

The Mighty Miss Malone



By

Christopher Paul Curtis

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 three chapters of *The Mighty Miss Malone* 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 family and friendship, loyalty, personal growth, The Great Depression, accepting responsibilities, and learning to accept life's difficulties (*toughening up*), and coming of age.

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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/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

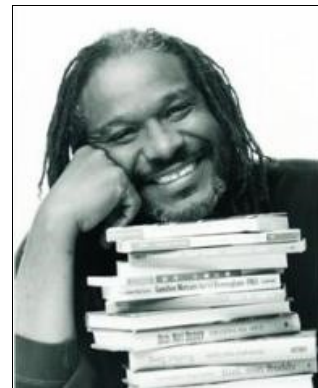
"We are a family on a journey to a place called wonderful" is the motto of Deza Malone's family. Deza is the smartest girl in her class in Gary, Indiana, singled out by teachers for a special path in life. But it's 1936 and the Great Depression has hit Gary hard, and there are no jobs for black men. When her beloved father leaves to find work, Deza, Mother, and her older brother, Jimmie, go in search of him, and end up in a Hooverville outside Flint, Michigan. Jimmie's beautiful voice inspires him to leave the camp to be a performer, while Deza and Mother find a new home, and cling to the hope that they will find Father. The twists and turns of their story reveal the devastation of the Depression and prove that Deza truly is the Mighty Miss Malone. [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-Flint and the University of Windsor. Christopher spent thirteen years working in a car assembly plant and an assortment of 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 Windsor, Ontario. They have two children.



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Name:

The Mighty Miss Malone

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Chapters 1-3



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *The Mighty Miss Malone* is Deza, an enterprising twelve-year-old girl. 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**? (One that’s hard to forget.)



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

grandiose	exalted	endearing	inappropriate
disillusional	verbose	pervasive	epiphany

1. I think it is most _____ for you to ask me my age.
2. She is so _____ that I sometimes wonder if she ever shuts up.
3. Percy has some very _____ ideas about what his mother does for a living.
4. Rachel had an _____ last night involving how she might earn extra money.
5. After winning the battle, King Richard was _____ by the entire nation.
6. “You are _____ if you think I will support you,” she snarled.
7. The flood waters were so _____ that everyone’s basement was soon flooded.
8. Jeremy has this _____ habit of cozying up to someone when he is trying to get his own way.

Questions



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

b. Think of one thing you would enjoy about living in this setting (both time and place), and one thing you would not enjoy.

Enjoy	
Not so much	

2. Deza's mother's pet peeve is that she hates it when people are mean to Jimmie. Jimmy's pet peeve is when people call him Pee-Wee. What's your pet peeve? Why?

3. What is a *napoleon complex*?

4. Deza's father's most endearing trait was that he was the best storyteller and poet in the world. True or False

5. What was your impression of Deza's family? Please support your answer with evidence from the story.

6. How did Jimmie actually come by the pie that he brought home? How did his family react to this event?

7. Match each character from these chapters with the most accurate description.

a	Clarice Johnson		1	He stole from the rich and gave to the poor.
b	Roscoe Malone		2	Mother the Marvelous Mammalian Matriarch.
c	The Carsdales		3	Born in Flint, Michigan.
d	Deza Malone		4	A very active imagination.
e	Margaret Malone		5	A famous gangster of the 1930s.
f	Dr. Bracy		6	Usually has a pleasing even disposition.
g	Jimmie Malone		7	The best teacher in the world.
h	Robin Hood		8	A rich family.
i	Pretty Boy Floyd		9	Has a crush on Jimmie.
j	Karen Needham		10	Studied about books and writing in college.

8. Why do you think that Jimmie's dad was relieved that the pie hadn't been taken from a white neighborhood?

9. What did Jimmie propose to Dr. Bracy as to how he might repay her? What was her counter proposal?

Language Activities



A. Deza says about her father, *His most annoying trait is the way he uses alliteration every chance he has.* Many authors also enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. *The example of alliteration that Deza is referring to is: ... doing work in a horribly hot furnace...*



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

An freshly baked pie.	
A tornado.	
Your choice.	

B. Gary, Indiana

The setting of our story, Gary, Indiana, is set on the shores of Lake Michigan, 25 miles from downtown Chicago. During the 1930s it was a vibrant city but since then the decline of the steel industry has meant hard times for the people living there. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three important facts about this fascinating city.



1.	
2.	
3.	

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 **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 three chapters of *The Mighty Miss Malone*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
spread		Curtains.
singer		Quit.
reason		A married Spanish lady.
responds		Mulls over.
least		Take without permission.
shoes		Used by firefighters.
dishes		An angry audience ____ at the bad performance.

Now find two additional words from the first three chapters which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.

Word	Anagram	Clue

Good to Know ~ Pies, Pies and More Pies

Jimmie has a real fondness for pies – especially apple pies. I wonder, however, if he knew that there are more than 12,000 different registered types of pies in the world. According to the livescience.com website, when people were asked to rank their three favourite types of pies the following pies were included:

1. Apple (the choice of 47% of those surveyed). 2. Pumpkin (27%). 3. Chocolate Creme (32%). 4. Cherry (27%). 5. Apple Crumb (25%).



What is your favorite kind of pie? _____

D. A Quatrain Poem About an Alligator Pie.

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, Dennis Lee. It is the first verse of a poem called, **Alligator Pie**.

*Alligator Pie, alligator pie,
If I don't get some I think I'm gonna die.
Give away the green grass, give away the sky,
But don't give away my alligator pie.*



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

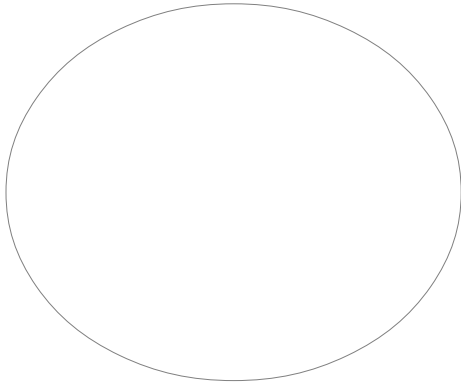
The Quatrain Poem

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

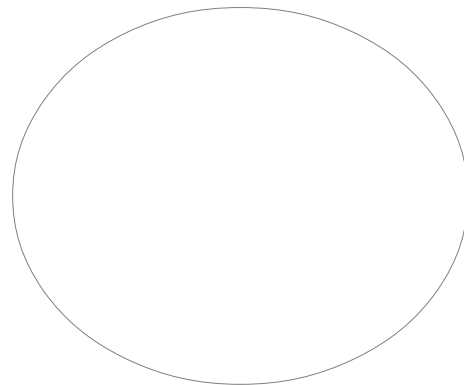
Title: _____

E. 5 Ws and an H.

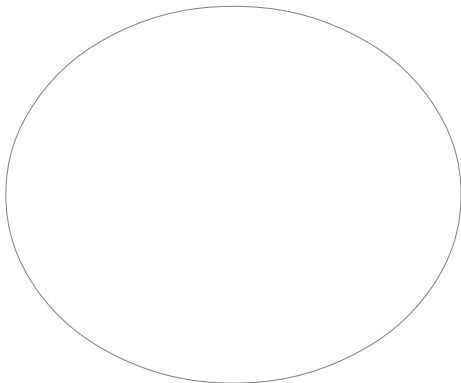
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



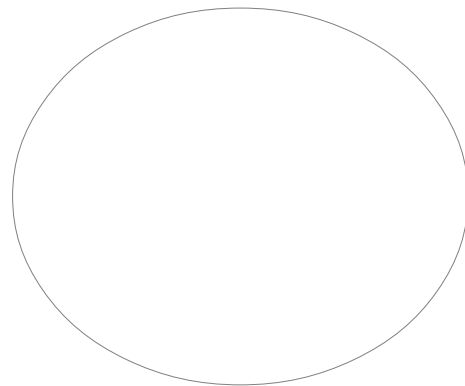
WHO?



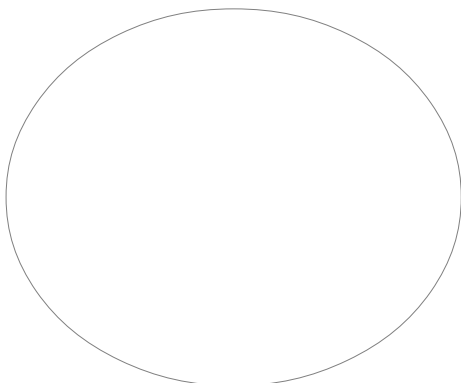
WHAT?



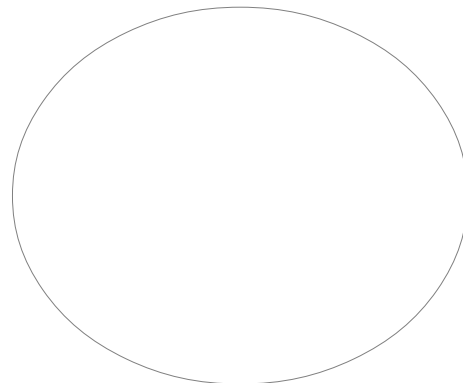
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

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



1	2
3	4
5	6