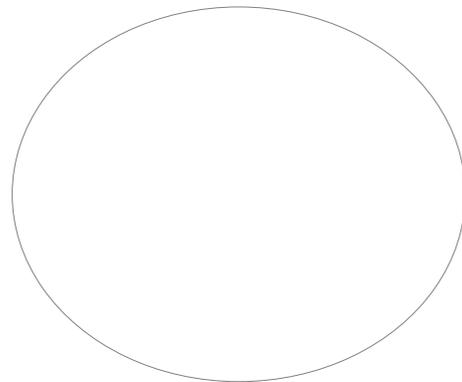
WHO?



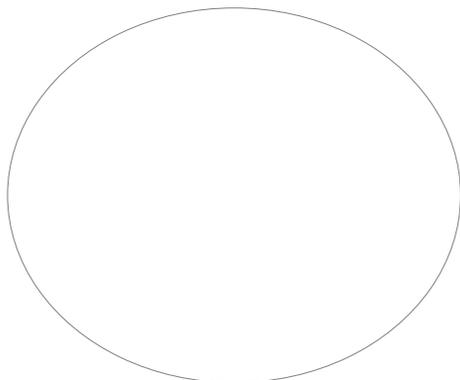
WHAT?



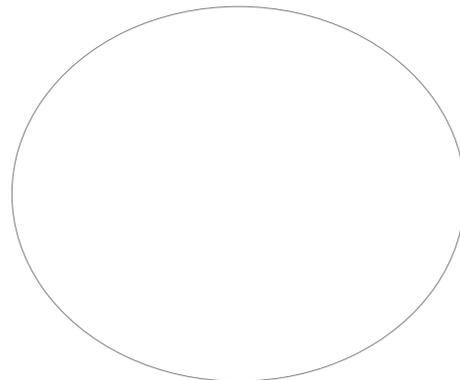
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A story-board can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel. Complete the story-board 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