

# The Princess Bride



By

William Goldman

A Novel Study  
by Nat and Joel Reed

# The Princess Bride

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## Table of Contents

|                              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| Suggestions and Expectations | 3  |
| List of Skills               | 4  |
| Synopsis / Author Biography  | 5  |
| Student Checklist            | 6  |
| Reproducible Student Booklet | 7  |
| Answer Key                   | 68 |

**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

**Note:** This unit covers Chapters 1 – 8 of the novel (where the climax of the novel occurs). It does not include activities or questions for **Buttercup's Baby: An Explanation OR Buttercup's Baby.**

This unit can be used in a variety of ways and is comprised of the following activities:

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 keep 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 true love, marriage, revenge, society and class, the sometimes unfairness of life, courage.

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### List of Skills

#### Vocabulary Development

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

#### 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
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. Complete a KWS Chart
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write about personal feelings
7. Write a book review

#### 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

A tale of true love and high adventure, pirates, princesses, giants, miracles, fencing, and a frightening assortment of wild beasts — ***The Princess Bride*** is a modern storytelling classic.

As Florin and Guilder teeter on the verge of war, the reluctant Princess Buttercup is devastated by the loss of her true love, kidnapped by a mercenary and his henchmen, rescued by a pirate, forced to marry Prince Humperdinck, and rescued once again by the very crew who absconded with her in the first place. In the course of this dazzling adventure, she'll meet Vizzini—the criminal philosopher who'll do anything for a bag of gold; Fezzik—the gentle giant; Inigo—the Spaniard whose steel thirsts for revenge; and Count Rugen—the evil mastermind behind it all. Foiling all their plans and jumping into their stories is Westley, Princess Buttercup's one true love and a very good friend of a very dangerous pirate. [Courtesy of the Publisher]

## Author Biography William Goldman

William Goldman (born August 12, 1931, Highland Park, Illinois, U.S.—died November 16, 2018, New York, New York) was an American novelist, screenwriter, and playwright noted for his versatility, his works ranging from witty comedies to dramas, as well as for his talent for writing dialogue. He received Academy Awards for writing the screenplays for ***Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*** as well as ***All the President's Men***. As well, Goldman wrote several acclaimed novels including the modern classic, ***The Princess Bride***. (Adapted from Britannica.com)



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## Student Checklist

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

| Assignment | Grade/Level | Comments |
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Name:

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## Chapters 1-4



### Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist in this section of the novel is Buttercup, a young farm girl, who although beautiful, cares little about her appearance or what others think of her. These seem to be unusual traits for a protagonist in such a story. What character traits are more common in the protagonists of most novels? Why did you select these particular traits?

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### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

|             |           |           |           |               |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| sublimity   | antiquity | arbitrary | confidant | supplication  |
| infatuation | undaunted | decreed   | satiric   | sophisticated |

1. The Count was Prince Humperdinck's only \_\_\_\_\_.
2. She could chide herself for her silly \_\_\_\_\_ with a dullard.
3. The Prince \_\_\_\_\_ that there were to be five levels.
4. It was the man, whose name is lost to \_\_\_\_\_, who mentioned it to the Count.
5. Guilder was, in fact, the far more \_\_\_\_\_ country.
6. All this was in a \_\_\_\_\_ vein since Morgenstern hated royalty.
7. She married soon thereafter, to the man who had accused her of \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Westley's hands were tight together in almost a gesture of \_\_\_\_\_.
9. "Gracious, but it isn't easy being tidy." So \_\_\_\_\_, she set to work.
10. The king had a certain \_\_\_\_\_ quality that bothered many of the citizens.

## Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story for most of Chapter One.

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2. The topic of beauty dominates the first few pages of this novel. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross once wrote, *People are like stained - glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.* How would you describe true beauty?

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3. What excuse did the Count give for why they stopped at Buttercup's farm?

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4. Describe the event that finally caused Buttercup to realize her true feelings for Westley.

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5. Record one remark from this section that you found especially humorous.

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6. What was Westley's immediate response to Buttercup's "I love you" statement?

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7. Describe Westley's long-term plans. What was Buttercup's response to this?

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8. How did they know that Westley was dead and not simply captured?

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9. After reading the title to Chapter 2, who might you have expected the chapter to be about? Why?

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10. Describe your impression of Prince Humperdinck.

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11. What ruined Princess Noreena's chances for marrying Humperdinck?

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12. How did Humperdinck finally persuade Buttercup to marry him?

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## Language Activities



### A. 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 our novel.

| Word    | Anagram | Clue                              |
|---------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| ulcer   |         | Willfully causing pain in others. |
| lived   |         | Beelzebub.                        |
| horse   |         | Seaside.                          |
| present |         | Feel remorse.                     |
| slime   |         | Fruits.                           |
| finest  |         | Overrun; spread through.          |
| credit  |         | Undeviating.                      |

### B. Cliffhanger

Chapter One contains an important literary device called a **cliffhanger**. A cliffhanger usually occurs at the end of a chapter when the author leaves the reader in suspense. How is this true in Chapter One? What do you make of this mysterious conclusion?



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**C. Personification** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here's an example taken from Chapter 3: *Most of the candles lost their flames and toppled.*

Describe how the candles are personified in this example.

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Create your own example of personification.

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If you come across another example of personification, return to this question and enter it below.

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**D. A simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter 2 is: *The orangutan fell like a rag doll.*



What is being compared in this example?

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

a) an exciting swordfight

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b) a dragon

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## E. The Diamante Poem.

There are many forms of poetry available to the aspiring poet other than the rhyming poem. One of the forms of poetry that is the most fun to tackle is the **Diamante** poem.



### The Diamante Poem

The diamante poem has a distinct form and a distinct shape. Directions for creating one is as follows:

**Line 1** - Noun or subject – one word.

**Line 2** – Two adjectives that describe Line 1.

**Line 3** – Three *'ing* words that describe line 1 (i.e. *playing*).

**Line 4** – Four nouns – the first two are connected with Line 1, the last two are connected with Line 7.

**Line 5** – Three *'ing* words that describe Line 7.

**Line 6** – Two adjectives that describe Line 7.

**Line 7** – One noun synonym for the subject.

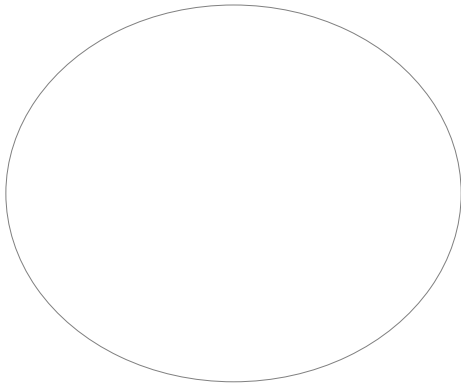
Following the above instructions, try your hand at writing a diamante poem using an idea, event or character from the first four chapters as your inspiration.

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

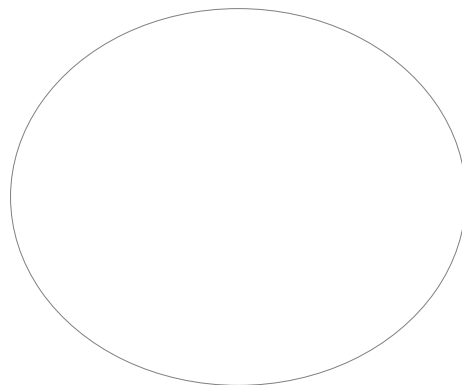
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## F. 5 Ws and an H.

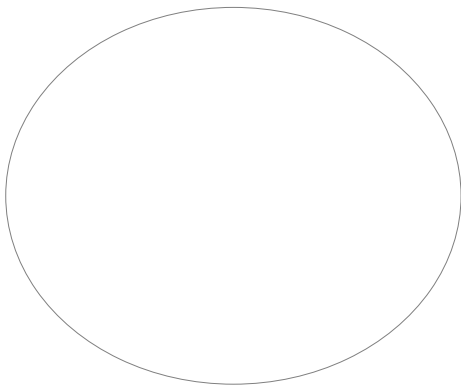
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



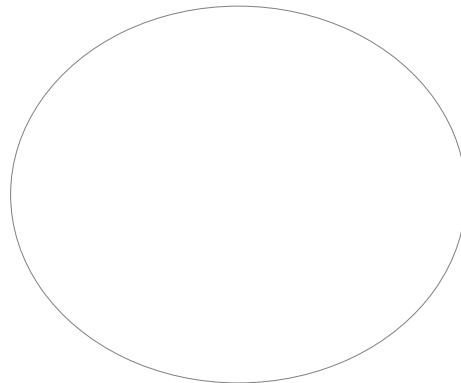
**WHO?**



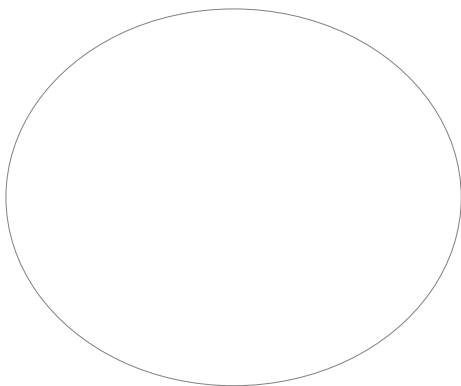
**WHAT?**



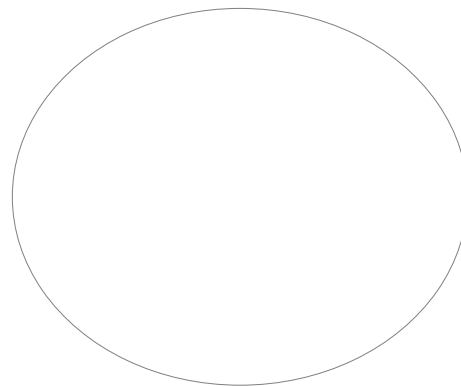
**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**



**WHY?**

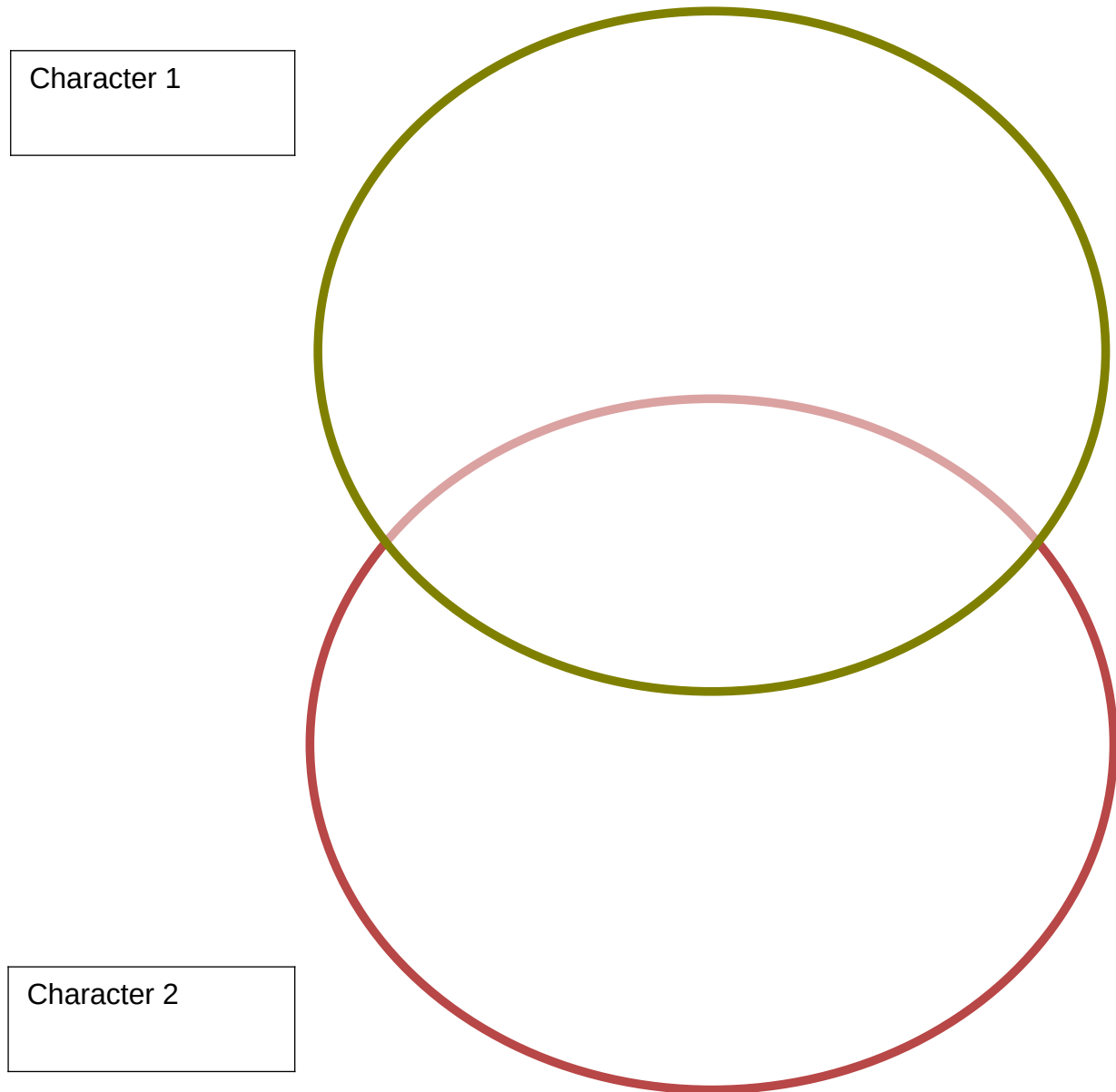


**HOW?**

## G. What a Character.

So far in our novel you have been introduced to several interesting characters. These people share a number of similarities and many more differences.

Your task is to choose two of the characters featured in ***The Princess Bride***. Then using the Venn Diagram below please record characteristics which mark your two choices – consider both physical and personality traits. Similar traits should be placed in the intersecting part of the circles. Be sure to record the names of the two characters in the boxes provided.



## 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 this section our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |