



# How Rudolph Came to Be

The history behind the creation of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* is as interesting as the story itself. Rudolph is a character crafted from the thinking of an author during the 1930's. As we examine the life of the author, we begin to understand how Rudolph began to take shape.

## Kentucky English and Language Arts: Arts and Humanities

Reading (1.2) Arts and Humanities (2.24, 2.25) Grades 4-6

### Academic Expectations:

- 1.2 Students make sense of the variety of materials they read.
- 2.24 Students have knowledge of major works of art, music, and literature and appreciate creativity and the contributions of the arts and humanities.
- 2.25 In the products they make and the performances they present, students show that they understand how time, place, and society influence the arts and humanities such as languages, literature, and history.

## Ohio: Language Arts > Reading Applications > Literary Text Standard

### Benchmark(s) Grades 4-6

C. Identify the elements of plot and establish a connection between an element and a future event.

### Objective

Students will:

- Identify the time and place in a story.
- Identify sequenced events in a story.
- Understand how societal factors influence an author's writings.

### Assessment

Students will be able to:

- Analyze how societal factors affected the creation and writing of main events in a story, such as *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*.

Sample selected response items to gauge student understanding:

1. Complete this sentence. To sequence is to \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Answer: Arrange things in a logical order. Kid Language: to show how one thing follows another.*
2. Define the term "incident" as used in storytelling.  
*Answer: The events, action, or things that happen in a story (plot).*
3. "Cause and effect" indicates an explanation of a story event and how it leads to something else. True or False?  
*Answer: True*

### Vocabulary

- Societal influences

- Cause
- Effect

### **Material**

- Resources—print, web, library, to search the history of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* and the department store, Montgomery Ward.
- Handout

### **Activity**

#### **Sequencing Rudolph**

##### **Teacher will:**

1. Present visuals of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, of the author Robert L. May, and of the department store, Montgomery Ward in the 1930s to prompt class discussions. (Explore web resources for available images, especially those available at the Library of Congress American Memory Web Site, <http://www.loc.gov/index.html>)
2. Have students reflect on the Children’s Theatre’s production of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* to recall story events.
3. Highlight a visual/photograph of Robert L. May (if available), and inform students of his authoring the original story of Rudolph. Have students brainstorm and think about the influences that may have inspired the author to come up with his idea.
4. Inform students that Robert L. May wrote the story of Rudolph in 1939. (See <http://www.snopes.com/holidays/christmas/rudolph.asp> for background information and facts.)
5. Have students share their prior knowledge of what they know about this year.
6. Distribute the Handout, “Rudolph and Society,” and display a copy on an overhead.
7. Instruct students of the overall requirement to pinpoint the story’s time and place, sequence of the story’s events, and identify societal influences that may have impacted the author’s desire to tell this tale. Instruct students to complete only the left side of the handout at this time.
8. Review generated story sequences with the class to confirm correct order.
9. Review the vocabulary words. Explain and discuss the meaning of “societal influences.”
10. Explain to students the next step of their task; to examine the societal influences that impacted Robert L. May and his authoring of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. Question prompts to aid student inquiry.
  - b. What inspired the author to first think about the writing of Rudolph?
  - c. Where was the author employed, and what was his career when he wrote the story? (Introduce a visual/photograph of Montgomery Ward if available.)
  - d. What would have been the daily setting and activity of the author in 1939?
  - e. What things were taking place in society at that time? In the world at large?
11. Have students research this time period to identify connections and relationships between what was happening in the society, in the world at large, with the author, and how all connects to the actual events

presented in the story of *Rudolph*. Students will record summarization of relevant events on the right side of the handout, "Rudolph and Society." (Student goal to align the societal influence/event to the correlating event of action in the story of *Rudolph*.)

12. Instruct students to examine the societal influences to identify "cause and effects" that may have lead the author to construct the story the way he did in his development of main events and story action.
13. Have students consider and voice opinion as to how the story of *Rudolph* may have been written differently had events in society been different in 1939 (e.g., no Great Depression).
14. Have students consider if the Children's Theatre Production of *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, illustrated today's societal influences. If so, how and in what way? Question prompt: What is the benefit of making a story or dramatic production relevant to present day society?



## Language Arts

### Handout A: Rudolph and Society

#### Directions:

- Fill in the time in society, and the place or setting of the story of *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, at the time of the story's creation.
- In the left-hand column below, record the sequence of events from the story of *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer*.
- In the right-hand column below, record relevant societal events that contributed to the depiction or series of events in the story, and too, those that may have influenced the authors writing.
- Draw arrows to connect the correspondent societal events to the correspondent story events.

#### Story

Time

Place

Event 1	
Event 2	
Event 3	
Event 4	
Event 5	
Event 6	
Event 7	

#### Society

Time

Place

---



---



---



---



---



---



---

\*Record additional events on the back of this paper.