Rascal

By

Sterling North

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

Rascal
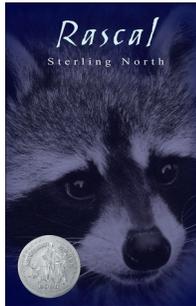## *By Sterling North*



Table of Contents

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 of these years. For more information on his work and literature, please visit the websites www.reedpublications.org and www.novelstudies.org.

Rascal

By Sterling North
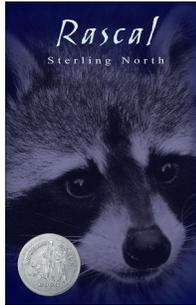
Suggestions and Expectations

Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one chapter of **Rascal** and is comprised of four distinct sections:

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 the following:

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 overcoming loss, conservation and ecology, raccoons/wildlife of Wisconsin, World War I, Spanish influenza pandemic, assuming responsibility, perseverance, courage.

Rascal

By Sterling North

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

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. Identify the climax of the novel
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard / Comic Strip
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design an Information Card

Rascal
By Sterling North
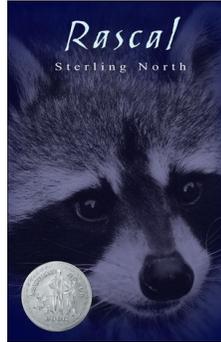
Synopsis

Skunks, woodchucks, a crow named Poe, an 18-foot, half-finished canoe in the living room … welcome to the North home! Rascal is only a baby when Sterling brings him home to join the menagerie, but soon raccoon and boy are best friends, doing everything together – until the spring day when Sterling realizes things must change. [The Publisher]

A website you may wish to check out with some interesting reviews and discussions of the novel is **goodreads ~** http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/967511.Rascal

Author Biography
Sterling North

Sterling North was born into a family of poets on the second floor of a farmhouse on the shores of Lake Koshkonong, a few miles from Edgerton, Wisconsin, in 1906. First published at the age of eight, he went on to have a successful career as a journalist and editor of several well-respected newspapers. Sterling North won a host of literary awards during his lifetime, including a Newbery Honor for the autobiographical **Rascal**. As is mentioned in **Rascal**, Sterling survived a near-fatal bout with polio when he was in his teens. He died in Morristown, New Jersey in 1974 at the age of 68. [Adapted from The Publisher]

Rascal
By Sterling North

Student Checklist

Student Name: _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments
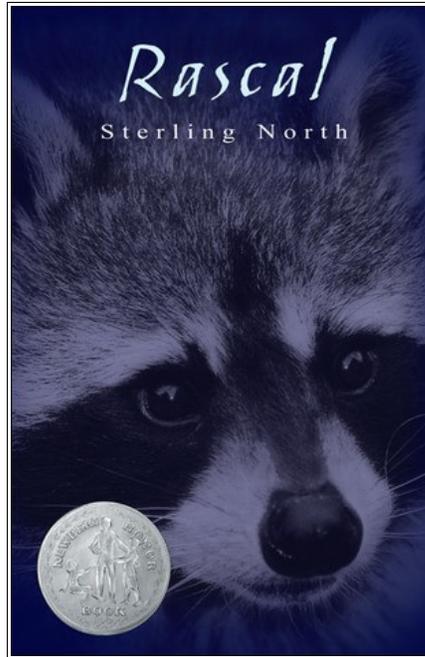
Rascal

By Sterling North

Name: _____

Rascal
By Sterling North

Chapter 1
May

Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or "good guy". The protagonist of *Rascal* is the author, Sterling North, for this novel is actually the story of the author's childhood. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you have seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?

| |
| |
| |
| |

Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

exceptional	badgered	luminescent	amiable
laborious	delicacies	maneuvered	indignant

1.   Helga _____ her little brother until he finally gave her his candy bar.

2.   Mr. Sellers was extremely _____ when someone stole his wallet.

3.   What do the Cree people consider as _____ in their daily diet?

4.   Building a house is a very _____ undertaking.

5.   Charlene _____ her motorcycle in the thickest traffic.

6.   Leonard is an _____ chess player.

7.   The St. Bernard breed is famous for its _____ disposition.

8.   The glow of the fireflies was as _____ as several light bulbs.

Questions

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

2. What four adjectives do you think would best describe **Wowser**? (Try to come up with two that describe his <u>appearance</u> and two which describe his <u>personality</u>.)

3. Match each character from Chapter One with the correct description.

1	Herman Sutherland		a	Distracted
2	Oscar Sutherland		b	Very competent 11-year-old
3	Oscar's mother		c	Bad-tempered
4	Sterling's dad		d	A good friend
5	Sterling North		e	Tender-hearted.

Test Your Math

a) If the story is set in the year 1918 and Sterling is eleven years old, what year was Sterling probably born? _____

b) Later in the novel Sterling states that his mother was only 47 when she died. Check the year that she died in Chapter One. In what year was his mother probably born? _____

4. Write a brief description of the odd relationship that Sterling had with his dad. Do you think Mr. Sterling (as a parent) should have been investigated by the local Children's Aid Society? Why or why not?

Good to Know

The Great War mentioned in this chapter is now known as **World War I**. It took place mainly in Europe and lasted from 1914-1918. In this devastating conflict, countries such as The United States, Canada, Great Britain and Australia were at war with Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Italy. World War I was one of the world's most destructive conflicts (approximately 37 million people were casualties).

5. Describe the strategy used by Sterling and Oscar to get the raccoon down from the tree.

| |
| |
| |

6. Why did they need the mother raccoon?

| |
| |
| |

7. Why did Oscar let Sterling keep the one baby raccoon that they captured?

| |
| |
| |

8. Sterling's mother died in the year _____. Sterling's brother, _____, was fighting in the army in France.

9. As the first chapter comes to an end, what unusual fact do we learn about the relationship between Oscar's parents?

| |
| |
| |

🖊 Language Activities

A. The Raccoon

Not too many novels feature a raccoon as one of the main characters. Other than being regarded as a nuisance by many people, what do you know about this fascinating animal?

Two of the raccoon's most famous features are his extremely nimble front paws, and its bandit-like mask. Did you know, however, that they are very intelligent creatures, being able to remember tasks for up to three years?

Using resources in your school library or on the Internet investigate the raccoon. Your investigation should uncover at least <u>three</u> facts about this animal and include an appropriate picture.

1	
2	
3	

B. Choose <u>ten</u> words from these chapters with two or more **syllables**. Indicate the syllables by drawing a line between each syllable. **Example**: **good / bye**.

C. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. In Chapter One the author writes, ***The tasseled limb of the white oak sighed at last …*** In this sentence the oak tree is given human characteristics (it sighs).

a) Why do you think personification is a literary device used by many authors?

b) Create your own example of personification.

Check out the website dedicated to the author of Rascal, Sterling North: https://www.sterlingnorthsociety.com

D. The Quatrain Poem.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of <u>four</u> lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain was written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis and is entitled ***My Pet Raccoon***.

My pet raccoon, called Bubba Fett,
Don't like to get his fingers wet.
He keeps them dry when he does eat,
His food he washes with his feet.

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: _____

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 *Rascal*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	**4**
5	**6**