

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

Aligns with  
Common Core  
State Standards



## THE BOSTON BREAKOUT

ROY MACGREGOR

"The Screech Owls are great reading for the  
hockey players in your family." – **WAYNE GRETZKY**



TUNDRA BOOKS

# DEAR EDUCATOR

In *The Boston Breakout*, the Screech Owls visit historical Boston for a mid-summer hockey tournament. Not accustomed to playing hockey through the summer, the Owls' hockey and detective skills are put to the test as they stumble upon a potentially disastrous plot to "free the animals" at the New England Aquarium. This exciting new mystery about a fictional inclusive, mixed-gender hockey team will thrill and entertain hockey fans and young readers alike.

The 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 are in historic Boston to play in the Paul Revere Peewee Invitational Hockey Tournament. For Travis and his teammates, the highlight of places to see is the New England Aquarium, home to seals and turtles and penguins. Its huge glass tanks are filled with an awesome collection of sharks, stingrays and other sea creatures. Samantha Bennett, especially, is amazed, but when she meets an animal-rights campaigner who is keen to convert Sam to her cause, Sam falls under the strange woman's spell and becomes a new recruit in a very dangerous organization.

## 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 do you think this novel takes place? 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 do you know about Boston? Do you know of any historically significant events that took place there? What do you think the story will be about?
- 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?

*(SL.4.1, SL.5.1, SL.6.1)*

## 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.

The Screech Owls always play hockey throughout the summer.	T / F
There are 16 Screech Owls players on the trip.	T / F
The Screech Owls top line is Nish, Travis and Sarah.	T / F
The New England Aquarium has exactly 600 sea creatures.	T / F
Benjamin Franklin was the youngest of 16 children.	T / F
The Screech Owls lost their first game in the tournament.	T / F
Travis helped Nish with his invention, the Nishikawa Stinger.	T / F
Frances (Isobel) had a tattoo of a sea turtle on her neck.	T / F
Nish and Travis's special play was called a "Hail Mary."	T / F
The divers doing the census started at the bottom of the tank and rose upwards.	T / F
The Owls won the championship game of the tournament, 2-0.	T / F
	T / F
	T / F
	T / F

# LEARNING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

## 2. Good Sportsmanship

- What does it mean to show “good sportsmanship”?
- Find three examples in the book that show how much the Screech Owls value good sportsmanship. Do you think it is important to always show good sportsmanship? Why or why not?
- Have you ever demonstrated or witnessed good sportsmanship? Write a journal-style entry that describes this experience. If you have not ever seen good sportsmanship first hand, describe something you have read about, seen on television or seen in movie.

*(RL.4.1, W.4.1, W.4.2, W.4.9, RL.5.1, W.5.1, W.5.2, W.5.9, RL.6.1)*

## 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.

EVENT	PAGE NUMBER / CHAPTER
Travis, Sarah and Sam are escorted to the aquarium security office.	
Nish discovers clean underwear in his equipment bag.	
The Screech Owls beat the Detroit Wheels 5–4 in overtime.	
Data tells Nish that his invention has already been made.	
Sam is taken down into the penguin exhibit at the aquarium.	
One event that was funny.	
One event that was exciting.	

*(RL.4.1)*

## 4. Fancy Signature

- Why do you think Muck insisted the Owls all write a postcard home to their parents instead of, for example, sending them a text message or email?
- Select a famous Boston landmark or historical event mentioned in the novel, and design a postcard representing that place or event. Select one of the players on the Screech Owls and write a message home from that character to their parents about something that happened on the trip. Create a fancy signature for that character with which to sign off the postcard.

*(RL.4.1, W.4.1, W.4.2, RL.5.1, W.5.1, W.5.2, RL.6.1)*

# LEARNING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

## 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.

- The American Revolution
- Benjamin Franklin
- Paul Revere
- Charles River
- Boston Common Park
- New England Aquarium
- Bobby Orr
- Freedom Trail
- Massachusetts State House
- Granary Burying Ground
- Samuel Adams
- John Hancock
- The Declaration of Independence
- Boston Latin School
- Harvard University
- Faneuil Hall
- Bunker Hill monument
- The USS *Constitution*
- St. Francis of Assisi
- Boston Tea Party

(W.4.2, W.4.7, W.5.2, W.5.7, W.6.2, W.6.7)

## 6. Is School Necessary?

- Nish is thrilled to learn that Benjamin Franklin, perhaps one of the most intelligent Americans of all time, dropped out of school when he was young. Brainstorm a list of reasons for why children should have to go to school and a separate list of reasons for why children should not be made to go to school. Write a persuasive piece of writing supporting one side of the argument. Divide the class into two teams, each side supporting different sides of the argument. Moderate a class debate for the question, should children have to go to school?
- What story does Muck tell Nish to convince him that dropping out of school is not a wise idea?

(RL.4.1, W.4.1, W.4.2, W.4.9, RL.5.1, W.5.1, W.5.2, W.5.9, RL.6.1, W.6.1)

## 7. Nish vs. Travis

- Nish and Travis are good friends but very different characters. Compare and contrast the two boys, both as hockey players and how they behave outside the rink. Find examples of three different situations in the story and explain how the boys reacted to support your thinking.

(RL.4.3, RL.5.1, RL.5.3, RL.6.1)

## 8. Rituals and Superstition

- Athletes often follow certain rituals prior to playing their sport. What is a ritual? Many of the Screech Owls have their own unique pre-game rituals. Make a list of these rituals.
- As explained in the book, famous NHL players have been known to have rituals too. Can you list some of them? Have you ever followed any rituals? Are you superstitious?
- Before the first game of the tournament begins, something happens which suggests to Travis that maybe the game won't go very well. What happened?
- Travis mentions a book he once read that talks about some of the more famous superstitions in hockey. Locate a copy of the book he mentions—*A Loonie for Luck*—and read it to learn more.

(RL.4.1, W.4.2, RL.5.1, W.5.2, RL.6.1)

# LEARNING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

## 9. Aquariums and Zoos

- Visit [www.neaq.org/index.php](http://www.neaq.org/index.php) to learn more about the New England Aquarium and the creatures it houses.
- How and why does Sam's opinion about the aquarium change throughout the novel? What event in the novel caused her to consider the aquarium from a different perspective?
- What are some of the benefits of zoos and aquariums? What are some of the drawbacks of zoos and aquariums? Have you ever visited a zoo or aquarium? If so, how did you feel when you were there? If not, after reading this book, how do you imagine you might feel? Write one to three paragraphs explaining your thinking.

*(RL.4.1, W.4.1, W.4.2, RL.5.1, W.5.1, W.5.2, RL.6.1)*

## 10. Nish's Great Invention

- Nish and Data wrote a prospectus for their invention, the Nishikawa Stinger. What is a prospectus? What invention did they think they had created? What was the problem?
- Write a prospectus for the idea Nish and Data had for a hockey bag on wheels that runs by remote control. Make sure to include all the major features of the invention including its cost and who might want to buy it.

*(RL.5.1)*

## 11. Team Names

- In Chapter 13, Travis ponders the significance of team names. He mentions the controversy surrounding the names of teams such as the Cleveland Indians, the Washington Redskins and the Kansas City Chiefs. Why are these names controversial?
- Travis is curious as to how Muck came up with the name Screech Owls. What image comes to mind when you hear this team name? Why do you think Muck chose this name for his hockey team? Given what you know about the team and how it plays, do you think this was a good name? Why or why not?
- The Screech Owls play the Mini-Penguins, Chicago Young Blackhawks and the Detroit Wheels. Select one of these teams and design what you imagine their team logo to have looked like.
- If you were asked to rename the Screech Owls, what would you call them? Why would you select this name? Design a team logo for the newly named team.

*(RL.4.1, W.4.1, W.4.9, RL.5.1, W.5.1, W.5.9, RL.6.1)*

## 12. More Owls Adventures

- In Chapter One, we learn about some of the other places the Screech Owls visited as a team. Visit your school or local library and read some of their other adventures.



# OTHER BOOKS IN THE SCREECH OWLS SERIES

*Reality Check in Detroit*

*The Mystery of the Russian Ransom*

*Panic in Pittsburgh*

*Face-Off at the Alamo*

*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](http://www.screechowls.com)

[www.twitter.com/RoyMacG](https://www.twitter.com/RoyMacG)

## 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.4.3** Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
- 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.5.3** Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1** Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.7** Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1** Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.7** Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.