

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Aligns with
Common Core
State Standards



THE MYSTERY OF THE RUSSIAN RANSOM

ROY MACGREGOR

"The Screech Owls are great reading for
the hockey players in your family." – Wayne Gretzky



TUNDRA BOOKS

THE NIGHT THEY
TOOK THE STANLEY CUP

FACE-OFF
AT THE ALAMO

PANIC IN
PITTSBURGH

PERIL AT THE
WORLD'S BIGGEST
HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

THE GHOST OF
THE STANLEY CUP

THE BOSTON
BREAKOUT

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DEAR EDUCATOR

In *The Mystery of the Russian Ransom*, the third new book in the Screech Owls series, a terrible fate awaits a member of the Screech Owls in the ancient land of Ivan the Terrible. This exciting new mystery about a fictional hockey team will thrill and entertain hockey fans and young readers alike.

This activity guide includes discussion questions, writing activities, and prompts to elicit a meaningful understanding of the text. Where applicable, activities have been aligned with Common Core State Standards. The activities can be used in a Language Arts unit or as stand-alone enrichment in whole class, small group, and/or independent novel studies.

ABOUT THE BOOK

The Screech Owls have never had such a wonderful surprise. A famous Russian billionaire has offered to pay and fly the whole Screech Owls team to his country. He wants the Owls to visit his homeland so the Russians can learn from the Screech Owls' style of play. The team will play in a tournament while they are there, but even before their first practice on Russian ice, Sarah is taken off the snowy streets. Her kidnappers want ten million rubles in exchange for her safe release! The billionaire wants to pay for Sarah's safe return, but Travis and his teammates decide to take matters into their own hands.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roy MacGregor was named a media inductee to the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2012, when he was given the Elmer Ferguson Memorial Award for excellence in hockey journalism. He has been involved in hockey all his life, from playing all-star hockey in Huntsville, Ontario, against the likes of Bobby Orr from nearby Parry Sound, to coaching, and he is still playing old-timers hockey in Ottawa, where he lives with his wife, Ellen. They have four grown children. He was inspired to write *The Highest Number in the World*, illustrated by Geneviève Després, when his now grown-up daughter started playing hockey as a young girl. Roy is also the author of several classics in hockey literature. *The Home Team: Fathers, Sons and Hockey* was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for Literature. *Home Game: Hockey and Life in Canada* (written with Ken Dryden) was a bestseller, as were *Road Games: A Year in the Life of the NHL*, *The Seven A.M. Practice*, and his latest, *Wayne Gretzky's Ghost: And Other Tales from a Lifetime in Hockey*. He wrote *Mystery at Lake Placid*, the first book in the bestselling, internationally successful Screech Owls series in 1995. In 2005, Roy was named an Officer of the Order of Canada.



Photo credit: Fred Lum / *The Globe and Mail*

PRE-READING DISCUSSION

Use the following questions and prompts with students before reading the novel.

- Without revealing the title of the story, show the logo and cover image to students. Where and what do you think this novel is about? If you had to describe the logo to somebody who hadn't seen it, what would you say?
- Reveal the title of the novel. What is the meaning of the word "ransom"?
- What are some common elements of a mystery novel? Do you have a favorite mystery story?
- Read the quote from Wayne Gretzky on the bottom of the book. Who is Wayne Gretzky? What is he known for?

(RL.5.9)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. True or False

- Indicate on the chart below whether the statements are true or false. As a class, review the answers. For any of the false statements, correct them so they are true. Create three of your own true/false statements at the bottom of the chart and challenge a partner to solve them.

Sarah is the captain of the Screech Owls.	T / F
Coach Muck's last name is Monroe.	T / F
The 2013 World Junior Hockey Championships took place in Ufa, Russia.	T / F
Matryoshka is the Russian word for prison.	T / F
The first team the Screech Owls played in the tournament was St. Petersburg.	T / F
Nish is distantly related to Hockey Hall-of-Famer "Terrible Ted Lindsay."	T / F
There is a bright orange bird on the Russian hockey team's crest.	T / F
The ransom set for Sarah's return was ten million dollars.	T / F
The two players with cell phones were Data and Jenny.	T / F
Sacha helped Sarah escape.	T / F
Dmitri plays right wing.	T / F
	T / F
	T / F
	T / F

LEARNING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

2. Narration

- What are the different types of narration?
- The author used two different narrative techniques. Why do you think he chose to do this? What effect did it have on you as a reader?
- Fill in the chart below with the list of chapters written in first and third person narration.

Chapters written in first person
Chapters written in third person

(RL.4.6, RL.5.6, RL.6.6)

3. Scavenger Hunt

- Locate the page and chapter numbers where the following events in the story happen. In the blanks at the bottom of the chart, write down another event that you thought was significant. Challenge a partner to locate the event's page number and chapter.

(RL.4.1)

EVENT	PAGE NUMBER / CHAPTER
Sarah is given a Matryoshka as a gift from Olga.	
The first time Sarah meets Olga.	
Nish gets in trouble for damaging the table-hockey game.	
Travis sees Sarah at the old arena.	
Sarah has a nightmare about Travis being seriously injured.	
One event that was funny.	
One event that was exciting.	

LEARNING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

4. Beginning, Middle, End

- In partners, divide the story into three parts: beginning, middle, and end.
- In the chart below, summarize what happened in each of the three parts. Remember that summarizing does not mean writing down *everything* that happened! Choose the important events and write them down in your own words.

Beginning
Middle
End

(RL.5.2, RL.6.3)

5. History

- There are several references in the novel to historical figures, places, and events. Select one of the following figures, places, or events from the list below and explain how and/or why they were mentioned in the novel. Use three sources to further research the figure, place, or event.

Paul Henderson | Alexander Yakushev | The Cold War | Ufa, Russia
Ivan the Terrible | Salavat Yulaev | St. Petersburg, Russia | Yekaterinburg
Alexander Pushkin | Winston Churchill

LEARNING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- Dmitri's father explains how Russia has changed since 1972. Using the t-chart below, describe some of the changes.

Russia - 1972	Russia - today

6. Enigma

- Muck quoted Winston Churchill as saying, "Russia is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." Look up the definition of "enigma" in the dictionary and write a definition in your own words.
- Some of the Screech Owls reference this quote and seem confused by it. Now that you have an understanding of the word "enigma," what do you think this saying means? Can you connect the Screech Owls experiences in Russia, Sarah's experiences in particular, to the meaning of this expression?

(RL.4.4, RL.5.1, RL.6.4)

7. Superstition

- Athletes often follow certain rituals prior to playing their sport. What ritual does Travis perform before getting on the ice for the Screech Owls first game against Minsk?
- Pretend you are Travis before a game. As the teacher or partner reads aloud Travis's ritual on page 36, act it out.
- Do you have any rituals that you follow? What does it mean to be superstitious? Are you superstitious about anything?

(RL.4.4)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

(CONTINUED)

8. The Five Senses

- On page 50, Sarah knows she is entering a hockey arena by the sights, sounds, and smells she experiences. What are some of these sights, sounds, and smells?
- Choose a favorite place at school, home, or elsewhere. Fill in the chart below explaining what some of the sights, sounds, and smells are in your favorite place. In small groups, challenge your partners to guess your favorite place after reading your list aloud.

MY FAVORITE PLACE: _____

SIGHTS	SOUNDS	SMELLS

- Use this list of sights, sounds, and smells to write a descriptive paragraph about your favorite place.

(RL.5.2, RL.6.3)

9. Matryoshka

- Sarah is given a traditional Russian doll called a Matryoshka. Why did Sarah find this gift unusual? What is special about this kind of doll? Have you ever seen one before?
- What is a metaphor? At the end of the novel, how was the doll used as a metaphor for Mr. Yakushev's plans?

(RL.5.1, RL.5.4)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

10. Accessibility

- What does the word “accessible” mean? Data was previously a player on the Screech Owls. He became the team’s assistant coach after being hit by a car. What problems did Data have with accessibility in Ufa? How do you think he was feeling as the team went exploring, and when they went to rescue Sarah?
- How accessible is your city? Think about where you have been today, including your own home, the way you came to school, and your school itself. If you were in a wheelchair, would you have experienced any problems with accessibility?
- Write a letter or e-mail to your city councilor explaining any concerns you may have about places that are inaccessible in your city. Include suggestions for how you think these problems may best be addressed. Ensure that you follow proper letter writing etiquette.

11. Captain

- In Chapter 23, Travis found himself “acting” like the captain of the team. Make a list of the qualities Travis has that make him a good team captain. Find evidence of his actions or behavior in the novel that proves he is a natural leader.
- Have you ever had to take charge of a situation? What leadership qualities do you have?
- In Chapter 25, Travis is surprised by how assertive Dmitri is behaving: “This was a Dmitri that Travis didn’t know. Always so shy and soft-spoken back home, here he was being firm and confident and talking fast.” Why do you think Dmitri was feeling so much more confident than when he was at home in Canada?

(RL.5.1)

12. Pavel

- Pavel plays a very important role in the novel. Even though the reader doesn’t learn very much about Pavel as a character, he changes from the beginning of the novel to the end. Rewrite the story from Pavel’s perspective. What would his understanding have been about what was going on? Why would he be involved in the first place? Why would he help Sarah escape?

(RL.5.6)



OTHER BOOKS IN THE SCREECH OWL SERIES

Face-Off at the Alamo

Panic in Pittsburgh

The Boston Breakout

Reality Check in Detroit

Mystery at Lake Placid

The Night They Stole the Stanley Cup

The Ghost of the Stanley Cup

Sudden Death in New York City

Peril at the World's Biggest Hockey Tournament

LINKS

www.screechowls.com

IF YOU LIKED THE SCREECH OWLS, YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE:

Viminy Crowe's Comic Book by Marthe Jocelyn and Richard Scrimger

The Fortress of Kaspar Snit by Cary Fagan

The Nose from Jupiter by Richard Scrimger

Word Nerd by Susin Nielsen

Older readers:

The Voice inside My Head by S. J. Laidlaw

Eye of the Crow by Shane Peacock

APPENDIX: COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.6** Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1** Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2** Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.6** Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.9** Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g., mysteries and adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3** Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.6** Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.