

The Witch of Blackbird Pond



By

Elizabeth G. Speare

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 one or two chapters of *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* and is comprised of five of the following different 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 courage and perseverance, pioneer life in North America, witches, justice and judgment, loyalty and trust, the Puritans and Quakers, tolerance for people who are different, moving to a new place.

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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 *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*

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. Create an Information Card
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Create a comic strip
6. Design a wanted poster

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Synopsis

Orphaned Kit Tyler knows, as she gazes for the first time at the cold, bleak shores of Connecticut Colony, that her new home will never be like the shimmering Caribbean islands she left behind. In her relatives' stern Puritan community, she feels like a tropical bird that has flown to the wrong part of the world, a bird that is now caged and lonely. The only place where Kit feels completely free is in the meadows, where she enjoys the company of the old Quaker woman known as the Witch of Blackbird Pond, and on occasion, her young sailor friend, Nat. But when Kit's friendship with the 'witch' is discovered, Kit is faced with suspicion, fear and anger. She herself is accused of witchcraft. (Courtesy of 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_Witch_of_Blackbird_Pond

Author Biography

Elizabeth George Speare

Elizabeth George Speare (November 21, 1908 – November 15, 1994) was an American writer of children's books, best known for historical novels including two Newbery Medal winners (*The Witch of Blackbird Pond* and *The Sign of the Beaver*). She has been called one of America's 100 most popular writers for children and some of her work has become mandatory reading in many schools throughout the nation. Indeed, because her books have sold so well she is also cited as one of the Educational Paperback Association's top 100 authors.



Speare is one of six writers with two Newbery Medals recognizing the year's "most distinguished contribution to American literature for children". In 1989 she received the Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal for her contributions to children's literature.

Elizabeth Speare was married and had two children. She and her family lived in Connecticut. (Adapted from Wikipedia)

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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

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Name: _____

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

Our novel tells the tale of a young woman who makes a very daring trip from Barbados to Connecticut hundreds of years ago. Describe briefly the most memorable trip you have ever taken (or would like to take).



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

disembark	impulse	instinctive	defiant
solemn	humiliation	respectable	deliberation

1. After practicing the guitar chords for some time, Kevin found that his fingers seemed to have an _____ feel for where to go next.
2. As soon as the family entered the funeral home they became very quiet and _____.
3. The jury's _____ lasted for only twenty-five minutes.
4. As soon as she saw the beautiful bracelet she had a tremendous _____ to buy it.
5. Now that Joash has a job, he will appear much more _____ in the eyes of others.
6. The ship had no sooner docked than the passengers began to _____.
7. Jessica gave her father a _____ look and then stormed from the room.
8. Kit's _____ would have been greater if Nat had seen her fall.

Questions



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

2. Investigate: using resources in your school library or on the Internet research two facts about a **brigantine**.

1.
2.

3. The Dolphin was returning from a voyage to Barbados with a load of molasses and sugar. What had been traded for these goods?

4. Their first stop was the town of _____, but their final destination was _____ which was up the _____ River.

5. Why did Kit wish to go ashore at Saybrook even though that wasn't her destination?

6. How would you have described Kit's upbringing back on Barbados? Do you think this prepared her well for her life in Connecticut? Explain why or why not.

7. Describe the incident involving the little girl's dolly. What does this tell you about Kit's character (personality)?

8. Why was John Holbrook going to Wethersfield?

9. What was Kit's attitude regarding the Puritans?

10. Why did Goodwife Cruff think that Kit must be a witch?

11. As the chapter comes to an end what did both Nat and John do/say to protect Kit?

Good to Know

The **Puritans** were a reform group of English Protestants in the 16th and 17th centuries that sought to purify the Church of England. They were regarded by many as extremists in their religious beliefs. Facing persecution from the established church in England, many fled to America. They were known for their spirit of moral and religious sincerity that reached to every part of their lives. Their efforts toward transforming society led both to civil war in England and to the founding of the colonies in America as working models of the Puritan way of life.



Language Activity



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.

Word	Anagram	Clue
ship		Parts of the body.
breaths		You see them at the beach.
sail		Doesn't feel well.
first		Cracks or splits.
room		A tract of open land.
others		Fired a gun once again.
smile		Green-colored fruits.

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 One "... especially when the ship stood right on end..."



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

A ship in a storm	
A sword fight	
Your own example	

C. Place the following words from this chapter in **alphabetical order**.

flattered	1.
first	2.
forecastle	3.
gray	4.
four	5.
forth	6.
Francis	7.
end	8.
fins	9.
forever	10.

D. KWS Chart ~ Barbados

Kit's home is on the lovely island called **Barbados**, a sovereign country in the Lesser Antilles. It is a very small country, about 21 miles long (34 km) and 14 miles wide (23 km). Kit certainly speaks highly of her beautiful island home, and misses many things about her past life there. When Nat refers to it as *a heathen island*, Kit states that it is as civilized as England. But what do you know about this tiny nation? In each of the columns below add helpful details which would assist someone who is researching the island of Barbados.

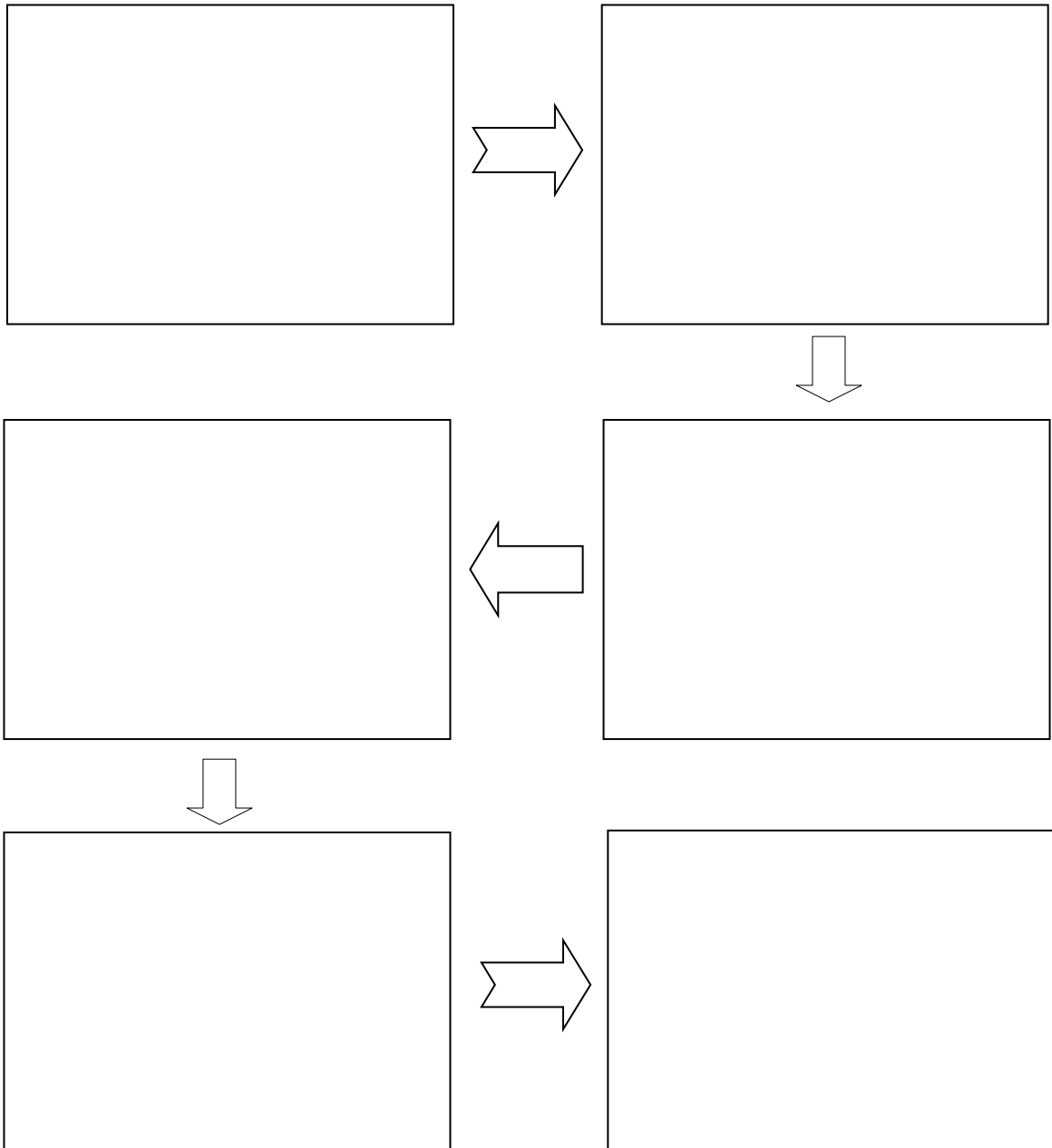


Topic	
-------	--

What I Know	What I Want To Learn	Possible Sources

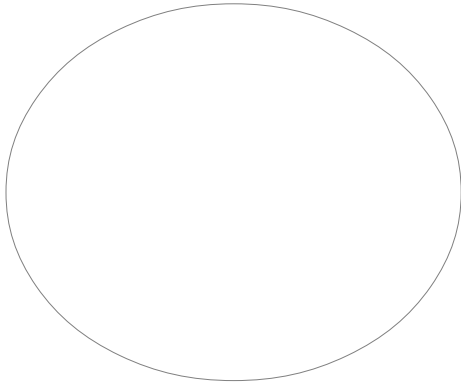
E. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in this chapter. 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.

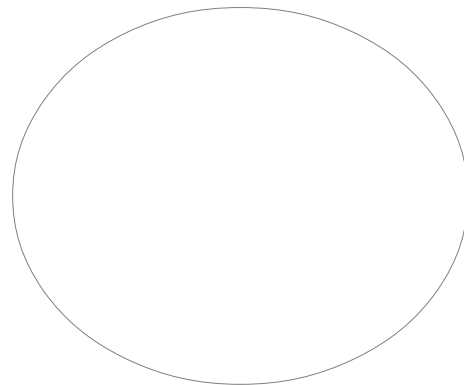


F. 5 Ws and an H.

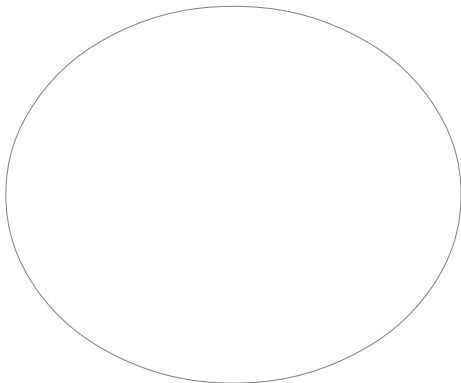
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



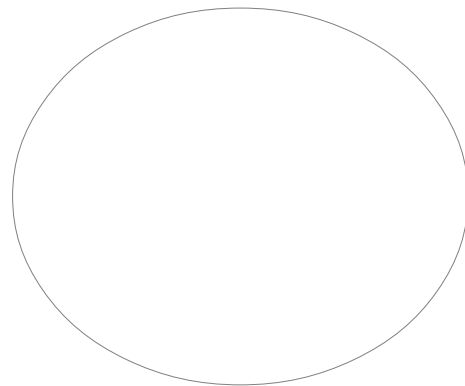
WHO?



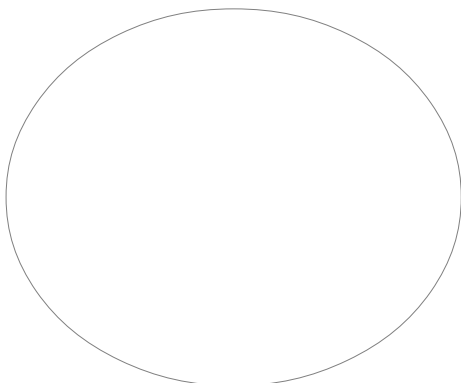
WHAT?



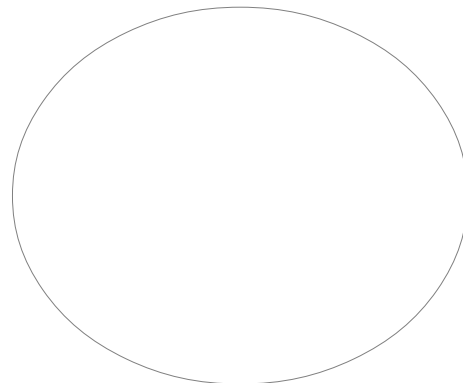
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activities



A. 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 of *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6

B. Poems Kit May Have Enjoyed.

Even back in Kit's time, Americans enjoyed the writings of many talented poets. These included such people as **John Dryden**, who wrote the famous poem, *Happy the Man* which begins -

*Happy the man, and happy he alone,
He who can call today his own:
He who, secure within, can say,
Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today.*



There are many forms of poetry available to the aspiring poet other than the rhyming poem for which John Dryden was so adept at creating. One of the forms of poetry that is the most fun to tackle in 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 Chapter One of the novel as your inspiration.

Title: _____
