



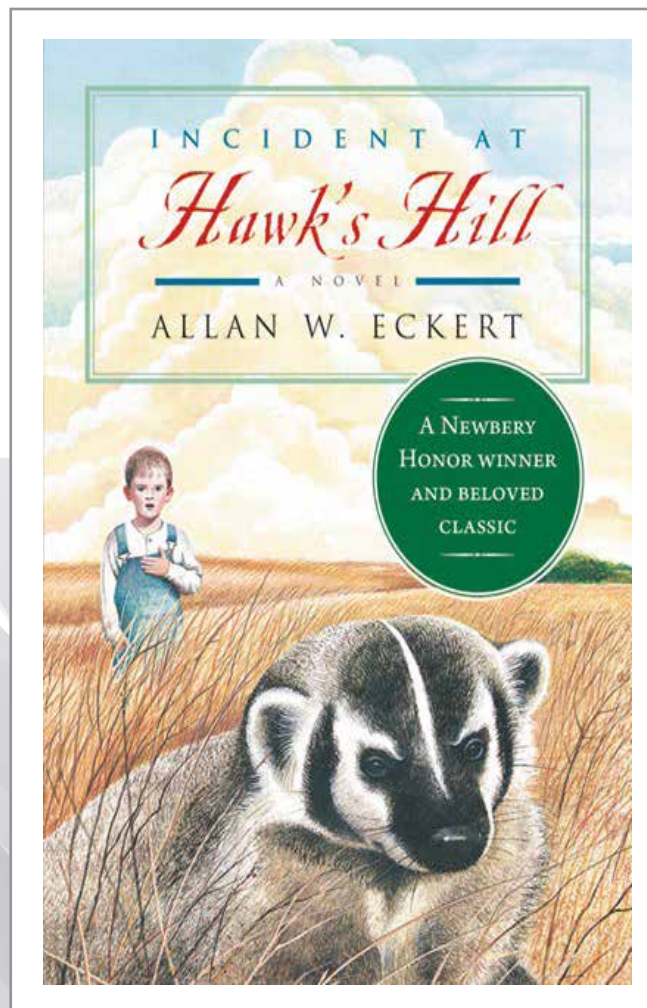
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Incident at Hawk's Hill

Allan W. Eckert



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

# Incident at Hawk's Hill

Allan W. Eckert

## 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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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, comparing  
and contrasting, evaluating,  
analyzing details

### Writing

Response journal, chapter  
titles, description, travel log,  
narrative, journal entry,  
newspaper article

### Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,  
cause/effect, KWL, inference,  
problem solving, decision  
making

### Vocabulary

Antonyms/synonyms, root  
words, prefixes/suffixes

### Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot,  
theme, conflict, prologue

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## Summary

In the Author's Note of *Incident at Hawk's Hill*, the author states that the novel is "a slightly fictionalized version of an incident which actually occurred at the time and place noted." The story has many peculiar events in it and may leave the reader searching for answers long after the reading is over. Many scenes in the book are violent, albeit in a very natural way. Other scenes are quite provocative and should lend themselves to student reflection and response.

The story revolves around a six-year-old boy, Benjamin MacDonald, who has an uncanny ability to mimic the sounds and behavior of animals. In fact, he much prefers the company of animals to people, including his own family, particularly his father. To his parents' growing dismay, Ben appears increasingly withdrawn from people. The neighbors are beginning to talk, and the parents find themselves at odds over what to do about their child. The child is particularly estranged from his father, and they seem unable to communicate on any level.

Ben wanders away from home, a small farm near Winnipeg, Canada, one day in 1870. Lost from home and separated from his parents, the small child finds refuge in the burrow of a female badger. The badger recently has lost her mate and litter of three pups. Ben survives in the wilderness for eight weeks, nurtured by the attentive actions of his adoptive mother—a badger. During his stay with her, Ben becomes a feral child.

He acquires all the characteristics of the badger. He sounds like her. He eats what she eats. He crawls on all fours as she does. By the time he is eventually found by his brother, Ben has lost nearly all semblances of a human being.

Much of the conflict in the story involves a neighbor, George Burton. He is a callous, savage trapper who frightens Ben, kills the badger's mate, and pushes William MacDonald beyond the limit of self-control. His actions are quite violent and should be put in perspective for the student reading the novel. There are several graphically violent scenes in the book.

## About the Author

Allan W. Eckert is an American nature writer and natural historian. He is the author of *The Court-Martial of Daniel Boone* and five titles in the "Narratives of America" series. *Incident at Hawk's Hill* is a Newbery Honor Book, first published in 1971.

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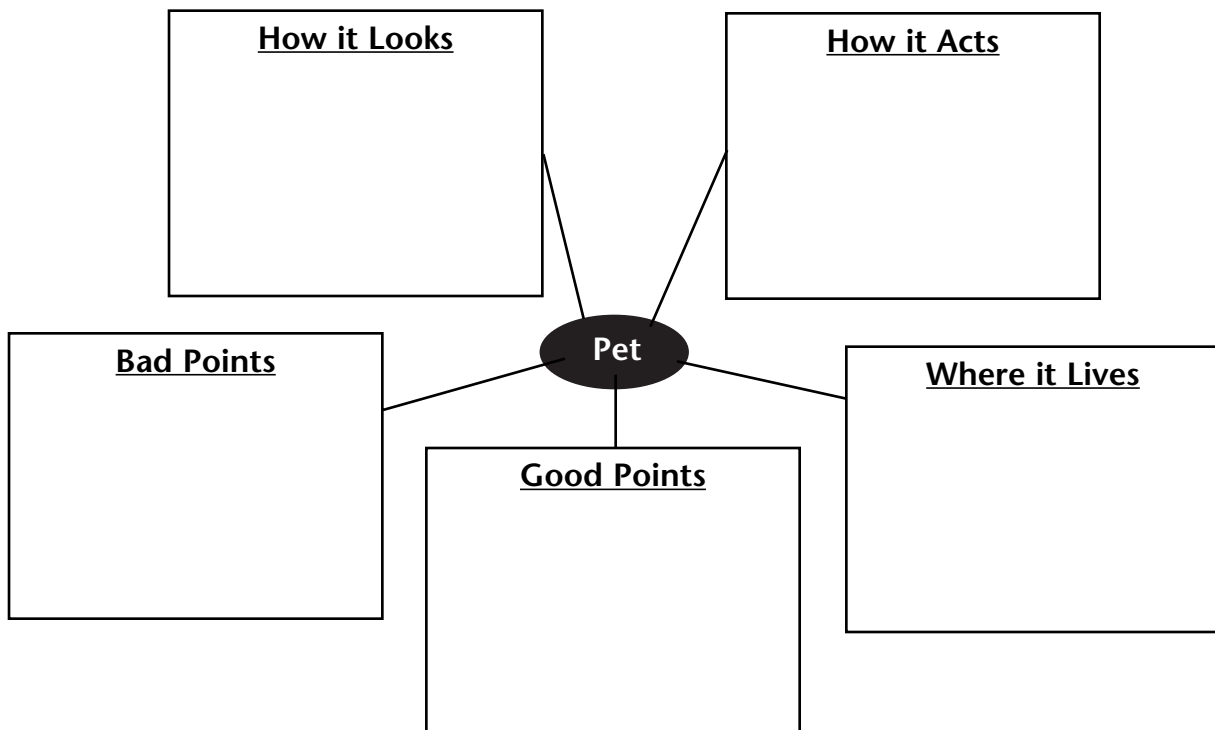
## Introductory Information and Activities

### Instructions Prior to Reading

You may wish to choose one or more of the following Initiating Activities. Each is designed to help students draw from their store of background knowledge about the events and themes they will meet in the story they are about to read.

### Initiating Activities

1. *Incident at Hawk's Hill* is a Newbery Honor Book. Ask: What does that mean? What makes a book good or notable? What other Newbery honorees have you read?
2. As a class, look at the cover and the title. What are your guesses about the book? Look at the back cover. What do you think the title, *Incident at Hawk's Hill*, means? What is an incident?
3. Ask students to think of a favorite pet that they have had or would like to have. Each student should list words or phrases that might be used to describe the parts of the pet, including details such as type of pet, kind of fur or skin, color, face, eyes, ears, tail, and legs. Have students use these words and details to write a descriptive paragraph about their pet.



- 
5. What happened to the badger's three pups? (*Page 89, They starved to death because the mother was not there to nurse them.*)
  6. Instinct plays an important part in this chapter. What instinct can you identify in this story?

## Chapter 7 — Pages 94-104

### Vocabulary

inadvertently 94	solicitous 95	shrewd 95	transgression 95
lavished 96	nullified 98	impromptu 98	erratic 98
niggling 99	torrential 100	rivulets 102	deluge 102
searing 102	acrid 102	spasm 102	finale 102
appeased 103	recommenced 104	assurance 104	

### Vocabulary Activity

Hangman: Using the vocabulary words which have been introduced, think of a word and draw blanks to represent the number of letters in that word. Draw a noose on the board. (This may be a simple number 7 with a rope dangling from it.) The child must guess which letters are in the word. When a student guesses a correct letter fill it in its proper place. If a student guesses a wrong letter, draw one part of a stick figure under the noose until a whole body is completed. The parts which must be drawn on the figure are the head, a line for the body, arms, legs, hands, feet, eyes, a nose, and a mouth. If there are double letters in the word, both should be filled in when one is guessed. If the body is completed before the word is guessed, the teacher (or leader) wins. If the word is guessed before the body is completed, the students are the winners. The student who guesses the word first may take the teacher's place. When the word is completed, the word is defined.

### Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What change in attitude had there been towards Ben from his family members, especially his father? (*Pages 95-96, Everyone tried harder with him.*)
2. What caused Ben to wander away from home? (*Pages 96-97, Ben began chasing a prairie chicken.*)
3. Why couldn't Ben tell direction by looking at the sun? (*Page 99, The day was sunless.*)
4. Where did Ben hide from the storm? (*page 100, the female badger burrow*)
5. What happened when Ben and the badger met in the rock-pile burrow? (*Pages 103-104, The badger struck out at Ben with its injured paw which hurt. Ben made badger noises and the badger backed out of the burrow.*)
6. Describe Ben's emotional state of mind on the first day he was lost.
7. **Prediction:** How will Ben survive lost on the prairie?

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### Supplementary Activities

1. Have you ever been lost? Describe this time. How did you feel? How were you able to find your way home?
2. Compare Ben's first meeting with the badger and this meeting with the badger.

	First Meeting	Second Meeting
Place		
How they met		
How each reacted		
Who threatened whom in what way		
Who won in the encounter and why		

3. Complete Cause/Effect Chart on page 28.