

Save Me a Seat



By
Sarah Weeks & Gita Varadarajan

A Novel Study
by Nat and Joel Reed

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About the Authors: Joel Reed has authored over 70 published novel studies and four novels. Nat Reed, a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years, served as a full-time instructor at Trent University's Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on their work and literature, please visit www.reednovelstudies.com.

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Suggestions and Expectations

Each chapter of the novel study focuses on four or five chapters of *Save Me a Seat* and is comprised of four distinct sections:

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

A **portfolio cover** (page 7) as well as a **Checklist** (page 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 fitting in, dealing with bullying, courage, personal growth, different perspectives, the importance of empathy and understanding.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Identify *similes*
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. 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. Five W's and an H Chart
4. Create a synopsis
5. Identify the climax of the novel

Character Activities

1. Determine perspectives
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experience
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. Create a journal entry
9. Opinion writing

Art Activities

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

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Synopsis

A new friend could be sitting right next to you.

Joe and Ravi might be from very different places, but they're both stuck in the same place: SCHOOL.

Joe's lived in the same town all his life, and he was doing just fine until his best friends moved away and left him on his own. Ravi's family just moved to America from India, and he's finding it pretty hard to figure out where he fits in.

Joe and Ravi don't think they have anything in common -- but soon enough they have a common enemy (the biggest bully in their class) and a common mission: to take control of their lives over the course of a single crazy week. [Courtesy of the Publisher]

Author Biographies

Sarah Weeks

Sarah Weeks is an American writer of children's books, perhaps best known for the novel *So B.* It which has won several juvenile literature awards. In 2007 it won the Rebecca Caudill Young Reader's Book Award and William Allen White Children's Book Award. Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



Gita Varadarajan

Gita Varadarajan was born and raised in India. She has worked with children all over the world, and now teaches second grade in Princeton, New Jersey. *Save Me a Seat*, written with Sarah Weeks, was her first novel.



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Student Checklist

Student Name

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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-5



Before you read this section:

Save Me a Seat is rather unusual in that it has two **protagonists**: Ravi and Joe. What advantage do you think there would be in having two main characters?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence or answer the question.

surname	coincidence	hilarious	sequence
icebreaker	lurk	monitor	dosas

1. Amma gives Ravi a plate of **dosas** to eat. Investigate: what would you be eating if you ate dosas? _____
2. Jonas thought Marjorie's joke was _____. _____.
3. The teacher scheduled an _____ to help everyone relax.
4. What is the proper _____ of those five numbers?
5. Once you're in the cafeteria someone will _____ your behaviour.
6. I think it is merely a _____ that they arrived at the same time.
7. My _____ is the longest one in our class.
8. I saw the kitten attempting to _____ under the stairs.

Questions



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

2. What was your impression of Ravi from what you learned of him in the first five chapters?

3. Would you describe Joe as more of a loner than Ravi? Cite proof for your answer.

4. Describe your impression of Dillon Samreen. From what evidence did you form this impression?

5. What does the following sentence mean: One thing I will say about Dillon Samreen: He really knows how to play a crowd?

6. Why do you think Dillon keeps winking at Ravi?

7. Does it surprise you when Ravi says that he would like to sit next to Dillon? Why do you think he would like to do that?

8. Joe's nickname was _____.

9. What does Joe find especially difficult? What does he do to help himself out in this regard?

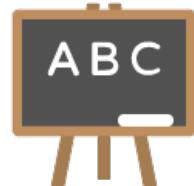
10. Why are things kind of tense in Ravi's household among the adults?

Language Activities



A. Alliteration

Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words with the same consonant (i.e. *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers*). The following from this section also serves as an example: ... the Bathroom Bandit of Einstein.



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

A lake in autumn	
Fingernails on chalkboard.	
Your choice.	

B. The Good Old Indispensable Adverb!

An **adverb** is a part of speech defined as *a modifier (or helper) of a verb* (usually an action word). Often an adverb will end in the letters *ly* (i.e. *slowly*). Our novel features a good many creative adverbs.



1. *I carefully lay out the cloth napkin...*

→ In this sentence, which verb does **carefully** modify? _____

2. *...so I gobble it down quickly.*

→ In this sentence, what verb does **quickly** modify? _____

3. *Perimma could hardly wait to show off to her friends...*

→ In this sentence the adverb _____ modifies the verb _____

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 this section of **Save Me a Seat**.

Word	Anagram	Clue
smile		Fruits.
period		Dumber.
grade		Angered.
wider		Strange.
wears		Curse.
scream		Lotions.
times		Things.

D. Research ~ India

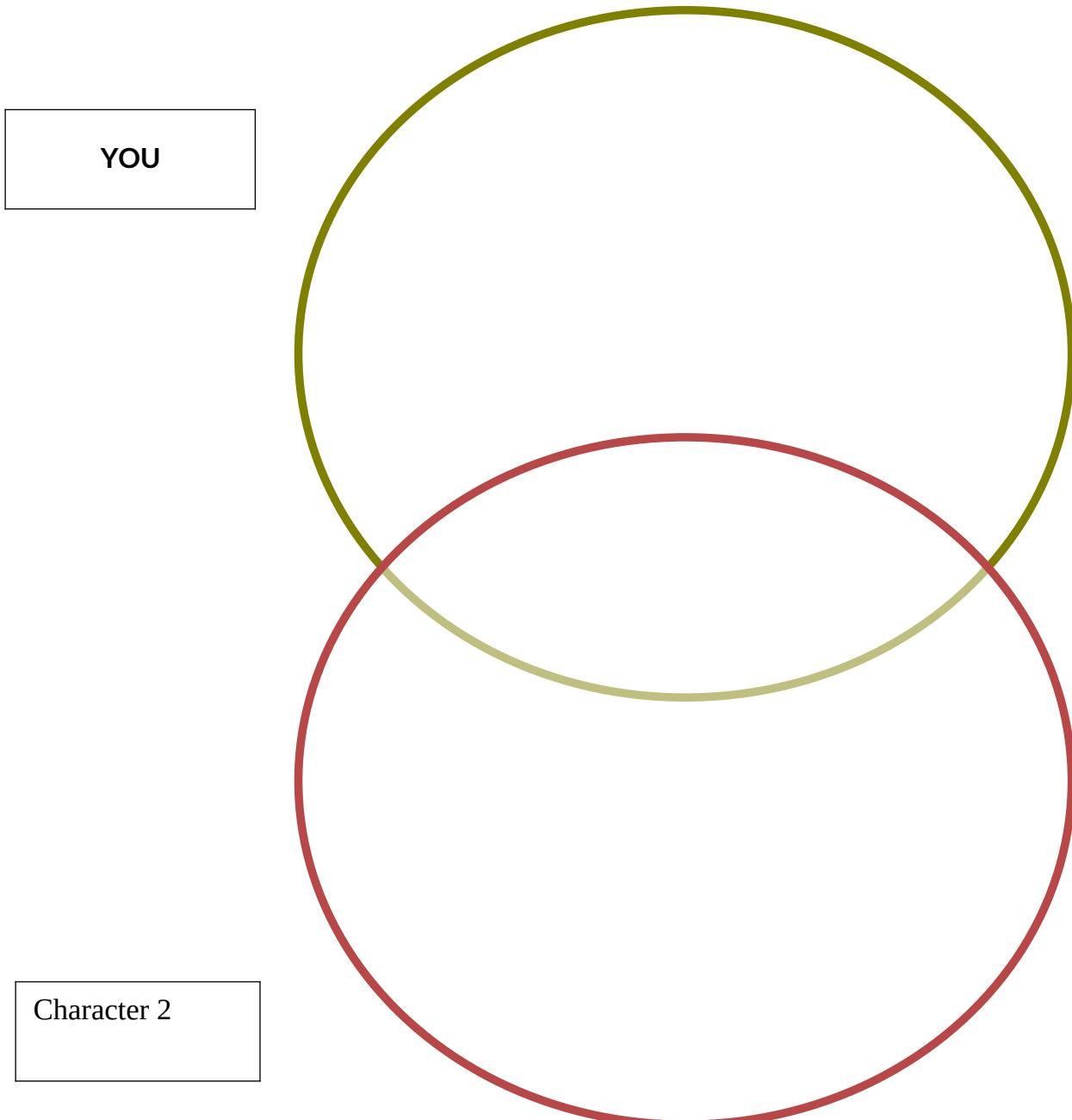
The country of India plays quite a significant role in the coming pages. India is a most fascinating nation and is home to more than 1.4 billion people and 22 official languages. Indians invented the game of chess and Snakes and Ladders. Bollywood, the Indian film industry produces the most films globally. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three additional facts about India and record them below.



1	
2	
3	

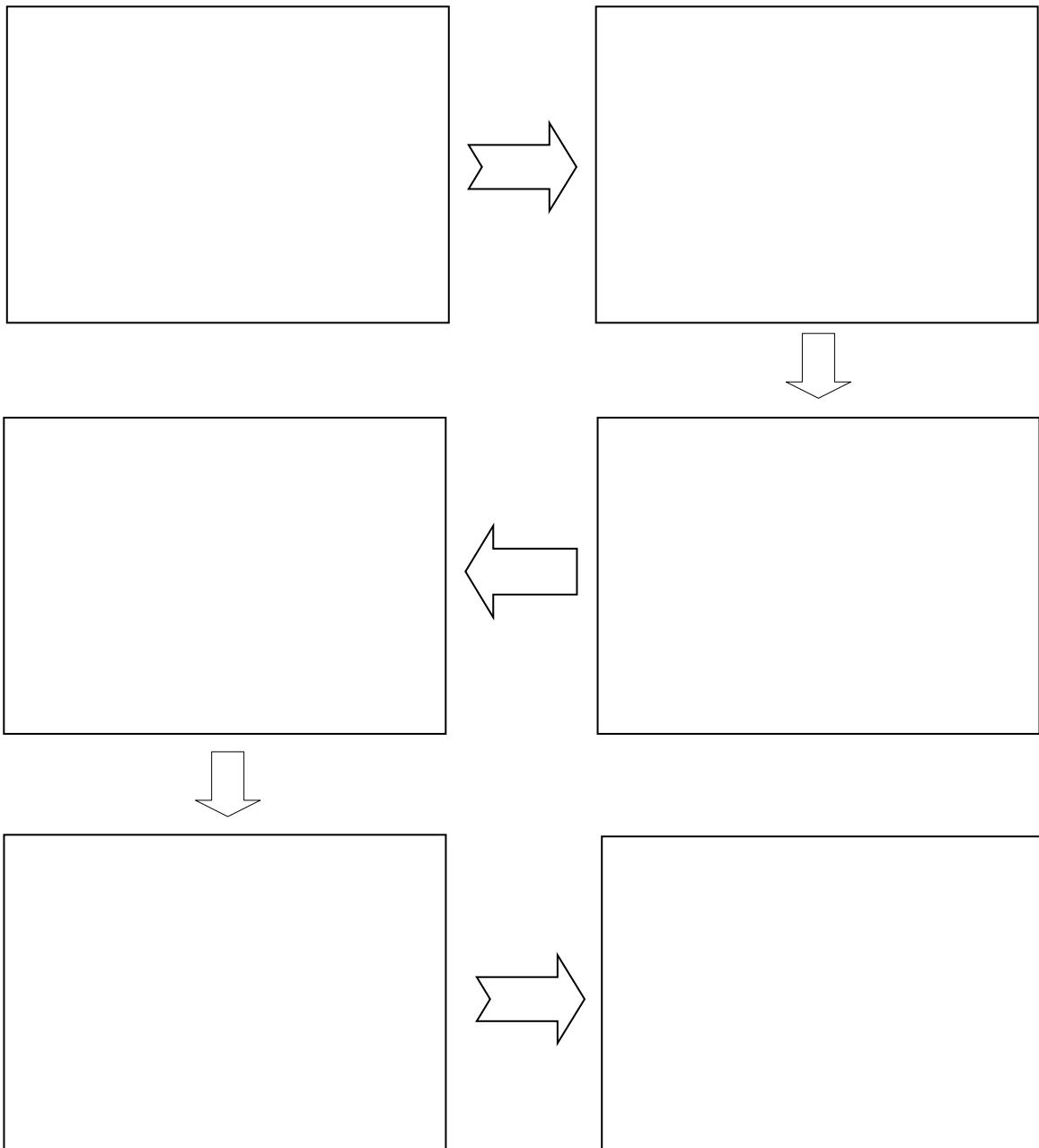
E. Using a Venn Diagram - What a Character!

So far in our novel you have been introduced to several interesting characters including the main two – Ravi and Joe. Choose one of these two characters, then using the Venn Diagram below, compare yourself to this boy. Be sure to include physical and personality traits in making your comparison, and both similarities and differences. Similar traits should be placed in the intersecting circles. Be sure to record the name of the character in the boxes.



F. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in this section. 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



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words



Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and end of this section.

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