

A Place to Hang the Moon



By

Kate Albus

A Novel Study
by Nat and Joel 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.

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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 two chapters of *A Place to Hang the Moon* and is comprised of five different 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

- 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 which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include family and belonging, resilience, compassion, identity and self-worth, personal growth, learning to accept life's difficulties, coming of age, and dealing with loss.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. Identification of root words
10. Identify *personification*.

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. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Complete a Story Pyramid
5. Identify the climax of the novel.

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

It is 1940 and William, 12, Edmund, 11, and Anna, 9, aren't terribly upset by the death of the not-so-grandmotherly grandmother who has taken care of them since their parents died. But the children do need a guardian, and in the dark days of World War II London, those are in short supply, especially if they hope to stay together. Could the mass wartime evacuation of children from London to the countryside be the answer?

It's a preposterous plan, but off they go-- keeping their predicament a secret, and hoping to be placed in a temporary home that ends up lasting forever. Moving from one billet to another, the children suffer the cruel trickery of foster brothers, the cold realities of outdoor toilets and the hollowness of empty stomachs.

But at least they find comfort in the village lending library-- a cozy shelter from the harshness of everyday life, filled with favorite stories and the quiet company of Nora Müller, the kind librarian. The children wonder if Nora could be the family they've been searching for. ... But the shadow of the war, and the unknown whereabouts of Nora's German husband complicate matters. (Courtesy of the Publisher)

Author Biography

Kate Albus

I started writing after stepping away from my career as a research psychologist to be with my kids. I had written plenty of scientific stuff, and always assumed I had to be either scientific or creative – but not both.

Silly. Then I attended a dear friend's creative writing group and fell in love with it. I had a story in my head – about the World War II evacuation of London – and squirreled myself away in my studio while my kids were in school. For at least a hundred pages, I didn't even tell my family I was doing it, but when we'd had pizza for a suspicious number of dinners, I finally fessed up. I love writing for the pure, simple, solitary pleasure of it. I love spending a year or more with characters who come to feel like family. Thank you for stopping by... I'm so glad you're here! (Author's website)



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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade/Level	Comments

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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-2



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. There are three principal characters in this novel: William, Anna and Edmund Pearce. Do you think it would be easier for an author to have just one protagonist, or is it maybe better to have more than one? Please defend your answer.



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

undaunted	formidable	paragon	indignation	stalwart
concocted	procure	imperiled	preposterous	circumspect

1. Joe thought the silly idea was absolutely _____.
2. “Will someone please _____ a microscope from the lab?” Mr. Peach asked.
3. Beatrice immediately _____ the most outlandish story from her imagination.
4. Corporal Smithers was a real _____ soldier during the battle.
5. The child’s cranky old grandmother was seen as quite _____ by everyone
6. Morris became quite _____ when asked about his troubled childhood.
7. The rare bird species has become _____ by the city’s spread.
8. The swimmer remained _____ even when a shark entered the cove.
9. The teacher was filled with _____ when her authority was challenged.
10. Jessica is seen by most people as a _____ of virtue.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One?

- b. Think of one thing you would enjoy about living in this setting (both time and place), and one thing you would not enjoy.

Enjoy	
Not so much	

2. Describe the major crisis which faced the Pearce children in these chapters.

3. For each of the Pearce children give their age and a one sentence description for each (either appearance or personality).

	Age	Description
Anna		
Edmund		
William		

4. All three of the Pearce children adored their recently-departed grandmother.

True or False

5. What did Mr. Engersoll do for a living?

6. Who did the children want to serve as their guardian? Why did they make this choice? Why wasn't this possible?

7. What do you think is meant by the expression, *her children hung the moon*?

8. What did Mr. Engersoll mean by saying that the children's situation was both unique and precarious?

9. What did Mr. Engersoll suggest to the children that they consider doing instead of going back to boarding school? Why did he suggest this?

10. What did he say they must keep secret if this were to happen?

Good to Know ~ Evacuating London During World War II

During World War II (1939-1945), the city of London (and several other English cities) sustained heavy damage due to bombing by the German airforce. During this time 7,736 London children were killed and 7,622 were seriously injured. To keep them safe from these air raids, between 800,000 and one million children were evacuated to more rural areas (including over 3000 to North America). In addition, 500,000 mothers of children under five years old fled the city as well as 100,000 teachers and helpers.

Language Activities



A. The City of London

The city of London is over 2000 years old, founded by the Romans in 47 A.D. Although millions of people live there, the city itself covers just 1.12 square miles. London is one of the most fascinating cities of Europe, boasting a number of popular attractions. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three additional fascinating facts about this great city.



1.	
2.	
3.	

B. 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 **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. 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. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first two chapters of *A Place to Hang the Moon*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
smile		Green fruits.
sister		Withstand.
supper		Not downers.
parent		Snare.
solve		Small mouse-like rodents.
assume		Entertains.
grown		Incorrect.

C. A Quatrain Poem Celebrating Tea in England.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain was written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis. It is called, **Confusion About Tea**. (Which is understandable since the people of England often call their evening meal, “tea”.)

*When I visited old England, they asked me out for tea,
“Why I prefer my coffee black and tea just ain’t for me.”
My host she shook her head and smiled and said so patiently,
“Our evening meal’s a hearty deal, as soon you’ll surely see.”*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A – A – A – A**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AABB, AABA, ABBA, ABBA, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the first two chapters of our novel.

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____

D. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. The following example is taken from Chapter 1: *William smiled a stalwart sort of half smile.*

Describe how William's smile is personified in this example.

Create your own example of personification.

As you continue to read through the novel be on the lookout for other examples of this literary device. If you should find one, come back to this question and enter it below.

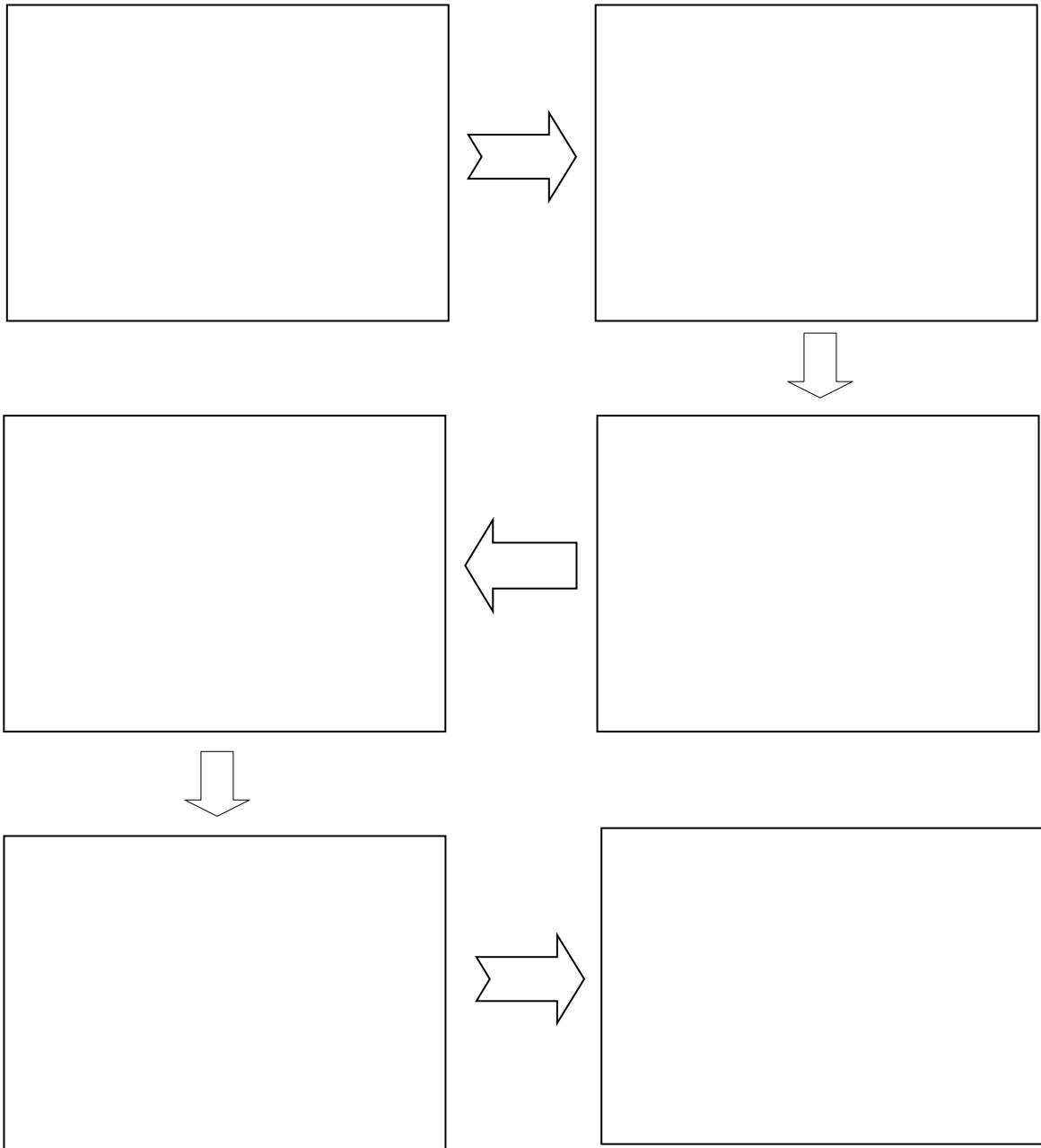
E. Chapter One contains an example of an important literary device called **foreshadowing**. Foreshadowing is defined as *a warning or indication of a future event*. Chapter One ends with the statement, "Mr. Engersoll will have a plan for us, and everything will be all right."



1. How much faith do you have in William's statement? Why or why not?
2. Why might the author have included this statement?

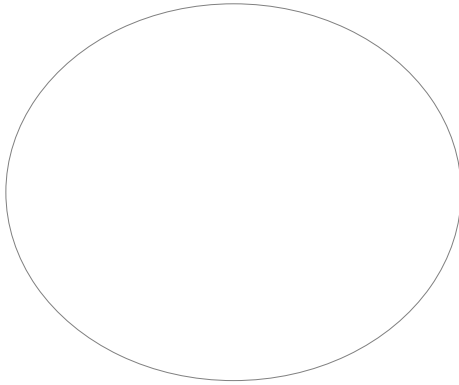
F. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in these chapters. 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.

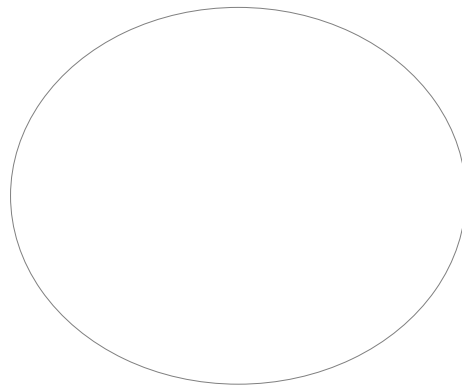


G. 5 Ws and an H.

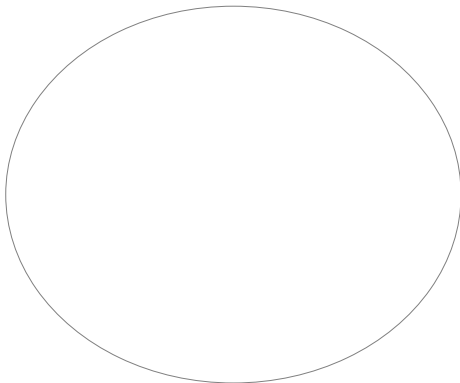
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



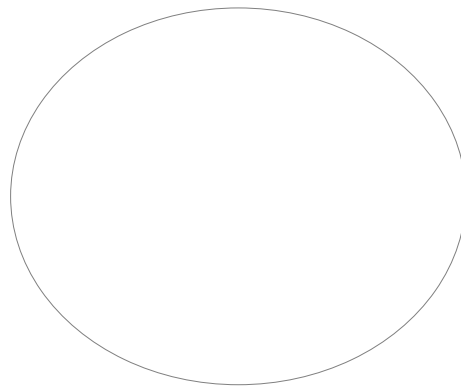
WHO?



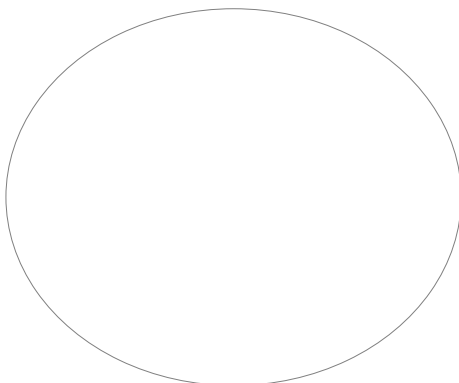
WHAT?



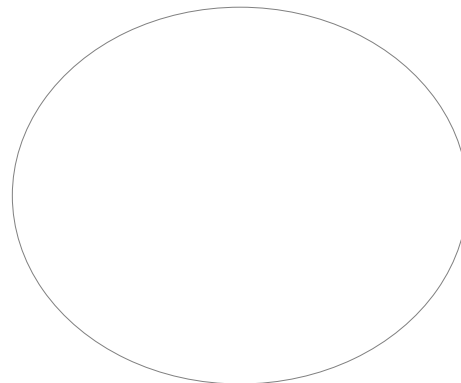
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

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 two chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6