

# A Mango-Shaped Space



By  
Wendy Mass

A Novel Study  
By Nat Reed

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**About the author:** Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit [novelstudies.org](http://novelstudies.org).

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## Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one or two chapters of ***A Mango-Shaped Space*** and is comprised of these activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

**Every activity need not be completed by all students.**

### Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to the following:

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

**Themes** and **topics** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include living with synesthesia, change is a normal experience of life, coping with the death of a family member/pet, the process of understanding oneself through personal exploration, the importance of friends and family, and personal growth.

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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying / creating *alliteration*
4. Identifying/creating *exaggeration*
5. Identifying parts of speech
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Use of singular / plural nouns
8. Listing compound words
9. Identify *personification*
10. Identify/create *similes/metaphors*
11. Identification of root words

### Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

### Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel
4. Five W's Chart

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Create a poem
6. Conduct an interview
7. Write a description of personal feelings
8. Write a book review
9. Do a Book Talk

### Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a movie poster
3. Create a comic strip
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Create a graphic novel
6. Design an Information Card

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## Synopsis

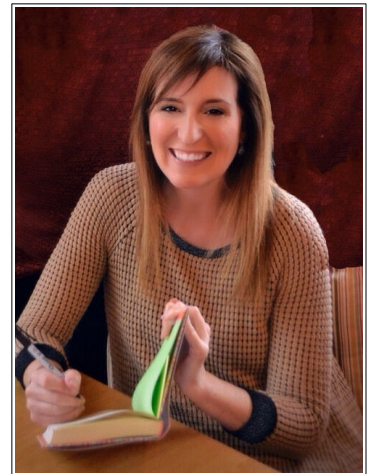
Mia Winchell appears to be a typical kid, but she's keeping a big secret--sounds, numbers, and words have color for her. No one knows, and Mia wants to keep it that way. But when trouble at school finally forced Mia to reveal her secret, she must learn to accept herself and embrace her ability, called synesthesia, the mingling of perceptions whereby a person can see sounds, smell colors, or taste shapes. (Courtesy of the Publisher)

Winner of the ALA Schneider Family Book Award

## Author Biography

Wendy Mass

Wendy Mass (born April 22, 1967) is an author of young adult novels and children's books. Born in Livingston, New Jersey, Mass's favorite subjects in school were reading and science. Wendy worked at town libraries and bookstores. As a child she would compete with friends to see who could read the most books; this helped develop her writing skills. Her first career vision was to be an astronaut. Mass's first story, co-written with her two siblings, starred a cat that somehow turned into a goat and destroyed her neighborhood. In high school, Mass worked at a local bookstore and continued to hone her writing skills. She took writing classes and decided on writing for her career. Mass has published 29 novels for children and teens, including *11 Birthdays* and *Every Soul a Star*. Mass's novel *Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life* was adapted into a feature film in 2011. Mass currently resides in New Jersey with her husband, twin children, a dog, and two cats. (Wikipedia)



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## Student Checklist

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Prologue - Chapter 1



### Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *A Mango-Shaped Space* is 13-year-old Mia Winchell who is spending the last few weeks of summer dreading entering grade eight in September. Mia has a rare condition called synesthesia, in which she perceives letters, numbers and sounds as colors. How might this unusual condition make for Mia to be a very interesting protagonist?




### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

inescapable	destructive	tentative	uncharacteristic
morbid	contort	adamant	fluorescent

1. Mia took a \_\_\_\_\_ step toward the kitchen, then retraced her steps.
2. When they reviewed their pictures of the zombies, the boys realized they were quite \_\_\_\_\_.
3. It was \_\_\_\_\_ of Geoffrey to be so rude.
4. The thief had to \_\_\_\_\_ his body like a pretzel to enter the house.
5. The teacher was \_\_\_\_\_ about everyone giving the correct answer.
6. The hurricane was the most \_\_\_\_\_ in the state’s history.
7. We had to go to the hardware store to get a new \_\_\_\_\_ bulb.
8. “It is an \_\_\_\_\_ fact that mother is a good cook,” Marjorie said.



## Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the novel for most of the Prologue?


2. Match each name with the proper description:

1	Zach		A	Threw up during a ride in a helicopter.
2	Mrs. Lowe		B	The Magniicat.
3	Mango		C	13
4	Mrs. Davis		D	Blond with strange ideas.
5	Mia		E	A real cranky pants.
6	Abraham Lincoln		F	Enjoyed Mozart.
7	Mr. Winchell		G	Her gifts will run out one day.
8	Jenna		H	Thinks Jenna's father should mind his own business.
9	Mia's Grandpa		I	Mia's PIC.
10	Beth		J	Fought in the Blackhawk War

3. Describe your impression of Mrs. Lowe from what you know about her in the Prologue. How might the principal handled this situation better?


4. When she was very ill, what unique thing did Mrs. Davis do to help her daughter, Jenna, deal with her mom's eventual passing?


5. Mia's dad, Mr. Winchell, seems to be quite a unique individual. Find two examples of this from Chapter 1.


6. How was Zach a very unusual brother.


7. For the would-be writer. Why do you suppose the author didn't introduce Beth to the reader until Chapter 2?


8. Describe what Zach did which proved traumatic for Mia.


## Language Activities



### A. What Do You Know About Synesthesia?

The author provides helpful information on the condition called **synesthesia**. Using the novel as well as resources in your school library or on the Internet, research and record three fascinating facts about synesthesia and list this information below.

1	
2	
3	

## B. Personification

Personification is a literary device which gives human qualities to something that is not human. The following example is taken from Chapter One: *The house is almost like a living creature that keeps expanding and contracting and remaking itself.*



Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with suitable words which demonstrates personification.

1. The coyote \_\_\_\_\_ painfully when caught in the trap.
2. The daffodils \_\_\_\_\_ in the rain.
3. It seemed like the night wind was \_\_\_\_\_ Mia.
4. The little dog \_\_\_\_\_ to see such sport and the dish \_\_\_\_\_ with the spoon.
5. Time \_\_\_\_\_ by, and before I knew it, school was over.
6. The earth \_\_\_\_\_ when the drought lasted for two months.
7. Lightning \_\_\_\_\_ across the sky.
8. Mango seemed to \_\_\_\_\_ when I knocked over his dish by accident.
9. The camera \_\_\_\_\_ her since she is so pretty.
10. The flowers were \_\_\_\_\_ for water.

## C. How Much Do You Know About the Protagonist?

Character's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Sketch a picture of the protagonist in the middle hexagon. In the surrounding text boxes enter words that would describe the protagonist (either her personality traits or descriptive words about her appearance).

The worksheet consists of a central hexagon and seven surrounding rounded rectangular boxes. The hexagon is intended for a sketch of the protagonist. The seven boxes are arranged around the hexagon: one at the top left, one at the top right, one on the middle left, one on the middle right, one at the bottom left, one at the bottom center, and one at the bottom right. These boxes are for entering words that describe the protagonist's personality traits or appearance.

## D. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **PAN** can also form the word **NAP**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters.

Each of the words in the left-hand column are found in Chapter One of our novel.

Word	Anagram	Clue
ravine		More proud.
start		Small pies.
death		Despised.
finger		Perimeter; border.
slope		Ski ____.
secret		To hold in high regard.

**E. A simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. We find an example of this in Chapter One: *We used to be a lot closer, before she went to high school and dropped me like a piping-hot bag of microwave popcorn.*

In this example what two things are being compared?

--	--

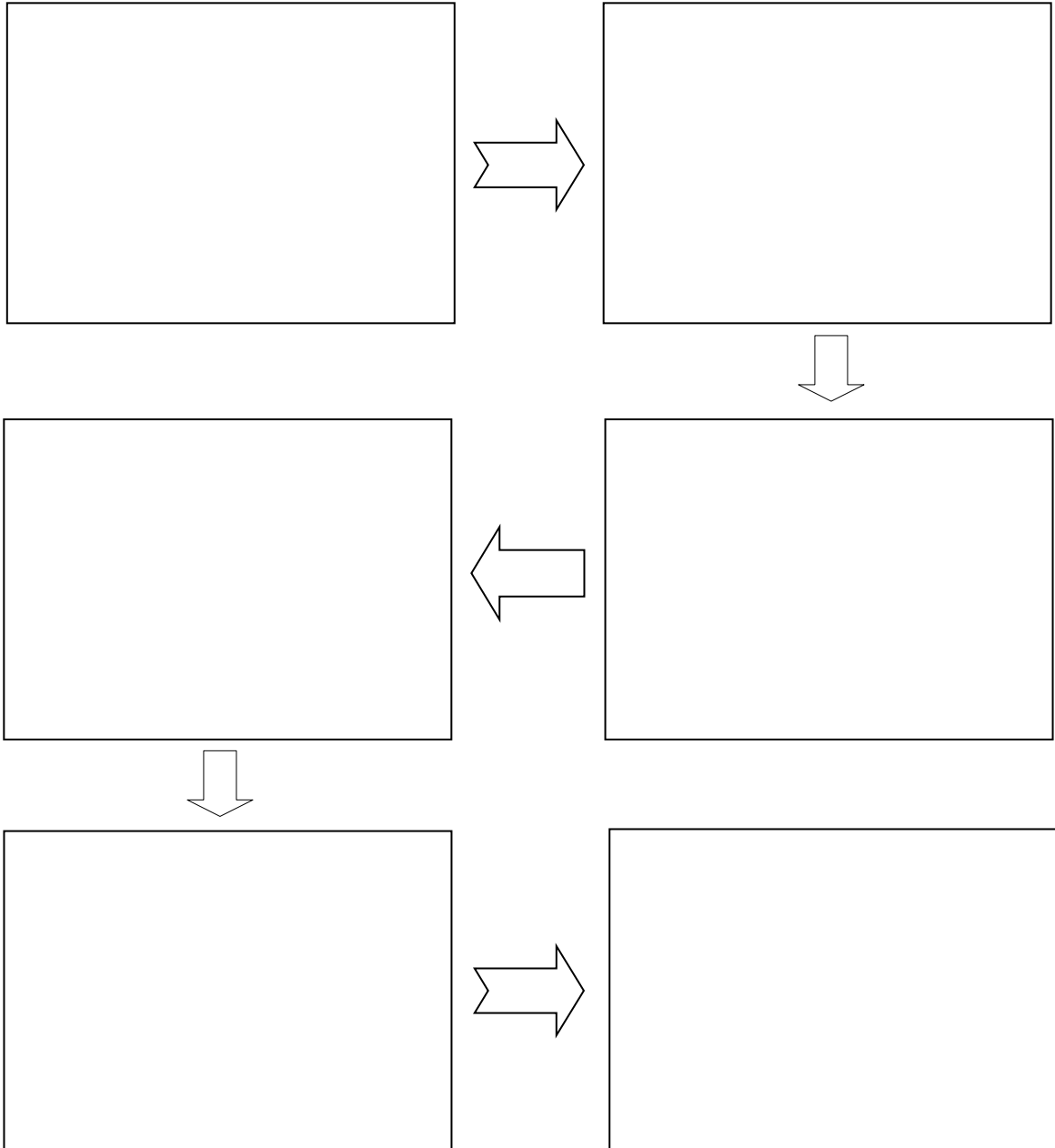
Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your imagination:

a) a scary helicopter ride


b) your own example


## F. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in this chapter. In each of the six boxes below list the six events that you have chosen, describing what happened and telling why you consider this to be an essential part of the story.



## Extension Activity



### Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6