

# Mary Poppins



By

P.L. Travers

A Novel Study  
by Joel Michel Reed

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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 2 or 3 chapters of **Mary Poppins** and is comprised of five of the following different activities:

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

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

Many of the activities in this 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.**

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.

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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. Identify *foreshadowing*.
6. Identify *personification*
7. Use of singular / plural nouns
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identifying syllables
11. Identify/create *similes*
12. Identify anagrams

### 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.

### Character Activities

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

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Compare the book and movie.
5. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Sheet
8. Complete a KWS Chart

### Art Activities

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

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## Synopsis

A blast of wind, a house rattling bang, and Mary Poppins arrives at Number Seventeen Cherry-Tree Lane. Quicker than she can close her umbrella, she takes charge of the Banks children – Jane, Michael, and the twins – and changes their lives forever.

Unlike other nannies, Mary Poppins makes the most ordinary events extraordinary. She slides up banisters, pulls all manner of wonders out of her empty carpetbag, and banishes fear or sadness with a no-nonsense “Spit-spot”. Who else can lead the children on one magical adventure after another and still gently tuck them in at the end of the day? No one other than the beloved nanny Mary Poppins. (Publisher – Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found on the following website:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary\\_poppins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_poppins)

## Author Biography

P.L. Travers

**Pamela Lyndon Travers**, (born **Helen Lyndon Goff**; 9 August 1899 – 23 April 1996), was an Australian-British novelist, actress and journalist. In 1924, she emigrated to England where she wrote under the pen name **P. L. Travers**. In 1933, she began writing her series of children's novels about the mystical and magical English nanny Mary Poppins. During the Second World War, while working for the British Ministry of Information, she traveled to New York where Roy Disney first contacted her about selling the Mary Poppins character to the Disney studio for film use.



For services to literature, Travers was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire by Elizabeth II in 1977. Her popular books have been adapted many times, including the 1964 film starring Julie Andrews and the Broadway musical originally produced in London's West End. (Biography courtesy of Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P. L. Travers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P._L._Travers))

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## Student Checklist

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

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

# Mary Poppins



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

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## Chapters 1-2



### Before you read the chapter:

The story of *Mary Poppins* has been classified as both a fiction novel, as well as a classic *fairy tale*. What is your favorite novel or fairy tale? Give reasons for your answer.




### Vocabulary:

Draw a straight line to connect the vocabulary word to its definition. Remember to use a straight edge (like a ruler).

1. Dilapidated
2. Consideration
3. Flagstaff
4. Shilling
5. Restrained
6. Crimson
7. Ecstatic
8. Contemptuous
9. Whelk
10. Flourished

- A. A former British coin and monetary unit.
- B. To be scornful or disrespectful.
- C. Careful thought, typically over a period of time.
- D. Of a rich deep red colour inclining to purple.
- E. A predatory marine mollusc with a spiral shell.
- F. In a state of disrepair or ruin.
- G. To grow/develop in a healthy or vigorous way.
- H. A long pole which a flag is hung.
- I. Feeling or expressing overwhelming happiness.
- J. Characterized by reserve or moderation; unemotional or dispassionate.



# Questions



1. Describe the setting of the story as Chapter One begins.


2. Why did Mrs. Banks need a new nanny so urgently?


3. What was so unusual about Mary Poppin's arrival to Seventeen Cherry-Tree Lane?


4. What did Mary Poppins say when Mrs. Banks asked for her references?


5. What was so special about the medicine Mary Poppins gave the children?


6. What happened when Mary Poppins and Bert stood on one of his paintings?


# Language Activity



**A.** Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's an example of an alliteration: “. . . screaming, shrieking, shouting about something scary.”



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

The sounds of a rainstorm.	
The sounds of children playing on a playground.	
The sound of a car's engine.	

**B.** A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is “*And as he said that, Mr. Banks popped his head out of the window and looked down the Lane to Admiral Boom's house at the corner. This was the grandest house in the Lane, and the Lane was very proud of it because it was built exactly like a ship.*”



What two things are being compared in this example?

--	--

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

a) Mary Poppins flying with her umbrella.


b) A boat sailing across the ocean.


### C. Pick a Country and an Object!

Sports Cards have been a very popular collector's item for nearly one hundred years. As a matter of fact, a Willie Mays 1952 Topps rookie baseball card is worth over \$3000.00 today!



Wouldn't it be great if a series of collectors cards were issued celebrating some of the world's most fascinating countries?

Design an information card on a country of your own choosing. The back should include at least five interesting facts about the country, and the front of the card should feature an image or drawing of an object that you feel best identifies the nation of your choice. (i.e. England=double-decker buses, France=Eiffel Tower, etc)

### D. England - Fascinating Facts

Using resources from your school library or the Internet, do some research on the nation of **England** and complete the questions listed below.

Questions	Answers
Population	
Official Language(s)	
Currency	
Largest City	
Capital City	
Land Size (Kilometres or Miles)	
Head of State	
Kind of Government (Democracy, etc)	

## 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 last 2 chapters of *Mary Poppins*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6