

Third Grade Angels



By

Jerry Spinelli

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 or three chapters of *Third Grade Angels* 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 family and friendship, peer pressure, personal growth.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive word/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. Identify/create *similes*
10. Identify root words

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.

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 about 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. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

George (aka “Suds”) Morton has heard that in third grade you're supposed to be an *angel* . . . but what does that mean, exactly?

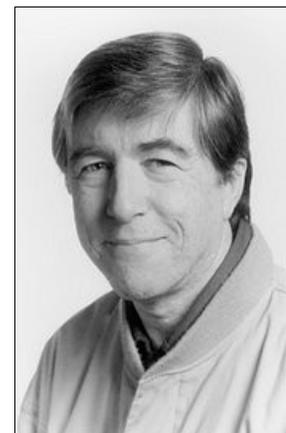
It means that his teacher, Mrs. Simms, will hold a competition every week to see which student deserves to be awarded “the halo” - which student is best-behaved, kindest to others, and, in short, perfect. Suds is determined to be the first to earn the halo, but being good all the time can be pretty stressful. Does he have to be good even outside of school? Does he have to be nice to his annoying little sister? And if Mrs. Simms doesn't actually see him doing a good deed, does it even count? [The Publisher]

Author Biography

Jerry Spinelli

Born in 1941 in Norristown, Pennsylvania, Jerry Spinelli discovered his calling in 1957 when his high school football team won a big game. The town celebrated, his fellow students raced through the streets, but Jerry sneaked back home and marked the occasion in his own way. He wrote a poem. Later the town newspaper published it. “And,” he reports, “I’ve been a writer ever since.”

Married to Eileen Spinelli, who is also a writer, Jerry was for many years an editor for the Chilton Company. Now a full-time writer, he lives in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.



Jerry Spinelli's immensely popular books include *Space Station Seventh Grade*, *Jason and Marceline, Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush?*, and *Maniac Magee*, which has won more than fifteen state children's book awards in addition to the Newbery Medal.

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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 main character of *Third Grade Angels* is eight-year-old Suds who is really looking forward to grade three and being one of Mrs. Simms' *Third Grade Angels*. 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** in a story?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

disagree	observant	impression	personally
perfection	obedient	congratulations	suspense

1. We all offered Brad our _____ after he won the high jump event.
2. Mandi took it _____ when Coach Mundy chose me to be captain.
3. “I must _____ with you on that point,” Roger stated.
4. I think Mrs. Fedora expects nothing but _____ from her students.
5. I didn't get a very good _____ of your uncle when we met.
6. A scientist must be very _____ when doing experiments.
7. Don't keep us in _____, tell us who won!
8. My little baby sister is a very _____ child.

Questions



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

2. Suds didn't like being a first-grade baby because _____,
and he didn't like being a second grade cat because _____.

3. Several students describe what they think an angel is. What do you think an angel is?

4. According to Mrs. Simms, what did the students have to do in order to be good third-grade angels?

5. Look over the list of suggestions the students gave to Mrs. Simms about how they could win their halo then think of two more good suggestions that they missed.

1.	
2.	

6. Why do you think Mrs. Simms didn't smile when Suds blurted out, "Even Gerald Willis"?

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 the first two chapters of *Third Grade Angels*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
rats		It twinkles.
grade		Was very angry.
board		Wide.
seat		Chows down.
kids		Slip.
stared		Swap.
life		A carpenter's tool

Now find two additional words from the first two chapters which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.

Word	Anagram	Clue

B. Suds Seemed to Enjoy This Quatrain Poem.

Chapter One begins with a quatrain. The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. Here's the quatrain from Chapter 1.

First grade babies!
Second grade cats!
Third grade angels!
Fourth grade rats!



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - B - C - B**. In this poem the last words in lines two and four (cats and rats) rhyme. Other rhyming schemes include: AABB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. It would be great if your poem had something to do with the events of the first two chapters of this novel.

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem on a subject of your choice. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____

C. Exaggeration

Exaggeration in a literary device defined as *a statement that represents something as better or worse than it really is*. Do you think this statement from Chapter One is an example of exaggeration: *I knew right away that we were the best class she ever had?* Why or why not?

Think of an exaggerated way of describing the following:

The smell of a skunk.	
A loud burp.	

D. What Do You Think?

What do you think of Mrs. Simms halo contest? Would you like it if your teacher started the same contest in your class? Why or why not?

Did you notice that Suds' school only has names for the classes up to grade four? What if you were asked to provide names for the other grades? What would they be? (You may wish to talk over possible answers with a classmate or two.)

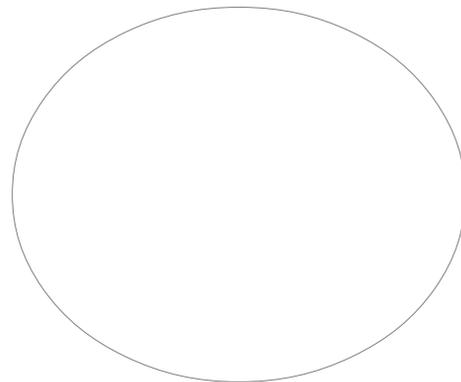
First grade babies!	Fifth grade _____!
Second grade cats!	Sixth grade _____!
Third grade angels!	Seventh grade _____!
Fourth grade rats!	Eighth grade _____!

E. 5 Ws and an H.

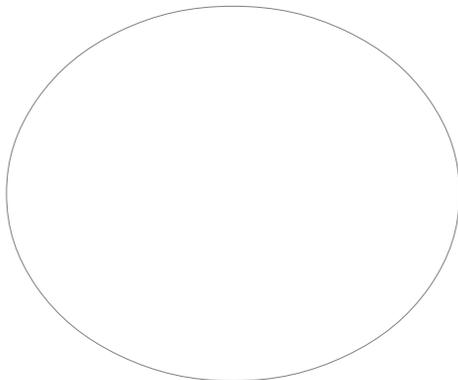
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



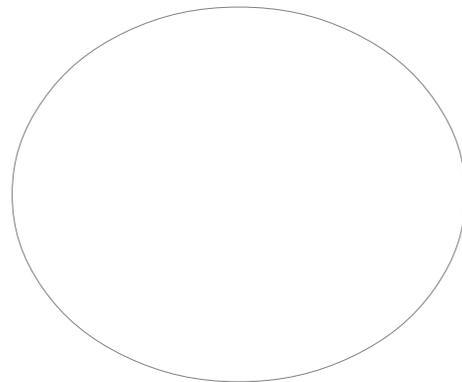
WHO?



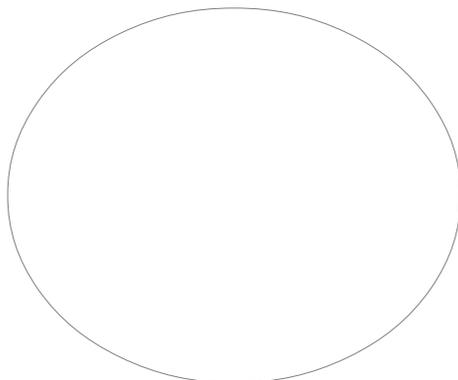
WHAT?



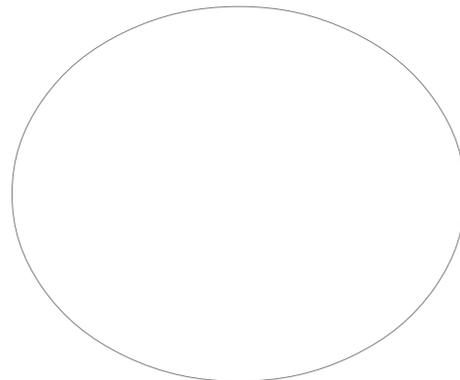
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

F. My 02¢ About This Section.

What I Liked Best:

I Didn't Like The Part:

I Didn't Like It Because:

G. Caviar Words

The author of this novel is noted for his use of elegant, tasteful words. Someone once stated that some words have the sound of **caviar** (rich and elegant) and others are more are common (**peanut butter** words). With a colleague come up with 6 examples of each type of word. You may use “ any chapter of the novel to find these words.



Caviar Words	Peanut Butter Words

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 the first two chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6