

The Phantom Tollbooth



By

Norton Juster

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 two chapters of **The Phantom Tollbooth** and is comprised of five of the following different 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 the written word and education, wisdom, properly using what one learns.

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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 *foreshadowing*.
7. Identify *singular/plural*
8. Identify *anagrams*
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identify *personification*

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. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Chart
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Create an Information Card
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

For Milo, everything's a bore. When a tollbooth mysteriously appears in his room, he drives through only because he's got nothing better to do. But on the other side, things seem different. Milo visits the Island of Conclusions (you get there by jumping), learns about time from a ticking watchdog named Tock, and even embarks on a quest to rescue Rhyme and Reason! Somewhere along the way, Milo realizes something astonishing. Life is far from dull. In fact, it's exciting beyond his wildest dreams (The publisher)

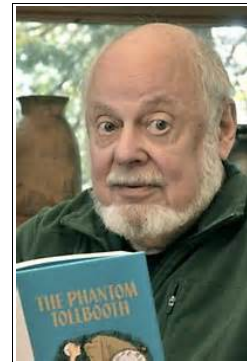
A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found online at such sites as the following: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Phantom_Tollbooth

Author Biography

Norton Juster

Norton Juster was an architect and planner and the author of a number of highly acclaimed children's books, including ***The Dot and the Line***, which was made into an Academy Award-winning film. He collaborated with Sheldon Harnick on the libretto for an opera based on ***The Phantom Tollbooth***. This musical adaptation, with a score by Arnold Black, premiered in 1995 and has been performed in schools and theatres nationwide.

[Biography courtesy of the publisher]



The Phantom Tollbooth



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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”. The protagonist of *The Phantom Tollbooth* is Milo a young boy who goes through some rather fantastic adventures as this story unfolds. 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 especially interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

dejected	cartographer	conciliatory	procrastinate	wistful
effusive	surmise	monotonous	lethargy	unethical

1. After receiving an apology from Carol, Henrietta was in a _____ mood.
2. I think it is just _____ thinking to believe she will ever admit she was wrong.
3. After stuffing so many envelopes, Sam felt a feeling of _____ fill him.
4. His praise was so _____ that we all thought he wasn't being sincere.
5. "Please do not _____," Mother urged him, "Or you may never start."
6. A _____ is perhaps better known as a *map-maker*.
7. Defeat always leaves me feeling _____ and alone.
8. Cheating on your income tax returns is very _____.
9. He was able to _____ from our excuses that we didn't want the job.
10. Jonathan did not know that a summer job planting trees would be so _____.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** for most of Chapter One?

2. Why was Milo so unhappy?

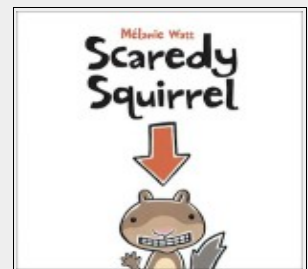
3. What items were in the mysterious package that Milo found?

1 genuine -	1 -
3 -	1 -
Assorted -	

4. Describe **how** Milo decided where he would go on the map. Where did he decide to go?

Good to Know - The Laid-Back Lethargarians

Despite their laid-back way of looking at life, the **Lethargarians** are still very interesting characters. The Lethargarians would appear to have derived their name from the word *lethargic*, which means *tired* or *sleepy*. Here's something you may want to check out regarding their "busy schedule". Take a look at the picture book **Scaredy Squirrel** (it may be in your school library) and have a look at his daily schedule - do you note any similarities?



5. What strange thing happened when Milo drove past the tollbooth?

6. The first sign that Milo encountered on his journey was one that welcomed him to _____.

7. The first person that Milo meets on his journey is the Whether Man. Use the word **whether** in a sentence to show its meaning.

8. Because Milo wasn't paying attention to where he was going, he ended up in the _____, where nothing ever _____, and nothing ever _____. Here he met the _____.

9. The Lethargarians claimed that they never thought. How do you know from the story that this wasn't true?

10. What advice did the dog give Milo?

Language Activities



A. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here's an example from Chapter Two: *“Help you! You must help yourself,” the dog replied.*

Describe how the dog is personified in this example.

Create your own example of personification.

B. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's one such example: from Chapter Two “. . . than what the weather will be. ”



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

A racing car approaching the finish line.	
A leaf falling from a tree.	

C. Foreshadowing is defined as *a warning or indication of a future event*. Can you find an example of foreshadowing in the paragraphs immediately following Milo’s encounter with the Whether Man?

D. Cinquain Poems

A Cinquain poem has five lines and most often does not rhyme. Write two Cinquain poems describing two of the characters from *The Phantom Tollbooth* using what you know about them from this novel. With your teacher's permission you may wish to collaborate with a colleague in the creation of these poems.

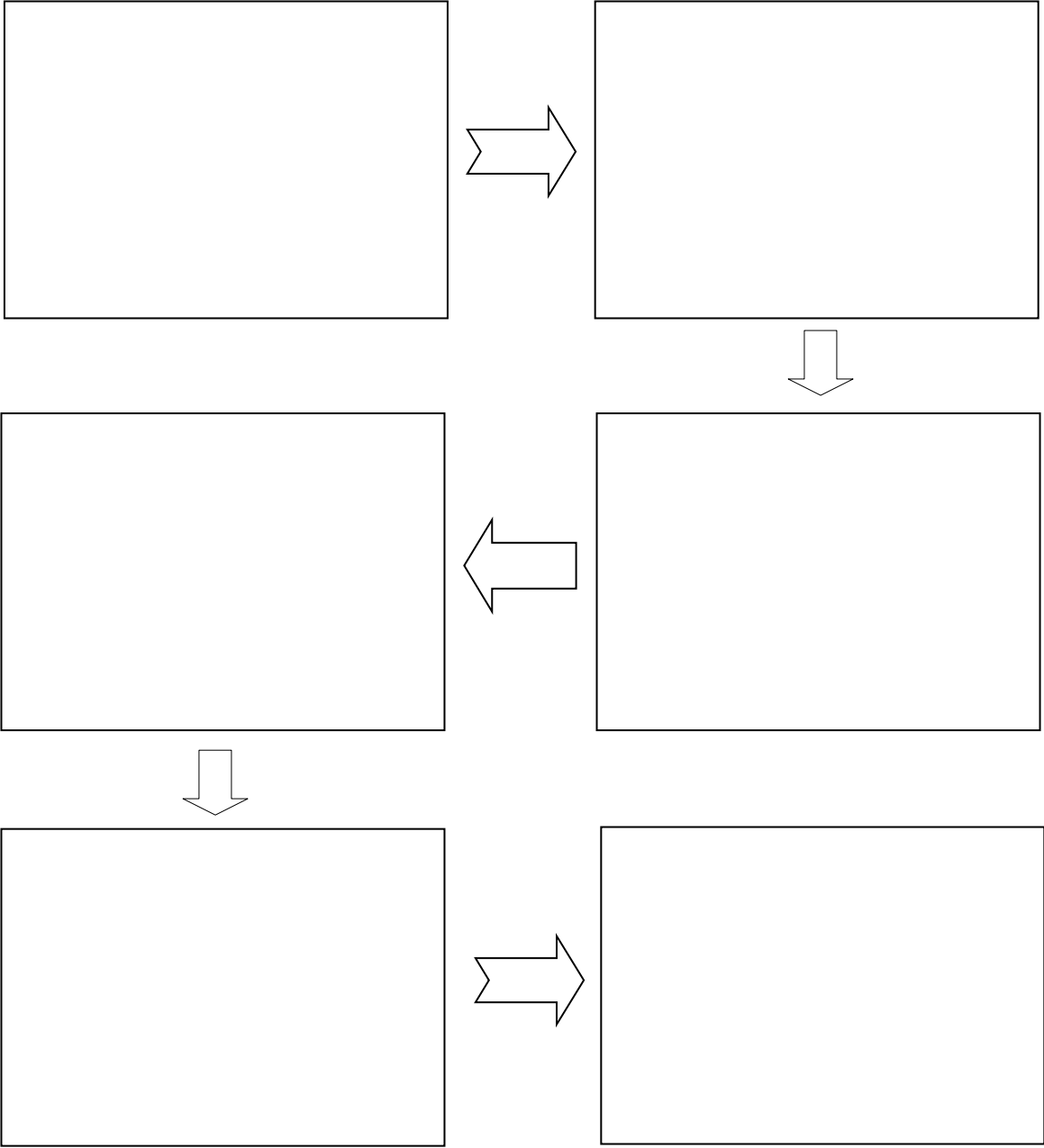
<p>Line 1 is one word. Line 2 is two words. Line 3 is three words. Line 4 is four words. Line five is one word.</p>	<p><i>Santa Saint Nick Long white beard Christmas Eve present-giver Jolly</i></p>
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Character 1 _____

Character 2 _____

E. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in these chapters. 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

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 Chapters 1 and 2. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6