



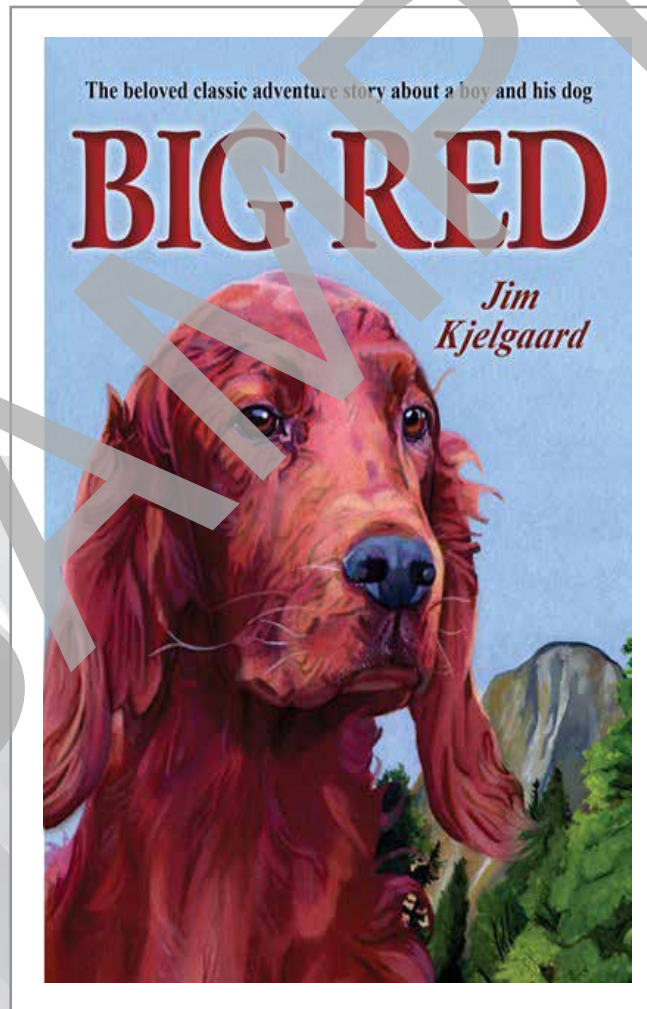
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Big Red

Jim Kjelgaard



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

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Jim Kjelgaard

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

[sales@novelunits.com](mailto:sales@novelunits.com)

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## Summary

One of the classic boy-and-his-dog tales, this is the story of Red—a championship Irish setter belonging to a wealthy estate owner—and Danny Picket—a 17-year-old trapper’s son who grows to love the dog.

The story opens in the wilderness near the “Wintapi” estate owned by Mr. Haggin. Danny, who lives with his father near the edge of the estate, discovers that an infamous bear, Old Majesty, has killed one of Mr. Haggin’s bulls. On his way to reveal the killing to Mr. Haggin, Danny is greeted on the trail by Red, who enjoys a brief pet before being whisked roughly away by Mr. Haggin’s overseer, Robert Fraley. That evening he describes the beautiful dog—who cost Mr. Haggin \$7,000—to his father; that night Danny’s agitated father wakes him up with the news that Red has followed Danny to the shanty. Reluctant to return the dog immediately, Danny wanders afield with Red, who manages to corner Old Majesty—something no dog has ever done, and survived—before the bear slips away. When Danny arrives at the Haggin estate with the missing dog, Robert Fraley threatens to hit Red with a stick and Danny smacks the man in the chin. Just then Mr. Haggin shows up and Danny describes the encounter with the bear. To Danny’s astonishment, Mr. Haggin offers to take him to New York to see a dog show in which Red is entered so that Danny can learn about showing dogs. Danny is doubly stunned to hear Mr. Haggin add that he would like to have Danny take Red home and help start a long line of champions for the new kennels Mr. Haggin plans.

Danny goes to New York in a chauffeur-driven station wagon, with his father Ross’ blessing. After a night at Mr. Haggin’s brownstone, Danny is taken to the show. During the judging, Red seems about to lose out on the ribbon for best of breed, when he catches Danny’s scent, perks up, and wins. A few days later, Red competes with a beautiful female setter (who is destined to reappear later in the story) and barely misses getting the ribbon for best of breed. On the train ride home, Danny stays in the baggage car with Red. Back home, Danny decides that Red should be a grouse hunter and begins training Red without a choke collar or leash. Danny grows frustrated when his attempts to teach Red control seem to be failing as Red bounds off after every passing squirrel and rabbit, but he does not want to “give him a lickin’” as his father suggests. Nor does he want Red to be a “varmint” dog, although Ross feels that he is sissifying the dog by only allowing him to hunt grouse. In any case, Red soon learns to flush grouse and to point without giving chase.

A wealthy woman friend of Mr. Haggin’s decides that she wants Red. Desolate on the day when he must give up the dog, Danny is taking Red to his new mistress when Red jumps on a skunk. To Danny’s great joy, the woman’s eagerness to have the now-smelly dog is dampened and Red returns home with him. Not long after, Red saves Danny’s life. Danny falls while shooting a buck and is wedged against a rock by the dead animal’s antlers. Red refuses to follow Danny’s orders to go home and stays to guard his young master—fortunately for Danny, since unbeknownst to him a big lynx lies nearby in the darkness waiting to strike (as Danny’s father reveals after killing the lynx and finding his son). Red also saves Ross’ life that winter, when Ross falls and is covered with snow. Red sniffs out the partridges in Ross’ pocket and leads Danny to the spot where the older man lies unconscious in the snow. Ross accepts that Red is a grouse hunter, and the tension between father and son disappears.

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## Using Predictions in the Novel Unit Approach

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how a conflict will be resolved, which details will be important to the plot, which details will help fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses as they read the novel.

As students work on their predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give to help us make predictions? Why are some predictions more likely to be accurate than others?

Create a chart for recording predictions. This could be either an individual or class activity. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, students can review and correct their previous predictions about plot and characters as necessary.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own prior knowledge.

Apply any new information (i.e., from class discussion) that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions

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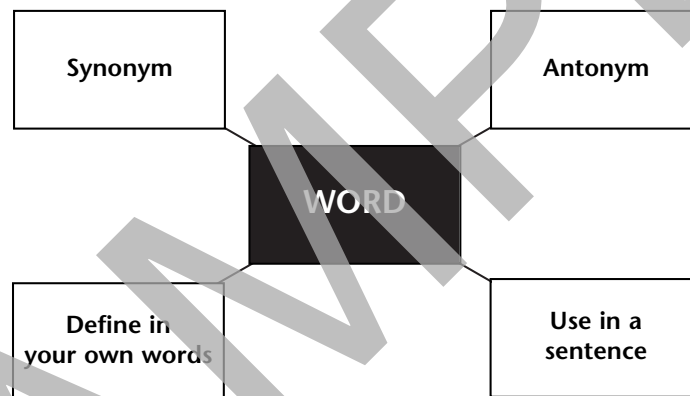
## Chapter 1, pages 1-21 “Irish Setter”

### Vocabulary Words

carbine 1	skulked 1	legend 1	glade 1
grotesquely 1	Holstein 2	carcass 2	nurtured 2
gabled 3	chiselled 3	restive 4	resolutely 6
mirage 7	unattainable 7	shanty 7	squatter 7
purling 7	brindle 8	vociferous 8	adze 8
galvanized 8	kindling 8	hocks 9	admonished 9
tantalizingly 10	lee 10	grouse 11	massive 12
suppressed 14	counselled 15	crest 16	scrutinized 16
slithered 17	rank 17	Wintapi 20	

### Vocabulary Activity

Word mapping is an activity that lends itself to any vocabulary list. For words that have clear antonyms, the following framework would be suitable:



Students might enjoy coming up with variations on this framework. For example, instead of listing antonyms, students could provide line drawings to illustrate the target word.

**Cooperative Learning Activity:** Each individual within a small group is responsible for three or four words. Each group member teaches the others about these words by sharing his/her maps with the others. Students are tested individually on all the words, but all members of a group get bonus points if everyone gets above a certain score.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are your reactions to this first chapter? What stands out in your mind?
2. What are your impressions of Danny? Does he remind you of anyone you know? Is he like you at all? Begin an attribute web. See page 12 for a discussion of attribute webs. (*age 17, resourceful woodsman, knows and loves dogs, lives in a cabin with his father, respectful but speaks his mind*)