

AL CAPONE DOES MY SHIRTS

by [Jennifer Choldenko](#)

PREPARE YOUR NOTEBOOK:

Any type of notebook will do, even loose-leaf paper stapled together. Begin numbering your pages (both fronts and backs).

The first page will be your title page. Write the title and author of the book on this page. Once you've finished the book, you'll come back to this page to draw a picture you think best fits the story.

Books like this, fictional but with real people and events from history, are called historical fiction.

Label page five of your notebook "Table of Contents." You'll be adding page headings and page numbers here as you work your way through this project.

Go to the back of your notebook and count inward about ten pages. Label this page "Glossary." Throughout this document, you will be asked to add words to your glossary. You'll need to add the meanings of those

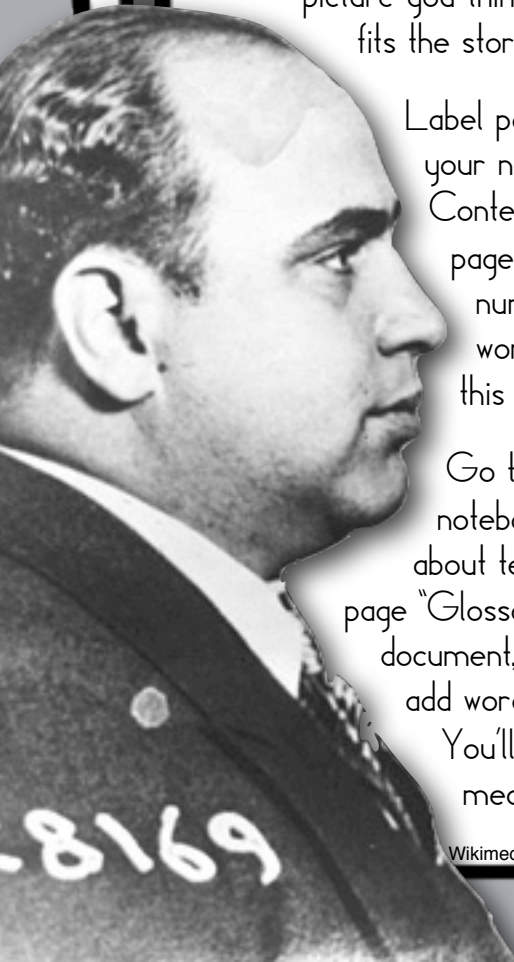
words as well. Be sure to use the meaning of the word that fit this story; it may not always be the first meaning listed.

HOTLINKS:

Throughout this document, anything typed in blue and many of the images are links to websites with additional information and activities. Just click on them!

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:

Print the chart on page nine of this document and tape or glue it onto pages two and three of your notebook. It works best to fold it in half [hamburger style](#) and tape or glue only one side. You'll be asked to add to this chart throughout this document. If you need help remembering what the different types of figurative language are, check out [this site](#).



CHAPTERS 1-3

What's in an ice box? Be sure to scroll down for pictures! (PDF)

Begin answering questions and completing activities on page 11 of your notebook (you'll want to save some space for your table of contents). Label this page Chapters 1-3 and then be sure to add this page title to your table of contents along with the page number.

Continue in this manner until you've completed the book.

QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES:

1. How big is an acre? Go to [this site](#) to find out. Alcatraz is twelve acres; how many square feet is this?

2. Add "There's water all around, black and shiny like tar" to your figurative language chart.

3. Before iPods, CDs, cassette tapes, or albums, people listened to music on phonographs. Go to [this site](#) to learn about the history of music players. Who invented the phonograph? What date and year was the first radio broadcast? What year was the first iPod created?

4. Eleanor Roosevelt was the wife of the president at the time this story takes place, Franklin Roosevelt. Watch [this video](#) about her. What was she the first First Lady to do and what was unusual about it?

5. Moose says he "was born responsible. It's a curse." Why

MACHINE GUN



AL CAPONE



does he say being responsible is a curse? What other seemingly "good" traits can be considered bad sometimes?

6. Moose says there were 237 electricians who applied for the job his dad got at Alcatraz. This story takes place during a period known as The Great Depression. Go to [this site](#) to learn about it. What year did it start? Create a graph to show the change in unemployment rates in the U.S. between 1929 and 1933.



Eleanor Roosevelt in 1932

ROY GARDNER



BONNIE & CLYDE



Poison Oak



Wikimedia Commons

AlcatrazHistory.com

Wikipedia.com

Wikipedia.com

FBI.com

FBI.com

CHAPTERS 4-8

Wikimedia Commons



The Frank M. Cox really did transport passengers between San Francisco, Angel Island, and Alcatraz.

1. Moose never knows if he'll "sound like Mickey Mouse or the giant on top of the beanstalk." Read about why boys' voices change [here](#). What causes sound when we speak?
2. Print the chart on page ten of this document. Tape or glue it into your notebook (fold it as you did the figurative language chart). Each character's actions tell us something about his or her personality traits. From what you've read so far and as you continue reading, fill out the chart.
3. What does feeling "like a louse" mean?
What is a louse?

A new Bay Bridge was completed in 2013. See the new bridge [here](#).

4. Add this sentence to your figurative language chart, "... the Bay Bridge—two toothpicks held together by a thread of steel."

5. Go to [this site](#) to see the Palmer Method of handwriting. Write your name and one of the questions from this page using the Palmer Method.

6. Alcatraz inmates really did do laundry. Go to [this site](#) to learn more. Read about the work they did (be sure to click "Work continued. . ."). List all the jobs prisoners did while in Alcatraz.

7. Moose says his double play in the baseball game is not like the double play of the Chicago Cubs' "Tinker to Evers to Chance." Read [this article](#) about it. What were the full names of Tinker, Evers, and Chance? When was the last time they played together? Why are they still famous now?

A cleat, used to tie a boat to a dock

© Cookie Davis



Add these words and their definitions to your glossary:

snubbed
scowl
cockamamie
asylum
mute

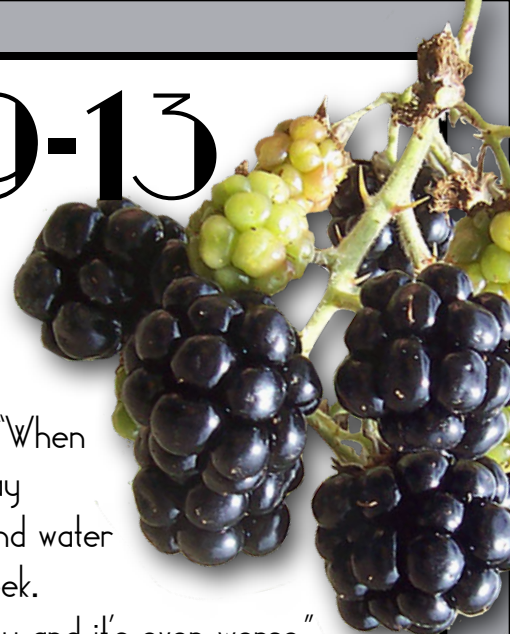
heinous
antsy

Wikimedia Commons

CHAPTERS 9-13

1. Add the following sentence to your figurative language chart, "The ball, my glove, my arm are all working together like greased motor parts."
2. Natalie has autism. Go to [this site](#) to learn about it. What is its official name? How many kids have autism? Why did the author choose to have an autistic character? [Go here](#) to find out.
3. Add the following sentence to your figurative language chart, "My dad says Weasel could convince the hens they're better off with the fox in charge."
4. Why do you think Moose agreed to go along with Piper's laundry scheme? What reasons are listed in the book? Do you think there were other reasons?

5. Add the following line to your figurative language chart, "When you forget to say please. Bread and water for an entire week. Forget thank you and it's even worse."
6. Moose mentions using "tooth powder." Toothpaste like we have now is a new invention. Watch [this video](#) about toothpaste. How old is the first known toothpaste recipe? What ingredient do you need to make your own toothpaste?



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UCLA stands for the University of California at Los Angeles.

Add these words and their definitions to your glossary:

earnest
remedial
replicate

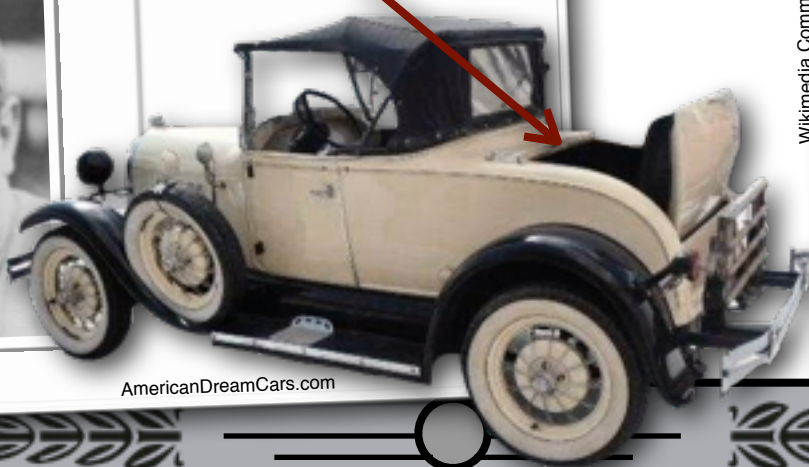
shrill
bellow
commando

BABE RUTH

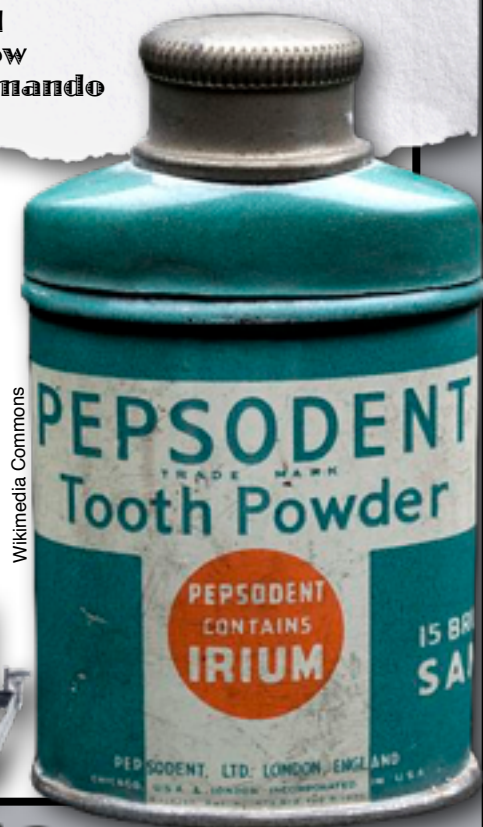


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A rumble seat

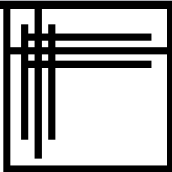


AmericanDreamCars.com



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CHAPTERS 14-18



1. Scout says Moose wouldn't want to play baseball with the inmates because they'd "probably steal all the bases."

This is a play on words. There is another famous example of this that is related to baseball. Watch [this video](#) of Abbott and Costello. What are the players names?

2. Moose describes putting his pants back on as "deciding to bake each of my legs." Though this is a simile, it's also [hyperbole](#). Add this to your figurative language chart in the hyperbole column. Rewrite this sentence using another example of hyperbole. How can you describe how hot it is for Moose to put his pants back on?



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3. What does Mr. Trixler mean when he says Piper has an answer for everything, just like her "old man"? What is he trying to say about her?



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Add these words and their definitions to your glossary:

revving

divvy

About her father?

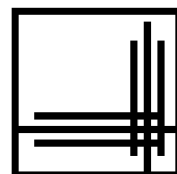
4. Chapter 16 ends with Del saying a brown haired girl took their "whole seventh-grade class to the cleaners." This line would fit in two different columns of your figurative language chart. Add it. What does taking someone to the cleaners mean?



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5. Moose uses a play on words when Piper tells him she's divvying up the money. He says, "What you been doing with the money, anyway . . . laundering it?" This is a play on words because money really can be "laundered." Go to [this site](#) to read about it. Who launders money? Why do they do it?

6. Scout asks Piper if she'd "watch Moose's little sister" so he can play baseball. Why do you think Piper chose not to say anything to Scout about Natalie?



CHAPTERS 19-22

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Al Capone's son, Albert, and his mother, Teresina

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A buoy can be free floating or attached to the sea floor by rope or chain to act as a marker to help boats navigate, often as channel markers so boats know where safe passage is. Buoys often have bells so people at sea will know where they are when it is dark or in bad weather.

1. Go online and find the menu of a local restaurant (there were no fast food restaurants in 1935, so no fast food). How much money would you need to buy dinner there? How much is a movie now? Go to [this site](#) and find out how much \$1.06 is equal to in today's dollars. How much is it? Is it enough for you to go out to dinner and to a movie? What's the difference?



2. In what ways was the warden right in blaming all the kids for the laundry scheme? In what ways was he wrong? Do you think Piper got "out of it"?

3. Add the following line to your figurative language chart, "Jagged lines of orange and pink carve up the sky."

4. Al Capone's mother really did try to visit him at Alcatraz and really did set off the metal detector with the stays

on her corset.

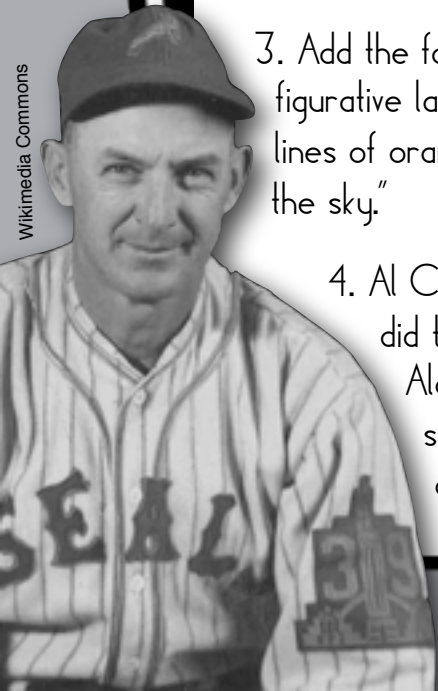
A corset is something women wear to make their stomachs look smaller and they had

metal "stays" in them so they would stay in place and keep its shape. She never tried to visit her son again. How do you think she felt about her son's life and his being in prison? Write a letter to Al Capone as if you were his mother. Explain why you didn't visit that day and why you won't be back. Tell him how you feel about what he's done in his life.

Add these words and their definitions to your glossary:

deliberate
preposterous
culpability

elaborate
procuring



Moose wonders how much "Seals tickets" are in chapter 19. There was a minor league baseball team called the [Seals](#) from 1903-1957.



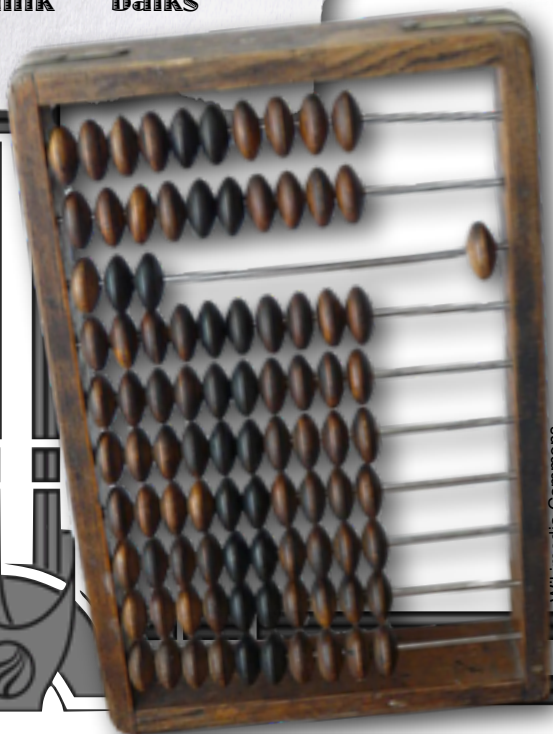
Bowlingballs.us

CHAPTERS 23-29

1. Add the following line to your figurative language chart, "There are almost waves today, like the bay is trying very hard to be the ocean."
2. From Alcatraz, Moose has a great view of the Golden Gate Bridge being built. Watch [this video](#) about this marvel in engineering (10+ min.). Draw a picture of the bridge in your notebook. Label the length of the center span and side spans. Label the distance from the road bed to the water. What year did construction on the bridge begin? How many workers were saved by the safety net? What is the official color of the bridge? On what date was the bridge opened?
3. Natalie is often counting birds. Go to [this site](#) to learn about the birds of Alcatraz. What does the word "alcatraz" mean? What type of birds live on Alcatraz?
4. Add the following line to your figurative language chart, "Her eyes are like teeth tearing into me."
5. Moose's mom seems to only be interested in Natalie. How do you think this feels for Moose? What examples from the book show that he's not pleased with this? Many think that compared to now, kids were expected to be more responsible in the 1930s, and more respectful of adults. Cite specific examples from the book that show this to be true or not true.

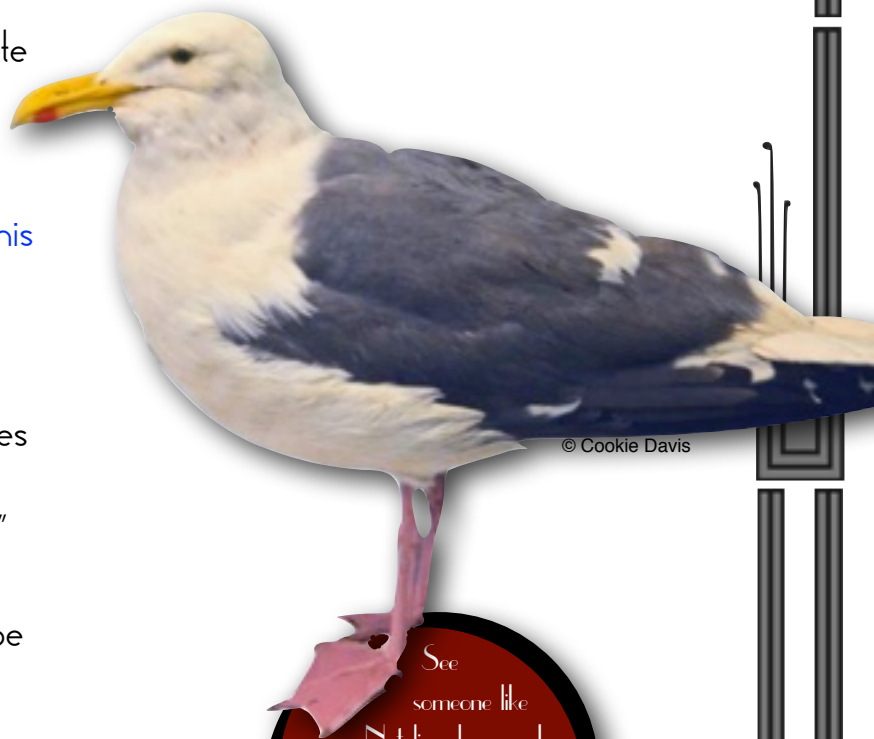
Add these words and their definitions to your glossary:

chink balks



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An abacus



© Cookie Davis

See someone like Natalie who can do amazing math in his head by watching this video (Youtube).

CHAPTERS 30 - AUTHOR'S NOTE

1. Watch [this video](#) about pronouns. What are pronouns "made to do"? What are the "special" pronouns mentioned in the video? Why are they "special"?
2. Why doesn't Moose's dad yell at him for leaving the apartment such a mess?
3. Moose has this to say about Natalie holding the con's hand, "This is terrible. This is good." How can it be both? What is terrible about it? What is good about it?
4. The "Why did the chicken cross the road?" joke has been around since 1847. Though Natalie's version wasn't very funny, some of [these](#) are. Write down your favorite version of the joke in your notebook (or write your own).
5. Add the following sentence to your figurative language chart, "My stomach feels as if I've swallowed a quart of vinegar."
6. Was the warden right in not asking Al Capone for help?
7. Those "three dots" Piper tells Moose to type are called ellipses. Go to [this site](#) to learn how to use them correctly.
8. How is Piper and Moose's relationship changing? Cite specific evidence from the book to show how their feelings for each other have changed.
9. Though this is a fictional story and no Moose or Natalie existed, if it were true, Al Capone might really have helped. Read [this article](#) about him (begin with the 5th paragraph). What is the surprising thing was he responsible for that is the main topic of the article? What other good thing did he do?
10. What was the name of the real warden of Alcatraz?
11. What position did Al Capone play on the prison baseball team?
12. Go back to your title page and draw a picture you think best represents this story.

Add these words and their definitions to your glossary:

admirable

From linked websites:

omission

adjacent

Check out these interesting things about Al Capone.

