

The Journey of Little Charlie



By

Christopher Paul Curtis

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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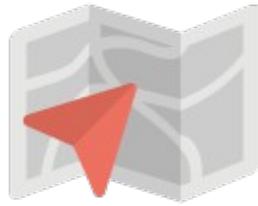


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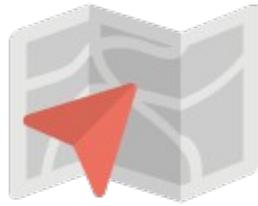
About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on two chapters of *The Journey of Little Charlie* and is comprised of five of the following 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 which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include racism and tolerance, bullying, the brutal institution of slavery in the United States during the 1800s, empathy, friendship, personal growth.

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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 *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

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
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

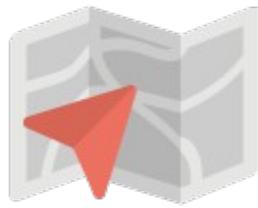
1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

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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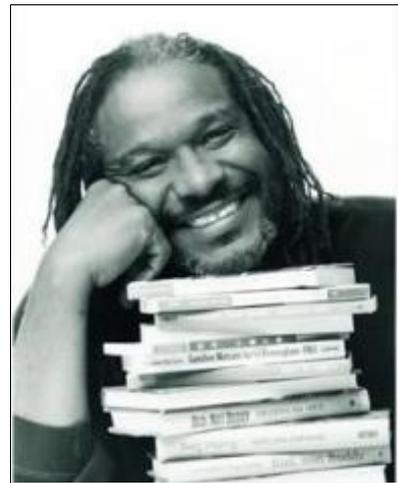
Synopsis

Twelve-year-old Charlie is down on his luck: His dad just died, the share crops are dry, and Cap'n Buck – the most fearsome man in Possum Moan, South Carolina – has come to collect a debt. Fearing for his life, Charlie strikes a deal with Cap'n Buck and agrees to track down some thieves. It's not too bad of a bargain for Charlie... until he comes face-to-face with the fugitives and discovers that they escaped slavery years ago and have been living free in Detroit. Torn between his guilty conscience and his survival instinct, Charlie needs to figure out his next move – and soon. It's only a matter of time before Cap'n Buck catches on... [Summary courtesy of the publisher]

Author Biography Christopher Paul Curtis

Christopher Paul Curtis was born in Flint, Michigan in 1953. Here he attended both elementary and secondary school. He later graduated from the University of Michigan and the University of Windsor. Christopher spent thirteen years working in a car assembly plant and assorted other jobs.

He took a year off work to write his first novel, *The Watsons go to Birmingham - 1963*. Other award-winning book by Mr. Curtis followed, including *Bud, Not Buddy* and *Elijah of Buxton*, which were both Newbery winners. Christopher and his wife, Kaysandra, live in Detroit. They have two children.



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Name: _____

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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 main character of *The Journey of Little Charlie* is twelve-year-old Little Charlie Bobo, who lives just outside of Possum Moan, South Carolina, in the year 1858. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. Who would you say is your *favorite* character? Why did you select this character?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

dour	contraption	cavorted	vexed
commenced	dusk	pitiful	antics

1. We failed to realize how _____ Miss Jameson would get on account of our joke.
2. Wyatt Earp has been described as a very serious, _____ man.
3. The _____ of the children proved to be too much for Grandma's nerves.
4. The construction workers _____ each day promptly at nine o'clock.
5. When the puppy stepped on the thorn he let out the most _____ yelp.
6. I doubt if that sorry _____ can do more than five miles per hour.
7. We were all so tired from fighting the forest fire we were in bed before _____.
8. The elves _____ out in the meadow to celebrate their freedom.

Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One.

2. What was unusual about Little Charlie's appearance for a twelve-year-old boy?

3. From what we know of Little Charlie so far in the story, how would you describe his personality?

4. Describe the two tests that Little Charlie's dad gave the pups to determine if they would make good hunters.

1	
2	

5. What do you think happened to the three pups?

6. Describe the tragic event that caused Pap's death.

7. How did the events following Pap's death demonstrate Little Charlie's great physical strength?

8. Describe Charlie's mother's unusual reaction to her husband's death.

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. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first two chapters of *The Journey of Little Charlie*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
closer		Usually derived from wood tar. Used as a disinfectant.
never		Firmness or courage.
gash		Witches or sorceresses.
faster		An action of a fighter plane.
table		A sheep makes this sound.
riled		A lazy person.
birds		_____ and drabs.

B. Cinquain Poems

A Cinquain poem has five lines and most often does not rhyme. Write two Cinquain poems describing two of the characters from *The Journey of Little Charlie* using what you know about them so far. With your teacher's permission you may wish to collaborate with a colleague in the creation of these poems.

<p>Line 1 is one word. Line 2 is two words. Line 3 is three words. Line 4 is four words. Line five is one word.</p>	<p><i>Santa Saint Nick Long white beard Christmas Eve present-giver Jolly</i></p>
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Character 1 _____

Character 2 _____

C. George Washington

Little Charlie's Ma seems to have a connection with America's first president, George Washington. Twice in the first chapter his name comes up with regard to Little Charlie's mother. She first mentions that George Washington is rich, even though by this time he has been dead for almost 60 years, and secondly she insinuates that the former president was a cheapskate. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three interesting facts about this great man and record them below.



1	
2	
3	

D. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. The following is an example taken from Chapter Two: *I sent where time goes from moving at the reg'lar pace to when it slides 'long on greased locomotive rails.*

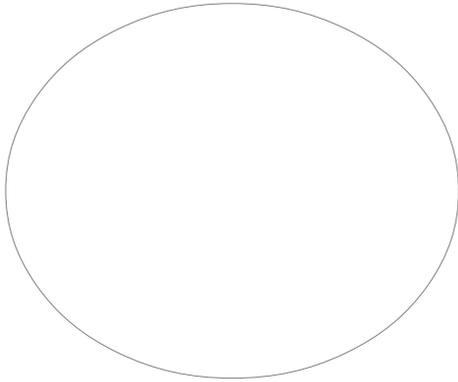
Describe how time is personified in this example.

Create your own example of personification.

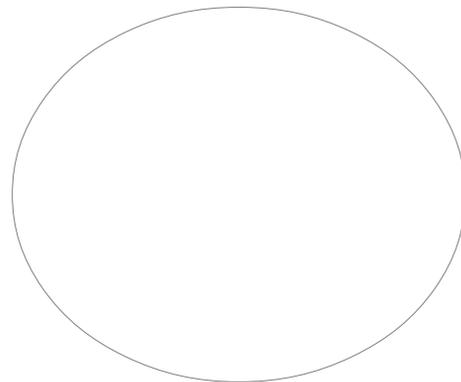
As you continue to read through the novel be on the lookout for other examples of this literary device. If you should find one, come back to this question and enter it below.

E. 5 Ws and an H.

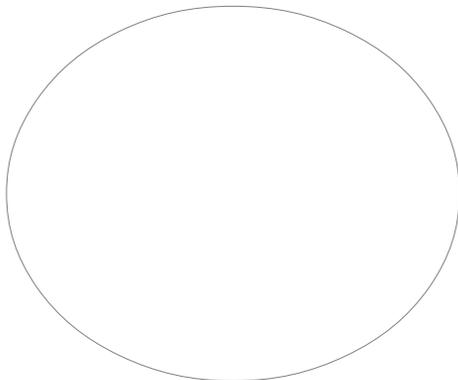
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



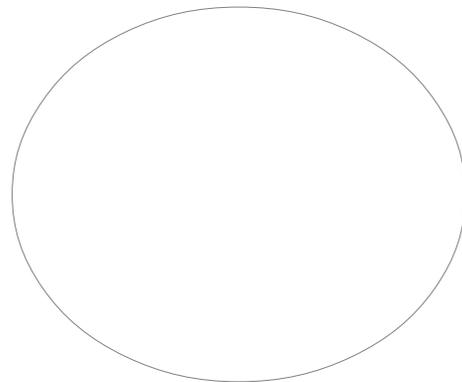
WHO?



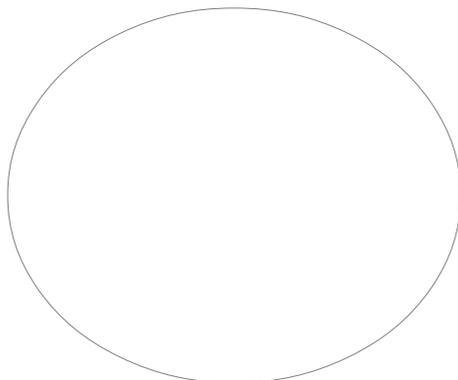
WHAT?



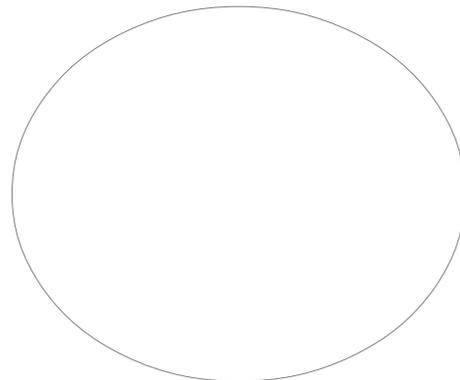
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

F. My 02¢ About This Section.

What I Liked Best:

I Didn't Like The Part:

I Didn't Like It Because:

G. Caviar Words

The author of this novel is noted for his use of elegant, tasteful words. Someone once stated that some words have the sound of **caviar** (rich and elegant) and others are more are common (**peanut butter** words). With a colleague come up with 6 examples of each type of word. You may use any chapter of the novel to find these words.



Caviar Words	Peanut Butter Words

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 the first four chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6