

# Greystone Secrets: The Strangers



By

Margaret Peterson Haddix

A Novel Study  
by Nat and Joel Reed

# The Strangers

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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 five or six chapters of *The Strangers* and is comprised of five 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 alternate worlds, science fiction, personal identity, importance of family, loyalty, personal growth, perseverance, accepting responsibilities, coming of age, and dealing with loss.

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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. Identify *personification*
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. Identify/create *similes*
10. Identification of 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.
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. 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. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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## Synopsis

The Greystone kids thought they knew. Chess has always been the protector over his younger siblings, Emma loves math, and Finn does what Finn does best—acting silly and being adored. They’ve been a happy family, just the three of them and their mom.

But everything changes when reports of three kidnapped children reach the Greystone kids, and they’re shocked by the startling similarities between themselves and these complete strangers. The other kids share their same first and middle names. They’re the same ages. They even have identical birthdays. Who, exactly, are these strangers?

Before Chess, Emma, and Finn can question their mom about it, she takes off on a sudden work trip and leaves them in the care of Ms. Morales and her daughter, Natalie. But puzzling clues left behind lead to complex codes, hidden rooms, and a dangerous secret that will turn their world upside down. [Courtesy of the Publishers.]

## Author Biography

Margaret Peterson Haddix

Haddix grew up on a farm about halfway between two small towns: Washington Court House, Ohio, and Sabina, Ohio. Her family was predominantly farmers and she grew up in a family of voracious readers. She graduated from Miami University in [Oxford, Ohio](#) with degrees in English/Journalism, English/Creative writing, and History. Haddix chose to pursue fiction writing after her husband, Doug, became a news reporter, because she did not want to be his employee. Her previous work as a reporter inspired her to write fiction. Haddix experienced a long period of having her writing rejected by publishers before



her first two books were accepted in 1995 and 1996. Her first book was *Running Out of Time*. Haddix has written more than 40 books for children and teenagers. Her books have made the *New York Times Best Seller* lists and they have won the International Reading Association's Children's Book Award. [Courtesy of the author's website]



# Greystone Secrets

## The Strangers



*By Margaret Peterson Haddix*

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

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## Chapters 1-6



### Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. *The Strangers* actually has three protagonists, siblings, Finn, Emma and Chess. 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 interesting **protagonist**? (One that's hard to forget.)




### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

prediction	overwhelming	indisputably	navigate
coincidence	symptom	complicated	probability

1. It took him a long time to \_\_\_\_\_ the cornfield maze.
2. Jasmine was delighted to discover that an \_\_\_\_\_ number of her classmates supported her for class president.
3. “It's just a \_\_\_\_\_ that she and Gerry arrived at the same time,” John said.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ of that happening is very slim.
5. Kelly made a \_\_\_\_\_ that tomorrow would be a snow day.
6. Lamont is \_\_\_\_\_ the tallest student in our class.
7. Is a sore throat a \_\_\_\_\_ of influenza?
8. Some people find that Monopoly is a very \_\_\_\_\_ game to play.

# Questions



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


2. Think of three appropriate adjectives that would describe each of the three Greystone kids.

Kids	Adjective #1	Adjective #2	Adjective #3
Finn			
Emma			
Chase			

3. What did their mother do for a living?


4. The parents of the Greystone kids were divorced.      True or False

5. Who was “the quiet Greystone”? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Describe the unusual discovery their mother made on the Internet?


7. What new trick had Emma discovered which helped her survive school?


8. How would you describe their mother's reaction to her discovery?


9. Describe how math failed Emma in Chapter Five?


10. How was their mom's reassurance that they would never have to worry about being kidnapped less reassuring than it might have been?


11. Why did Chess think it was unusual that his mother was going down to the Boring Room at 3:15 a.m.?


12. A **cliffhanger** is defined as *an ending to an episode of a serial drama or book that leaves the audience in suspense*. Describe how Chapter 6 ends with a cliffhanger.


# 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 six chapters of *The Strangers*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
grade		Showed uncontrolled anger.
weird		More broad.
smile		Green fruits.
aimed		Mass communication.
staring		Rankings.
names		Long hair on the neck of horses.
acted		A trainee at a military school.

**B.** A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter 3 is: *The way she held her hand was like a nightmare.*

What is being compared in this example?

--	--

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

a) The startled cry of a frightened child

b) a boat ride on a rough lake

## C. A Quatrain Poem Celebrating Tea.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain was written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis. It is called, ***When They Kidnapped Pete***.

*They kidnapped Pete the other day,  
His parents offered then to pay,  
Five years supply of ginger ale,  
To wet their whistles when they're in jail.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - A - B - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBA, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the first six chapters of our novel.

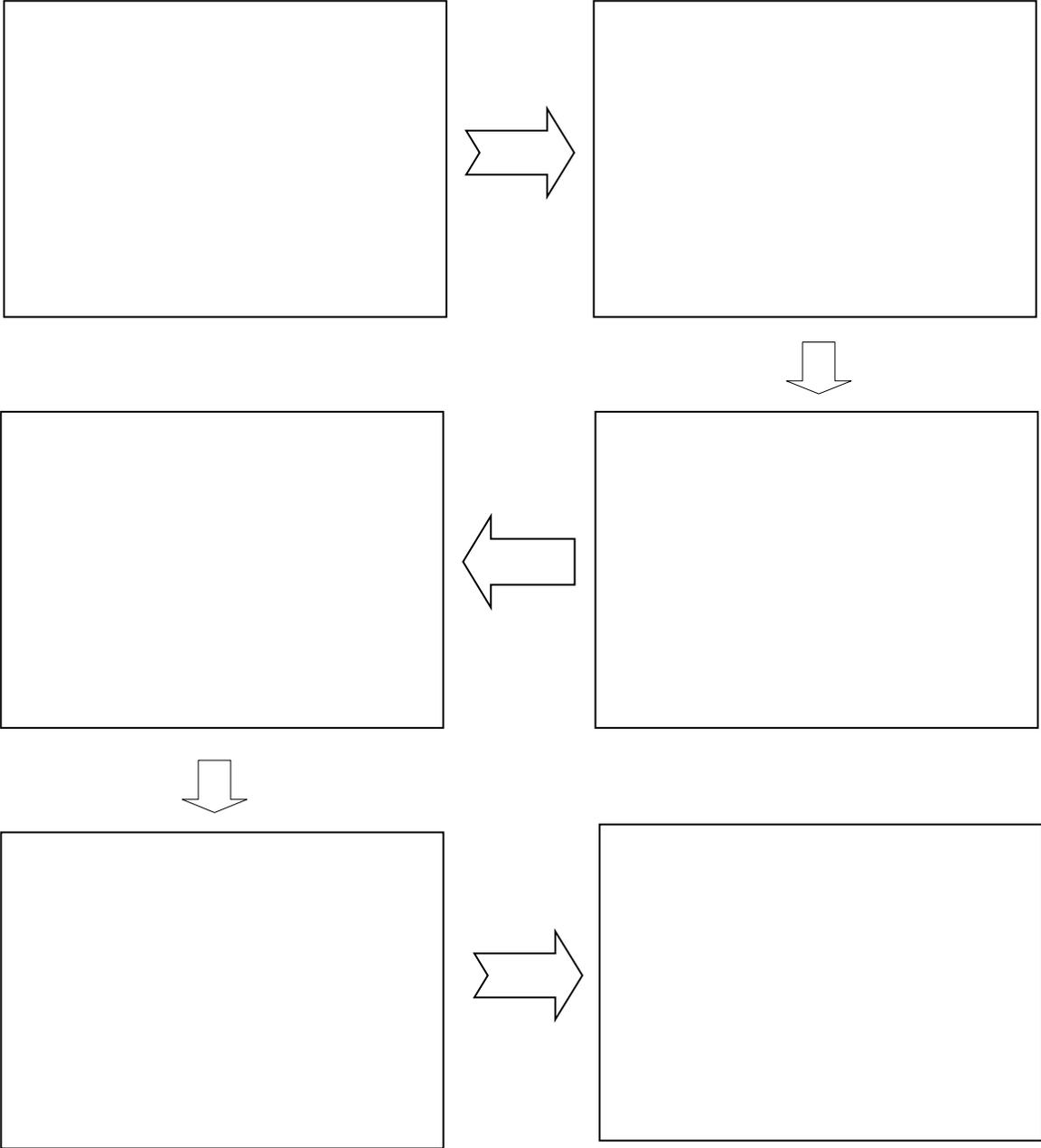
### The Quatrain Poem

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

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


# D. 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.



## E. 5 Ws and an H.

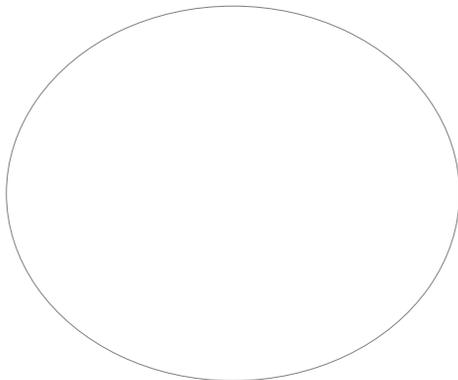
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



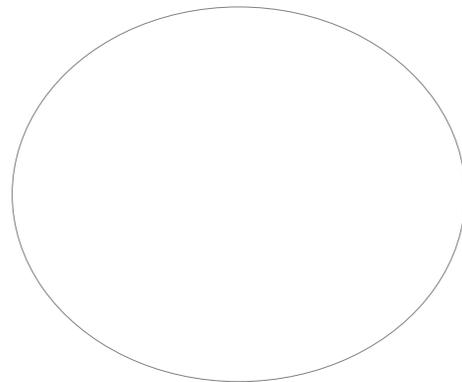
**WHO?**



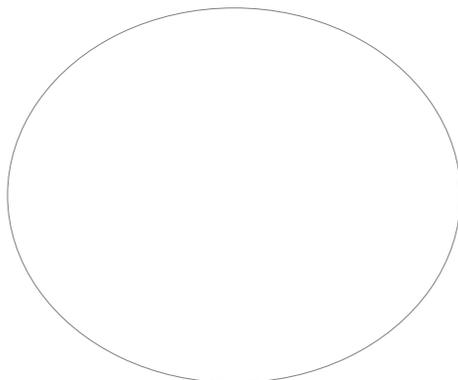
**WHAT?**



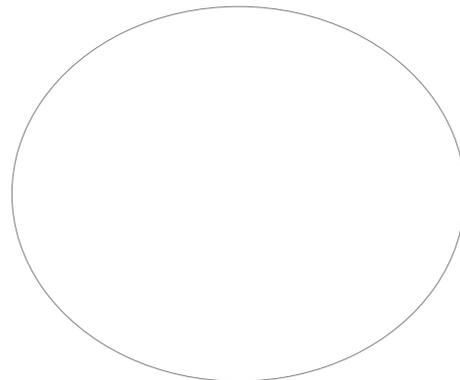
**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**



**WHY?**



**HOW?**

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



1	2
3	4
5	6