

The Parker Inheritance



By

Varian Johnson

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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About the Author: Nat Reed, a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years, served as a full-time instructor at Trent University's Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, please visit reednovelstudies.com.

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Suggestions and Expectations

Each chapter of the novel study focuses on several chapters of *The Parker Inheritance* and is comprised of four distinct sections:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (page 7) as well as a **Checklist** (page 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 solving a mystery, friendship, community, perseverance, racism and prejudice (racial and gender), poverty and economic struggle, the power of history.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Identify *similes*
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. Identify *personification*

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Five W's and an H Chart
3. Create a synopsis
4. Identify the climax of the novel

Character Activities

1. Compare characters
2. Identify the protagonist
3. Relating personal experience

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Create a poem
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Create a journal entry
8. Opinion writing

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a movie poster
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

The Parker Inheritance by Varian Johnson is a middle-grade mystery that follows 12-year-old Candice Miller, who is spending the summer in Lambert, South Carolina, after her parents' divorce. While cleaning out her late grandmother's attic, she discovers a mysterious letter and puzzle addressed to her grandmother that hints at a hidden fortune and an unresolved injustice from decades earlier.

With the help of her new friend Brandon Jones, a thoughtful and bookish neighbor, Candice sets out to decipher the clues. Their investigation leads them deep into the town's history of racial discrimination, unearthing the story of a family wronged in the Jim Crow era and the mystery behind why her grandmother's own search for the treasure ended in disgrace. As they piece together past and present, they hope to solve the puzzle, claim the inheritance, and restore her grandmother's reputation before summer ends.

(Courtesy of the Publishers Weekly)

Author Biography

Varian Johnson

Varian Johnson is an American author of middle-grade and young adult fiction. He was born in Florence, South Carolina, and grew up with a love of reading, especially mystery and adventure stories. Johnson studied engineering at Vanderbilt University and later earned an MBA, working as an engineer and business professional before becoming a full-time writer.

He is best known for writing engaging, thoughtful novels that feature diverse characters and themes of justice, friendship, and problem-solving. His books include *The Parker Inheritance*, *The Great Greene Heist*, *Saving Maddi*, and the *Twins* series (co-written with Shannon Wright). *The Parker Inheritance* received major recognition, including a Coretta Scott King Author Honor.



Curriculum Units for Mystery Novels

Reed Novel Studies is stocked with hundreds of comprehensive novel studies featuring some of the greatest novels for middle grades and young readers. Included are many popular mystery stories – including **The Westing Game**, a book which plays a huge role in helping Candice and Brandon solve the mystery of the Parker Inheritance.

Here are a few novels of this genre for which we have helpful, teacher-friendly Curriculum Units:

The Westing Game [by Ellen Raskin](#)

From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler [by E.L. Konigsburg](#)

Chasing Vermeer [by Blue Balliett](#)

Mystery at Red Marsh Lake [by Nathanael Reed](#)

The Secret Lake [by Karen Inglis](#)

The Shakespeare Stealer [by Gary Blackwood](#)

The Phantom Tollbooth [by Norton Juster](#)

The Wednesday Wars [by Gary D. Schmidt](#)

Hello Universe [by Erin Entrada Kelly](#)

The Invention of Hugo Cabret [by Brian Selznick](#)

Three Times Lucky [by Sheila Turnage](#)

Fuzzy Mud [by Louis Sachar](#)



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Student Checklist

Student Name

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Name:

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Chapters 1-5



Before you read this section:

It is important for an author to create an interesting **protagonist** (main character) for any work of fiction. *The Parker Inheritance* features twelve-year-old Candice, who moved with her mom to the city of Lambert, South Carolina for the summer. Why do you think such an event might be especially appealing to readers?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

injustice	accusation	reputation	confidential
logic	legacy	tarnish	facilitate

1. Jasmine had the _____ of being a difficult camper.
2. I think it was a great _____ for my grandfather to be accused of theft.
3. My mother tried her best to _____ a real conversation between them.
4. One couldn't really deny the _____ of her argument.
5. Nothing on earth could _____ his sterling reputation.
6. Everyone knew that his _____ was just a figment of his imagination.
7. Please keep the message _____," Georgia pleaded.
8. Wayne Gretzky's _____ as a hockey icon will live on through the ages.

Questions



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

2. Describe briefly what is going on in Chapter One.

3. Why did this event turn out to be such a catastrophe for Abigail?

4. Although Candice loved her dad, why was she disappointed in him at this point in the story?

5. Foreshadowing is defined as a hint provided by the author regarding a possible future event. Why might mention of the attic be an example of this literary device?

6. Candice states, "A mistake isn't a failure." Do you think she has a point? Please defend your answer.

7. What did Candice's mother do for a living? Why was this difficult for her after moving?

8. What was your impression of Brandon? What helped you form this impression?

9. Describe what Candice investigated in the library. What do you think motivated her to do this?

10. Describe the crisis that Brandon endured in Chapter 5. What role did Candice play in this event?

Language Activities



A. The Good Old Indispensable Adverb!

An **adverb** is a part of speech defined as *a modifier (or helper) of a verb* (usually an action word). Often an adverb will end in the letters *ly* (i.e. *slowly*). Our novel features a good many creative adverbs.



1. *It sat directly across from her park bench.*
→ In this sentence, which verb does **directly** modify? _____
2. *"Well, well.. look who's outside," he mother said breezily...*
→ In this sentence, what verb does **breezily** modify? _____
3. *"She was probably being polite," he said.*
→ In this sentence the adverb _____ modifies the verb _____

B. A simile is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. We find an example of a simile in this section: *The paper was bright. Crisp. Smooth. Like the pages of a new book that had yet to be cracked open.* What is being compared in this example?

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

a) a jackhammer

b) your choice

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 this section of ***The Parker Inheritance***.

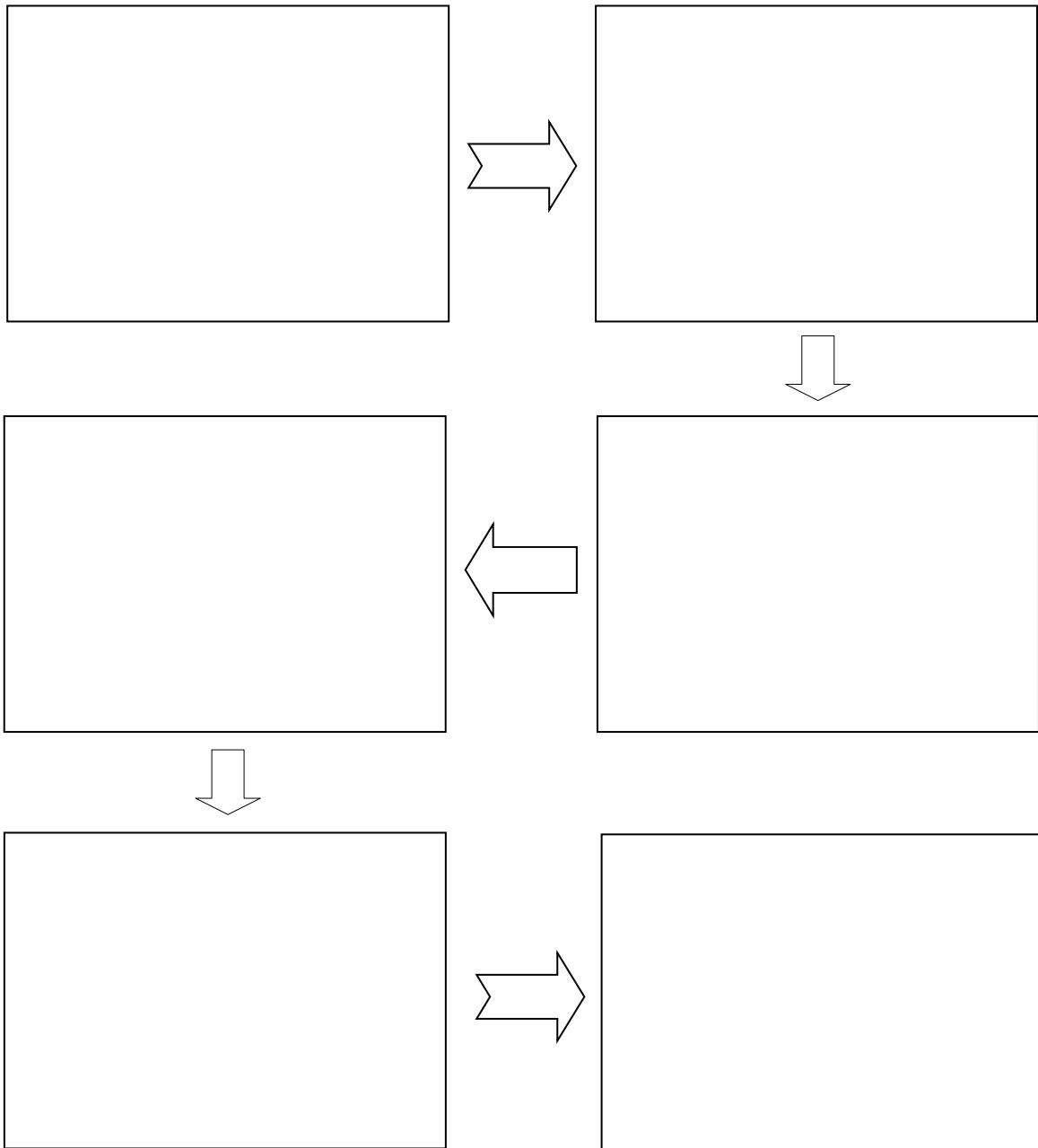
Word	Anagram	Clue
exist		Doorways.
deeper		Looked keenly.
taste		Say.
later		Change.
remain		They take to the sky.
street		Take the exam again.
strange		Precious stones.

D. A number of fascinating characters have already appeared in the novel. For each of the three characters below think of three adjectives which would accurately describe him/her. Consider both appearance and personality.

Character	1	2	3
Candice			
Brandon			
Candice's mom			

E. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in this section. In each of the six boxes below list the six events that you have chosen, describing what happened and telling why you consider this to be an essential part of the story.



Extension Activity



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words

Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and end of this section.



Beginning Picture:	Beginning:
Middle Picture	Middle:
Concluding Picture:	Concluding: