

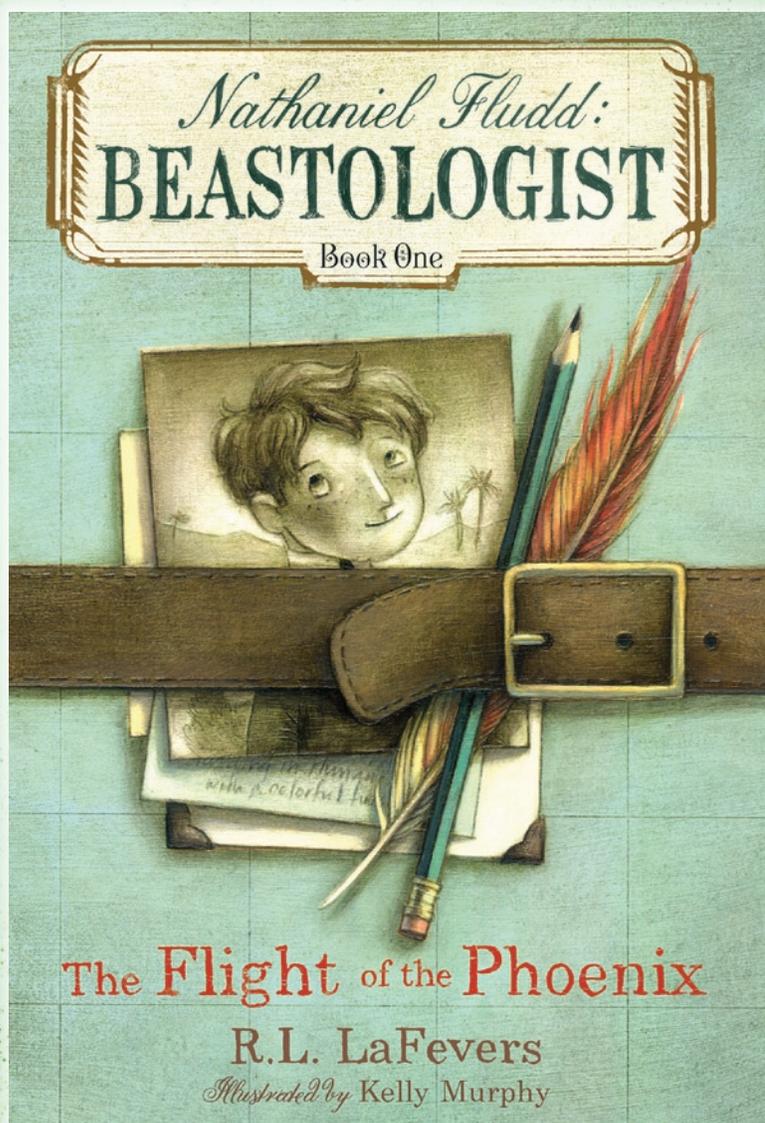
Nathaniel Fludd: Beastologist

Book 1: The Flight of the Phoenix

By R. L. LaFevers *& Illustrated by* Kelly Murphy
Reading Guide by Pat Evans

Summary:

NATHANIEL IS A TEN-YEAR-OLD boy who has been living with a guardian while his parents explore the world. When his parents are lost at sea, Nate is sent to live with Aunt Phil, with whom he begins his apprenticeship as a beastologist—a person who studies unusual beasts. Before he is even unpacked, Nate is whisked off to Arabia to witness and assist as the world's only phoenix prepares to lay its egg. Along the way, Nate rescues a mischievous gremlin named Greasle. Almost as soon as the little group arrives in Arabia, Aunt Phil runs afoul of a Bedouin tribe, leaving Nate and Greasle alone to protect the phoenix and save Aunt Phil.



About the Author:

RL. LAFEVERS (ROBIN LORRAINE WHEN SHE'S IN really big trouble) grew up in Los Angeles surrounded by a wide variety of beasts, including a number of brothers. "We had an extremely varied collection of pets, some of them quite exotic: a goat, chickens, chipmunks, a baby anteater, and, for a few short weeks, two *bear cubs*, who were *very* wild and untamed! Clearly, animals have always been a huge source of joy, comfort, and fascination for me." While researching another project, she stumbled across a medieval bestiary, the definitive zoological source of its time, and was fascinated by all the mythical beasts they listed as factual. "Shortly after that, I came across another article announcing discoveries of new, undiscovered species of animals and realized that our planet is a vast, mysterious place. Who knows what might actually lurk in its hidden valleys, deserts, and mountaintops? Thus the world of Nathaniel Fludd, *Beastologist* was born." An excellent armchair traveler, LaFevers has an obsession with maps, travel books, and atlases that has served her well.

She is the author of eight books for young readers, including *Theodosia and the Serpents of Chaos* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN, 2007), which received starred reviews and was a Junior Library Guild selection and a Booksense Summer Pick, and was nominated for the Malice Domestic's Agatha Award. *Kirkus Reviews* called her most recent book, *Nathaniel Fludd, Beastologist: Flight of the Phoenix* (Houghton Mifflin) "an exciting tale." Look for the sequel *Nathaniel Fludd, Beastologist: The Basilisk's Lair* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN) in Spring 2010.

About the Illustrator:

KELLY MURPHY IS AN AWARD-WINNING ILLUSTRATOR and animator working predominantly with traditional and mixed media. Born and raised in southeastern Massachusetts, she grew up surrounded by marshlands, which she explored with her siblings. Though she hasn't been anywhere as interesting as the Fludds' destinations, she's seen her fair share of the strange and mystical.

For the illustrations in *Nathaniel Fludd* she drew on her deep love of atlases and travel for inspiration. Her family had a dusty collection of *National Geographic*s that as a teenager she stored away as a future reference library. She finally got to dust them off and use them as a great picture source for all the lands and cultures that Nathaniel visits.



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Pre-reading:

FLIP THROUGH THE BOOK AND look at the pictures. What kind of book do you think it will be—realistic or fantasy, historical or modern, adventure or fairy tale? Why?



What do you think a beastologist does?

TURN TO PAGE 136 AND SCAN through “Nathaniel Fludd’s Guide to People, Places, and Things.” Are there words here you don’t know? Keep an eye out for these words and phrases as you read, and be sure to check back in this section when you want to know more.



Discussion:

- 1** What kind of person is Nathaniel at the beginning of the book? Is he someone you would want to be friends with? Why or why not?
- 2** Authors don’t just tell us what people think—they show us by how people act or talk. How does Miss Lumpton feel about Nathaniel? What does she say or do to show her true feelings about him?
- 3** How does Aunt Phil feel about Nathaniel? What does she say or do to show her true feelings for him? Do her feelings change from the beginning of the book to the end?
- 4** What mythical or extinct creature would you like to meet? What would you like it to tell you if it could talk?
- 5** Aunt Phil says that Nate’s parents should have sent letters. Why do you think Nate didn’t get any letters from them?
- 6** Why does the dodo think Nate should stay at home with him? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
- 7** When does this story take place? What are some clues to the time period?
- 8** Flying in a biplane is different from flying in a modern passenger jet. What are some of the ways it is different? Which would you rather do?
- 9** Aunt Phil thinks Greasle is trouble. What do you think?
- 10** Why did the phoenix give Nate the egg? Do you think Nate was right to offer to give the egg to the Bedouins in exchange for Aunt Phil?
- 11** What kind of person is Nathaniel at the end of the book? How has he changed from the beginning? Would you want to be friends with him now? Why or why not?
- 12** Nate doesn’t think he is very adventurous, but he does some exciting things in this story. What part of the adventure do you think took the most courage for him?
- 13** R. L. LaFevers plants some clues about the next adventure in this book. What do you think will happen next in the series?



Projects:

Reading Skill: Problem and Solution

IN AN ADVENTURE STORY, CHARACTERS FACE MANY SMALL PROBLEMS on their way to solving the big problem of the story. Sometimes the solutions work and sometimes they don't. Make a chart that lists small problems Nate has along the way to solving his big problem of helping the phoenix and saving Aunt Phil from the Bedouins.

Problem	Possible Solution	Does it Work?
Nate isn't supposed to listen to Miss Lumpton and the lawyer, but he is in the same room with them.	He tries drawing and drumming his feet against his suitcase.	No

Reading Skill: Characterization

DRAW AN OUTLINE OF ONE OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK. Inside the outline, write descriptive words for that character. Draw a line from each of those adjectives to the paper outside of the outline. At the end of each line, name one or more events from the book in which the character demonstrates the characteristic. Title your paper with the character's name.

Writing

1. WRITE A DESCRIPTION of your own imaginary creature's home, habits, unique talents, and abilities.
2. WRITE AN ADVENTURE STORY where you and a sidekick must rescue someone you care about. Be sure to have a complication (something that makes it harder to solve your problem).
3. AUNT PHIL TELLS NATHANIEL that people in their family always write letters home. Write a letter from Nathaniel telling about one of his adventures. It can be an adventure in the book or one you make up for him.



Projects:

Art

1. **THE PHOENIX IS FOUND** in the mythology of many different cultures. Gremlins are also imaginary creatures. Create an imaginary creature of your own. Draw a picture of it in its habitat.
2. **NATHANIEL DRAWS THINGS** he sees around him. He looks carefully to notice details about the things he draws. Look around your school and draw something that interests you. Be sure to observe carefully.
3. **CHOOSE A SCENE FROM THE BOOK AND DRAW IT** the way you see it in your imagination.



Science

1. **FIND OUT ABOUT ENDANGERED ANIMALS IN YOUR AREA.** Most of the animals that ever lived on earth are extinct. The dodo became extinct around 1681 because people came to the island where dodos lived, bringing along other animals that ate the dodo eggs. People also helped cause the extinction by using dodos and their eggs for food.

An animal that is in danger of extinction is called endangered. Look up endangered animals in your state. Choose one species and find out why it is endangered.

2. **MAKE A COMPASS.**

Materials:

Sewing needle (1–2 inches long)

Bar magnet

Circle of cork about 3/4 to 1 inch in diameter and 1/4 inch thick.

(Ask an adult to cut off the end of a wine bottle cork.)

Pliers

Small cup or glass

Water

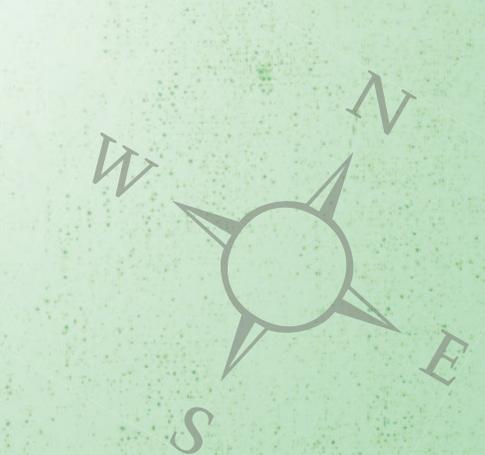
Directions:

RUB THE MAGNET the needle about thirty times. Always rub in the same direction, not back and forth.

HOLDING THE NEEDLE IN THE PLIERS, push the needle through the cork so that the same amount of needle is sticking out each side of the cork.

HALF FILL THE CUP or glass with water and place it on a flat surface.

FLOAT THE CORK and needle compass on the water, with the needle flat on the surface of the water. The magnetized end of the needle will point toward the north if you are in the Northern Hemisphere or toward the south if you are in the Southern Hemisphere.



Projects:



Social Studies

MAPS AND MAPMAKING ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO NATE'S FAMILY. They even have their own trademark compass rose with a dodo at the center.

1. **MAKE A COMPASS ROSE** that includes a symbol of something that is important to you. (Directions for making a basic compass rose can be found at www.ehow.com/how_5161196_make-compass-rose.html.)
2. **DRAW A MAP OF YOUR CLASSROOM** or school grounds. Use a compass to find out which way is north. Draw your map so that the top of the paper is north. Be sure to put your personal compass rose on the map with north pointing toward the top of the page.

Kinetic/Acting

1. **IN A SMALL GROUP**, choose a scene from the book and act it out.
2. **PRETEND YOU ARE A MYTHICAL OR EXTINCT** creature from the book or from your research. Without using words, pretend you are the creature. See if your partner or group can guess who you are.



Research Skills

USE THE WEBSITES BELOW to look up mythical or extinct creatures. Choose one and read about it. Then search for more information about it in a print encyclopedia or library book. Write a paragraph describing what this beast looks like and does.

Internet resources:

encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/my/Mythical_beast
www.amnh.org/ology/?channel=mythiccreatures
www.eaudrey.com/myth/index.html
www.enchantedlearning.com/coloring/extinct.shtml



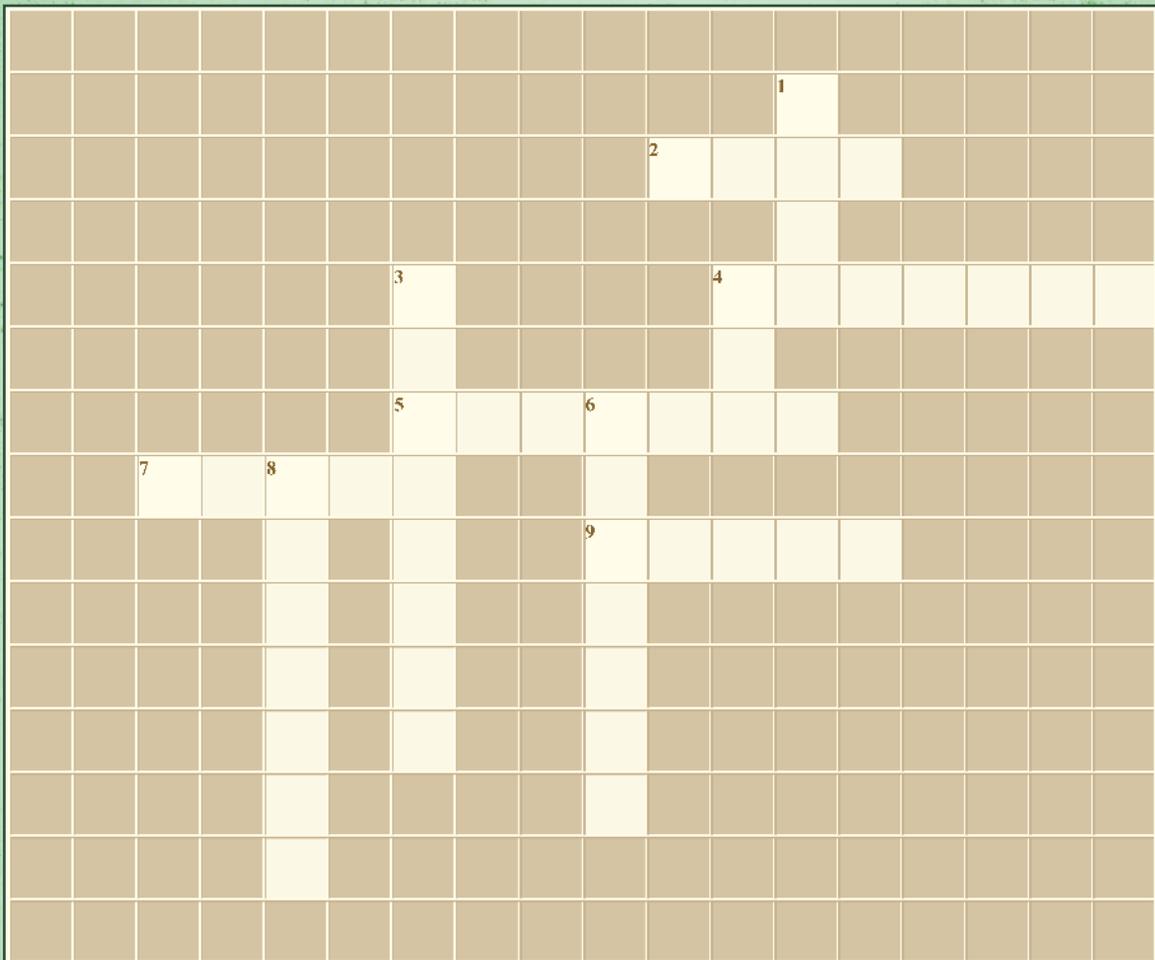
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Compass Rose Worksheet



1. Label the four cardinal points of the compass.
2. Label the four ordinal points of the compass.

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Crossword



Down

1. extinct flightless bird
3. rucksack
4. petrol
6. mythological bird that is born in fire
8. no longer in existence

Across

2. short for propeller
4. tight fitting glasses used to protect the eyes
5. tool for finding direction
7. Arab leader
9. desert place with water and plants

Word Bank:

Backpack Compass Dodo Extinct Gas Goggles Oasis Phoenix Prop Sheik

