

White Bird



By

R.J. Palacio

A Novel Study
by Nat and Joel 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. Most chapters of the novel study focuses on two chapters of *White Bird* and is comprised of these 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 World War II, the holocaust, honor and loyalty, courage and sacrifice, personal growth, perseverance, coming of age, and dealing with loss.

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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 Sequence Chart

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

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

Sara Blum lives an idyllic life with her adoring parents in Vichy France. But her world comes crashing down when the Nazi occupation separates the family and moves the young Jewish girl into hiding. Her classmate Julien and his family will risk everything to ensure her survival, and, together, Sara and Julien manage to find beauty in a secret world of their creation.

First published as a graphic novel and now a major motion picture starring Ariella Glaser, Orlando Schwerdt, Bryce Gheisar and Gillian Anderson and Helen Mirren, R. J. Palacio's unforgettable story demonstrates the power of kindness to change hearts, build bridges, and even save lives in the darkest of times. (Courtesy of the Publisher)

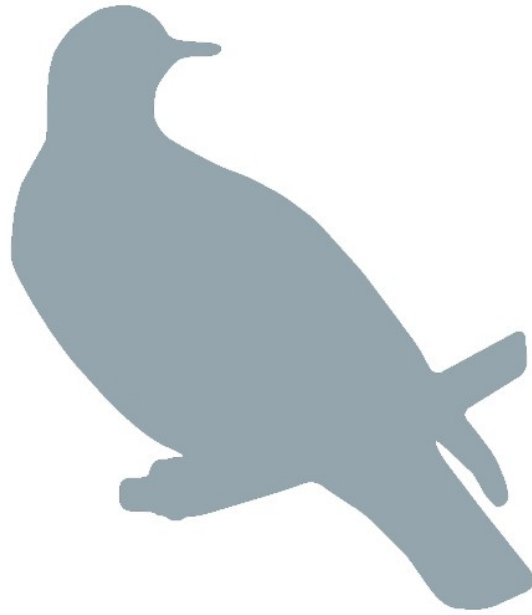
Author Biography R. J. Palacio

I live in NYC with my husband, two sons, and two dogs. For many years, I was an art director and book jacket designer, designing covers for countless well-known and not so well-known writers in every genre of fiction and nonfiction. I always wanted to write, though. I kept waiting for the perfect time in my life to start writing, but after more than twenty years of designing book jackets for other people, I realized that the perfect time would never really present itself. It's never the perfect time to start writing a book. So I decided to just go for it. *Wonder* was my first novel.



Courtesy of the author's website: <http://rjpalacio.com/author.html>

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Name: _____

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PART ONE – Present Day, Chapters 1-2



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *White Bird* is Sara Blum, a young Jewish girl living in Vichy France during World War II. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read. What do you think makes for an interesting **protagonist**? (One that's hard to forget.)



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

inadvertent	transpired	remorse	quaint	chide
validate	omnipresent	insidious	interment	revel

1. The dangerous serpent had an _____ look about it.
2. What _____ within the nursing home was soon known to all concerned.
3. The _____ tossing of a match into the dry grass resulted in a great fire.
4. It appeared that Josie felt absolutely no _____ for causing Cheryl to cry.
5. The thieves began to _____, knowing their caper was a success.
6. The _____ of Daryl's pet bird was a most somber affair.
7. Many religions believe that God is _____.
8. Barbara's aunt owns a _____ little candy shop.
9. “I am not going to _____ your crazy idea by agreeing with you,” Ann said.
10. The teacher began to _____ the children for their thoughtlessness.

Questions



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

b. Think of one thing you would enjoy about living in this setting (both time and place), and one thing you might not enjoy.

Enjoy	
Not so much	

2. According to Sara's parents, his curious mind came from her mother and the daydreaming part from her father. True or False

3. How would you describe the relationship Sara had with her parents?

4. Do you think you would enjoying spending time in the Mernuit forest with your friends? Why or why not?

5. How did Papa explain the presence of the bluebells so far south?

6. What startling news did Papa share with Sara at the beginning of Chapter 2? Why didn't this news directly affect them at this time?

7. Why was Sara's mother fired from her position at the University?

8. Sara was born in the month of _____ in the year _____. In Chapter Two she was _____ years old.

9. What do you consider the most startling piece of news received by Sara's family in Simone's letter?

10. Describe the disturbing event that occurred at the ice cream store.

11. What happened to Simone and her family?

Language Activities



A. France

Sara's home, France, is recognized by many as one of the world's most beautiful countries. Investigate this amazing nation further and record three interesting facts about it below.



1.	
2.	
3.	

B. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter 1 is: *I loved how it made me feel – happy and carefree as a bird.*

What is being compared in this example?

--	--

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

a) A picnic in the park.

b) An old house that looked haunted.

c) your choice

C. A Quatrain Poem Celebrating France.

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 was written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis. It is called, *I Call France Home*.

*I call France home, that I do,
I was born in Paris in 2002.
I learned when I was young to parlez-vous,
How to eat bouillie and cordon bleu.*



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

<p>The Quatrain Poem</p> <p>Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).</p> <p>Title:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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D. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here's an example from Chapter One: ... I came to view the forest as an ominous place much of the time.

Describe how the forest 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.

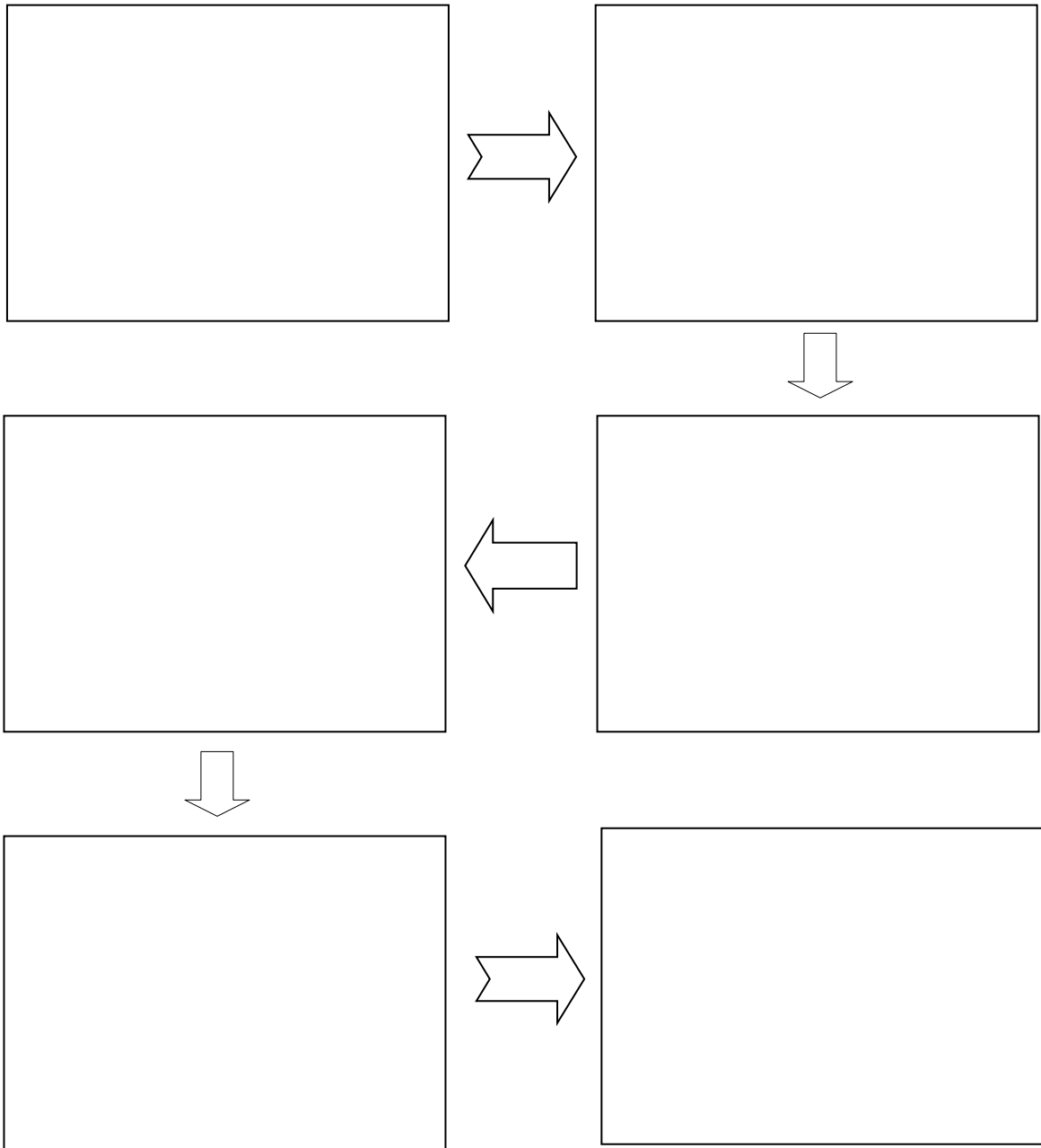
E. Chapter One contains an example of an important literary device called **foreshadowing**. Foreshadowing is defined as a warning or indication of a future event. Chapter Two ends with the statement, *After the Vel' d'Hiv (Roundup), we never heard from them again.*



1. What is the author hinting at in this statement with regard to Sara's family?
2. Why might the author have included this statement?

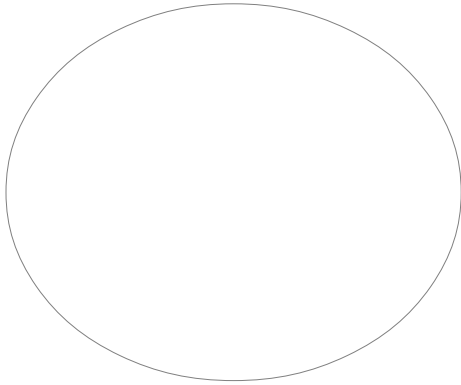
F. Sequence Chart

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.

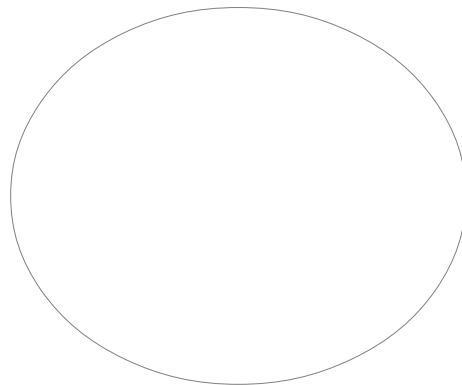


G. 5 Ws and an H.

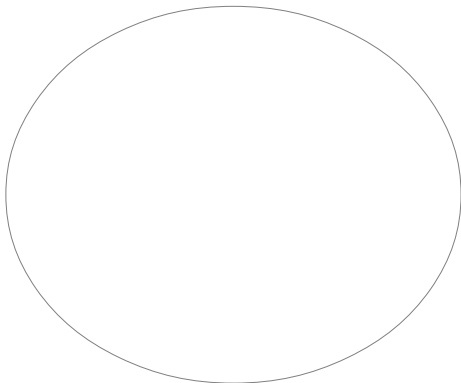
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



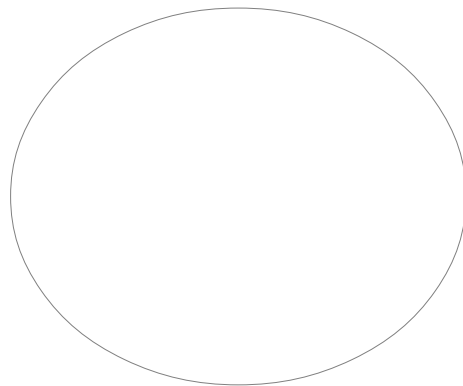
WHO?



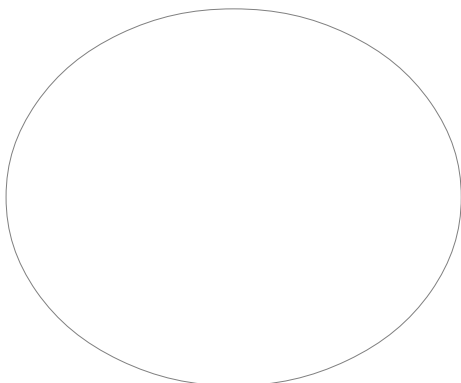
WHAT?



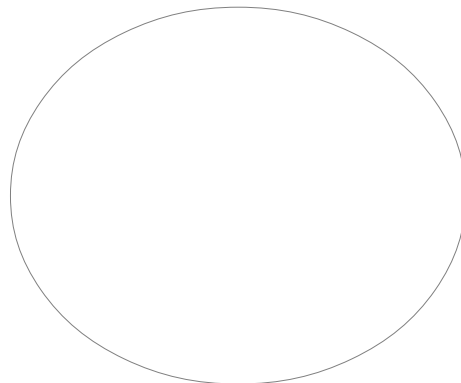
WHEN?



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 one scene - or the entire novel.



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in one or two chapters of the novel. You may wish to practice your drawings before you begin.

1	2
3	4
5	6