

The Last Kids on Earth



By

Max Brallier

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.

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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 Last Kids on Earth* and is comprised of five different sections:

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 nuclear apocalypse, survival, friendship, gender roles and stereotypes, courage, home and security.

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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. Determining alphabetical order
11. Identification of root words
12. Identify/create *similes*

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/antagonist
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. 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

Ever since the monster apocalypse hit town, average thirteen year old Jack Sullivan has been living in his tree house, which he's armed to the teeth with catapults and a moat, not to mention video games and an endless supply of Oreos and Mountain Dew scavenged from abandoned stores. But Jack alone is no match for the hordes of Zombies and Winged Wretches and Vine Thingies, and *especially* not for the eerily intelligent monster known only as *Blarg*. So Jack builds a team: his dorky friend, Quint; the reformed middle school bully, Dirk; Jack's loyal pet monster, Rover; and Jack's crush, June. With their help, Jack is going to slay Blarg, achieve the ultimate Feat of Apocalyptic Success, and be average no longer! **Can he do it?** [Courtesy of the publisher]

Author Biography

Max Brallier

Max Brallier (maxbrallier.com) is the *New York Times* bestselling author of more than thirty books and games, including the Last Kids on Earth series. He writes both children's books and adult books, including the Galactic Hot Dogs series and the pick-your-own-path adventure series *Can YOU Survive the Zombie Apocalypse?* He has written books for properties including *Adventure Time*, *Regular Show*, *Steven Universe*, and *Uncle Grandpa*.

Under the pen name Jack Chabert, he is the creator and author of the *Eerie Elementary* series for Scholastic Books as well as the author of the *New York Times* bestselling graphic novel *Poptropica: Book 1: Mystery of the Map*. Previously, he worked in the marketing department at St. Martin's Press. Max lives in New York with his wife, Alyse, who is way too good for him. His daughter, Lila, is simply the best. (The publisher)



The Last Kids on Earth



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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-2



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. *The Last Kids on Earth* features thirteen-year-old Jack Sullivan, who has survived the destruction of most of the world's population and it seems must face a Monster Apocalypse alone. 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 **protagonist**? Who is your all time favorite protagonist?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

gargantuan	apocalypse	photojournalist	encounter
predicament	primal	imminent	sinister

1. The overconfident wrestler didn't realize that his defeat was _____.
2. There was a _____ monster awaiting Jack when he got home.
3. I could tell by the _____ expression on her face that she was up to no good.
4. Our _____ with the police chief was most unexpected.
5. My sister is a _____ with her own blog.
6. The creature gave a horrid, _____ scream which scared us half to death.
7. No one expected an _____ after all the countries of the world signed a treaty.
8. “This is a fine _____ you've gotten us into, Ollie,” Stan exclaimed.

Questions



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

2. Investigate: Jack battles the gargantuan monster on the roof of the local CVS pharmacy. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, find out what **CVS** stands for.

--

3. According to Jack, what was it that made him so cool, confident and good with girls?

4. It had been ____ days since the Monster Apocalypse happened. Jack decides to call the monster _____.

5. Why does Jack photograph every monster he encounters?

6. According to Jack there are four types of monsters he must contend with. In the chart below write a brief description of each of these monster types.

Zombies	
Dozers	
Winged Wretches	
Vine-Thingies	

7. Do you think you would enjoy having Jack as a close friend? Give one reason why you think he would make a great friend and one reason why he wouldn't.

8. Do you think it was a good idea for Jack to treat life like a video game? Why or why not?

9. Describe Jack's plan for completing the ULTIMATE Feat of Apocalyptic Success.

Language Activities



A. Metaphors

A **metaphor** is defined as a figure of speech that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but do have something in common. An example would be "A mighty fortress is our God." We find an example of this in Chapter One: "I'm a thimble in his gargantuan grasp."



1. What else (besides a thimble) might Jack have used as a metaphorical comparison?

--

2. Create a metaphor by filling in the blanks in these sentences:

a) Max is a _____ when he _____.

b) Her eyes were _____.

B. 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:

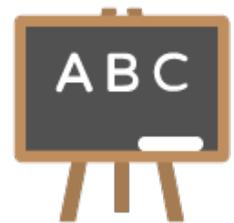


a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters.

Word	Anagram	Clue
saliva		Helps or benefits.
thin		Suggestion.
sinister		One who demands something forcefully.
foster		Lots of trees.
brutes		Roots - like potatoes.
monster		A trusted advisor.
damsel		Small, portable artistic objects.
ultimate		Mangle.

C. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** - a literary device in which the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's one such example: from Chapter Three ... *just a super-slick slingshot ...*



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

A zombie.	
A monster.	
Your choice	

D. Simile

A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is “Suddenly, there's a racket like a wrecking ball crashing into ten million Legos.” What two things are being compared in this example?

--	--

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

a) the taste of a monster's saliva

b) an explosion

Look for a **simile** in the remaining chapters of the novel. When you find one return to this question and record it below.

Good to Know - Zombie

The English word "zombie" was first recorded in 1819, in a history of Brazil by the poet Robert Southey, in the form of "zombi". The Oxford English Dictionary gives the origin of the word as West African, and compares it to the Kongo words *nzambi* (god) and *zumbi* (fetish). A Portuguese dictionary defines it as being a "spirit that is supposed to wander the earth to torment the living. (Wikipedia)



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. A Quatrain Poem About a Zombie.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain was written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis. It is called, *I Lost My Brain to a Zombie*.

*It ate my brain this afternoon,
And now I am undead.
It's hard to form a single thought.
When I lost part of my head.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - B - C - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABCA, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the first two chapters of our novel (i.e. zombies, monsters, courage, the apocalypse, photojournalists, etc.)

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____

Extension Activities



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 this section of *The Last Kids on Earth*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6