

# **The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate**



By  
**Jacqueline Kelly**

**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](http://novelstudies.org).

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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 one, two or three chapters of *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* and is comprised of these different activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. 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 science and nature, the importance of friends and family, perseverance, personal growth and finding one's own way in life.

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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/antagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

### Art Activities

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

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## Synopsis

The summer of 1899 is hot in Calpurnia's sleepy Texas town, and there aren't a lot of good ways to stay cool. Her mother has a new wind machine, but instead, Callie's contemplating cutting off her hair, one sneaky inch at a time. She's also spending a lot of time at the river with her notoriously cantankerous grandfather, an avid naturalist. But just when Callie and her grandfather are about to make an amazing discovery, the reality of Callie's situation catches up with her. She's a girl at the turn of the century, expected to cook and clean and sew. What a waste of time! Will Callie ever find a way to take control of her own destiny? [Courtesy of the publisher]

## Author Biography Jacqueline Kelly

Jacqueline Kelly is a New Zealand-born American writer of children's books. Kelly's first published story appeared in the *Mississippi Review* in 2001. In 2009 her first novel, *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*, was published. It tells the story of a young girl growing up in Texas in 1899, learning what it means to be a woman in turn-of-the-century America, and learning about science and the natural world from her grandfather.

Kelly was born in New Zealand and moved with her family to Canada when she was young, then to Texas. She earned degrees in law and medicine and continues to practice medicine in Austin, Texas. (Biography courtesy of Wikipedia)



# The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate

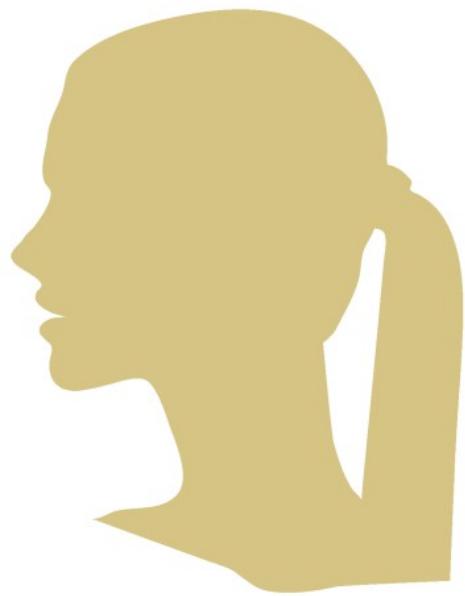
*By Jacqueline Kelly*



## **Student Checklist**

Student Name

# The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate



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Name:

# The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate

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## Chapter 1



### Before you read the chapter:

The protagonist in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* is eleven-year old, Callie Tate, who grew up in the small Texas town of Fentress in 1899. 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 interesting and memorable protagonist?




### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

vegetation	dilapidated	humiliated	irresistible
elaborate	treacherous	distinction	envised

1. I was very \_\_\_\_\_ when the principal singled me out at assembly.
2. Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_ living anywhere but here?
3. Mrs. Milquetoast certainly makes an \_\_\_\_\_ birthday cake.
4. The path up the mountain was very \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Alvin York served with \_\_\_\_\_ in the United States Army.
6. The Arizona landscape features some of the world's most interesting \_\_\_\_\_.
7. I had an \_\_\_\_\_ urge to eat all of Mom's cookies.
8. Old Man Cooper lives in a \_\_\_\_\_ cabin on the edge of town.

## Questions



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


2. Match each name with the proper description:

1	Callie Vee
2	Jim Bowie (J.B.)
3	Viola
4	Walter Tate
5	Harry Tate
6	Lamar Tate
7	Charles Darwin

A	Worm-purchaser.
B	The cook.
C	Author.
D	Calpurnia's favorite.
E	Only girl of 7 children.
F	The baby of the family
G	Grandfather.

3. Viola is described as the family's quadroon cook. What is meant by **quadroon**?


4. How was Callie able to escape the heat and misery of a hot Texas summer?


5. Briefly describe Callie's grandfather's appearance and personality.


5. Describe the plans Harry's parents had in store for him when he turned eighteen.

Mom	
Dad	

6. How did Harry encourage Callie to become a naturalist?


7. With what question did Callie finally approach her grandfather? What was his response? Why do you think he said this?


9. The name of the book Callie wished to borrow from the library was

--

10. The earth's creatures have an uncanny way of adapting to aid in their survival. How had the yellow grasshoppers adapted in this way? (Note: **Adaptation** and **Evolution** are two distinct processes.)


11. What did Mr. Tate bring home that helped the family endure the heat of summer?


12. What event began Callie's relationship with her grandfather?


## Language Activities



### A. Exaggeration

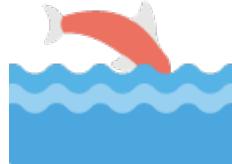
**Exaggeration** is a literary device defined as *a statement that represents something as better or worse than it really is*. We find several possible examples of exaggeration in this chapter. One such example is: ... *she daily constructed an elaborate mountain of her own hair*.

Think of an exaggerated way of describing the following

The smell of a skunk.	
A bad scare.	
Your choice.	

**B. A simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. We find an example of this in Chapter One: *They looked as blind as salamanders...*

In this example what two things are being compared?



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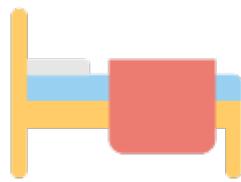
Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your imagination:

a) The sound of a grasshopper.


b) your own example


## 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 **PAN** can also form the word **NAP**. 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.

Each of the words in the left-hand column are found in this section of our novel.

Word	Anagram	Clue
lair		A bar or series of bars.
heads		Provided by a tall oak tree.
wrote		Part of a castle.
first		Cracks or faults.
tasted		Said emphatically.
share		Listens.

## D. What Do You Know About Grasshoppers?

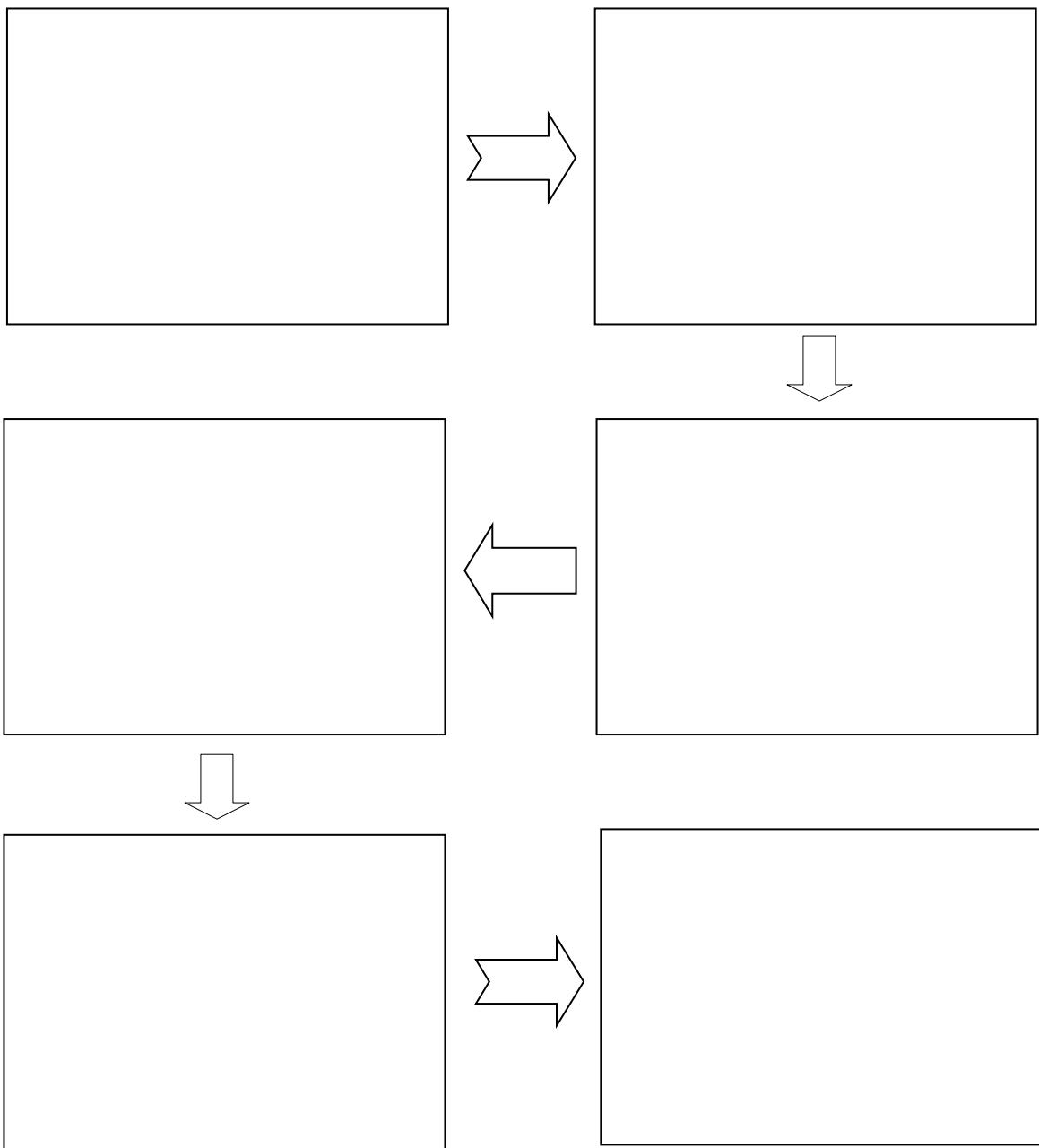
Callie becomes fascinated with little yellow grasshoppers which she suspects to be a new variety of this species. But what do you know about these critters? Did you know, for instance, that grasshoppers have ears on their bellies? Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three fascinating facts about the grasshopper and record this information below.



1	
2	
3	

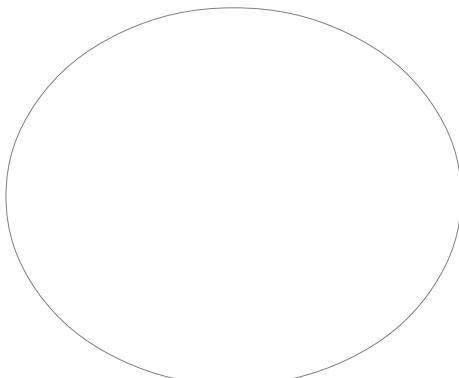
## E. Sequence Chart

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.

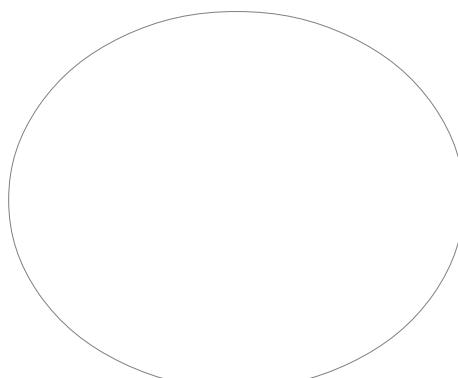


## F. 5 Ws and an H.

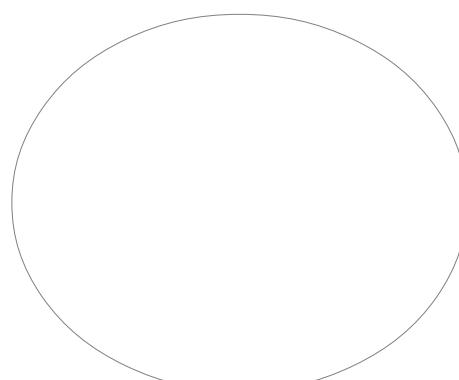
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



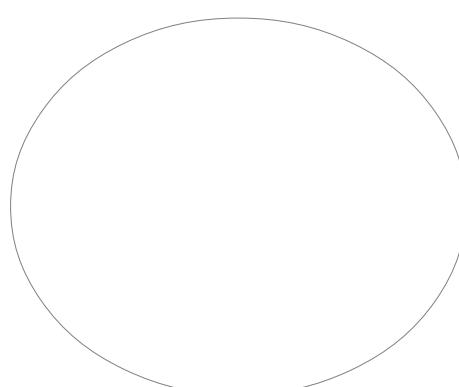
**WHO?**



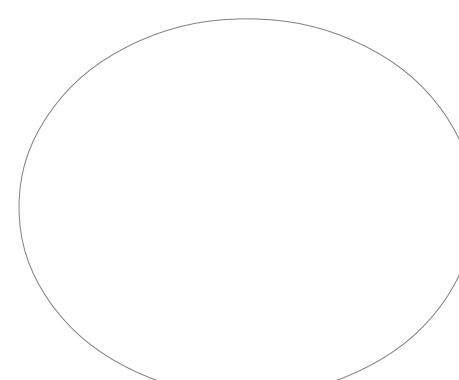
**WHAT?**



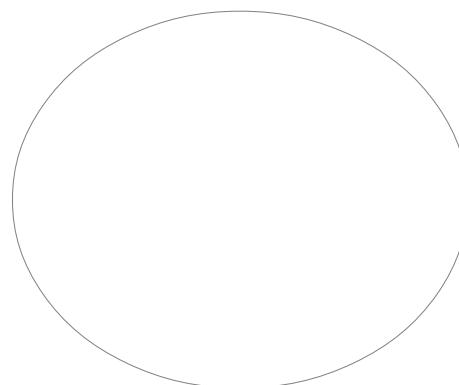
**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**



**WHY?**



**HOW?**

## Extension 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 first chapter of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6