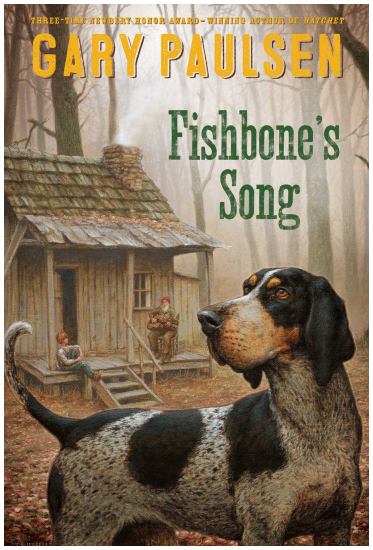
Fishbone's Song



By

Gary Paulsen

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

Fishbone's Song

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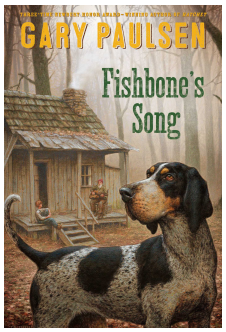

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About the author: Nat Reed has been a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, please visit the websites www.reedpublications.org and www.novelstudies.org.

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Fishbone's Song
By Gary Paulsen

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 ***Fishbone's Song*** and is comprised of five of the following different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language Activities
- Extension Activities

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.**

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. It is important, too, that students be encouraged to relate their own feelings and experiences in certain contexts, and describe their own interpretations of particular passages.

- Students can work on the activities at their own pace.
- Every activity need not be completed by all students.
- A **portfolio cover** is included (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) to keep a record of completed work.

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include the power of nature and how to live in it and respect it, resourcefulness, loyalty and friendship, the enterprising spirit.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words / phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
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
12. Identification of *exaggeration*.

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 a cliffhanger.
5. Identify the climax of the novel.

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist
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 journal entry.

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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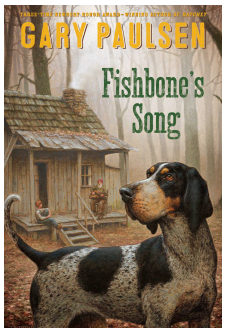

Synopsis

An orphan reflects on the lessons he was taught by the wise old man who raised him in this lyrical novel that reads like poetry from three-time Newbery winning author Gary Paulsen.

Deep in the woods, in a rustic cabin, lives an old man and the boy he's raised as his own. This sage old man has taught the boy the power of nature and how to live in it, and more importantly, to respect it. In *Fishbone's Song*, this boy reminisces about the magic of the man who raised him and the tales that he used to tell—all true, but different each time.
[Synopsis courtesy of the publisher]

Author Biography

Gary Paulsen

Gary Paulsen, a renowned author of novels for young people, presently lives in New Mexico. Three of Gary Paulsen's novels have been acclaimed as Newbery Honor Books: **Hatchet, Dogsong,** and **The Winter Room**. **The River** is Gary's exciting sequel to **Hatchet**. His other novels include: **Brian's Winter (sequel), Brian's Return (sequel), Canyons, The Crossing, Dancing Carl, The Island, Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights, Sentries, Tracker, Woodsong, The Legend of Red Horse Canyon, Escape From Fire Mountain, Danger on Midnight River**.

Gary Paulsen is an avid outdoors-man who competed in the Iditarod, a dog sled race across Alaska. He also frequently sails the Pacific Ocean.

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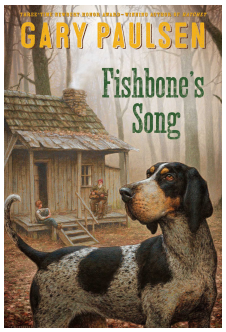
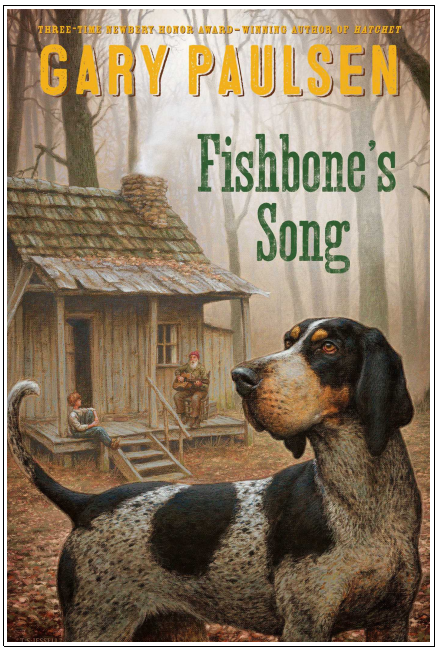


Student Checklist

Student Name: _____

Assignment	Grade/Level	Comments

Fishbone's Song



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Name: _____

Fishbone's Song

By Gary Paulsen

Chapter 1

Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or "good guy". The main character of ***Fishbone's Song*** is an unnamed boy of either 10, 11, or 12 years of age (no one is sure). Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you've seen. What do you think made these characters so unforgettable?

Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

squall	looped	absolute	splinter
gulley	gar	crate	bulrush

1. We removed most of the bones from an ugly-looking _____ my sister caught.
2. It took several painful moments before Mother was able to remove the _____.
3. Whoever would have thought a baby pig could _____ so loudly.
4. We brought home our groceries in a large wooden _____.
5. Did you find that _____ down in Fiddler's Marsh?
6. Fishbone was _____ on moonshine.
7. We found the flock of wild turkeys down in the bottom of the _____.
8. The class knew they were hearing the _____ truth from the principal.

Questions

1. What is the **setting** of the story?

2. Summarize the <u>two</u> stories told by Fishbone regarding the origin of his name.

1.	
2.	

3. The narrator relates four versions of how he came under the guardianship of Fishbone. Summarize the two versions which you found most fascinating.

1.	
2.	

4. What do you think there was about the boy which made the people at the school feel that he would never fit in?

5. What two pieces of evidence does the narrator cite to support his claim that he just might be a witching boy?

1.	
2.	

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 are found in Chapter 1.

Word	Anagram	Clue
smile		Wet mud.
worth		Toss; chuck.
shack		Cuts with rough or heavy blows.
board		Not at all narrow.
crate		Respond or behave in a particular way.
passed		Found in a deck.
sister		Withstand.

B. Assemble the word parts below into ten compound words found in this chapter.

rooms	break	board	humming	moon
bird	some	time	shoe	card
bone	fire	mush	tumble	horse
thing	down	mean	shine	fish

1		6	
2		7	
3		8	
4		9	
5		10	

C. A Poem About a Stump.

The song at the end of the chapter is a fairly short free verse creation. 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 entitled ***The Stump***, was written by the renowned poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

There's a big old stump in my friend's back yard,
It glows in the dark when the night is starred.
It whistles a tune when we pass on by,
So we hurry it up and try not to cry.

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 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 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: _____

Check out Gary Paulsen's website.
http://www.simonandschuster.ca/authors/Gary-Paulsen/707052

D. **Personification** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here is an example from Chapter One: *… to match the old boot tapping and sliding on the porch boards to make time...*

How are the old boot 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. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration –** a literary device where the author **r**epeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here is an example from the Chapter One: *… and a **s**oft **s**huffle **s**ound like the boot was dancing...*
Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

A piercing scream.	
The sound of a drum.	
Your choice.	

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 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