

# The Penderwicks



By

Jeanne Birdsall

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](http://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 Penderwicks* and is comprised of five activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- 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: the importance of family and family relationships; togetherness; courage; adjusting to new circumstances and surroundings; getting along with difficult people; and getting to know oneself.

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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms & antonyms
3. Identifying/creating *onomatopoeia*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Listing compound words
7. Identifying/creating similes
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Using content clues: analogies
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identifying / creating *alliteration*
14. Identifying anagrams.

### Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

### Plot Activities

1. Complete a 5 W's Chart
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify *cliffhanger*
4. Identify the climax of a novel
5. Write a synopsis
6. Predict an outcome
7. Complete a Sequence Chart

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Compare two characters
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Meeting a challenge/deadline

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper article
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write about personal feelings
7. Write a Book Review

### Art Activities

1. Design a cover for the novel
2. Create a collage.
3. Create a Storyboard.

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## Synopsis

***The Penderwicks*** is a delightful story of a family comprised of a widowed father, his four young daughters, and Hound. As the story begins the Penderwicks have rented a cottage for three weeks on the Arundel estate from the fearsome Mrs. Tifton. There the girls - Rosalind (the oldest), feisty Skye, dreamy Jane (the writer) and four year-old Batty - meet a cast of intriguing characters and experience a summer vacation they will not soon forget.

The girls strike up a friendship with Mrs. Tifton's son, Jeffrey , and discover that Mrs. Tifton (and her annoying fiancée, Dexter) plan on sending Jeffrey to a military academy in September. Despite the best efforts of the girls to help their friend out of this dilemma, they only seem to make matters worse. The situation comes to a dramatic conclusion when Jeffrey decides to run away from home - resulting in a final confrontation with his mother.

## Author Biography

*Jeanne Birdsall*

**Jeanne Birdsall**, growing up in the suburbs of Philadelphia, decided to become a writer when she was only ten years old - however it took her another thirty-one years to get started. In the in-between years Jeanne became a successful photographer whose work is featured in such prestigious sites as the Smithsonian and the Philadelphia Art Museum. Jeanne now lives with her husband in Northampton, Massachusetts. A



sequel to ***The Penderwicks***, ***The Penderwicks of Gardham Street*** was published in 2008. Another sequel, ***The Penderwicks at Point Mouette***, was published in 2011. Jeanne's picture-book debut was ***Flora's Very Windy Day*** (2010).



# The Penderwicks



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 1



### Before you read the chapter:

The Penderwick family is comprised of a father and his four daughters (ages four, ten, eleven and twelve). Using your imagination, think of one good thing about being the oldest girl in such a family - and one disadvantage. What would be one good thing about being the youngest - and one bad thing?

Oldest +	
-	
Youngest +	
-	



### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence. [Be careful, some words may be appropriate for more than one sentence - try to pick the best fit.]

concentrate	devour	botany	apologetic	terrace
pavilion	fetch	reluctant	flora	imitate

1. Joanna was very \_\_\_\_\_ to climb down the face of the steep cliff.
2. After bumping into the elderly man, Rosalind was most \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is a branch of biology which deals with plant life.
4. You get a lovely view of the countryside from the bedroom \_\_\_\_\_.
5. You will do much better in your school work if you learn to \_\_\_\_\_ in class.
6. My father has gone to the corner store to \_\_\_\_\_ a newspaper.
7. If you \_\_\_\_\_ the principal and he finds out, he will be very angry.
8. The \_\_\_\_\_ featured in Miss Kimball's garden is most unusual.
9. When it began to rain the children all took shelter in the park's \_\_\_\_\_.
10. After three days on his camping trip, Jackson will \_\_\_\_\_ any food put before him.

# Questions



1. Until the reader gets to know the four Penderwick girls, their identities can be quite confusing. To help get you started, complete the chart below. The *characteristic* should be something distinguishing about each girl's appearance or personality. Put a **star** beside the sister you think will be the main character.

Penderwick Girl	Age	Characteristic	Hair Color	Color of Eyes
Batty				
Rosalind				
Skye				
Jane				

2. The **setting** of a story includes not only where but when the story takes place. What is the setting of the story at the conclusion of Chapter One?


3. Where was the girls' mother, Mrs. Penderwick? How do you know this?


4. When the Penderwicks realized they were lost, what helpful suggestion did Rosalind make?


5. List two things which Jane's stories had in common.

1.	
2.	

6. What three pieces of helpful information did the tomato man give to the Penderwicks about Mrs. Tifton?


7. According to Rosalind's best friend, Anna, you could always tell a lot about people by their \_\_\_\_\_.

8. A **cliffhanger** is a literary device used by authors (often at the end of a chapter) which leaves the reader in suspense. Describe how the author uses Jane to create a cliffhanger at the end of this chapter.


## Language Activities

**A. PERSONIFICATION** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. We find an example of this in Chapter 1: ... *a huge mansion crouching in the middle of formal gardens*.

Why do you think personification is a popular literary device used by many authors?


Create your own example of personification.


If you come across another example of personification later in the novel, come back to this question and record it below.


**B. Cape Cod** is the *usual* vacation spot for the Penderwick family. Using resources in your school library or the Internet, research this famous locale.



Prepare an information card on Cape Cod which includes at least one picture (can be downloaded and printed out from the Internet or drawn) and four interesting facts. The purpose of your information card is to attract vacationers to this popular spot.

**C.** The author, Jeanne Birdsall, enjoys using a variety of literary devices in this novel. One such device is **onomatopoeia**. An example is “oomph” - the sound made by Batty as she struggles with her car seat. Define **onomatopoeia**, and use your imagination to think of one more example of this device.

Definition	
Example	

**D.** There are some words which can act as nouns or verbs, depending on their use in the sentence. Use your imagination and write sentences to illustrate how these words from Chapter One can be used as both a noun and a verb.

**GLARE**

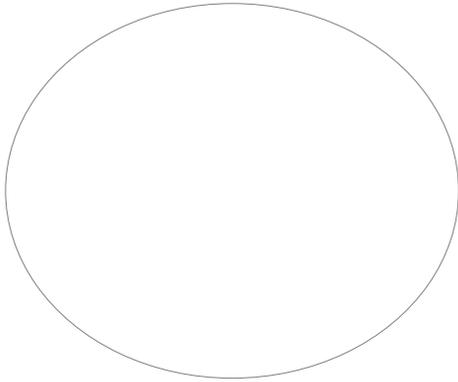
Noun	
Verb	

**SAW**

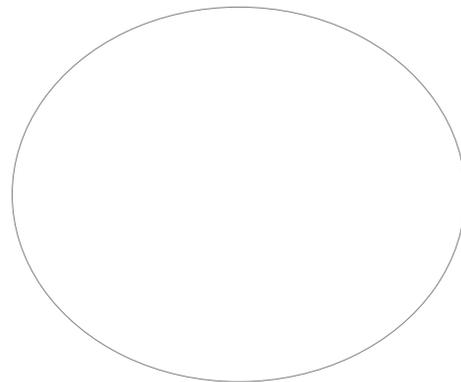
Noun	
Verb	

## E. 5 Ws and an H.

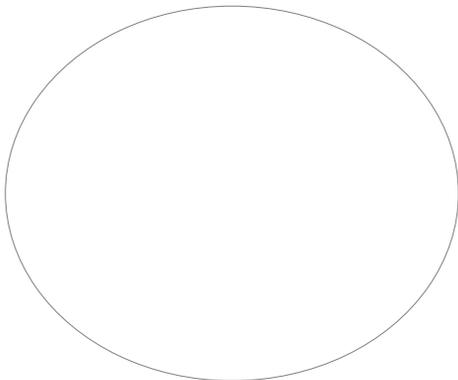
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



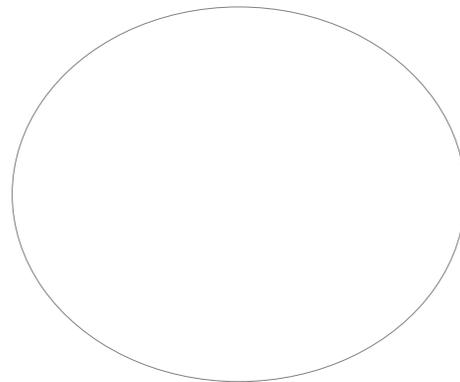
**WHO?**



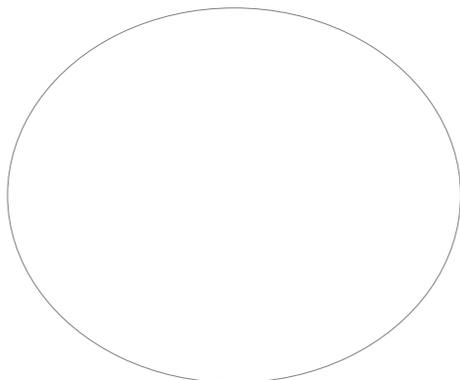
**WHAT?**



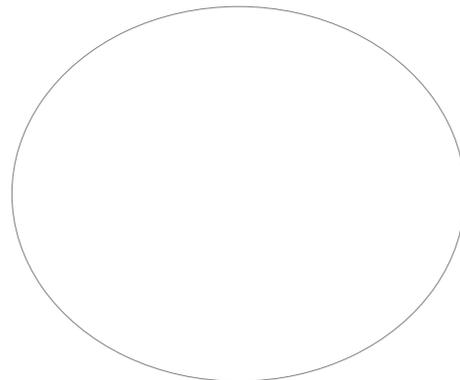
**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**



**WHY?**



**HOW?**

## F. Quintet

Unlike **quintuplet** (a set of five children born to the same mother at one birth), a **quintet** is a five-line verse that tells a story. The quintet has a syllable pattern and has the wonderful ability of bringing a visual image to life for the reader.

Here is the structure of the quintet:

### A Creative Title

Line 1 – tells **when** ~ and has 3 syllables

Line 2 – tells **where** ~ and has 5 syllables

Line 3 – tells **what** ~ and has 7 syllables

Line 4 – describes **activity** ~ and has 9 syllables

Line 5 – contains a relevant **thought** ~ and has 3 syllables

### An Example!

Here is an example of a Quintet take from the poem, *Jack and Jill*.

#### Jack and Jill

*Dinner time,  
Up a hill they went,  
To fetch a pail of water,  
Then Jack and Jill tumbled down the hill,  
Poor old Jack.*

Now try your hand at writing a quintet which contains some of the important details from this section of the novel.


## Extension Activity



### 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. [You may wish to postpone the completion of this assignment until you have read further in the novel.]



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events of your favourite scene from the novel thus far. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6