



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Rascal

Sterling North



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Rascal

Sterling North

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!

ISBN 978-1-50204-110-4

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3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

novelunits.com

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research

Comprehension

Predicting, comparison/
contrast

Writing

Letters, stories

Vocabulary

Analogies, word mapping

Listening/Speaking

Discussion

Literary Elements

Characterization, story
elements

Summary

Sterling North details his rural Wisconsin experiences from May, 1918 through April, 1919. In May of 1918 North befriends and tames a baby raccoon that he names Rascal. The relationship between the boy and his raccoon is delightful and loving. As the raccoon nears the completion of its first year of life, boy and animal realize that the pet must return to the wild to live out the remainder of its days. Readers will find the story a worthwhile experience, filled with affection and fun, while gaining an insight into life as it was in rural America during this time frame.

About the Author

Sterling North was born November 4, 1906, in Edgerton, Wisconsin. He died of a stroke on December 22, 1974, in Morristown, New Jersey. He was a literary editor, novelist, and an author of books for children. In 1957 he became a founding editor of North Star Books, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin, specializing in histories for children.

North's own writings ranged from biographies for young people to novels for adults. A conservationist and naturalist, North was noted for his nature and animal stories. *Rascal* has sold over two million copies and has been published in 14 countries.

In his books for young people, North went beyond the intention to entertain and amuse. He has said, "What America desperately needs is a better educational system. We must teach children not only how to read well at a very early age, but must inspire in them a love of books and of knowledge. It has been my life-long crusade to fight the comics and the terror of television shows, while editing and writing books which I hope will give bright young Americans a deeper and richer sense of our culture, past and present."

Introductory Information and Activities

Note: Please be selective, and use discretion when choosing the activities that you will do with the guide. It is not intended that everything be done, but that discretionary choices made are most appropriate for your use and group of children. A wide range has been provided, so that individuals as well as groups may benefit from these selections.

Initiating Activities

1. Raccoons: Discuss the advisability of having a raccoon for a pet. (See Chapter 1, Post-reading Activity #4.) Organize a KWL chart about raccoons. (See Teacher Information section of this guide.) Find out what the children KNOW about raccoons, what they WOULD like to know, and, as the study/story evolves, what they have LEARNED about raccoons. Record this information on the chart. Incorrect information will be crossed off as more is learned. (See Bulletin Board Ideas, Raccoons.)

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2. **Pets:** Make a copy of a poem about a pet. Have it displayed prominently near the bulletin board. Ask for a volunteer to read the poem to the class. (See Bibliography, dePaola and Prelutsky.) Discuss pets. Make a pet graph. (See Bulletin Board Ideas, Pets.)
 3. **The Poetry of War:** The recounting of the incidents in this book take place during the time in which the First World War was being fought. Sterling North's brother, Herschel, was fighting in France at the time. If it is intended that this book be a vehicle by which the First World War, or war in general, is introduced, poetry may be used to this intent. There are several books of poetry devoted to this period of time, as well as *The Oxford Book Of War Poetry* that starts with Biblical times and ends with "Your Attention Please," directing people to Atomic Attack Shelters. (See Bibliography/Other, Brooke, Giddings, Hibbard, Stallworthy.) It is suggested that several of the poems be copied and placed about the room, and that the children be encouraged to read them before any group discussion takes place. (See also Bulletin Board Ideas, The Poetry of War, Chapter 2—Post-reading Activity #3, and Suggested Activities, First World War Poetry Timeline.) When ready to start the study, ask for volunteers to read the poems, and discuss the content of each, as well as the feelings elicited.

Bulletin Board Ideas

1. **Raccoons:** Cover the bulletin board with plain background paper. Divide the space vertically into three sections. Example follows:

What I Know	What I Would Like to Know	What I Learned

2. **Pets:** Cover the bulletin board with plain background paper, such as butcher or craft paper. Make a large grid on the paper. Make a thick baseline on the graph, and record the kinds of pets that were discussed in the Initiating Activity. Also have a space for "none."

Chapter I: “May”—Pages 15-26

Vocabulary

unweaned 15	drooled 16	phosphorescent 16	luminescent 17
amiably 18	lair 19	plaintive 20	quavering 20
tasseled 22			

Vocabulary Activity

Definitions. One thing leads to another. Define the words phosphorescent and luminescent. What other definitions does it lead you to? For example:

Phosphorescent: Something is said to be phosphorescent if it has a persistent emission of light following exposure to and removal of incident radiation.

Luminescent: Capable of, exhibiting, or suitable for the emission of luminescence.

Luminescence: The emission of light, as in phosphorescence, fluorescence, and bioluminescence, by processes that derive energy from essentially nonthermal sources such as chemical, biochemical, or crystallographic changes, the motion of subatomic particles, or the excitation of an atomic system by radiation; especially, such emission distinguished from incandescence.

Incandescent: Emitting visible light as a result of being heated.

Bioluminescence: The emission of visible light by living organisms, such as the firefly.

Use some of the words that have been defined in a sentence.

Discussion Questions and Activities

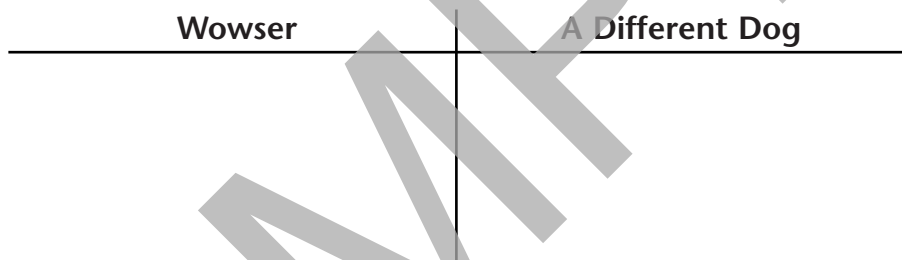
1. Read the first paragraph, page 15, aloud. Who is telling the story? What does the author reveal in this first paragraph? Does he make you want to read the rest of the story? Discuss.
2. Who is Wowser? (Page 15, *Wowser is the storyteller’s dog.*) What does the author tell us about Wowser? (pages 15-16) (See Post-reading Activities #1 and #2.)
3. Why does the storyteller like to visit the home of his good friend Oscar Sunderland? (Page 17, *Oscar’s mother bakes delicious Norwegian pastries, and often says something tender in Norwegian to the storyteller as she places a plate of the pastries before him. This kind gesture is appreciated by the boy, as his own mother died when he was 7.*) Who is the storyteller? (the author, Sterling North) (See Post-reading Activity #3.)
4. Where do the two boys go? What do they find there? (Page 18, *The boys go to Wentworth’s woods; page 19, they find a mother raccoon with a litter of four baby raccoons.*) How does Sterling get another pet? (pages 20-23)
5. How does Mrs. Sunderland feed the baby raccoon? (Page 26, *She uses a wheat straw. “She filled her own mouth with warm milk, put the wheat straw between her lips, and slanted the straw down to the mouth of the little raccoon.”*) (See Post-reading Activity #4.)

Post-reading Activities

1. Do some research. Find out more about the Saint Bernard Dog. The following is a summary of the description and standards of the mature dog, from the American Kennel Club.

The dog is powerful, tall, having an erect figure, strong and muscular in every part, with powerful head and most intelligent expression. Like the whole body, the head is very powerful and imposing. The massive skull is wide, slightly arched and sloping at the sides, with a gentle curve into the very well-developed cheek bones. The muzzle is short, and the depth must be greater than the length of the muzzle. The teeth, in proportion to the conformation of the head, are only of moderately strong development. A black roof to the mouth is desirable. The nose is very substantial and broad, with well-dilated nostrils, and always black. The ears are of medium size, set on rather high, with very strongly developed burr. The eyes set more to the front than the sides, are of moderate size, brown, or nut-brown, with a good-natured expression. The neck is set on high, is very strong, and in action is carried erect. The shoulders are sloping and broad. The chest is well arched, and the back is very broad.

2. Use a T-Diagram to compare Wowser to your dog, a real dog that you know, or a dog in a different story.



3. Start character attribute webs for Mr. and Mrs. Sunderland. Add to the webs as more is learned about them. (See pages 9-10 of this guide.)

