



Challenge Novels

Grade 2



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Background Information

The following facts might help you better understand this book:

- The island in *Nim's Island* is not a real place, but it is like many islands in the South Pacific. Undersea volcanoes formed islands like this one.
- Coral reefs, which are large rocky underwater areas with many types of animals and plants, often encircle these islands. The map illustration in the book shows that Nim's Island has a "fringing reef," which is a shelf growing close to the island's shore.

WEEK 1 Think about It

Many forces affect our Earth. In this book, tropical storms and a volcanic eruption change an island's surface. Before reading *Nim's Island*, think about the following questions:

- What forces change Earth's surface near your home?
- How can people help protect the environment?
- How do you think reading *Nim's Island* will help you better understand Earth in Action?

Discuss your thoughts with others during Workshop. As you discuss *Nim's Island*, think about what you learned from the reading. Post any new ideas or questions about Earth in Action on the **Concept/Question Board**.

Read about It

VOCABULARY Review the vocabulary words and definitions that follow from Chapters 1–3 of *Nim's Island*.

whorly (wor' lē) *adj.* in the shape of a pattern made by a series of circles (Chapter 1)

barometer (bə rä' mə tûr) *n.* an instrument that measures air pressure and can help forecast the weather (Chapter 1)

plankton (plang' tən) *n.* tiny living things in the ocean that are food for many large water animals (Chapter 1)

chasm (ka' zəm) *n.* a deep crack in the earth (Chapter 2)

hoisted (hoi' sted) *v.* a form of the verb **hoist**: to raise something up using ropes (Chapter 2)

correspond (kor' ə spænd') *v.* to communicate by sending letters (Chapter 3)

Read each sentence. Circle the correct example.

1. Circle all of the examples of **plankton**.
 - a. tiny sea animals
 - b. adult killer whales
 - c. desert scorpions
2. Circle all of the items that are **whorly**.
 - a. flower petals that wrap in a circle around a stem
 - b. curved conch shells
 - c. stripes on a zebra
3. Circle each example of a **chasm**.
 - a. a tall mountain
 - b. a narrow, deep valley
 - c. a flat plain
4. Circle each thing for which you could use a **barometer**.
 - a. to measure the air pressure
 - b. to find the air's temperature
 - c. to predict what weather might be like
5. Circle all the situations that describe **corresponding**.
 - a. reading a book
 - b. writing an email
 - c. sending a handwritten note
6. Circle each example of someone **hoisting** something.
 - a. pulling on a rope to lift something heavy
 - b. looking through a spyglass
 - c. marking measurements on a chart

COMPREHENSION Read Chapters 1–3 of *Nim’s Island*. As you read, answer the following questions to check your understanding. Remember to post additional questions or answers to the **Concept/Question Board**.

7. What are three scientific things Jack and Nim work on together on the island? (Chapter 1)

8. Nim says, “It’d be funny having a friend that could talk.” Who are Nim’s friends that cannot talk? (Chapter 2)

9. What happened to Jack his first night at sea? (Chapter 3)

Wrap It Up

At the end of the week, discuss any questions you still have. Clarify any vocabulary words or ideas that are still confusing. Write any final comments about the first three chapters.

WEEK 2 Read about It

VOCABULARY Below are some vocabulary words and definitions from Chapters 4–6 of *Nim's Island*.

sulked (sulkt) *v.* a form of the verb **sulk**: to be silent because of anger or annoyance (Chapter 4)

annihilated (ə nī' ə lā' ted) *v.* a form of the verb **annihilate**: to completely destroy (Chapter 4)

crescent (kre' sənt) *adj.* having a curved, sickle shape (Chapter 5)

limpets (lim' pətz) *n.* plural form of **limpet**: a small ocean animal with a cone-shaped shell, known for clinging to rocks (Chapter 5)

arc (ark) *n.* a part of a curve or circle (Chapter 6)

Read each sentence beginning. Use what you know about the vocabulary word to complete each sentence.

1. **Limpets** would not like to live in the desert because...

2. The little boy **sulked** because...

3. The sandcastle was **annihilated** when...

4. The **crescent** moon did not shine brightly because...

5. When the baseball made a huge **arc** through the air, I knew...

COMPREHENSION Read Chapters 4–6 of *Nim’s Island*. As you read, answer the following questions to check your understanding. Remember to post additional questions or answers to the **Concept/Question Board**.

6. What new way do Nim and Jack find to communicate once Jack can no longer make phone calls? (Chapter 4)

7. Why does Chica come to the island each year, and why does she stay longer than a sea turtle normally would? (Chapter 5)

8. What experiment does Nim do for Alex Rover? (Chapters 4 and 6)

Wrap It Up

At the end of the week, review the vocabulary and questions that have been posted on the **Concept/Question Board**. Make a prediction about what will happen next to Nim.

WEEK 3 Read about It

VOCABULARY Below are some vocabulary words and definitions from Chapters 7–9 of *Nim’s Island*.

bellowed (be’ lōd) *v.* a form of the verb **bellow**: a deep roaring sound or shout (Chapter 7)

bleak (blēk) *adj.* wide open and without plants; not welcoming (Chapter 8)

reproachfully (ri prōch’ ful ē) *adv.* in a way that shows disapproval (Chapter 8)

putrid (pū’ trəd) *adj.* rotting; unpleasant smelling (Chapter 8)

oozy (ōō’ zē) *adj.* gooey or slimy (Chapter 9)

Complete each sentence below with the correct vocabulary word.

1. The dog looked at his owner _____ when she forgot to put out his dinner.
2. We laughed when the _____ mud squished around our toes.
3. The seals on the coast _____ noisily.
4. A _____ smell came from the rotten tomatoes.
5. The icy wind came screaming across the _____ hillside.

COMPREHENSION Read Chapters 7–9 of *Nim’s Island*. As you read, answer the following questions to check your understanding. Remember to post additional questions or answers to the **Concept/Question Board**.

6. Why do you think Nim and Jack gave Fire Mountain its name? (Chapter 7)

7. Describe two things Nim does to scare the Troppo Tourists away. (Chapter 8)

8. While making the coconut raft, Nim gets angry at Selkie and Fred. What might be the real reason she is upset? (Chapter 9)

Wrap It Up

At the end of the week, clarify any vocabulary words or ideas that are still confusing. Write a question you have about these three chapters.

WEEK 4 Read about It

VOCABULARY Below are some vocabulary words and definitions from Chapters 10–12 of *Nim’s Island*.

dozed (dōzd) *v.* a form of the verb **doze**: to sleep unsoundly (Chapter 10)

blurb (blûrb) *n.* a short advertising description of a book or movie (Chapter 10)

miserable (miz’ rə bəl) *adj.* extremely unhappy (Chapter 10)

lolloped (lä’ læpt) *v.* a form of the verb **lollop**: to bound or leap clumsily (Chapter 11)

daredevil (dâr’ de vəl) *n.* someone who does dangerous things (Chapter 12)

Read each sentence. Write the vocabulary word that means the opposite of the underlined word or words.

1. The ice skater glided gracefully across the ice.

2. She slept soundly but was awoken suddenly.

3. The careful boy inched his way along the balance beam.

4. I read a long article describing that author’s new book.

5. A cheerful smile broke across my mother’s face.

COMPREHENSION Read Chapters 10–12 of *Nim’s Island*. As you read, answer the following questions to check your understanding. Remember to post additional questions or answers to the **Concept/Question Board**.

6. What does Alex Rover finally realize about Nim when Nim emails asking for help with her knee? (Chapter 10)

7. Why does Nim get upset with Alex? (Chapter 11)

8. What is the Troppo Tourist captain afraid of once Alex finishes writing the book about the island? (Chapter 12)

Wrap It Up

At the end of the week, review the vocabulary and questions that have been posted on the **Concept/Question Board**. Make a prediction about what might happen next.

WEEK 5 Read about It

VOCABULARY Below are some vocabulary words and definitions from Chapters 13–16 of *Nim’s Island*.

scuttling (skə’ təl ing) *v.* a form of the verb **scuttle**: to move quickly with short steps (Chapter 13)

frail (frāl) *adj.* easily damaged (Chapter 13)

smudge (smuj) *n.* a smear or blur (Chapter 13)

smug (smug) *adj.* showing pride in an annoying way (Chapter 14)

Each underlined vocabulary word has more than one meaning. Reach each sentence. Circle the definition that matches the word’s use.

1. His smug smile at winning the race made me mad.
 - a. showing pride in an annoying way
 - b. tidy and neat
2. The girl tore up the frail paper boat.
 - a. easily damaged
 - b. easily led into bad behavior
3. Jack put a shovel of coal in the scuttle and carried it inside.
 - a. a metal pail used for carrying coal
 - b. to move quickly with short steps
4. The far-off land looked like a smudge on the map.
 - a. a smoky, burning mass of leaves or wood
 - b. a smear or blur

COMPREHENSION Read Chapters 13–16 of *Nim’s Island*.

As you read, answer the following questions to check your understanding.

5. What does Nim do to prepare for the big storm? (Chapter 13)

6. How do Alex and Nim make it back to the island together? (Chapter 14)

7. Why does Jack’s survival story make Nim and Alex laugh? (Chapter 16)

Wrap It Up

Write one question you have about what might happen after the novel’s end.

WEEK 6 Talk about It

Think about *Nim's Island*. Work with a partner during Workshop to answer these questions.

1. Scientists use the scientific method to test theories or ideas. Explain one way Nim acts as a scientist and tests a theory.

2. Name one way Nim uses nature to accomplish a task in an unusual way.

3. What forces in the story change things on Earth's surface?

Write about It

Response to Literature: Setting

You are going to plan and write a response to literature explaining how setting affects the story of *Nim's Island*.

PREWRITING Remember that a story's setting is where and when that story takes place. In *Nim's Island*, most of the story takes place on a South Pacific island that is Nim and Jack's home.

The setting in *Nim's Island* affects the plot in many ways. Think about Nim's life. How would it be different if she did not live on the island? How do the island and ocean affect the way Alex travels to see Nim? What plot events would have been different without the island setting? Brainstorm a list of examples that show how the setting affects the story.

Use a TREE graphic organizer to plan your paragraph:

- The Topic Sentence tells what you believe.
- Give three or more Reasons to show why you believe this.
- Explain each reason.
- Include an Ending sentence to wrap it up.

DRAFTING Use your TREE graphic organizer to write a draft of your paragraph.

REVISING Once you have finished your draft, read it out loud to a partner during Workshop. Have the partner ask questions about anything that is not clear in your paragraph. Make any changes that will help clarify those details.

EDITING During Workshop, have your partner mark any mistakes you made in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Write a new copy of your paragraph, and fix those errors.

PUBLISHING Write or type a final, clean copy of your paragraph.

Wrap It Up

During Workshop, read aloud your paragraph to a group of classmates. Discuss the setting and plot examples you used to support your topic sentence.



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The Cricket in Times Square

Background Information

The following facts might help you better understand this book:

- Times Square is the name for a famous intersection in New York City. A New York mayor named Times Square after *The New York Times* newspaper when the paper built a large building there in 1904. It is near to many famous theaters, and is famous for its many stores, billboards, and brightly lit signs. Hundreds of thousands of people walk through Times Square every day.
- Crickets are insects related to grasshoppers, and usually live in humid places with many plants. Male crickets make chirping sounds by rubbing their front wings together. Temperature affects a cricket's chirping—it chirps faster and louder when the air is warm. For over a thousand years, some people in China have had a tradition of keeping crickets in small cages so as to enjoy the crickets' songs.

WEEK 1 Think about It

In *The Cricket in Times Square*, a cricket, a mouse, and a cat share an unusual friendship and work together as a team to help a boy and his family. Before reading this novel, think about the following questions:

- Why can it be hard to work with others?
- When working with others, have you ever made a mistake and had to fix it?
- How can sharing different talents make a team stronger?

Discuss your thoughts with others during Workshop. As you discuss *The Cricket in Times Square*, think about what you learned from the reading. Post any new ideas or questions about Teamwork on the **Concept/Question Board**.

Read about It

VOCABULARY Below are some vocabulary words and definitions from Chapters 1–3 of *The Cricket in Times Square*.

scrounging (skroun' jing) *v.* a form of the verb **scrounge**: to get something by looking in many places (Chapter 1)

niche (nich) *n.* a hollow or curved space in a wall (Chapter 1)

refuse (re' fyōōs) *n.* garbage (Chapter 2)

sheen (shēn) *n.* a shininess caused by reflected light (Chapter 2)

melody (me' lə dē) *n.* the pleasing notes that make a song (Chapter 3)

excitable (ik sī' tə bəl) *adj.* easily made excited; flighty (Chapter 3)

Read each item, and then answer each question.

1. Overnight, an animal had gotten into the can by the curb. The bag inside was ripped open. Refuse lay on the ground in the hot sun. Moses wrinkled his nose as he cleaned it up.

Question: What caused Moses to wrinkle his nose?

2. “I’m sorry we don’t have much in the way of snacks,” the children’s grandmother said. “You’ll have to do some scrounging in the kitchen.”

Question: What did the children’s grandmother expect them to do when they were hungry?

3. Yousef’s car had a nice sheen. The windows sparkled in the sunlight. His brother did not understand why Yousef was planning on taking it to the car wash.

Question: Why was Yousef’s brother confused?

4. Little Anna seemed very excitable. Her mother was sorry she had let her drink all that juice on an empty stomach.

Question: Why did the juice affect Anna this way?

5. The kitchen wall had a niche high above the sink. It was the perfect place for the breakable piece of pottery.

Question: Why would a niche be a good place for the pottery?

6. The audience tried not to cover their ears. The band was supposed to be playing a melody. Maybe they should have practiced more.

Question: What did the band’s music sound like?

COMPREHENSION Read Chapters 1–3 of *The Cricket in Times Square*. As you read, answer the following questions to check your understanding. Remember to post additional questions or answers to the **Concept/Question Board**.

7. What problem does Mario have at the beginning of the book? (Chapter 1)

8. What are two reasons Mama does not want a cricket for a pet? (Chapter 2)

9. How did Chester Cricket end up in New York City? (Chapter 3)

Wrap It Up

At the end of the week, discuss any questions you still have. Clarify any vocabulary words or ideas that are still confusing. Write any final comments about the first three chapters.

WEEK 2 Read about It

VOCABULARY Below are some vocabulary words and definitions from Chapters 4–6 of *The Cricket in Times Square*.

acquaintance (ə kwān' tən(t)s) *n.* the state of knowing someone a little bit (Chapter 4)

leery (lēr' ē) *adj.* cautious or suspicious (Chapter 4)

enchanting (in chan' ting) *adj.* wonderful or charming (Chapter 5)

timid (ti' məd) *adj.* shy or nervous (Chapter 5)

novelties (nä' vəl tēz) *n.* plural form of **novelty**: a small object, usually made for decoration (Chapter 6)

Read each sentence. Write the vocabulary word that means the same or nearly the same thing as the underlined word or words.

1. Lola felt unsure of the rickety bridge's safety.

2. His grandparents' store sold many types of small decorations.

3. "I do not know Mrs. Rainer well," Jenny said. "She is just someone I recently met."

4. The bashful child would not speak into the microphone.

5. We were drawn to the bakery by the amazing smell drifting out of it.

COMPREHENSION Read Chapters 4–6 of *The Cricket in Times Square*. As you read, answer the following questions to check your understanding. Remember to post additional questions or answers to the **Concept/Question Board**.

6. How is Harry and Tucker’s relationship different than that of country mice and cats, and why? (Chapter 4)

7. Why does Mario want to go to Chinatown? (Chapter 5)

8. According to Sai Fong’s story, what does a cricket sing about? (Chapter 6)

Wrap It Up

At the end of the week, review the vocabulary and questions that have been posted on the **Concept/Question Board**. Make a prediction about what will happen next to Mario.

WEEK 3 Read about It

VOCABULARY Below are some vocabulary words and definitions from Chapters 7–9 of *The Cricket in Times Square*.

browse (brouz) *v.* to look through casually (Chapter 7)

spongy (spən' jē) *adj.* squishy or open like a sponge (Chapter 7)

luxury (lək' shə rē) *n.* the state of fancy living (Chapter 7)

pathetic (pə the' tik) *adj.* making people feel sorry or sad (Chapter 8)

gamboling (gam' bə ling) *v.* a form of the verb **gambol**: to play and frolic (Chapter 8)

moist (moist) *adj.* damp (Chapter 9)

Answer each vocabulary question below.

1. If you are *gamboling* with friends, what are you doing with them?

2. Why might a towel feel *moist*?

3. If you are *browsing* at a store, what are you doing?

4. What is an example of a *luxury* you would like to have?

5. Why might someone throw away a *spongy* cracker?

6. How would a *pathetic* speech make you feel?

COMPREHENSION Read Chapters 7–9 of *The Cricket in Times Square*. As you read, answer the following questions to check your understanding. Remember to post additional questions or answers to the **Concept/Question Board**.

7. Compare and contrast how Chester and Tucker feel about the pagoda. (Chapter 7)

8. How did Tucker Mouse become “the richest mouse in New York”? (Chapter 8)

9. How does Sai Fong solve Chester’s money-eating problem? (Chapter 9)

Wrap It Up

At the end of the week, clarify any vocabulary words or ideas that are still confusing. Write a question you have about these three chapters.

WEEK 4 Read about It

VOCABULARY Below are some vocabulary words and definitions from Chapters 10–12 of *The Cricket in Times Square*.

luminous (lōō' mə nəs) *adj.* full of light; shining (Chapter 10)

ovation (ō vā' shən) *n.* an audience applauding or cheering for a long time, in order to show they like a performance (Chapter 10)

jinx (jingks) *n.* a person or thing that brings bad luck (Chapter 11)

tempo (tem' pō) *n.* the speed of a piece of music (Chapter 11)

precious (pre' shəs) *adj.* costly or valuable (Chapter 12)

compositions (käm pə zi' shənz) *n.* plural form of **composition**: a work of music, writing, or art (Chapter 12)

Read each sentence. Decide whether the underlined word makes sense. If it does, write *correct* on the line. If it does not, write the vocabulary word that should replace it.

1. The girl played a piano piece with a quick tempo.

2. Because Sai always lost games when he wore his red jersey, he thought the jersey was a composition.

3. The luminous moon shone brightly in the sky.

4. After the lovely song, the audience gave the band a standing jinx.

5. The museum kept the precious ring in a locked case.

6. I love many famous ovations, but my favorite musical piece is called “Ode to Joy.”

COMPREHENSION Read Chapters 10–12 of *The Cricket in Times Square*. As you read, answer the following questions to check your understanding. Remember to post additional questions or answers to the **Concept/Question Board**.

7. How does Chester alert people about the fire? (Chapter 10)

8. Why does Chester’s music cause Mama to change her mind about sending him away? (Chapter 11)

9. How does Tucker help Chester learn songs that humans would like? (Chapter 12)

Wrap It Up

At the end of the week, review the vocabulary and questions that have been posted on the **Concept/Question Board**. Make a prediction about what might happen because of Mr. Smedley’s letter.

WEEK 5 Read about It

VOCABULARY Below are some vocabulary words and definitions from Chapters 13–15 of *The Cricket in Times Square*.

remarkable (ri mar' kə bəl) *adj.* unusual or special (Chapter 13)

retire (ri tīr') *v.* to leave a job and stop working (Chapter 14)

summit (su' mit) *n.* the highest level of something (Chapter 14)

commuters (kə mū' tîrz) *n.* plural form of **commuter**: a person who travels to a job (Chapter 14)

smidgin (smi' jən) *n.* a very small bit (Chapter 15)

Read each question. Write an answer using one of the vocabulary words.

1. If you could have only a tiny bite of dessert, how much of what kind of dessert would you want to have?

2. Describe an extraordinary talent you wish you could have.

3. Name a famous singer or writer. Would meeting this person be the highest point of your life?

4. Explain why people might not like living far from their jobs.

5. Describe what you would like to do when you are old enough to stop working.

COMPREHENSION Read Chapters 13–15 of *The Cricket in Times Square*. As you read, answer the following questions to check your understanding. Remember to post additional questions or answers to the **Concept/Question Board**.

6. Give at least two reasons why Chester was not happy with his fame. (Chapter 13)

7. What decision does Chester announce to his friends? (Chapter 14)

8. How does Mario know Chester went home and will not come back? (Chapter 15)

Wrap It Up

During Workshop at the end of the week, discuss any words or concepts that still confuse you. Write one question you have about what might happen after the novel's end.

WEEK 6 Talk about It

Think about *The Cricket in Times Square*. Work with a partner during Workshop to answer these questions.

1. How did Chester, Tucker, and Harry work as a team to help the Bellinis?

2. In Chapter 5, Mr. Smedley tells the story of Orpheus, whose music made the whole world silent. Why do you think the author gave Chapter 14 the title “Orpheus”?

3. Why do you think Mario is glad Chester decided to leave?

Write about It

Descriptive Paragraph of a Place

You are going to plan and write a descriptive paragraph.

PREWRITING Sound is very important in *The Cricket in Times Square*. Read the last paragraph in Chapter 1, and notice all the sound words that are used there.

Paragraphs like this one in the story are good examples of *onomatopoeia*. Onomatopoeia is the use of words that sound like what they name. In the last paragraph of Chapter 1, some onomatopoetic words are *rumble*, *thrumming*, *hooting*, and *babble*.

Think of a place you have visited that has many interesting noises. Make a list of onomatopoetic words that relate to it.

DRAFTING Using your list of onomatopoetic words, write a descriptive paragraph about taking a walk through your chosen place. Although sound is the most important thing to communicate in your paragraph, also think about describing things that appeal to the senses of sight and touch.

REVISING Once you have finished your draft, read it out loud to a partner during Workshop. Have the partner ask questions about anything that is not clear in your paragraph. Make any changes that will help clarify those details.

EDITING During Workshop, have your partner mark any mistakes you made in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Write a new copy of your paragraph, and fix those errors.

PUBLISHING Write or type a final, clean copy of your paragraph.

Wrap It Up

During Workshop, read aloud your paragraph to a group of classmates. Discuss the examples of onomatopoeia you used in your paragraph. Ask the group to describe how the sound words helped them better understand the setting.