

Mara, Daughter of the Nile



By

Eloise Jarvis McGraw

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 *Mara, Daughter of the Nile* 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 and **topics** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include ancient Egypt, perseverance and personal growth, courage, risk-taking and sacrifice, supporting a cause worth dying for, justice.

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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/antagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Complete a KWS Chart
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

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design an Information Card

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Synopsis

A compelling story of adventure, romance, and intrigue, set in ancient Egypt.

Mara is a proud and beautiful slave girl who yearns for freedom. In order to gain it, she finds herself playing the dangerous role of double spy for two arch enemies – each of whom supports a contender for the throne of Egypt.

Against her will, Mara finds herself falling in love with one of her masters, the noble Sheftu, and she starts to believe in his plans of restoring Thutmose III to the throne. But just when Mara is ready to offer Sheftu her help and her heart, her duplicity is discovered, and a battle ensues in which both Mara's life and the fate of Egypt is at stake.

[Summary courtesy of the publisher]

“Dangerous espionage, an unusual love story, and richly drawn background make this a book to capture quick and lasting interest.” (*Horn Book*)

Author Biography Eloise Jarvis McGraw

Eloise Jarvis McGraw was an American author of children's books and young adult novels. She won the Newbery Honor three times in three different decades, for her novels *Moccasin Trail* (1952), *The Golden Goblet* (1962), and *The Moorchild* (1997).

A Really Weird Summer (1977) won an Edgar Award for Best Juvenile Mystery from the Mystery Writers of America.

McGraw had a very strong interest in history, and among the many books she wrote for children are *Greensleeves*, *The Seventeenth Swap*, and *Mara, Daughter of the Nile*. A Lewis Carroll Shelf Award was given to *Moccasin Trail* in 1963. She

also contributed to the Oz series started by L. Frank Baum;

working with her daughter, graphic artist and librarian Lauren Lynn McGraw, she wrote *Merry Go Round in Oz* (the last of the Oz books issued by Baum's publisher) and *The Forbidden Fountain of Oz*. (Courtesy of www.penguinrandomhouse.com)



Mara, Daughter of The Nile



By Eloise Jarvis McGraw

Name:

Mara, Daughter of the Nile

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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 *Mara, Daughter of the Nile* is a proud and beautiful slave girl who lived in ancient Egypt. 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 a memorable **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

contradict	luxurious	portentous	suave	obtrusive
sardonic	obscure	venomous	impudence	usurper

1. The appearance of the copperhead snake was a _____ omen.
2. It's quite likely that the rain will _____ his tracks.
3. Henry VII went down in history as a _____ to the throne of England.
4. “Don't you dare to _____ me,” the principal shouted angrily.
5. Clark Gable was a very _____ and debonair actor.
6. His _____ reply to the question really rankled the judges.
7. I think your actions have been most _____ and unhelpful.
8. The pharaoh lived a most _____ lifestyle.
9. The child's _____ caused the babysitter to call his parents.
10. Although a Black House spider is _____, its bite isn't usually lethal.

Questions



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

2. Match each name with the proper description:

1	Teta
2	Nekonkh
3	Zasha
4	Hatshepsut
5	Mara
6	Sheftu
7	Thutmose

A	A mysterious passenger.
B	Master of the household.
C	Half-brother to Egypt's regent.
D	The novel's protagonist.
E	A bossy slave.
F	A boat captain.
G	Her majesty

3. Why is Nekonkh anxious as the first chapter begins?

4. How does Sheftu manage to increase his anxiety even more.

5. Who does Sheftu claim to support as pharaoh? Do you believe he is on the level, or is he secretly a spy?

6. Why does Nekonkh feel that Hatshepsut is not a good ruler?

7. What was your first impression of Mara? What caused you to form this impression?

8. What did Teta catch Mara doing? Why was this objectionable to her?

9. Investigate: what is a *shentis*.

10. What does Mara long for? Considering her station in life, do you think such dreams are reasonable?

11. How does the chapter end as a *cliffhanger*?

Language Activities



A. Alliteration

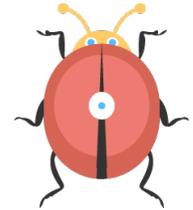
The author seems to enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. The following is an example from Chapter One, ...*he straightened, shoved his square-cut black wig askew...*



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

A mummy's tomb.	
An Egyptian pyramid.	
From your imagination	

B. A simile is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. We find an example of this in Chapter One: ... *the luxurious barge of some noble moved over the sparkling water like a gigantic water bug...*



In this example what two things are being compared?

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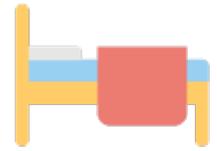
Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your imagination:

a) The sound of a hungry crocodile.

b) your own example

C. 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 **PAN** can also form the word **NAP**. 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.

Each of the words in the left-hand column are found in this section of our novel.

Word	Anagram	Clue
instance		People of bygone history.
reason		A married Spanish lady.
wrist		Citations; summons.
treason		A politician.
desert		No longer fatigued.
cradle		Dressed once more.
blessed		Without a place to lay one's head.

D. What Do You Know About Crocodiles?

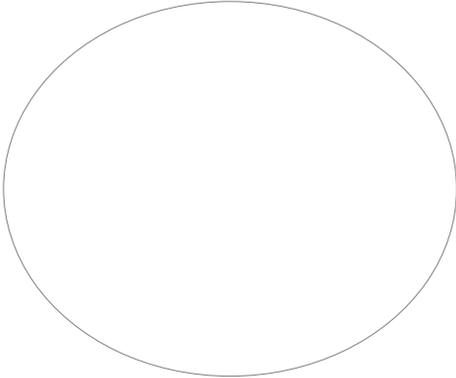
Crocodiles living in the Nile River are the subject of conversation quite often in this novel. What, though, do you know about this fearsome reptile? Did you know, for instance, that crocodiles don't chew their food? They tear apart flesh and swallow large chunks of meat. They sometimes swallow stones to ensure faster grinding of the food in their stomach. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three fascinating facts about the crocodile and record this information below.



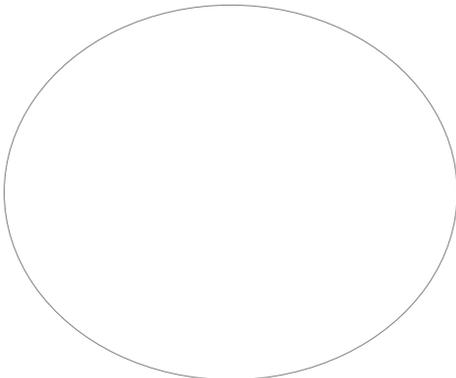
1	
2	
3	

E. 5 Ws and an H.

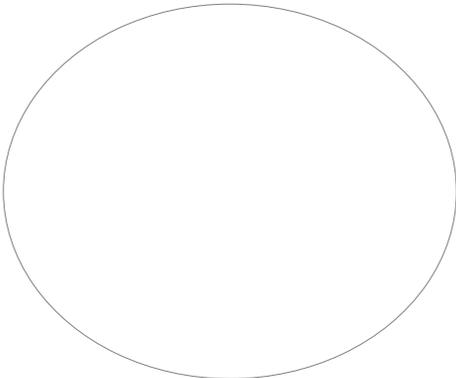
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



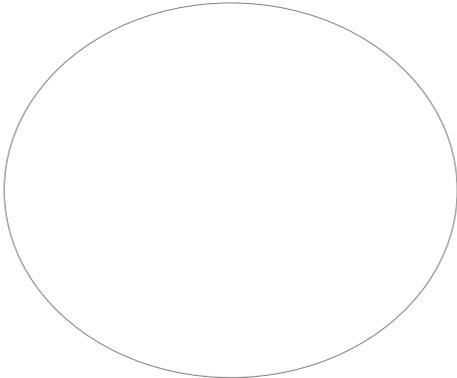
WHO?



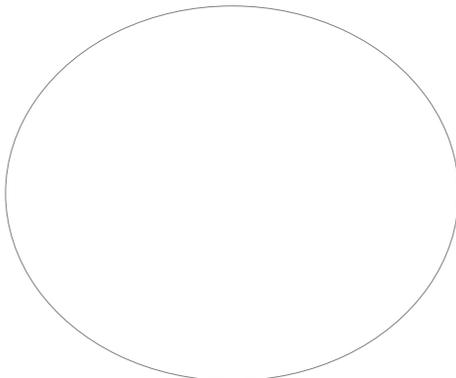
WHAT?



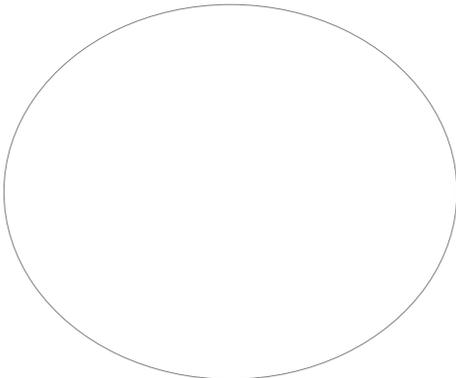
WHEN?



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

1	2
3	4
5	6