

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Aligns with
Common Core
State Standards



PANIC IN PITTSBURGH

ROY MACGREGOR

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



TUNDRA BOOKS

DEAR EDUCATOR

In *Panic in Pittsburgh*, the Screech Owls learn of a shocking plot to steal the Stanley Cup while participating in the biggest hockey tournament ever to be played on an outdoor rink. This exciting new mystery about a fictional hockey team will thrill and entertain hockey fans and young readers alike.

This 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 Owls have been invited to Pittsburgh to compete in the biggest hockey tournament ever to be played on outdoor ice. The open-air tournament is to be held in the massive Heinz Field area, home of football's mighty Pittsburgh Steelers.

But almost as soon as the tournament begins, Travis suffers a serious concussion, just like the injury that sidelined Penguins' superstar Sidney Crosby. Travis is confined to his hotel room so his injured brain can recover. His memory is patchy, and he's having some weird dreams. So when he stumbles upon an outrageous plot to steal hockey's most coveted trophy, he can't be sure if his mind is playing tricks or whether the danger is a terrible reality.

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 "panic"? Can you think of a time when you have felt panicked? What were the circumstances? How would you describe this feeling to somebody who has never experienced it before?
- 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.

The Screech Owls were playing a tournament at Heinz Field.	T / F
Travis was supposed to share a hotel room with Nish and Data.	T / F
Sarah's ritual as she entered the ice was a stutter step.	T / F
The Little Devils were a very strong hockey team.	T / F
The first team the Owls played in the tournament was the Portland Panthers.	T / F
Sarah took over as Captain after Travis was hurt.	T / F
Nish's full surname was Nishikawa.	T / F
Travis borrowed Lars's phone on the day the thieves planned to steal the cup.	T / F
Muck liked shootouts and thought they were a good way to end a game.	T / F
Nish, Sam, Lars, Sarah, and Dmitri were chosen to play the shootout.	T / F
Travis shook the Panthers' team members' hands after the Owls lost.	T / F
	T / F
	T / F
	T / F

LEARNING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

2. MVP

- What does MVP stand for?
- Muck stopped the team bus in front of a monument to Roberto Clemente. Who was Roberto Clemente? Why is there a monument to him?
- Muck tells the team, “MVPs in sport are a dime a dozen. It’s MVPs in *life* that matter.” What is Muck referring to? What does the phrase, “dime a dozen” mean? Name a character who you feel could be considered an MVP in life and explain why you think their actions in the novel make them worthy of this designation.
- In your own life, who are your MVP(s) and why? Choose an MVP from your life and write them a letter explaining to them why they are your MVP.

(*RL.4.1, RL.4.4, RL.5.1, RL.6.1*)

3. Sportsmanship

- As a team, the Screech Owls are an excellent example of what it means to exercise true sportsmanship. Locate three examples in the novel that show an individual member of the Owls, or the team as a whole, acting in a sportsmanlike manner. Record your answer in a t-chart, outlining actions on one side and how these actions demonstrate good sportsmanship on the other.
- In Chapter 3, Travis performs a nifty trick to score a goal in practice. Using pictures and words, explain the play. Travis is successful and scores a goal, yet Muck tells him to not do that move in a game. Why is Muck both impressed and unimpressed with Travis’s trick?
- Can you think of an occurrence in your life, or that you have heard about, that was an example of good sportsmanship? How might the situation have been different had good sportsmanship not been exercised? Write a short paragraph explaining this experience.

(*RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.6.1*)

4. Sportsmanship

- Locate the page and chapter numbers where the following events in the story occurred. In the blank 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
Travis first learns of the plan to steal the Stanley Cup.	
Travis is hit from behind and falls hard into the boards.	
The Owls visit the site where the plane crashed on 9/11.	
Travis realizes he hadn’t been dreaming when he heard part of the plot to steal the Cup.	
Travis first learns he suffered a concussion.	
Billy gives an apology note to Sarah to pass on to Travis.	
A funny event.	

LEARNING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

5. Character Comparison

- Travis and Nish are main characters in each of the Screech Owls' novels. They are very good friends but are also very different from one another. Compare and contrast the main similarities and differences between these two characters.
- Select one scene in the novel in which Travis and Nish play an important role. How do the two characters react and/or behave in the same situation? Is this consistent with their previous and subsequent behaviors?
- As a class, make a comprehensive list of both the main and minor characters in the novel. Select a character and write a set of clues from which a partner will have to guess the character you selected.

(RL.4.3, RL.5.2, RL.5.3)

6. Pittsburgh

- There are several references made in the novel to historically significant people, places, and things. Select one of the people, places, or things from the following list and using a minimum of three sources, research their significance.
 - Roberto Clemente
 - Sidney Crosby
 - Mario Lemieux
 - Fort Pitt Tunnel
 - Heinz Field
 - CONSOL Energy Center
 - Shanksville
 - Stanley Cup
 - Mount Washington
 - Monongahela River
- Why do you think the organizers of the Pee wee Winter Classic organized a trip to the field near Shanksville where Flight 93 had crashed on 9/11? Sarah noted that the coaches were often reminding the team of the importance of history and remembering. What value is there in learning about history? Why do you think the author chose to include references to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in this novel? Do you agree with his decision to include this information? Why or why not?

7. Chapters 17 and 18

- Reread Chapters 17 and 18. Make a list of all the events that happen in these chapters, in your own words, and in the sequence that they occur. Select one event in the middle of the list and replace it with an event of your own invention. What impact, if any, would this have on the remainder of the story?
- Rewrite these chapters from the perspective of one of the thieves. What would he be seeing, feeling, and hearing throughout the chapter?
- Retell the action in these chapters in a comic strip. You are only able to include a limited amount of text in a comic strip. Carefully plan how you will accurately and succinctly convey all the important details.

(RL.5.6, RL.6.3)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

8. The Ice Man

“He was supposed to accept that Nish was a perfectly normal boy who was really a superhero-in-waiting, and that one day these magical powers would show up, and from then on he’d be a masked avenger whose mission was to save the world?”

- What superpower does the Ice Man have? Nish explains to Travis why he thinks he is capable of becoming a superhero. What do all of the superheroes he mentions have in common? Why do you think he selected the Ice Man as the superhero he wanted to be?
- As a class, make a list of some of the more popular superheroes and note the superhero powers that they are known for. If you could choose to be one of these superheroes, which one would you be? How would you use your superpower? Plan and write a short story or comic strip about you evolving into a superhero.

9. Concussions

- Travis suffers a concussion after being hit from behind during the first game of the tournament. What is a concussion?
- Concussions are not an uncommon occurrence in both professional and amateur sport. There has been much attention shone on the issue recently in the mainstream media. Locate one recent newspaper or magazine article on this topic. Present the article to a partner, small group, or the class. Answer the following questions about your article:
 - Who wrote the article?
 - Where was it published?
 - What date was it published?
 - What is the main idea the author is presenting?
 - What did you find to be the most interesting about the article?
 - What would you like to learn more about as a result of reading this article?
- On page 120, Travis is so excited about the number of fans in attendance at the final game of the tournament that he wishes he could play. What did Muck mean when he said to Travis, “Winning today means nothing if you lose tomorrow.”
- Do you think hockey is a safe sport to play? Why or why not? Write a paragraph in which you clearly state your opinion and give a minimum of five reasons as to why you think this way.

(RL.5.1)



OTHER BOOKS IN THE SCREECH OWL SERIES

Face-Off at the Alamo

The Mystery of the Russian Ransom

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.4.3** 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.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.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.5.3** 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.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.6.1** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- 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.