

Wringer



By

Jerry Spinelli

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 between three and five chapters of **Wringer** and is comprised of five of the following different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- 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 peer pressure, bullying, animal cruelty, compassion, the importance of family, overcoming obstacles in life, courage and sacrifice, perseverance when facing difficult circumstances.

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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 *foreshadowing*.
7. Identify *singular/plural*
8. Identify *anagrams*
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identify *personification*

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. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Chart
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Create an Information Card
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Create a comic strip
6. Design a brochure

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Synopsis

In Palmer LaRue's hometown of Waymer, turning ten is the biggest event of a boy's life. It marks the day when a boy is ready to take his place as a wringer at the annual Family Fest. It's an honor and a tradition.

But for Palmer, his tenth birthday is not something to look forward to, but something to dread. Because - although he can't admit this to anyone - Palmer does not want to be a wringer. But he can't stop himself from getting older, any more than he can stop tradition.

Then one day, a visitor appears on his windowsill, and Palmer knows that this, more than anything else, is a sign that his time is up. Somehow he must learn how to stop being afraid and stand up for what he believes in. (The publisher)

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found online at such sites as:
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wringer_\(novel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wringer_(novel))

Author Biography

Jerry Spinelli

Born in 1941 in Norristown, Pennsylvania, Jerry Spinelli discovered his calling in 1957 when his high school football team won a big game. The town celebrated, his fellow students raced through the streets, but Jerry sneaked back home and marked the occasion in his own way. He wrote a poem. Later the town newspaper published it. "And," he reports, "I've been a writer ever since."

Married to Eileen Spinelli, who is also a writer, Jerry was for many years an editor for the Chilton Company. Now a full-time writer, he lives in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.

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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-4



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *Wringer* is Palmer LaRue, a young boy who will be experiencing many trying experiences as the novel unfolds. 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 interesting **protagonist**?

The novel has a most interesting title – *Wringer*. What do you think a *wringer* is?

Good to Know - The Pigeon

The pigeon referred to in this novel and the one commonly seen on the streets of many North American cities is the **Rock Dove** or **Rock Pigeon**. The Rock Pigeon includes the domestic pigeon. Wild Rock Doves are pale grey in color with two black bars on each wing, while domestic and feral pigeons are variable in color and pattern. There are few visible differences between male and female.





Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

desperate	recognize	ancient	anxious	cringe
harass	contradiction	careened	meek	lopsided

1. It seemed a _____ that Henry was not only the tallest boy in the group but also the mildest.
2. Sheila is such a _____ little girl that all of her classmates pick on her.
3. "Please don't _____ Sam or I will send you straight home," Mrs. Kelly said.
4. The television was so _____ that it didn't even have a remote.
5. I saw you _____ when the principal called you to come to the front of the auditorium.
6. He ran with a sort of _____ gait.
7. I was so _____ to see the new movie that I butted into line at the theatre.
8. The car _____ off the curb and struck the fire hydrant.
9. Waiting to find out my grade on the math test made me very _____.
10. Why weren't you able to _____ Katy Perry when you passed her in the mall?

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of Chapter Two?

--

2. What was it that Palmer couldn't stop thinking about no matter how hard he tried?

--

3. What is your impression of Beans, Mutto and Henry? Would you want them to attend your birthday party? Why or why not?

4. Which of Palmer's three guests seems the most thoughtful? What proof is there for this in these chapters?

5. Describe the mean prank that the boys played on Dorothy Gruzik. Why do you think they enjoyed tormenting her?

6. Palmer had **mixed feelings** about playing with the boys in the park. Describe how his feelings were mixed.

7. What does the author mean when he says that Henry *was not just a member of the group, but also its prey*?

8. Describe the horrible memories from three years ago that came back to Palmer that day.

Language Activity



A. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here's an example from Chapter One: *Hunger came only sometimes, such as just before dinner or on long rides in the car. Then, quickly, it was gone the moment it was fed.*



Describe how hunger is personified in this example.

Create your own example of personification.

B. A simile is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. Here is an example from Chapter Four: *For a moment a dragonfly hovered before his eyes like a tiny helicopter.*

What two things are being compared in this example?

--	--

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

a) a pigeon strutting across a busy street

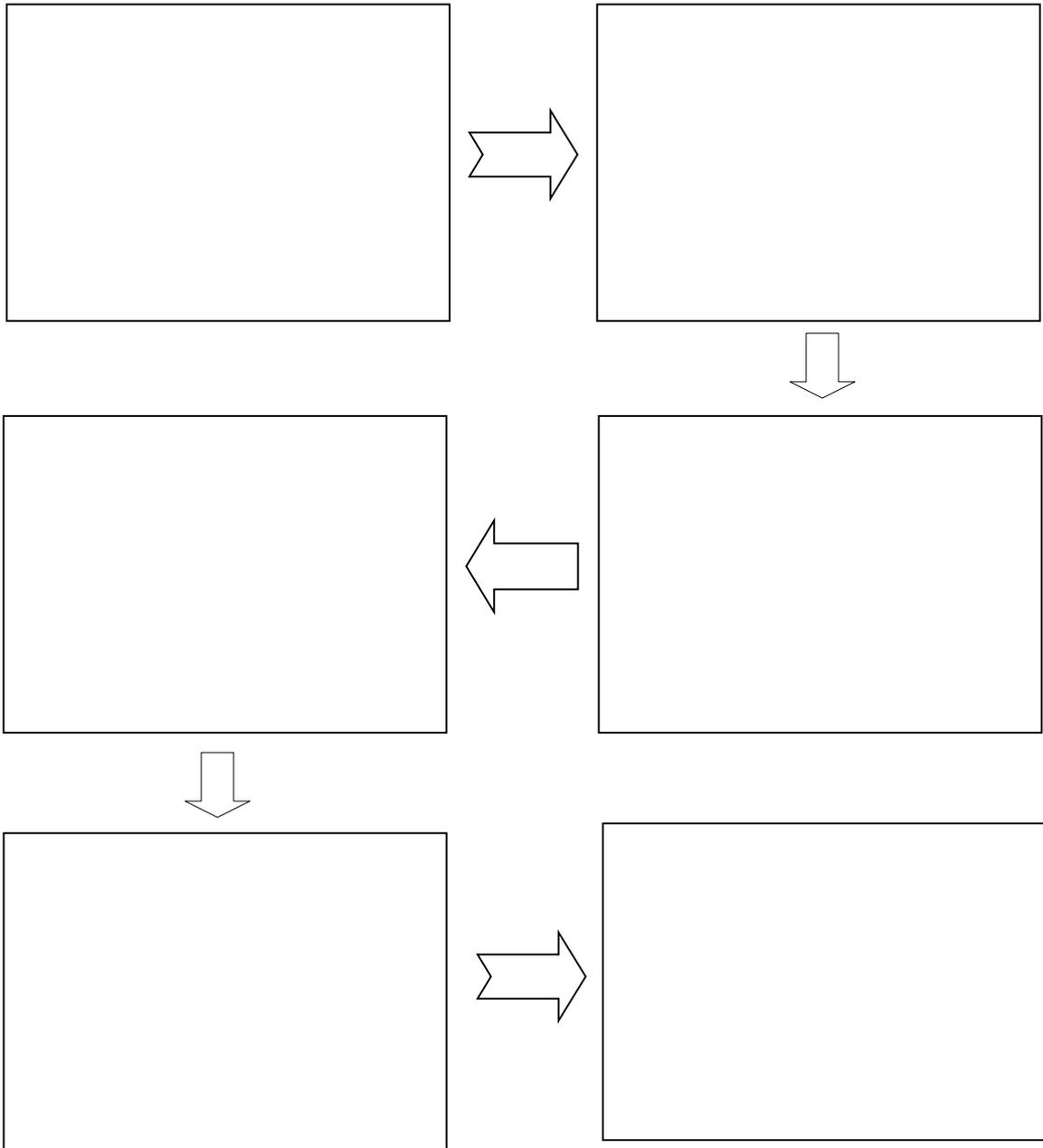
--

b) the sound of a shotgun going off

--

C. 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.



D. 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 Pigeon**, written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*My pigeon, Charlie, lives with me,
He knows a lot of tricks.
He plays the tuba very well,
That's how he gets his kicks.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - B - C - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, 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 seven chapters of our novel.

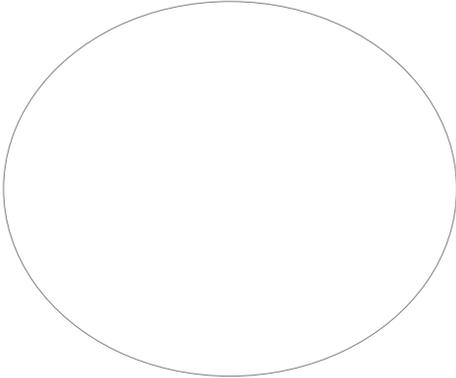
The Quatrain Poem

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

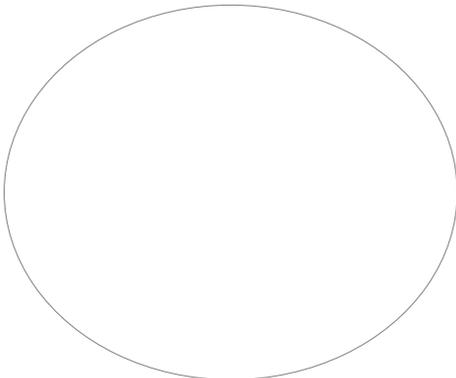
Title: _____

E. 5 Ws and an H.

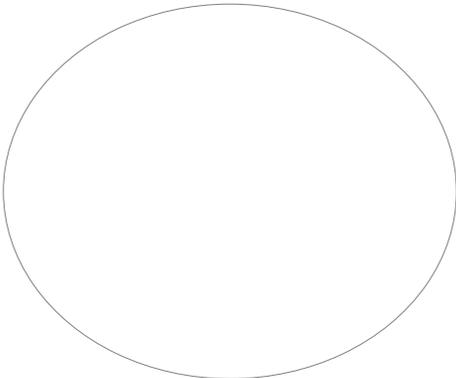
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



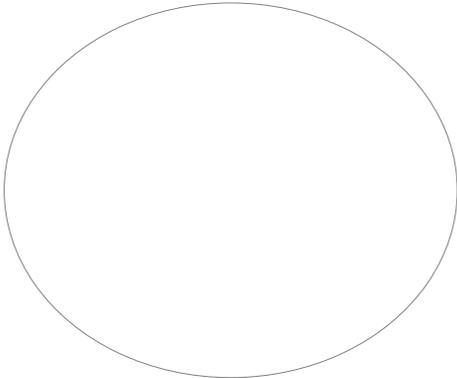
WHO?



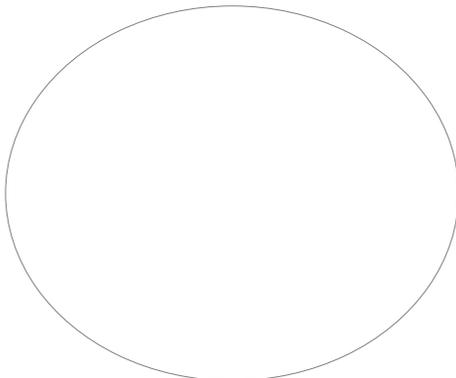
WHAT?



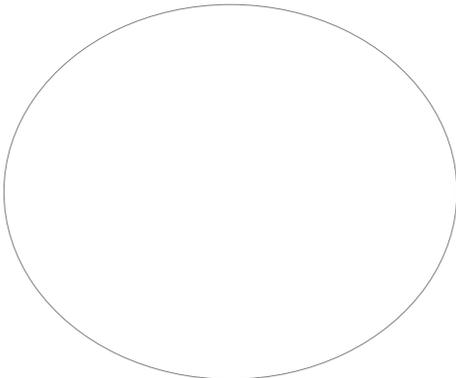
WHEN?



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. Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in Chapters 1 to 4 of *Wringer*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6