

The Wednesday Wars



By

Gary D. Schmidt

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 *The Wednesday Wars* 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 coming of age, love and friendship, the power of a committed mentor, justice and fairness, personal growth, making choices, independence.

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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

He's just started seventh grade with Mrs. Baker, a teacher he knows is out to get him. Why else would she make him read Shakespeare . . . outside of class?

The year is 1967, and everyone has bigger things to worry about. There's Vietnam for one thing, and then there's the family business. As far as Holling's father is concerned, nothing is more important than the family business. In fact, all the Hoodhods must be on their best behavior at all times. The success of Hoodhood and Associates depends on it. But how can Holling stay out of trouble when he has Mrs. Baker to contend with? [Summary courtesy of the publisher]

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found online at such sites as the following: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wednesday_Wars

Author Biography

Gary D. Schmidt

Gary D. Schmidt (born 1957) is an American children's writer of nonfiction books and young adult novels. His works include two Newbery Honor books and one Printz Honor award. The American Library Association awarded Mr. Schmidt a Newbery Honor in 2005 for *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy* and again in 2008 for *The Wednesday Wars*. He lives on a farm in Alto, Michigan, with his wife and six children, where he splits wood, plants gardens, writes, feeds the wild cats that drop by and wishes that sometimes the sea breeze came that far inland. He is a Professor of English at Calvin College.



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Name:

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Chapter 1- September



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of our novel is Holling Hoodhood, a grade seven student at Camillo Junior High on Long Island. 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 intriguing **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

monitor	prosecution	alternating	emporium
recruited	deployed	virtue	legitimate

1. Do you think that the New York Yankees have a _____ chance of winning?
2. The _____ believed they had a strong case against the mobster.
3. He was only thirteen when he was _____ by a local theater company.
4. Many people believe that honesty is the most important _____.
5. My sister and I went shopping at the local _____.
6. The police plan to _____ the headquarters of the motorcycle club until Friday.
7. Jessica always seems to be _____ between sugary sweetness and extreme orneriness.
8. Lieutenant Baker was _____ to Vietnam on March 3, 1967.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One? Remember setting includes both time and place.

2. What unfortunate circumstance got Holling and Mrs. Baker off on the wrong foot at the start of school in September?

3. Why do you think it was important for Mr. Hoodhood that they have the Perfect House?

4. Why was it especially important to Mr. Hoodhood that Holling do nothing to antagonize Mrs. Baker?

5. Holling's favorite novel was _____.

6. Who had had a crush on Holling since third grade? _____

7. What proof do we have in the first chapter that Holling wasn't a brave, macho guy?

8. **Investigate:** Holling accuses Doug Swieteck's brother of never evolving out of the Mesozoic Era. What are the supposed dates of this time period? _____

9. Describe how Doug Swieteck's brother was injured.

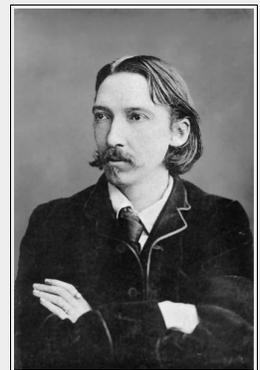
10. Why do you suppose Holling never mentions the first name of Doug Swieteck's brother, but always refers to him simply as *Doug Swieteck's brother*?

11. From which country had Mai Thi immigrated from? Why might this have invited persecution from others at this time?

12. Do you think it was fair of Mrs. Baker to request that Holling retake the sixth grade math course? Why or why not?

Good to Know ~ Robert Louis Stevenson

Holling's favorite author is Robert Louis Stevenson, the man who wrote the classic novel, *Treasure Island*, as well as *Kidnapped*, *The Black Arrow* and a number of other page-turners. Like many great 19th Century writers, Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland (in 1850). His father was a lighthouse engineer as were many members of his family. Plagued with bad health from early childhood, Stevenson, nevertheless was a great traveller. Besides his novels and books of travel he wrote a number of popular poems and songs. He finally settled on the island of Samoa where he hoped the climate would improve his health. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 44.



Language Activity



A. Stevenson's Requiem.

The following poem is inscribed on the tombstone of Robert Louis Stevenson:

*Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.
This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.*

Select one or two lines from this haunting poem which speak the loudest to you and explain why they stood out from the other lines.

B. Exaggeration

Exaggeration is a literary device defined as *a statement that represents something as better or worse than it really is*. Chapter One is loaded with examples of this device. Here's one: "... Pastor McClellan, who was old enough to have known Moses."

Find another example from this chapter and record it below.

Create you own example of exaggeration using the events of this chapter for inspiration.

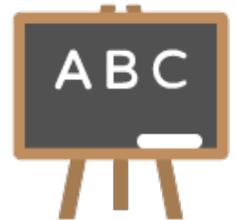
C. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here's an example from Chapter One: *The hair on his chest leaped over the neck of his T-shirt.*

Describe how the hair is personified in this example.

Create your own example of personification.

As you continue to read through the novel be on the lookout for other examples of this literary device. If you should find one, come back to this question and enter it below.

D. 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: ... *my father had it painted perfectly...*



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

A burning candle.	
The sound a rattlesnake might make.	
Your own choice.	

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 the first two chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6

B. A Poem Even Doug Swieteck's Brother Might Enjoy

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and humorous. The following quatrain is a poem by Robert Louis Stevenson called ***The Wind***.

*I saw you toss the kites on high
And blow the birds about the sky;
And all around I heard you pass,
Like ladies' skirts across the grass--*



A number of Stevenson's poems can be found at the site: www.poemhunter.com

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 are: 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 chapter of our novel.

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem on a subject of your choice. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____
