

The Castle in the Attic



By

Elizabeth Winthrop

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 two or three chapters of *The Castle in the Attic* 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 Medieval Times, courage and persistence, overcoming fears, a pure heart can overcome evil, loyalty and friendship.

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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. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. Identify *personification*.
10. 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. Complete a Plot Outline for a Sequel
5. Identify the climax of the novel.

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

William has just received the best present of his life. It's an old, real-looking stone and wooden model of a castle, with a drawbridge, moat, and a finger-high knight to guard the gates. It's the mysterious castle his housekeeper has told him about, and even though William is sad she's leaving, now the castle is his!

William can't wait to play with it – he's certain there's something magical about the castle. And sure enough, when he picks up the tiny silver knight, it comes alive in his hand!

Sir Simon tells William a mighty story of wild sorcery, wizards, and magic. And suddenly William is off on a fantastic quest to another land and another time – where a fiery dragon and an evil wizard are waiting to do battle... [Courtesy of The Publisher]

The Castle in the Attic was the winner of the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award and the California Young Reader Medal.

Author Biography

Elizabeth Winthrop

Elizabeth Winthrop is the author of more than 60 works of fiction for all ages. She is the winner of the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award. Elizabeth has written books for children of all ages (*The Castle in the Attic*, *Counting on Grace*, *Dumpy La Rue*). Elizabeth was born in Washington D.C. 1948 and is the great grand niece of President Theodore Roosevelt. She currently lives in New York City.



Check out her official website: <http://elizabethwinthrop.com>

The Castle In The Attic



By Elizabeth Winthrop

Name: _____

The Castle in the Attic

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Chapters 1-2



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *The Castle in the Attic* is William, who receives the best present ever from Mrs. Phillips, his housekeeper. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

absorb	chivalry	ritual	reclaim
legend	tradition	tapioca	yeast

1. Our family has a proud _____ of gathering at our cottage each Thanksgiving.
2. The prince returned to the kingdom to _____ his father's throne.
3. If you don't add _____ to the bread, it will not rise.
4. It took him a moment to _____ the news.
5. _____ was an important rule of life during Medieval times.
6. Mrs. Phillips made William a bowl of _____ pudding.
7. The ball player had a most unusual _____ before taking to the field.
8. _____ has it that the Knights of the Round Table once ruled the kingdom with King Arthur.

Tour of the Castle



Match each part of the castle mentioned in Chapter 2 with the correct description.

1	armory		a	The metal grating just beyond the double wooden doors.
2	scullery		b	Banquet room.
3	gatehouse		c	Where troubadours and jesters performed.
4	portcullis		d	Entranceway over the moat.
5	great hall		e	Where the dishes are washed.
6	allure		f	Where the weapons are stored.
7	drawbridge		g	Wall walk.
8	wardrobe		h	Where food and drink are kept cold.
9	buttery		i	Where the clothes are kept.
10	minstrels' gallery		j	Entrance in the front tower.

Questions



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

2. What disturbing news did Mrs. Phillips tell William? Describe how William responded to this news.

3. It is probable that Mrs. Phillips is fairly elderly in this story. There are two possible clues revealing this to us: 1) She mentions that her husband was killed in World War II. 2) If the novel is set in approximately the same year as the book was written, it would have taken place around 1985. If this is the case, about how old is Mrs. Phillips? How did you arrive at this figure?

--

4. William is _____ years old when the story begins.

5. What strategy did William come up with to try to make Mrs. Phillips stay? How did she react to this strategy?

6. What surprise did Mrs. Phillips have for William?

7. After reading the description of the different parts of the castle, which part did you find the most interesting? Why?

8. Describe in your own words the legend of the Silver Knight which was told to William.

9. As Chapter Two draws to a close, what do we learn that William was still determined to accomplish? How do you think he might do this?

Good to Know ~ Castles

Castles were a fortified structure built by nobility over the course of 900 years in Europe and Middle East during the Middle Ages. Early castles were constructed of earth and timber, but later they were improved to include stone. In the 12th and 13th Centuries towers became very popular as a form of defense, as did the building of walled structures within larger structures. By the 15th Century and the advent of gunpowder, castle walls became vulnerable to cannon fire, yet the building of castles continued until the 16th Century.



Language Activities



A. Cinquain Poems

A cinquain poem has five lines and most often does not rhyme. Write two cinquain poems about both **William** and **Mrs. Phillips**, using what you know about them from these first two chapters.

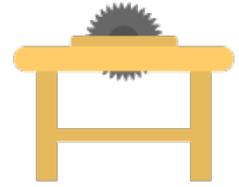
<p>Line 1 is one word. Line 2 is two words. Line 3 is three words. Line 4 is four words. Line five is one word.</p>	<p><i>Santa Saint Nick Long white beard Christmas Eve present-giver Jolly</i></p>
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William

Mrs. Phillips

B. 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 four chapters of *The Castle in the Attic*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
sink		The body's largest organ.
drawer		Prize.
table		The sound of a sheep.
nose		Long measurements of time.
present		Snake in the grass.
later		Vigilant; watchful.
lamp		A part of the hand.

C. Knights of the Realm

Mrs. Phillips mentions the Silver Knight to William in Chapter Two. A knight is someone who has been given the honorary title of knighthood by a king or queen – this was usually because of something brave or noble done by the knight. A number of famous knights (both real and fictitious) have come down through history: **King Arthur, Sir. Galahad, Sir Lancelot, Richard the Lionheart, William Wallace (Braveheart), John Hawkwood, The Black Prince (Edward of Woodstock), Sir. John Chandos, El Cid** and many other brave men.



Using resources in your school library or on the Internet investigate one of the above knights (or another approved by your teacher). From the information gathered, write a one page report on this individual on a separate sheet of paper. Your report should include personal information about this person (birthdate, place of birth, death date), accomplishments, how he achieved fame, etc.

D. 5 Ws and an H.

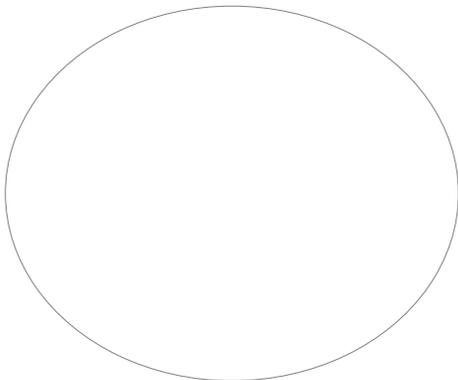
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



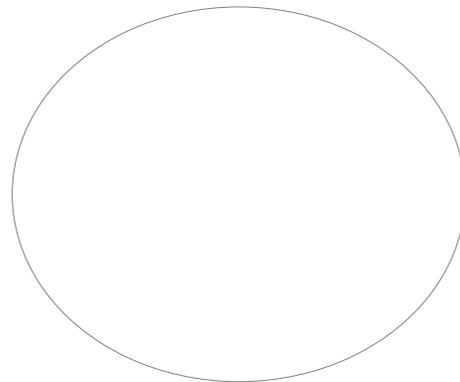
WHO?



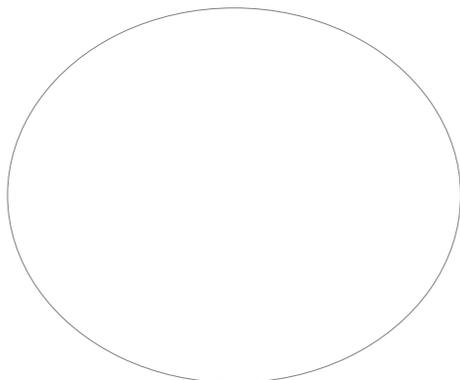
WHAT?



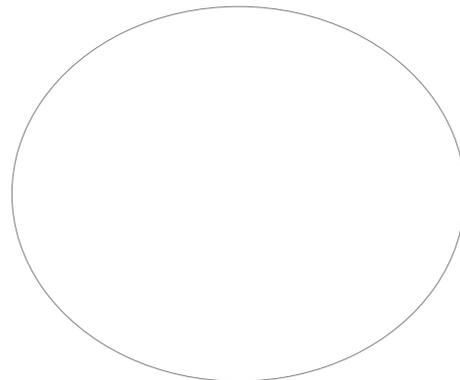
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activity



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words

Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and conclusion of these two chapters.



Beginning Picture:	Beginning:
Middle Picture:	Middle:
Concluding Picture:	Concluding: