

Piecing Me Together



By
Renée Watson

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 six or seven chapters of *Piecing Me Together* and is comprised of five of the following different activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language Activities
5. Extension Activities

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.**

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. It is important, too, that students be encouraged to relate their own feelings and experiences in certain contexts, and describe their own interpretations of particular passages.

- Students can work on the activities at their own pace.
- Every activity need not be completed by all students.
- A **portfolio cover** is included (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) to keep a record of completed work.

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include racism, friendship, speaking up for oneself, personal growth, courage and persistence.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
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 *personification*.
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. Complete a Plot Outline for a Sequel
5. Identify the climax of the novel.

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 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

Jade believes she must get out of her poor neighborhood if she's ever going to succeed. Her mother tells her to take advantage of every opportunity that comes her way. And Jade has: every day she rides the bus away from her friends and to the private school where she feels like an outsider, but where she has plenty of opportunities. But some opportunities she doesn't really welcome, like an invitation to join Women to Women, a mentorship program for "at-risk" girls. Just because her mentor is black and graduated from the same high school doesn't mean she understands where Jade is coming from. She's tired of being singled out as someone who needs help, someone people want to fix. Jade wants to speak, to create, to express her joys and sorrows, her pain and her hope. Maybe there are some things she could show other women about understanding the world and finding ways to be real, to make a difference. [Courtesy of the Publisher]

Author Biography

Renée Watson

Renée Watson is the acclaimed author of many books for children and teens. Renée has worked as a writer in residence for over 20 years, teaching creative writing and theatre in community centers, and her articles on teaching and arts education have been published in various periodicals.

Renée has given readings and lectures at many renowned places, including the United Nations Headquarters and the Library of Congress. In 2015 she was honored with the STEAM award for her work in arts education by Inner City Foundation of New York, Inc. Renée's books include, *Betty Before X*, *This Side of Home*, *What Momma Left Me*, and *Harlem's Little Blackbird*. (Courtesy of The Publisher)



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Student Checklist

Student Name

Piecing Me Together



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Name:

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Chapters 1-6



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *Piecing Me Together* is Jade, who lives in a “poorer” section of the city but attends an exclusive high school on a scholarship.

It is very important for the main character of a story to be appealing in some way, and be able to hold the reader's interest. What is one book (or movie) that you have read or seen which features an unforgettable protagonist? What was it about this character that made him/her so memorable?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

embedded	morphed	exquisite	transition
deferred	improv	proactive	displacement

1. The pictures in my notebook _____ into something no one expected.
2. The orator decided to _____, rather than look at her notes.
3. The secret message was _____ into the main part of the text.
4. I decided to become more _____ about losing weight.
5. No one was surprised when Margarita _____ to her father when in public.
6. The _____ of so many refugees was a very heartless act.
7. The princess has _____ taste in fine jewelery.
8. The _____ to high school was smoother than expected for the grade eights.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story in Chapter Two?

2. What do you think Jade means in Chapter One when she writes, “I am learning to speak. To give myself a way out. A way in?”

3. Jade is about to begin her _____ year of high school.

4. Why is Jade so anxious about returning to St. Francis High School in September?

5. Do you think Jade's mom was right in forcing her to attend St Francis? Think of one reason to support her decision and one reason why it wasn't a good decision.

Good Decision.	
Not so much.	

6. Why was Jade excited to speak to Mrs. Parker?

7. What is Jade's mom referring to when she speaks of her *deferred dream*?

8. How does Josiah act when he's around his white friends? Why do you think he acts this way?

9. What clue do we have in Chapter Four that Portland is in Oregon and not Maine?

10. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, look up the Winterhawks' logo. Why would this logo be considered offensive by many people?

11. How might Mrs. Parker's attitude have seemed patronizing to Jade during their conversation?

12. How did York and Sacagawea have a form of freedom, but no real power?

Language Activities



A. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human.

The following is an example from Chapter Two: ... *I know all about Mom's promises. She does her best to make them, but they are fragile and break easily.*

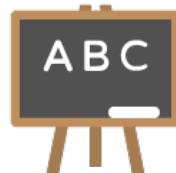


Describe how her mom's promises are personified in this passage.

Create your own example of personification.

As you continue to read through the novel be on the lookout for other examples of this literary device. If you should find one, come back to this question and enter it below.

B. Alliteration Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here is such an example from Chapter One: Mom makes Ms. Louise breakfast...



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

A bus leaving school.	
The northern lights.	
Your choice.	

C. Anagrams

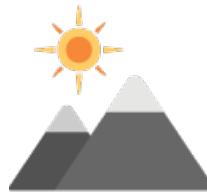
An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:

- 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 *Piecing Me Together*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
stories		Most red.
closer		Coal-tar disinfectant.
leader		Handy with cards.
grown		Hardly every correct.
tutor		A fish.
smile		Wet mud.
pages		Stares at with open mouth.

D. Cliffhanger

Chapter Four contains an important literary device called a **cliffhanger**. A cliffhanger usually occurs at the end of a chapter when the author leaves the reader in suspense. How is this true in Chapter Four? What does the author leave us wondering about at the end of this chapter?

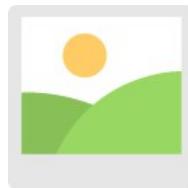


Extension Activity



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words

Use the following chart to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and end of the first six chapters.



Beginning Picture:	Beginning: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Middle Picture:	Middle: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Concluding Picture:	Concluding: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____