



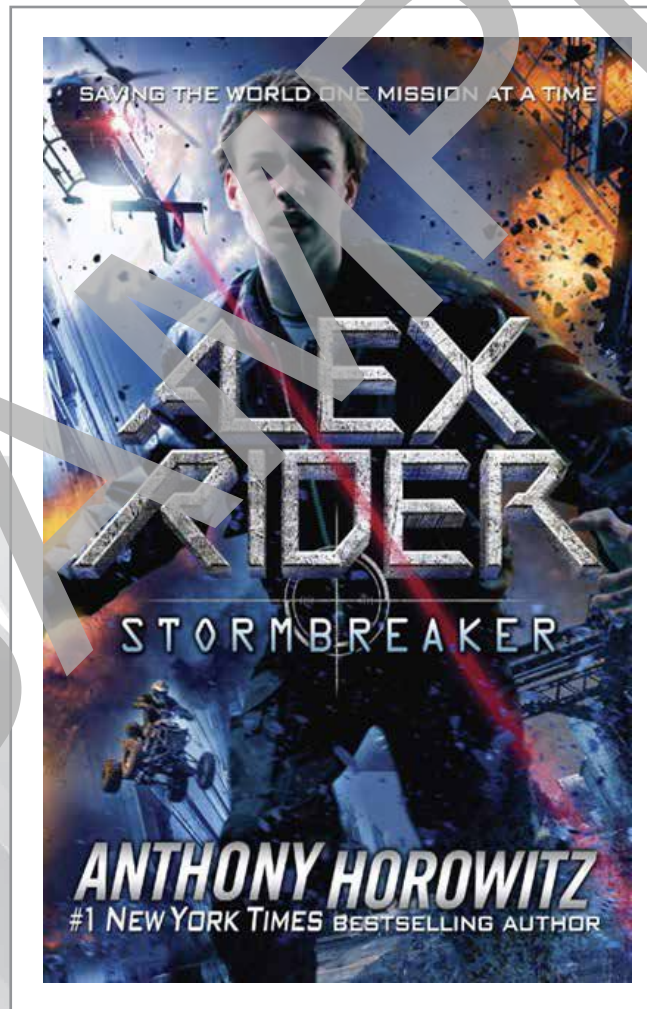
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Stormbreaker

Anthony Horowitz



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Stormbreaker

Anthony Horowitz

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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Table of Contents

Summary	3
About the Author.....	3
Characters	4
Background Information	4
Initiating Activities.....	5
Vocabulary Activities.....	6
Five Sections	7
Each section contains: Summary, Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Supplementary Activities	
Post-reading Discussion Questions	15
Post-reading Extension Activities	16
Assessment.....	17
Scoring Rubric.....	30
Glossary.....	31

Skills and Strategies

Comprehension

Main ideas/supporting details, sequencing, recalling, classifying, ordering, summarizing

Literary Elements

Genre, style, story mapping, plot, cause/effect, foreshadowing, setting, characterization, author's purpose, theme, point of view, similes, dialogue, mood, conflict/resolution

Vocabulary

Synonyms, antonyms, context clues, thesaurus/dictionary skills

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, debate, acting, presentation

Writing

Analytical essay, argumentative essay, creative writing, journalism, poetry, alternate story, journaling

Critical Thinking

Research, problem solving, compare/contrast, identifying attributes, predicting, evaluating, supporting opinions

Across the Curriculum

Art—illustration, drawing, visual analysis, travel brochure, Web page design, storyboard;
History—Desert Storm, time line, research; Geography—Cornwall, London and Cairo, Egypt; Social Studies—Industrial Revolution; Law—mock hearing

Genre: fiction; spy thriller

Setting: primarily Sayle Enterprises in Cornwall, England

Point of View: third person

Themes: service to country, self, family, and others; courage

Style: narrative; fast-paced; action-adventure

Tone: thrilling; suspenseful, and serious

Conflict: person vs. person; person vs. self; person vs. society

Date of First Publication: 2001

Summary

Fourteen-year-old Alex Rider appears to be an ordinary schoolboy from Chelsea, London, but on the way to his uncle's funeral, the curious details of Alex's life begin to emerge. His parents died in a car accident and his uncle, Ian Rider, raised him. Alex had believed that his uncle was a banker. He discovers, however, that his uncle was actually a Special Operations secret agent. Alex soon becomes the only viable candidate to follow in his Uncle Ian's footsteps to crack the case of Herod Sayle. No one, after all, would suspect a 14-year-old boy of spying at a high-tech facility supposedly cranking out innovative computers for schoolchildren. Sayle, as Alex deduces, is fitting the Stormbreaker computers with smallpox. Equipped with cleverness and a small arsenal of special spy gadgets, Alex overcomes Sayle and his collection of cronies to foil the evil plot.

About the Author

Horowitz was born in 1956 in Stanmore, Middlesex, England to a family he describes as "being wealthy by mysterious means." After transferring all of his money to a Swiss bank account under a secret name, Horowitz's father died, leaving Horowitz's mother on a futile search for wealth. This element of mystery, a miserable youth spent in boarding schools, and the escapist quality of the Bond flicks, Horowitz says, influenced the creation of the Alex Rider character and his many adventures. A self-proclaimed aficionado of the James Bond films from the time he was a child, Anthony Horowitz has written more than 50 books ranging from supernatural thrillers to detective mysteries. He has penned several scripts for television and film, including the screenplay adaptation of *Stormbreaker*. Horowitz may be best known for *Stormbreaker*, the book that began the Alex Rider series, which follows the exploits of a teenaged Bond-like spy. Other books in the Alex Rider series include *Point Blank*, *Skeleton Key*, *Eagle Strike*, *Scorpia*, *Ark Angel*, and *Snakehead*.

Characters

Alex Rider: Fourteen-year-old Londoner raised by his Uncle Ian after his parents' accidental deaths

Ian Rider: Alex's banker uncle who allegedly dies in a car accident; Alex begins to uncover Ian's true occupation as a secret agent.

Jack Starbright: young American woman who'd come to London to attend college; ends up serving as a housekeeper and companion in the Rider household

Alan Blunt: chief executive of the Special Operations Division of MI6, the spy organization of which Alex learns Ian had been a part

Mrs. Jones: peppermint-eating head of operations at MI6 in charge of sending spies out on their missions

Herod Sayle: London-raised Egyptian entrepreneur; under suspicion as he plans to donate his innovative computer "Stormbreaker" to every school in England

Mr. Grin: Sayle's brutal henchman noted for his smile-like scar and lack of tongue, both apparently caused by a knife-throwing incident in a circus

Nadia Vole: another of Sayle's accomplices; in charge of overseeing Stormbreaker production

Yassen Gregorovich: Russian hit-man involved in Sayle's Stormbreaker plot and responsible for Ian Rider's death

Wolf: fellow trainee of the K Unit, Special Operations, who torments Alex until Alex helps him pass his parachute drop

Smithers: designs spy gadgets suitable for Alex to use instead of a gun

Background Information

The following information will enhance students' understanding of the novel.

First published in 2001, Anthony Horowitz's *Stormbreaker* is the first in a series of books chronicling the adventures of teen spy Alex Rider. It follows in the tradition of Ian Fleming's *James Bond* series. There are several references in *Stormbreaker* to Bond, the famous agent in the Queen's secret service, as well as a nod to Fleming's knack for aptly-named bad guys (Horowitz's Mr. Grin, for example). Set in contemporary times, *Stormbreaker* takes place in London and Cornwall.

Like most spy novels, serious contemporary concerns lurk just beneath the surface of this otherwise fun-filled and thrilling adventure. The villain's Egyptian roots, his upbringing by a British couple hoping to better his life, and his misfit status in England recall England's long history of colonization in the Middle East as well as more modern efforts to thwart Middle Eastern terrorism (which intensified significantly in the years after Horowitz wrote the novel in 2000).

In 1878, the British gained dual-control with France over Egypt and struggled with the French over dominance in the region, gaining the upper-hand over the years, until 1922 when Britain declared Egypt independent. British involvement in the region extended to other areas such as India and Afghanistan. The British often instituted their own culture, language, education, and way of life in the regions they controlled, believing they were improving the lives of many. Needless to say, many of the native people in British-controlled areas were resentful, and those native to England

Supplementary Activities

1. Art: The different paintings in Sayle's home, particularly *Judgment Day*, lend a certain tone or mood to scenes and/or foreshadow events or plots. Divide into four groups, and select a different chapter from this section. Discuss with your group the most prominent scene from your group's assigned chapter. Then research and select artwork that either shares that scene's tone/mood or shares some other major detail from that scene. Choose at least three works. Present your group's artwork to the rest of the class, and see if they can guess which scene you selected based on the artwork.
2. Art Analysis: Review the two descriptions of the painting *Judgment Day* in the novel, and complete an OPTIC analysis in writing based on the information you are provided in the novel. It might help to do a rough sketch of the painting as described before you begin. First, you'll write an Overview of the artwork. Secondly, you will describe the Parts or details in the artwork. Thirdly, you will discuss the Title of the work. Fourth, you will explain how the details you've described Interrelate, or have something to do with, the title of the work. Finally, make some Concluding remarks about the work as a whole.
3. Social Studies: Research what life in Cairo, Egypt is like, and make a chart of pertinent information.
4. History: Research Great Britain's involvement in the Middle East, particularly with Egypt during the 1800s. Create a time line of events.
5. Conflict/Resolution: Complete the Making Decisions chart on page 23 of this guide.

Eleven O'Clock–Yassen

After fleeing Sayle's house, Alex hitches a ride on a cargo plane. He overtakes Mr. Grin, the pilot, and directs him to fly toward London. Alex parachutes out and maneuvers to the Science Museum where the Prime Minister is poised to click the mouse on the Stormbreaker. Alex effectively stops the Stormbreakers from going online. Alex expects to be shot by Sayle, but the assassin Gregorovich shoots Sayle instead. Gregorovich understands Alex will someday seek revenge for his uncle's death but advises Alex to forget the dangerous world of spies and bad guys. Gregorovich takes off in a helicopter.

Vocabulary

stock
chocks
effective
simultaneously
tarmac
mechanism
clambered
transformed
extravagant
conservatory
anonymous
fanatical
conciliatory

Discussion Questions

1. When Alex has an opportunity to shoot back as he struggles to get to the cargo plane, he doesn't, claiming he can't, "Not for his country. Not even to save his own life" (p. 202). Deaths have resulted in the novel, however, for these same causes. What is the difference? (Answers will vary. Suggested answer: Alex will not take a life using a weapon if he can avoid doing so.)
2. Alex uses a harpoon and nylon cord to hitch a ride on a cargo plane. How believable is this scene? Does believability matter? Why or why not? (Some students will think believability doesn't matter as long as they're being entertained, while others will think that if something isn't believable it removes them from the story.)

3. How can Sayle's speech about the Prime Minister be interpreted in two completely different ways? (*He words it in such a way that only someone who is aware of his evil intentions could see his real meaning. Otherwise it just sounds as if he's being magnanimous.*)
4. To Alex, Blunt sounds "like the principal of a second-rate private school giving him a good report" (p. 223). In what other ways has Alex's experience mirrored ordinary life in extraordinary ways? (*Answers will vary. Suggested answer: Alex's training is military in nature, except that he is only a boy and the other trainees are men; Alex is raised by a relative, except that his uncle is a spy; Alex is adept with computers and is skilled at martial arts, but he uses these abilities in espionage, etc.*)
5. Why doesn't Alex like the idea that he may be called on by Blunt again? (*He'd been forced into it to begin with and is exhausted from the experience.*)
6. Why does Alex feel that Mrs. Jones and Blunt are as "charming" as Mr. Grin? (*Charming is used sarcastically; therefore, Mrs. Jones and Blunt are about as dull as Mr. Grin.*)
7. How do you feel about Yassen after his exchange with Alex at the end of the novel? How does Alex seem to feel about him? When Yassen raises his hand in the end, is it truly a gesture of friendship? (*Alex vows to kill Yassen someday even though Yassen has spared him, so it would be safe to assume that Alex still hates him. Answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Geography: Research London on the Internet (try Google Earth), and see if you can locate some of the landmarks Alex notices at the beginning of the chapter titled, "Twelve O'Clock." Write your own concrete description of these places as viewed from the air.
2. Social Studies: Research the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain, and create a display featuring images and information on the era.
3. Journalism: Imagine that you are one of the reporters at the Science Museum when Alex crashes through the roof. Use the Newspaper graphic on page 24 of this guide to write your news story of the events from your perspective. Only include information that you would have witnessed or been able to uncover yourself.
4. Character Analysis: Use the Feelings chart on page 25 of this guide to explore Alex's progression of emotions throughout *Stormbreaker*.
5. Journal Entry: Write a journal entry as Alex reacting to the conversation with Blunt and Mrs. Jones and then the meeting with Gregorovich.
6. History: Research the first Iraq war (Desert Storm), particularly British involvement. Prepare a time line of events based on your findings.

Using Dialogue

Directions: Complete the chart below to analyze the exchange in “Physalia Physalia” between Alex and Herod Sayle when Sayle introduces Mr. Grin.

