

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_



# Activity One



## Newspaper Article

In *The Wednesday Wars*, protagonist Holling Hoodhood finds himself in a couple of different situations that catch the eye of the local newspaper. First, Holling takes part in the Long Island Shakespeare Company's Holiday Extravaganza. Next, Holling is dubbed a local hero as he saves his sister from a skidding bus during a particularly slippery winter storm.

Imagine you are one of the reporters tasked with following one of these developing stories. You can choose whether you want to write about the Holiday Extravaganza or Holling's effort to save his sister. Your editor has sent you out to find out whatever you can about the events described above.

Look up some well-respected news sources online or consult a local newspaper to help guide you on how to write a news article. The first sentence should be its own paragraph and should sum up the who, what, when, where, why and how of the story. This sentence should hook the reader and make them want to continue reading the article.

From there, work in more details about Holling, other characters, or events that are important to the story.

Your news article should include interviews with people who were eyewitnesses or patrons. Include quotes from these sources by using your imagination to think about what they might say about the Holiday Extravaganza, Holling, or what happened leading up to the event. Your news article should include as much detail as you can from the book.

The final product should be at least 600 words long and include all the information above. It should also have:

- At least three source interviews with quotes.
- Comment from a police spokesperson/eyewitness or theatregoer.
- Any interesting facts about the performance or Holling's rescue.

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# Activity Two

## Book Review



A book review is meant to suggest to the reader whether they should read the book. It should give some detail about the story, but shouldn't reveal too much or give away any of the plot twists. It should establish who the main characters are and a little about their motivations or state of mind.

In this activity, you will write a review of the book that will either entice readers to check it out or dissuade potential readers, depending on your thoughts.

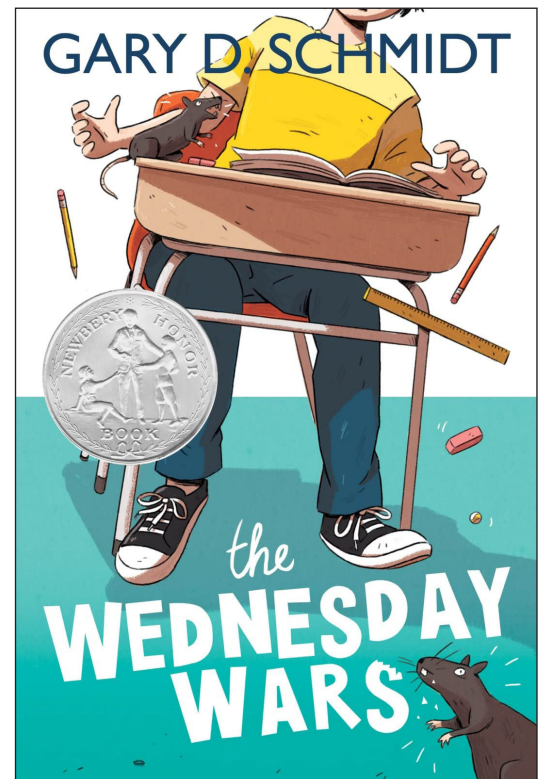
The first paragraph of your review should introduce the title of the book, the author, and should briefly set the tone for the review. In other words, you should establish early on whether you did or didn't like the book, and list some points that tell the reader why. These points will be expanded on later in the review.

The next paragraph should include information setting up the story (Holling Hoodhood is a seventh grader living on Long Island in 1967, and he's convinced his teacher hates him). Be sure to give the reader enough detail to set up the plot, but not enough to spoil anything.

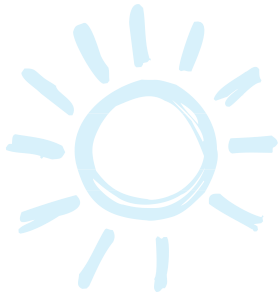
The subsequent paragraphs should further explain why you did or didn't enjoy *The Wednesday Wars*, and should use specific examples from the book to illustrate the points. For example, perhaps you thought there wasn't enough action, or maybe there was too much focus on a specific character. Maybe you thought some elements were confusing. This is where you would explain all those things.

Your final paragraph should sum up your review and reiterate whether you would or wouldn't recommend the book to someone else.

Your review should be at least 500 words in length.



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# Activity Three



## Holling's Play

When we first meet Holling Hoodhood, he's convinced his seventh-grade teacher—Mrs. Baker—hates him. He's convinced that she's singling him out because he's the only student who doesn't leave the school on Wednesday afternoons for religious school.

When Mrs. Baker begins to assign Holling the plays of William Shakespeare to read, he's sure she's doing it to punish him. At first, he's daunted. However, as time goes on, Holling becomes more and more interested in the stories and begins to memorize dialog from the plays.

This specific skill comes in handy when Holling finds himself in hot water with his classmates. While he can't afford to pay for cream puffs for his whole class, Mr. Goldman—the bakery owner—offers to give him some cream puffs in exchange for Holling taking part in the Long Island Shakespeare Company's Holiday Extravaganza.

While Holling is ultimately embarrassed due to his costume, and he doesn't appear to have much interest in acting in any more plays, let's imagine Holling has been bitten by the acting bug.

In this activity you will imagine that Holling has decided to emulate Shakespeare and write a play of his own. What do you think Holling might want to create a play about? What sort of plot points or twists might he want to include? What types of themes would he want to present in the story?

Use your imagination to put yourself in Holling's shoes and come up with an interesting story he might want to tell in a play of his own. Start out by writing a 300-word description of the plot, main characters and themes. Then, using a playwriting format, write a short scene from the play.

Make sure you include:

- At least three characters.
- An interesting or exciting plot twist.
- Dialog from each of the featured characters.
- Some Shakespeare-style dialog or phrases Holling might use.

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# Activity Four



## Themes and Through Lines

There are several moments in *The Wednesday Wars* where Holling either compares what he's feeling to characters or situations from Shakespeare's plays. Or, Holling wonders whether Mrs. Baker assigned a specific play due to some event or feeling affecting Holling.

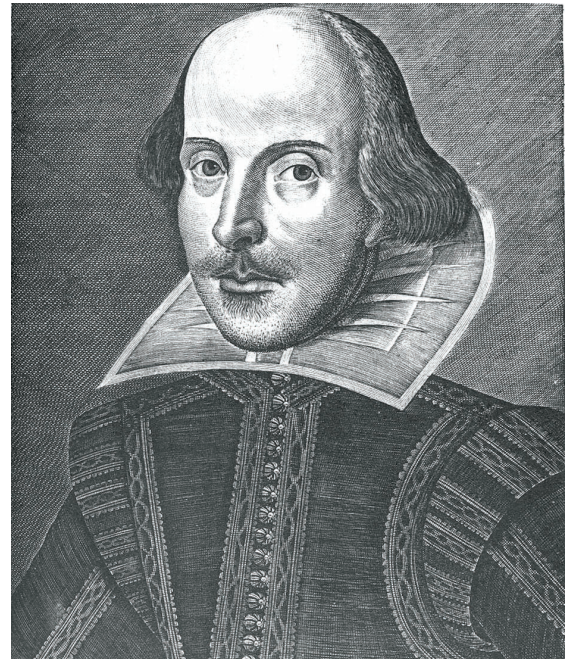
Go back through the book and identify the Shakespeare plays Holling is assigned to read. Once you have your list of plays, do some research online or at the library. Try to find a source that gives a brief synopsis of the plays and discusses some of the themes featured.

To make things easy for yourself, create a chart. The rows on the left can have the title of the plays while the columns at the top can have headings such as characters, settings and themes. Use this chart to help you gather your thoughts on some common character traits and themes that are similar throughout the Shakespeare plays.

Now, in a few paragraphs discuss some of the commonalities you found throughout each of the Shakespeare plays. Try to compare and relate these themes, events, character traits or interactions with *The Wednesday Wars*.

Does Holling have anything in common with the protagonists or secondary characters? What scenarios, situations, or events do the main characters of the Shakespeare plays face that mirror Holling's life? Why might Holling identify with specific characters, such as Romeo and Juliet, throughout the course of the novel?

Your finished product should answer all of the questions posed above in full sentences. Your opinions should be backed up by your research and specific examples from the book. Your report should be approximately 600 words in length.



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# Activity Five

## Before Mrs. Baker



When we are introduced to Mrs. Baker, she is seen through Holling’s eyes. As the narrator of the story, all the information we are given about Mrs. Baker is colored by Holling’s own thoughts and experience. That means we can’t fully rely on Holling to be a completely reliable narrator.

Mrs. Baker is introduced as a no-nonsense teacher who Holling believes hates him. This is seen when she asks if Holling attends Hebrew School or Catechism. When Holling says he doesn’t attend either, he quips “I think she rolled her eyes.”

Later, as teacher and student begin to learn more about one another, Holling mentions that Mrs. Baker tends to take on a teacher glare with her arms crossed in front of her. It all makes for an unflattering portrait of Mrs. Baker.

However, we do learn some very interesting bits about Mrs. Baker’s past. We learn that she was an athlete who competed in the 1956 Olympic Games in Australia. She uses this expertise to help Holling train for cross country and ultimately take an important victory for Camillo Junior High.

Other than that, there isn’t much information about Mrs. Baker’s past. That’s where you come in. In this activity you will explore the backstory of Mrs. Baker. How did she come to compete in the Olympics? How did she become a teacher? Does she still train? Did she ever compete in any other athletic events? You will have an opportunity to answer these questions.

Using a similar writing style as *The Wednesday Wars*, write a new chapter that details more of Mrs. Baker’s backstory. You can use flashbacks, dialog with teachers, or a conversation with Holling—use your imagination.

Your new chapter should be two to three typed, double-spaced pages in length and should give a creative and fun glimpse at Mrs. Baker’s life before the book begins.

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# Activity Six



## Holling High

*The Wednesday Wars* leaves off with Holling about to complete the seventh grade. He has stood up to his father and realizes what he fears most about his future is not having the right to choose what he wants to be when he is older. He knows his father expects him to take over the family business and he has witnessed first-hand, through his sister Heather, what it might be like to go against his father's wishes.

With all the growth Holling experienced in the seventh grade, it's interesting to imagine how his life would have progressed in the ensuing few years. Imagine Holling is in his final year in high school and he is contemplating everything he experienced back in the seventh grade and how it shaped him.

Write a story that will serve as a new ending (or perhaps a new beginning) for Holling that explores the idea of his transformation in the seventh grade, how it shaped his high school years, and what he expects to do during his last year of high school and beyond.

Using a similar writing style as used in the novel, begin a new chapter in Holling's life. You can use the same calendar month chapter style used in *The Wednesday Wars* to break up the different sections of your new story.

You can keep your chapters somewhat brief—they should be at least 100 to 200-word entries that discuss something interesting or difficult Holling had to face during that month. Each of these events could be related back to a similar event in *The Wednesday Wars* and could show how Holling learned or didn't learn from that event, and how it might have altered his reaction in the new story.

Your finished product should:

- Be at least 1,000 words in length.
- Have new and returning characters.
- Discuss Holling's past and his future plans.
- Keep with the writing style from the original novel.