

Chains



By

Laurie Halse Anderson

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.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Most chapters of the novel study focus on three or four chapters of *Chains* and are comprised of five of the following activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language Activities
- Extension Activities

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.**

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. Students will also be expected to provide clear answers to questions and well-constructed explanations. It is critical as well that students be able to relate events and the feelings of characters to their own lives and experiences and describe their own interpretation of a particular passage.

A strength of the unit is that students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included (p.7) so that students may organize their work and keep it all in one place. A **Student Checklist** is also included (p.6) so that a record of completed work may be recorded.

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include the evils of slavery, The American War of Independence (The American Revolution), independence and survival, courage and persistence, loyalty and friendship.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
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. Identify *personification*.
10. 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. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Complete a Plot Outline for a Sequel
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. Create a poem
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Chart
8. Complete a KWS Chart

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

Chains is an historical novel set during the Revolutionary War in the United States (1776). The protagonist is thirteen-year-old Isabel, an African-American slave fighting for her and her younger sister's freedom. Although the book is fictional, many of the events described in its pages are plucked from history. Isabel is encouraged to spy on her Loyalist master as a means of gaining her freedom. In doing so she puts her very life in peril. A very well-written book which invites discussion on many critical topics in the elementary classroom.

For a more complete synopsis please check the following website:

<http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-chains/#gsc.tab=0>

Author Biography Laurie Halse Anderson

Laurie Halse Anderson is the author of numerous highly acclaimed novels. *Wintergirls*, her most recent novel, debuted as a *New York Times* bestseller. Her YA novel, *Speak*, was a National Book Award nominee, A Printz Honor Book, and an ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers. Another novel, *Fever 1793*, was named one of the New York Public Library's 100 Best Books of 2000 and was selected as an ABA Kids' Pick of the Lists title. Laurie has also written wonderful picture books, including the critically acclaimed *Thank You, Sarah*; *Independent Dames*; and *The Hair of Zoe Fleefenbacher Goes to School*. The anticipated follow up to *Chains*, entitled *Forge* was published in 2010. Laurie lives in Mexico, New York. Visit her at writerlady.com.



Reed Novel Studies also offers a unit for *Fever 1793*.

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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-4



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy.” The main character of *Chains* is Isabel, an African-American slave in 1776 New York. Isabel is an extraordinary young girl, who faces many trials and challenges in her quest to gain freedom for herself and her younger sister, Ruth. An intriguing protagonist is really important in helping a reader enjoy a story. What was one particularly memorable protagonist from a book you have read or a movie you have seen? What made this character so unforgettable?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

procure	insolence	silhouette	satchel
privy	proprietor	indentured	condolences

1. The professor stored all his papers in an old brown _____.
2. “Will you please see if you can _____ a cab for me?” he asked.
3. The _____ of the inn closed early on Christmas Eve.
4. Many young girls from Ireland came to America as _____ servants.
5. “Please extend my _____ to the family,” the pastor said.
6. John got up in the middle of the night to visit the _____.
7. “I will tolerate no more _____ from you,” the principal exclaimed loudly.
8. The candle cast an eerie _____ on the wall of the bedroom.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One? Remember to give both the date and place.

2. What recent event was the cause of so much upheaval in Isabel and Ruth's lives? Why did this event have such a dramatic effect on them?

3. Think of three appropriate adjectives which would describe Isabel's personality.

1.		2.		3.	
----	--	----	--	----	--

4. What caused Isabel to feel that Mr. Robert's actions were especially unjust?

5. What two concerns did Isabel have with regard to her sister's mental/physical well-being?

1.	
2.	

6. What was there in Jenny's past that enabled her to be empathetic to the plight of slaves?

7. What prevented Jenny from buying Isabel and Ruth? What do you think her plans were had she been able to purchase them?

8. Describe your first impression of the Locktons?

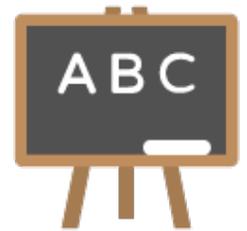
9. Isabel and Ruth sailed from Newport, Rhode Island, to the city of _____.

10. According to Isabel, why was it especially tragic for them to be moved across water?

Language Activities



A. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here is such an example from Chapter Three: ... *and too-small shoes...*



Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

An old wagon.	
A sunset.	
Your choice.	

B. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter Two is, *I could even mewl like a kitten*. In this example, what is Isabel's *mewl* being compared to?

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

a) the rattle of chains

b) a sneeze

C. 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:



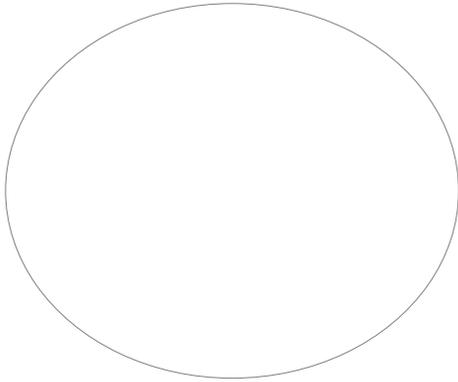
a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

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 four chapters of *Chains*.

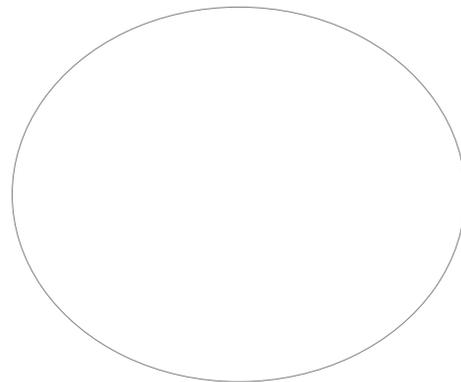
Word	Anagram	Clue
please		Insensible.
plate		Hurdled.
slowed		Pegs of wood.
tears		A plant of the daisy family.
satchel		Found in the Swiss Alps.
fainted		Intransigent.
table		Sound of a sheep.

D. 5 Ws and an H.

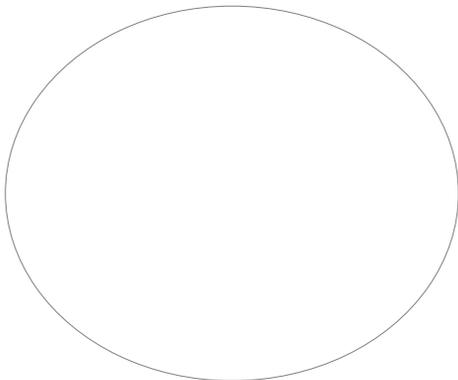
Choose an event from this section (or earlier in the novel) that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



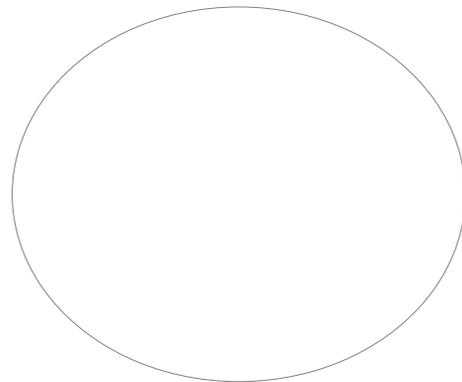
WHO?



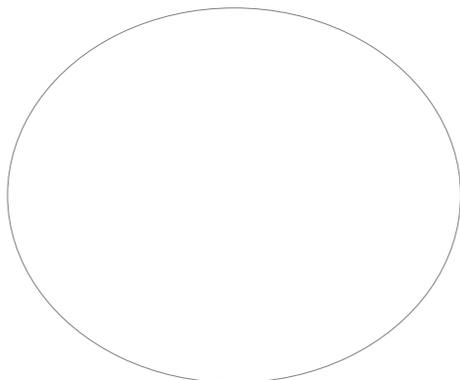
WHAT?



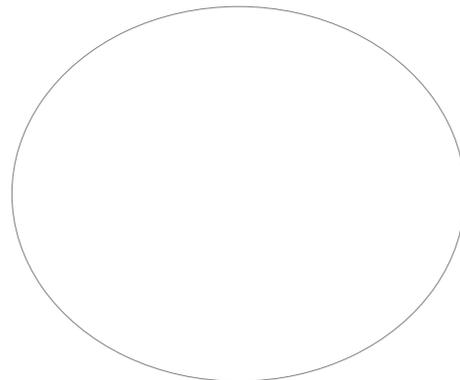
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

E. Quintet

Unlike **quintuplet** (a set of five children born to the same mother at one birth), a **quintet** is a five-line verse that tells a story. The quintet has a syllable pattern and has the wonderful ability of bringing a visual image to life for the reader.

Here is the structure of the quintet:

A Creative Title

Line 1 – tells **when** ~ and has 3 syllables

Line 2 – tells **where** ~ and has 5 syllables

Line 3 – tells **what** ~ and has 7 syllables

Line 4 – describes **activity** ~ and has 9 syllables

Line 5 – contains a relevant **thought** ~ and has 3 syllables

An Example!

Here is an example of a Quintet take from the poem, *Jack and Jill*.

Jack and Jill

*Dinner time,
Up a hill they went,
To fetch a pail of water,
Then Jack and Jill tumbled down the hill,
Poor old Jack.*

Now try your hand at writing a quintet which contains some of the important details from this section of the novel.

Extension Activity



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words



Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and conclusion of this chapter.

Beginning Picture:	Beginning:
Middle Picture:	Middle:
Concluding Picture:	Concluding: