

The Devil's Arithmetic



By

Jane Yolen

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

The Devil's Arithmetic

Jane Yolen



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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 76 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on two chapters of *The Devil's Arithmetic* and is comprised of four activities:

- a) Before You Read
- b) Vocabulary Building
- c) Comprehension Questions
- d) 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 and **topics** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include societal prejudice and persecution, perseverance and personal growth, overcoming difficulty, courage and loyalty, the Holocaust, World War II and Nazi Germany, Jewish culture.

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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. Identify *personification*
8. Use of singular/plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identification of a *cliffhanger*

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. Identify the climax of the novel
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists and antagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Complete a KWS Chart
3. Complete an Observation Chart
4. Conduct an interview
5. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Design an Information Card
3. Design a cover for the novel

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Synopsis

Hannah is tired of holiday gatherings – all her family ever talks about is the past. In fact, it seems to her that's what they do every Jewish holiday. But this year's Passover Seder will be different – Hannah will be mysteriously transported into the past . . . and only she knows the unspeakable horrors that await. [The Publisher]

For a more complete review of **The Devil's Arithmetic** go to
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_devils_arithmetic

Author Biography

Jane Yolen

Jane Yolen has been called the Hans Christian Andersen of America and the Aesop of the twentieth century. She has written over 300 books, won numerous awards, and been given six honorary doctorates in literature.

Jane Yolen was born in New York City in 1939. Her father was a café journalist and her mother a psychiatric social worker.

Jane attended Smith College then moved back to New York City where she became an editor. Writing in her spare time she published her first book, *Pirates in Petticoats*, when she was 22.

In 1962 she married David Stemple and they had three children – and six grandchildren. She now lives in Massachusetts.



The Devil's Arithmetic



By Jane Yolen

Name: _____

The Devil's Arithmetic

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Chapters 1 & 2



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *The Devil's Arithmetic* is Hannah, an outspoken twelve-year-old girl who as the story opens, is very unhappy to be visiting with her grandparents. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you've seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

deliberate	reasonable	gruesome	fascinated	comprehend
guttural	distorted	compensation	frustration	romance

1. Pleasing her grandfather soon became a source of _____ for Chloe.
2. The horse received a _____ injury when it tried to jump over the hedge.
3. The poor old man made a low _____ sound as the wolves closed in.
4. “Please be _____,” the merchant begged. “I am only trying to make living.”
5. Only two of the children in the class were able to _____ the question.
6. My sister thinks that she can begin a _____ with that movie star.
7. I really believe that Petula made a _____ attempt to injure me.
8. Kevin was _____ when he looked through the powerful telescope.
9. The picture on the television set was _____ by the power surge.
10. The government will offer some form of _____ after the severe drought.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of Chapter Two?

2. Match each name with the proper description:

1	Hannah
2	Aaron
3	Grandpa Will
4	Aunt Eva
5	Aunt Rose
6	Grandma Belle
7	Hannah's father

A	It was her place to light the candles.
B	Tattooed.
C	An only child.
D	Thought everyone in her family was the most beautiful.
E	The novel's protagonist.
F	Ron-ron.
G	No great beauty.

3. Research: Describe the historical event celebrated by the Jewish people on **Passover**.

4. What terrible event from his past caused Grandpa Will to be such a troubled person?

5. Why was Aaron so nervous about his upcoming Passover visit with the family?

6. What had Hannah once done that had upset Grandpa Will?

7. In the chart below, come up with three appropriate **adjectives** (or descriptive phrases) that would describe the personality and/or appearance of Hannah:

Personality / Appearance	
1	
2	
3	

8. What huge sacrifice had Aunt Rosa made for her family? Why do you think she did this?

9. When Hannah was younger, how had she regarded Aunt Eva's answers to her many questions? How had this changed?

Language Activities



A. Choose ten words from these chapters with two or more **syllables**. Indicate the syllables by drawing a line between each syllable. **Example:** good / bye.

B. Alliteration

The author seems to enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. An example from Chapter One is “... she reached out and held his hand...”

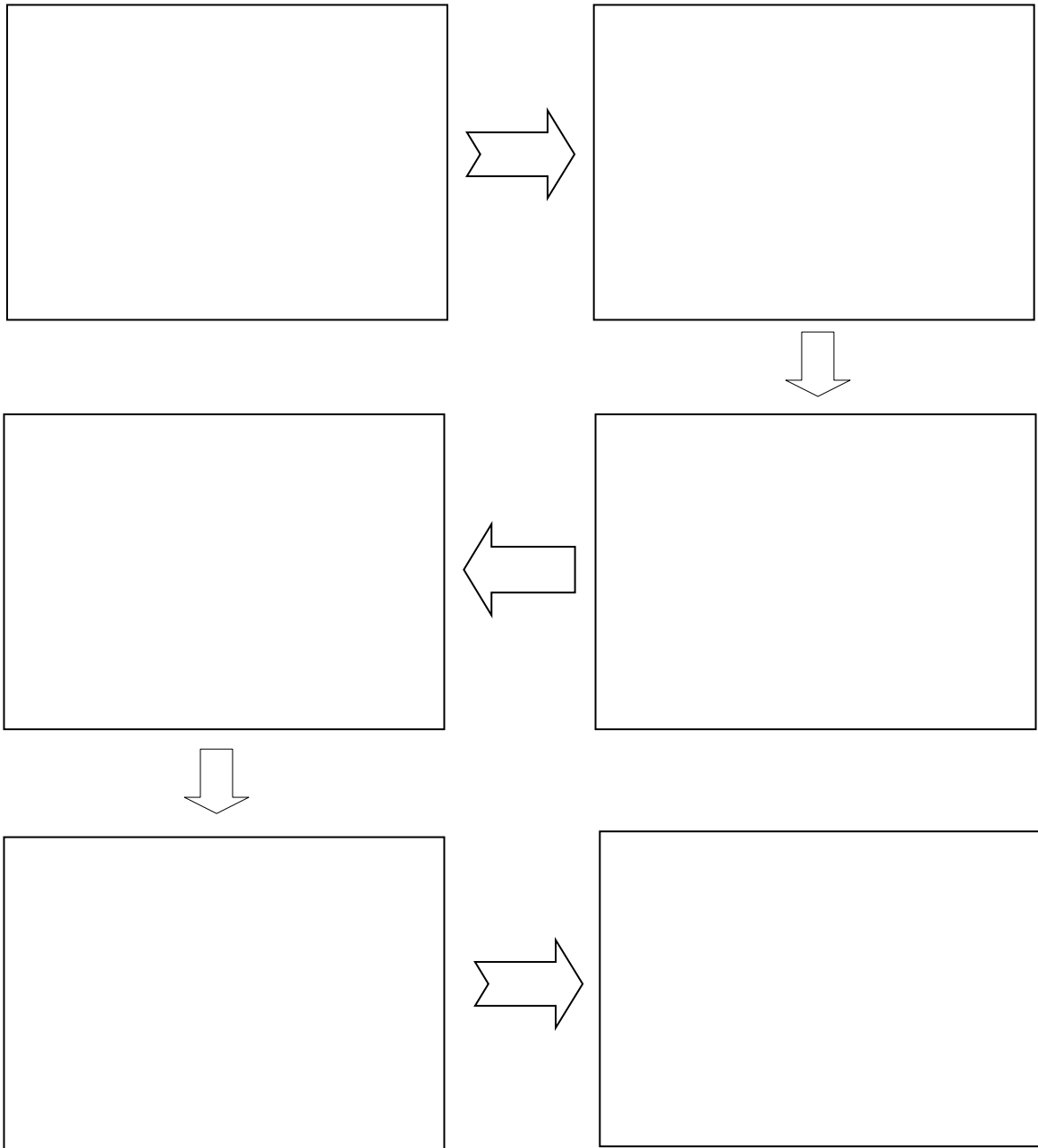


Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

The crackle of a fire	
The sound of a ball striking a bat	
From your imagination	

C. 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.



D. Who is going to help the poor old action word?

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. "Look," she said quickly to Aaron to shut him up . . .
→ In this sentence, which verb does **quickly** modify? _____

2. The photograph of a Nazi colonel, standing sharply at attention . . .
→ In this sentence, what verb does **sharply** modify? _____

3. He turned helplessly to Hannah.
→ In this sentence the adverb _____ modifies the verb _____

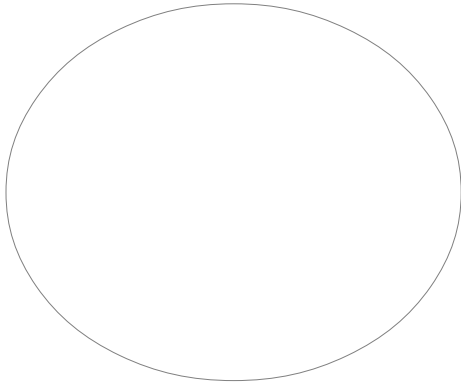
E. A **quintet** is a five-line verse that tells a story. The quintet has a syllable pattern and can bring an exciting scene to life. (It doesn't have to rhyme.)

Line 1 – tells when , 3 syllables Line 2 – tells where , 5 syllables Line 3 – tells what , 7 syllables Line 4 – describes activity , 9 syllables Line 5 – contains a thought , 3 syllables.	Now create a quintet poem using ideas from recent events in <i>The Devil's Arithmetic</i> .
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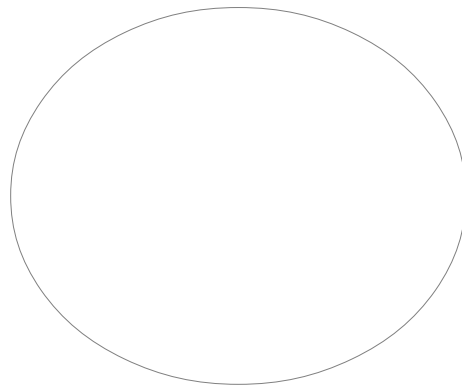
TITLE: _____

F. 5 Ws and an H.

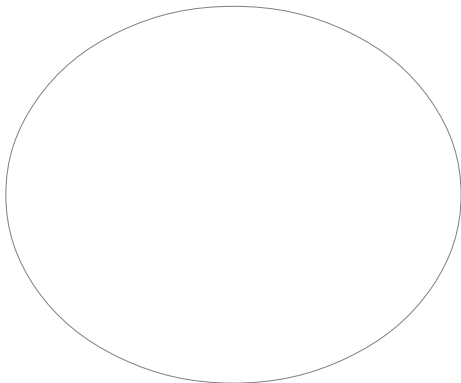
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



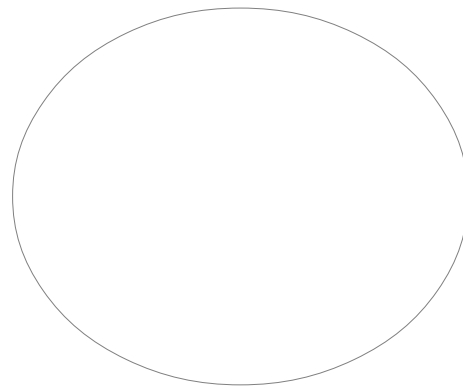
WHO?



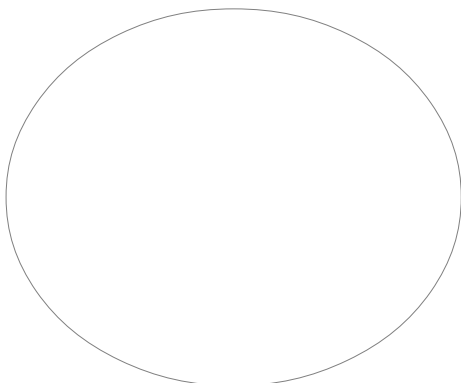
WHAT?



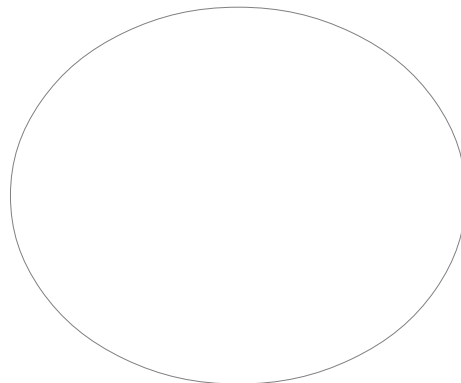
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activities



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 celebration described in the first two chapters of *The Devil's Arithmetic*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6