

Homeless Bird



By

Gloria Whelan

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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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	78

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 chapter of *Homeless Bird* 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** (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 perseverance and determination, honor and loyalty, family and friendship, personal independence and growth and realizing a dream.

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

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Synopsis

Koly's parents have arranged a marriage for their only daughter and now, like many girls her age in India, she will leave home forever. She yearns to flee, but tradition dictates that it's too late to turn back. On her wedding day, Koly's fate is sealed.

Caught up in a current of tradition that threatens to sweep her toward a terrifying fate, Koly finds herself cast out, lost in a strange and cruel world. But sometimes, courage and hope can be more powerful than tradition, and fate can be taken into one's hands. [Summary courtesy of the publisher]

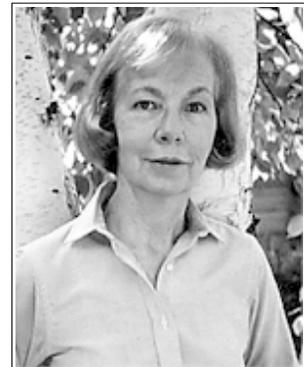
A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found online at such sites as the following: http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homeless_Bird

Author Biography

Gloria Whelan

Gloria was born 1923 in Detroit. She read many books as a girl, sometimes dictated stories that her baby sitter transcribed, and wrote poetry. She later edited the high school newspaper. Gloria earned a bachelor's degree in 1945 and a Master of Social Work in 1948 at the University of Michigan. In 1948 she and neurologist Joseph L. Whelan were married. They had two children and lived in the Detroit area where she was employed in social work. During that time she also wrote short stories and poetry. Whelan was almost fifty-five when Putnam's published *A Clearing in the Forest* in July 1978. In nearly thirty-five years since then, she has written fifty-two books of fiction for children and young adults. Many have been set in rural northern Michigan but her settings include Africa, China, Vietnam, India, Czarist and communist Russia.

Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria_Whelan



Homeless Bird



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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 main character of *Homeless Bird* is Koly a young woman from India who is about to be married to someone she has never even met. 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.

dowry	muslin	auspicious	courteous
conscious	linger	dishonor	astrologer

1. Surely you will not _____ the bride and groom by wearing cut-off shorts to the wedding?
2. My aunt went to an _____ to find out when she should take her holidays.
3. The _____ provided by the woman's family was worth a lot of money.
4. We are hoping that the guests will not _____ for long after the game.
5. The Quarterback fumbled the ball on the first play, an _____ start to his career.
6. The gown was made from the finest _____ and was dyed a rich blue color.
7. He was barely _____ when we pulled him from the freezing river.
8. Jackson was such a _____ little boy that even Aunt Rachel was impressed.

What on earth does that mean?

Many of the words in this chapter may be particular to the country of India. Using a dictionary or the Internet, match each of the words in the left hand column with its correct meaning on the right.



1	ghee
2	sari
3	rupee
4	cumin
5	namaskar
6	kautuka
7	sass
8	charpoy
9	choli
10	baap

A	A light bedstead.
B	A yellow woolen bridal thread
C	A deeply spiritual greeting.
D	Dress worn by a bride.
E	Father.
F	Butter.
G	A female's garment.
H	Mother-in-law.
I	An Indian currency.
J	A flowering plant (seeds used in cooking).

Questions



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

2. What reason did Koly's family offer her as to why she couldn't attend school?

3. What did Koly's mother and grandmother enjoy doing?

4. When Koly was married where would she have to make her home? How do you think you would find such an arrangement?

5. What particular activity did Koly undertake at this time to relieve her worries?

6. What was your impression of the groom's family during the negotiation of the dowry?

7. Who determined the date of Koly's wedding?

--

8. What did it seem was Mr. Mehta's chief concern when they first met him?

--

9. What do you think Koly's father meant when he said of the Mehtas, *nothing here is auspicious*?

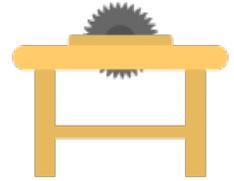
10. What concerned Koly's parents about the bridegroom? Do you think they have a legitimate concern? Explain your reasoning.

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 chapter of *Homeless Bird*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
rapped		A well-dressed man is said to be ___.
pages		Stares at with an open mouth.
rings		Smiles.
tears		Assesses.
parents		Catches in a snare.
rushes		A seat-director.
deserve		Lopped off.

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

Word	Anagram	Clue

B. A Poem Koly Might Enjoy on Her Wedding Day

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 is actually the start of a much longer poem called **Your Hand** which is found on the poetrysoup.com website.

*I come looking to take your hand
We can no longer stay apart
This day I have forever planned
You have captured all of my heart*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A – B – A – B**. Other rhyming schemes include: AABB, 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 chapter of our 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: _____

Good to Know ~ Hindu Castes

The **caste system in India** is a system of social standing which separates communities into groups called *jātis* or *castes*. There are four main groups in the caste system: **Brahmins**, **Kshatriyas**, **Vaishyas** and **Shudras**. Certain groups, now known as *Dalits*, were excluded from the system altogether, ostracized as *untouchables*.



C. Exaggeration

Exaggeration in a literary device defined as *a statement that represents something as better or worse than it really is*. We find an example of this in Chapter One: *I was afraid my ears would stretch to the size of an elephant's*.



Think of an exaggerated way of describing the following:

A dog's breath	
A thunderstorm.	
A fast runner.	
A turkey flying.	

D. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is: *Was my marriage to be like the buying of a sack of yams in the marketplace?*

What is being compared in this example?

--	--

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

a) a parrot's call

--

b) the roar of the crowd at a football game

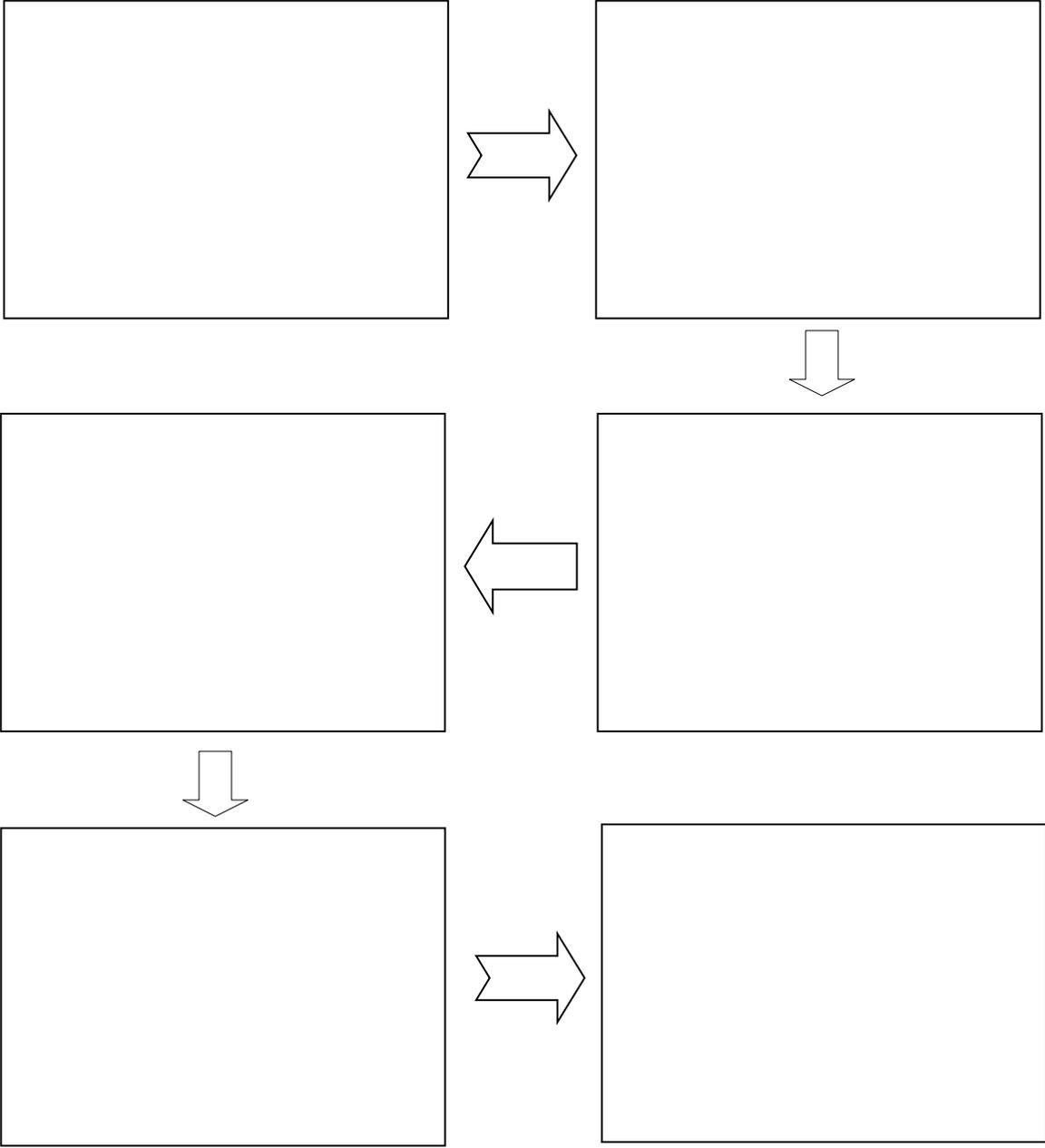
--

c) a beautiful sunset

--

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. Your Favorite Genre Of Books

Homeless Bird is usually classified as a novel for Young Readers. What genre of books do you enjoy the most? (i.e. mystery, humor, biography, romance, fantasy, historical fiction, science fiction, poetry, etc.) Why do you especially enjoy this type of book?



G. Many words in the English language have more than one meaning. An example from this section is the word *well*. *Well* can mean *to feel fine* or *a place to get water*. For each of the examples below, create a sentence showing that you understand the meaning of each.

Word	Meaning
rest	
rest	
play	
play	
fast	
fast	
watch	
watch	

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



1	2
3	4
5	6