

The Lions of Little Rock



By

Kristin Levine

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

The Lions of Little Rock

By *Kristin Levine*



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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 four to six chapters of *The Lions of Little Rock* and is comprised of five of the following different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language Activities
- Extension Activities

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.**

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. Students will also be expected to provide clear answers to questions and well-constructed explanations. It is critical as well that students be able to relate events and the feelings of characters to their own lives and experiences and describe their own interpretation of a particular passage.

A strength of the unit is that students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included (p.7) so that students may organize their work and keep it all in one place. A **Student Checklist** is also included (p.6) so that a record of completed work may be recorded.

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include friendship, race relations, prejudice, courage, personal growth and overcoming personal challenges.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
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. Complete a Story Pyramid
5. Identify the climax of the novel.

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. 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 Marlee, who is shy and quiet, feels like her whole world is falling apart. And she's sure that starting middle school is only going to make things worse, until she meets Liz, the new girl. It may look as if they have nothing in common – Liz always knows the right thing to say, and Marlee can barely stand to speak up in class – but they become fast friends. Then Liz is caught “passing” for white and leaves school without even a good-bye. Marlee decides she wants her friend back. But to stay friends, Marlee and Liz must be willing to take on segregation – and the dangers their friendship could bring to both of their families. [Courtesy of The Publisher]

A Stunning piece of historical fiction. - School Library Journal, Starred Review.

Author Biography

Kristin Levine

Kristin Levine, author of the critically acclaimed *The Best Bad Luck I Ever Had* and *The Lions of Little Rock*, received her BA In German from Swarthmore College and an MFA in film from American University. She spent a year in Vienna, Austria, working as an au pair and has taught screenwriting at American University. Currently she lives in Alexandria, Virginia, with her two daughters.



Biography courtesy of The Publisher.

The Lions of Little Rock



By Kristin Levine

Name: _____

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Chapters 1-5



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or 'good guy'. The main character of *The Lions of Little Rock* is twelve-year-old Marlee who is going through one of the most trying times of her life. 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**?

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Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

| | | | |
|-------------|---------|-----------|-------------|
| integration | polio | convinced | sympathy |
| compliment | hammock | delicious | segregation |

1. Betty Jean's chocolate cake was simply _____.
2. Marlee's dad was in favor of the _____ of the schools in Little Rock.
3. Uncle Jonas enjoys taking a nap in the _____ on his porch.
4. I don't have too much _____ for people who cheat on their tests and get caught.
5. Every time Rudy receives a _____ he begins to blush like crazy.
6. My little sister contracted _____ when she was six years old.
7. It seemed that Governor Faubus was in favor of _____.
8. I am _____ that my French teacher hates me.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story in Chapter One? (Time and place.)

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2. What great controversial issue was dividing the people of Arkansas at this time?

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3. What were Marlee's mother's four reasons for supporting the governor's decision to close the schools?

| | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 1. | | 3. | |
| 2. | | 4. | |

4. Marlee enjoys comparing the personalities of different people with different kinds of drinks. What kind of drink do you think Marlee would compare you to? Why?

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5. In Chapter Three Judy makes her sister promise to say at least _____ at school that day.

6. How was Liz's personality different than Marlee's?

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7. Why was Marlee sad when she lay in bed listening to the lions roar after her first day of school?

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8. What was your impression of JT In Chapter Five? Why?

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9. JT really puts Marlee on the spot at the end of Chapter Five. Think of two reasons why Marlee didn't object to him taking her only copy of the math assignment.

| | |
|----|--|
| 1. | |
| | |
| 2. | |
| | |

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 five chapters of *The Lions of Little Rock*.

| Word | Anagram | Clue |
|---------|---------|---------------------|
| throw | | Value of something. |
| parents | | Snares. |
| student | | Shortened. |
| nails | | Killed. |
| also | | An Asian country. |
| time | | Tiny arthropod. |
| words | | An ancient weapon. |

Fascinating Fact About Lions

- Lions are the second largest cat species in the world (behind _____)
- Lions can reach speeds of 81 kph (50 mph)
- The roar of a lion can be heard 8 km away (5 miles)
- Lions in the wild will live about 12 year (in a zoo _____ years?)
- Lionesses are better hunters than males

B. A Poem About a Lion.

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 entitled *The Old Lion*, was written by the humorous poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*A lion old with nasty breath,
Is worser than a dance with death.
He bats his eyes and draws you near,
Then quickly makes you disappear.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - A - B - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBA, 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 four chapters of our novel.

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: _____

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C. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter Five is: ... *when I hear the lions roaring and they're really going at it, just growling and yowling, and roaring like a jet engine...*



What is being compared in this example?

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

a) the speed of a cheetah

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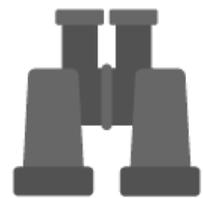
b) the croak of a Coqui frog (the loudest amphibian on the planet)

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c) your choice

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D. The very first paragraph of Chapter One contains an example of an important literary device called **foreshadowing**. *Foreshadowing* is defined as a warning or indication of a future event. It seems a bit odd that the first thing that Marlee reveals about herself is the fact that she used to have difficulty talking to people. Why do you think that this is the first thing that Marlee tells us about herself? How do you think this is an example of foreshadowing?



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



| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |