

Harriet The Spy



By

Louise Fitzhugh

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 86 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one or two chapters of *Harriet the Spy* and is comprised of these 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 and **topics** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include honesty, responsibility and respect, the need for love and belonging, the importance of friends and family, perseverance and personal growth, overcoming difficulty.

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

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. Identify the climax of the novel
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design a brochure

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Synopsis

Harriet M. Welsch is a spy. She's staked out a spy route, and writes down everything about everyone she sees - including her classmates and her best friends - in her notebook.

Then Harriet loses track of her notebook, and it ends up in the wrong hands. Before Harriet can stop them, her friends have read the always truthful, sometimes awful things she's written about each of them. Will Harriet find a way to put her life and her friendships back together? [The Publisher]

For a more complete synopsis of this novel please go to the website
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harriet the Spy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harriet_the_Spy)

Author Biography

Louise Fitzhugh

Louise was born in Memphis, Tennessee on Oct. 5, 1928. She graduated from Barnard College in 1950 and spent most of her adult life in New York City. When her first novel, *Harriet the Spy*, was published in 1964, it was the subject of some controversy because so many characters were far from admirable. It has since become a classic. *Harriet the Spy* was awarded a New York Times Outstanding Book Award in 1964—and has sold 4 million copies since publication. Two characters from the book, Beth Ellen and Sport, were featured in two of Fitzhugh's later books, *The Long Secret* and *Sport*. Fitzhugh illustrated many of her books and had works exhibited in several New York City art galleries. She died in 1974 of a brain aneurysm.



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Name: _____

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *Harriet the Spy* is a very unusual eleven-year-old girl, Harriet Welsch, who experiences many incredible adventures as the 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.

contented	dedicated	signified	sedately	sternly
relentless	exasperation	petrified	plaintively	dubious

1. Jordan calmly got up and walked _____ to the front of the room.
2. Most of the gang members were _____ about Marshall’s motives.
3. Jake felt a strong sense of _____ after missing the garbage can.
4. She had such a _____ look on her face that we hated to disturb her.
5. The bell _____ an end to the game.
6. The police detective’s pursuit of the fugitive was _____.
7. The principal looked _____ down at the two little mischief-makers.
8. I am absolutely _____ of bats and spiders.
9. The little lost lamb cried _____ for its mother.
10. Most Olympic athletes are _____ to their sports.

Questions



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

2. There are at least three clues as to the fact that Harriet's family is quite rich. What are two clues which lead us to believe the Welsch family is quite well-to-do?

1	
2	

3. The author loves to use **exaggeration** as a way of making her descriptions more interesting. An example from this chapter is: *She just had yards and yards of tweed which enveloped her like a lot of discarded blankets.* When you encounter another example of exaggeration, return to this question and enter the example below.

4. What would you say Harriet is obsessed with?

5. What was Harriet's impression of Mrs. Golly?

6. Why was the visit with Mrs. Golly so unusual for Harriet?

7. Ole Golly is a big fan of afternoon tea, quoting Henry James, “There are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea.” Complete the following sentence filling in the activity you think would be most agreeable to do as a pleasant pastime:

There are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to

8. Ole Golly advises Sport to try everything at least once. Think of three examples of activities that a person should not try – even once. You may wish to brainstorm ideas with a colleague before responding.

1	
2	
3	

9. What do you think it was that made Ole Golly sad near the end of the chapter? What does the fact that this was the first time that Harriet had ever seen Ole Golly sad tell us about her nurse’s personality?

Good to Know

Harriet’s house is described as a three-story **brownstone**. Brownstone is a type of house popular in the city of New York. The stone refers to a type of sandstone quarried from nearby New Jersey. The Manhattan neighborhood of the Upper West Side retains many brownstones. New York City brownstones are highly desired, and usually cost several million dollars to purchase.



Language Activities



A. New York, New York

The actor Robert De Niro described New York City as “the most exciting city in the world”. New York City is the most populous city in the United States. Its metropolitan area includes about 20 million people. Located by one of the world’s natural harbors the city is comprised of five famous boroughs: The Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island. The city is also home to a myriad number of fantastic attractions that will keep the average visitor occupied and mesmerized for days and days.



Using resources in your school library or on the Internet do a further investigation of one of these New York attractions (or one approved by your teacher): **Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, Staten Island Ferry, Central Park, Brooklyn Bridge, Yankee Stadium, Ellis Island Immigration Museum, Museum of Modern Art, Rockefeller Center, Grand Central Terminal**. Your investigation should uncover at least three fascinating facts about the landmark, as well as an appropriate picture.

B. Choose ten words from this chapter with two or more **syllables**. Indicate the syllables by drawing a line between each syllable. **Example:** good / bye.

C. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. We find an example of this in Chapter One : “She just had yards and yards of tweed which enveloped her like a lot of discarded blankets...” In this example the yards and yards of tweed is compared to a lot of discarded blankets. Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your imagination:

a) the sound of an old truck making its way up a steep hill

b) the smell of a wet dog

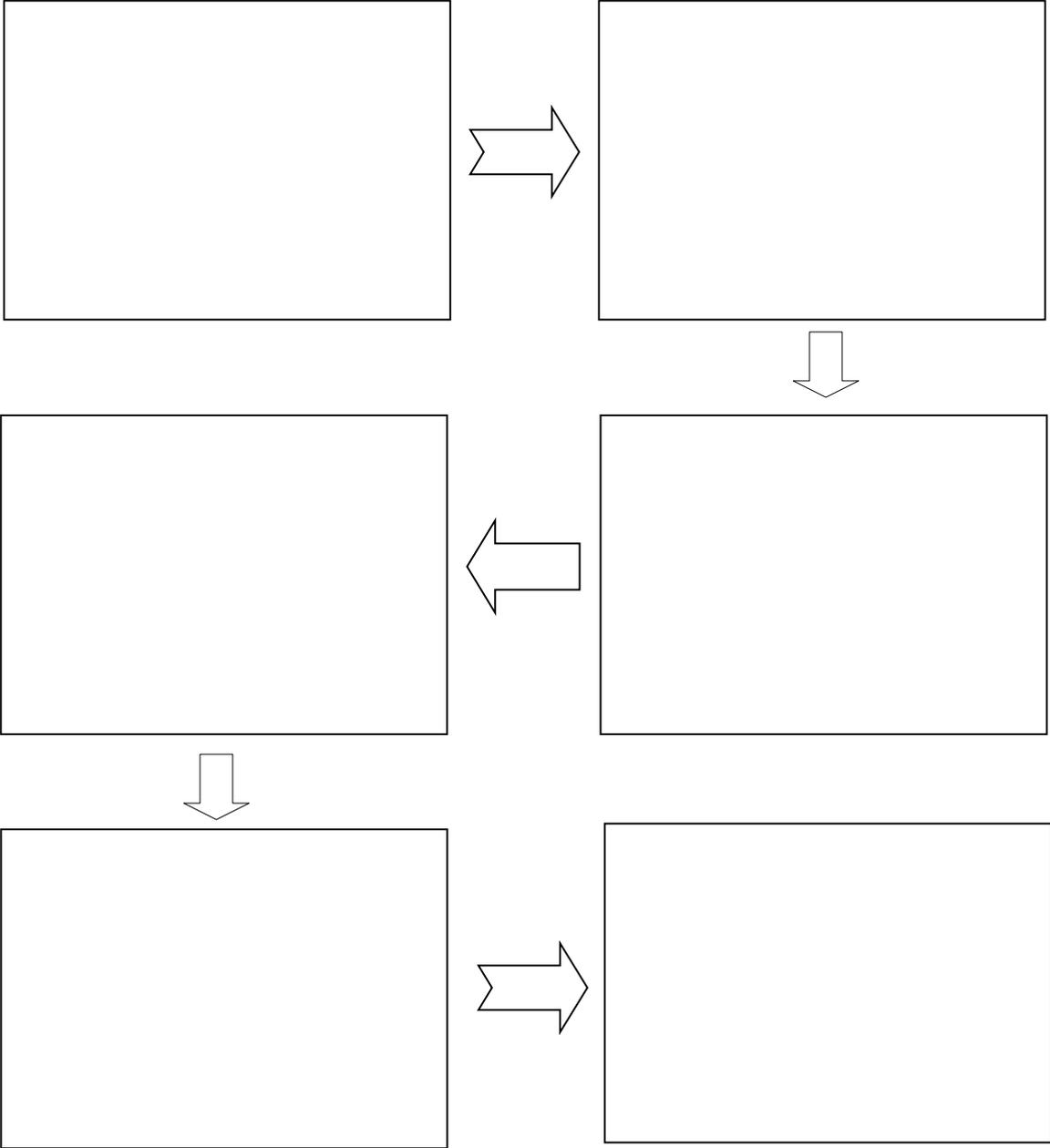
c) your own example

Bonus

Keep your eyes open for another example of a **simile**. When you find one come back to this question and enter it on the lines below.

D. 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.



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 chapter of *Harriet the Spy*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6