

# Gregor the Overlander



By  
Suzanne Collins

A Novel Study  
by Nat and Joel Reed

# Gregor the Overlander

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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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### Note to Teachers

This integrated novel study guide is designed to assist the classroom teacher in the reading of *Gregor the Overlander*. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on three chapters of the novel and is comprised of four distinct sections:

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

#### **Before You Read the Chapter and Vocabulary.**

The first two sections of the novel study are designed to be completed before the students read the designated chapters. This will enable students to gain some familiarity with relevant topics or themes addressed in these chapters as well as familiarizing them with new words they might encounter.

#### **Reading Comprehension.**

Once the students have read the assigned chapters (either in a group setting or silently), they can then be assigned some or all of the comprehension questions included for those particular chapters. A blend of factual and higher-order thinking questions are included.

#### **Language and Extension Activities.** A selection of activities are included:

- Vocabulary development activities (synonyms and homophones, parts of speech, anagrams, etc.)
- Creative and critical thinking activities (conducting an interview, identifying the novel's climax, describing one's personal feelings, etc.)
- In addition, the unit has a number of integrated activities (art, history, research skills, creative writing, etc.)

A **portfolio cover** (p.8) as well as a **Checklist** (p.7) are included so that students may track their completed work.

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

**Themes** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include courage, growing in the knowledge of one's self, loyalty and duty, hope and prejudice, coming of age.

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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Locate descriptive words/phrases
2. List synonyms/homophones
3. Identify/create *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identify syllables
6. Identify *personification*
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. List compound words
9. Identify parts of speech
10. Determine alphabetical order
11. Identify root words
12. Identify/create *similes*

### 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. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

### 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. 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

When Gregor falls through a grate in the laundry room of his apartment building, he hurtles into the dark Underland, where spiders, rats, cockroaches coexist uneasily with humans. This world is on the brink of war, and Gregor's arrival is no accident. A prophecy foretells that Gregor has a role to play in the Underland's uncertain future. Gregor wants no part of it -- until he realizes it's the only way to solve the mystery of his father's disappearance. Reluctantly, Gregor embarks on a dangerous adventure that will change both him and the Underland forever.

This unforgettable novel by Suzanne Collins, the international bestselling author of the Hunger Games series, is rich in suspense and brimming with adventure. (The publisher)

## Author Biography

Suzanne Collins

Suzanne Collins (born August 10, 1962) is an American author famous for *The Hunger Games* trilogy, a globally successful series that began in 2008 and explores war's effects through dystopian young adult fiction, inspired partly by her father's military service. Before her bestselling novels, she was a successful children's television writer for Nickelodeon (like *Clarissa Explains It All*) and penned *The Underland Chronicles*, a middle-grade fantasy series. She graduated from Indiana University, later earned an MFA from NYU, and lives in Connecticut.



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## Student Checklist

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

# Gregor the Overlander



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Name:

# Gregor the Overlander

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## Chapters 1-3



### Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. *Gregor the Overlander* features eleven-year-old **Gregor**, who lives in New York City. Think back on some favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially fascinating **protagonist**? Who is your all time favorite **protagonist**?




### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

contradict	lucid	plummet	generate
gracious	exertion	intentional	intricate

1. The twins hoped the fire would \_\_\_\_\_ enough heat to keep them warm.
2. How dare you \_\_\_\_\_ me,” the professor screamed.
3. *God save our \_\_\_\_\_ queen. Long live our noble queen.*
4. I saw the piano \_\_\_\_\_ from that fourth story window.
5. Jeremy thought he would faint from the \_\_\_\_\_ of moving the sofa upstairs.
6. After being struck on the head, Lucy was barely \_\_\_\_\_ for an hour.
7. My grandmother began to weave an \_\_\_\_\_ pattern into the quilt.
8. I believe his insult was quite \_\_\_\_\_,” Morgan suggested.

## Questions



1. What is the setting of the story in the novel's first few paragraphs?


2. What evidence did you find in Chapter One that Gregor is a very unselfish boy?


3. Describe the crisis that Gregor's family had endured a few years earlier?


4. A cliffhanger is defined as *the ending of a chapter (or episode) that leaves the reader or audience in suspense*. Which of these three chapters contains the best example of a cliffhanger. Please defend your choice.


5. What astonishing creature did Gregor encounter at the end of his fall? What made this creature especially unusual?


6. Describe what Gregor first encountered after following the bats.


7. Describe the appearance of the first human Gregor met.


8. What was there about Gregor and Boots that made it unsafe for them?


9. What did the old man say and ask at the end of Chapter 3 which was quite mysterious?

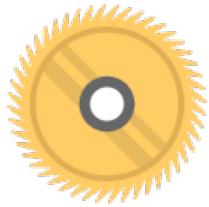

10. Describe your impression of the novel after reading the first three chapters. Did you find the characters interesting? Why or why not? Are you excited about continuing to read this novel? Why or why not? What would you rank it so far out of ten?


# Language Activities



## A. 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.

Word	Anagram	Clue
acted		Soldier in training.
staring		Grades; ranking.
finger		Edging; margin.
clear		One who ties up shoes.
right		Circumference; width.
smile		Ooze.
slight		_____, camera, action.
smarter		Part of a sofa.

**B.** Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device in which the same sound is repeated at the beginning of several words. Here's one such example: from Chapter Three... *she steals everybody's boots*. Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

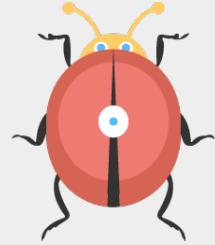
A laundromat	
A disgusting insect	
Your choice	

**C. Personification** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. You will find many examples of this device in *Gregor, The Overlander*, for even in the first three chapters we meet talking cockroaches.

Why do you suppose the author gave these cockroaches the ability to talk and reason? See if you can come up with at least two things she also included to make them even more interesting to the reader.


## **D. Cockroaches**

Cockroaches are certainly regarded as terrible nuisances by most people. These annoying insects, however, are incredibly resilient survivors. Did you know, for instance, that they can live for a week without their head, or that they can hold their breath for about 40 minutes? Using your school library or the Internet, research three additional facts about this amazing insect and record them below.



1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## E. The Quatrain Poem

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 is the first four lines of the poem **The Song My Paddle Sings**, written by the famous Mohawk poet, E. Pauline Johnson.

*West wind, blow from your prairie nest  
Blow from the mountains, blow from the west  
The sail is idle, the sailor too;  
O! wind of the west, we wait for you.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - A - B - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABCA, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, 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 section of our novel (i.e. cockroaches, bats, the Underland of this novel, caves, etc.

### 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:** \_\_\_\_\_


## Extension Activity



### Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A story-board can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel. Complete the story-board below illustrating the events described in this section of *Gregor the Overlander*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6