

The Littles



By

John Peterson

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 one or two chapters of *The Littles* and is comprised of five of the following 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 which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include courage, cats and mice, problem solving, dealing with change, 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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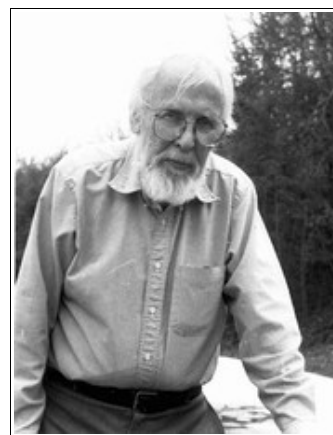
Synopsis

The Littles are a family of tiny people living in the walls of a house owned by the Bigg family. The family consists William and Wilma Little, their children Tom and Lucy, Granny and Uncle Pete. The family mooches off the Bigg family, but in return always make sure that the house is in good repair. Trouble ensues when the Biggs leave for a holiday and the Newcombs come to house-sit. This family, however, are slobs, and before long a myriad of mice are attracted to the messy house. Just when it seems that things couldn't get any worse, a cat arrives on the scene. Will the ingenuity of the Little family win the day or will they be driven out of the home they have known all their lives?

Author Biography

John Peterson

John Peterson was born in Bradford, Pennsylvania in 1924. He attended Pratt Institute before serving as a paratrooper in World War II. After the war he returned to Pratt Institute and graduated in 1948. John Peterson was also an illustrator as well as an author. His first book was entitled *Terry's Treasure Hunt*. He began writing a series of book about the Little family in 1967, with the inaugural novel, *The Littles*. This was later made into an animated cartoon series. Peterson also wrote the popular novel *The Secret Hide-Out*. Peterson lived a good part of his life in Brooklyn, New York with his wife Holly where they had four children. Later the couple moved to Hankins, New York. John enjoyed speaking at various elementary schools and volunteering with the Boy Scouts. John died in 2002. *[Biography Adapted from Wikipedia]*



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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”. One of the main protagonists in this novel is Tom Little, a very unusual ten-year-old boy who would not even come up to your knee. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels that you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially fascinating and unforgettable **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

disappeared	electricity	plumber	vacation
suppose	fireplace	factory	neighbors

1. The Marsh family decided to go camping for their _____.
2. Just _____ for a minute that you were home alone when that happened.
3. The storm knocked out all the _____ in the city.
4. Our _____ built a tall fence around their swimming pool.
5. Jesse _____ from the classroom in a puff of smoke.
6. My mother works across town in a run-down _____.
7. I feel like cuddling up to the _____ with a good book.
8. We are going to have to call a _____ to fix the leak.

Questions



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

2. What were two things which were unusual about the Littles' appearance?

1.	
2.	

3. Describe how the Littles repaid the Bigg family for the things they took.

4. What was worrying the Little family in Chapter 2?

5. Do you think if the Bigg family knew the Littles were living in their house they would force them to leave? *Why or why not?*

6. How are the surnames of the Littles and Biggs quite fitting in this story?

Language Activity



A. Exaggeration

Authors sometimes use a literary device called exaggeration. Exaggeration might be defined as stretching the truth to make something sound better or worse than it really is. Here is a statement that Uncle Pete makes in Chapter Two; “You have enough red yarn there, Granny to start a knitting factory.” Do you think this is an example of exaggeration. Why or why not?



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:



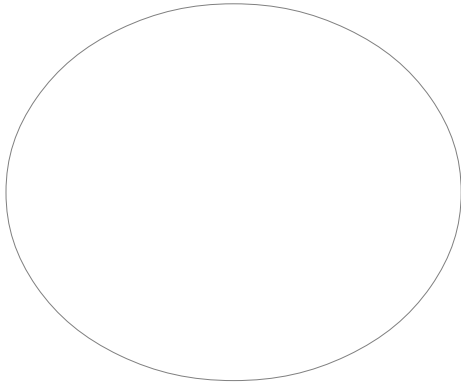
a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first two chapters of *The Littles*.

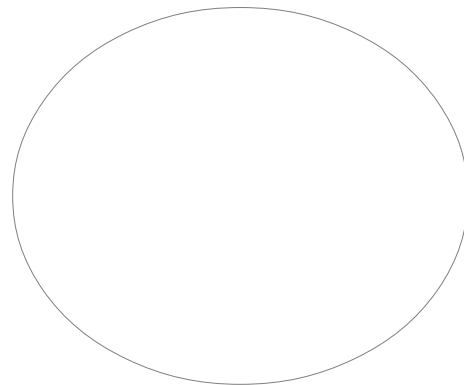
Word	Anagram	Clue
lived		Satan.
secret		Builds.
last		Goes good on steak.
counter		Beat badly in a game.
reason		Married woman in Mexico.
owners		Fails to get better.
stop		Mailbox task.

C. 5 Ws and an H.

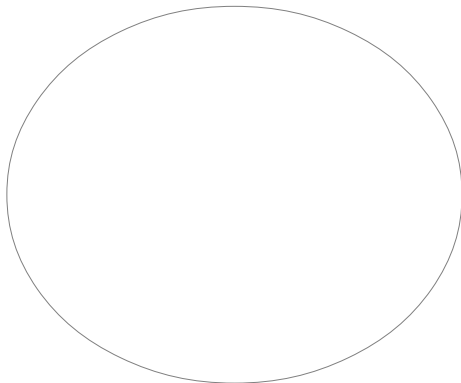
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



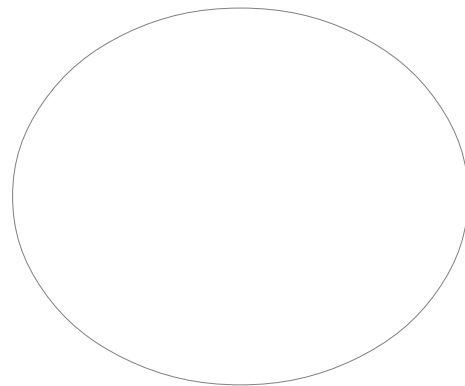
WHO?



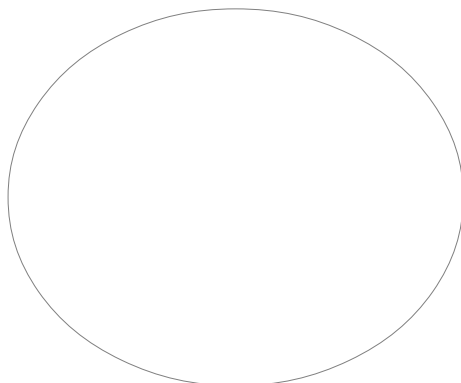
WHAT?



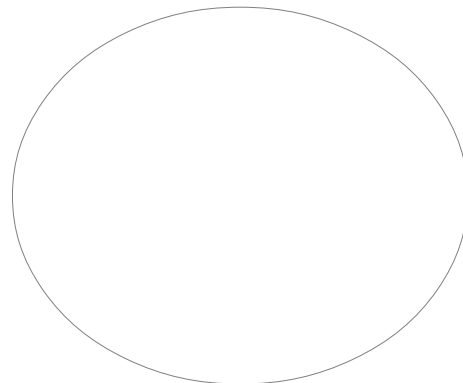
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

D. My 02¢ About Chapters 1-2.

What I Liked Best:

I Didn't Like The Part:

I Didn't Like It Because:

E. 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 Activities



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



1	2
3	4
5	6

B. Quatrain Poems

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and humorous. The following quatrain is actually one verse of a longer poem called **My Bored Cat** by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*They say a cat's the best of pets,
It doesn't need much care.
It's fussy and it's mostly bored,
And loves to sit and stare.*



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: AABB, 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 topic should have something to do with the themes established in the first two 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: _____
