

# Surviving the Applewhites



By

Stephanie S. Tolan

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](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 three chapters of *Surviving the Applewhites* 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** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include the importance of family and community, acceptance, teamwork and determination, personal growth.

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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

Jake Semple is notorious. Rumor has it he burned down his old school and got kicked out of every school in his home state.

Only one place will take him in now, and that's a home school run by the Applewhites, a chaotic and hilarious family of artists. The only one who doesn't fit the Applewhite mold is E.D. - a smart, sensible girl who immediately clashes with the unruly Jake.

Jake thinks surviving this one will be a breeze... but is he really as tough or as *bad* as he seems? [Courtesy of the publisher]

## Author Biography Stephanie S. Tolan

Stephanie S. Tolan is the author of more than 25 books for young readers, including *Listen!* Which won the Christopher Award... Her *New York Times* bestselling novel *Surviving The Applewhites* received a Newbery Honor and was named a *Smithsonian Magazine* Notable Book for Children... Readers can revisit the eccentric Applewhite family in Tolan's newest novel, *Applewhites At Wit's End*.

Tolan lives on a little lake in a big woods in Charlotte, North Carolina, with her husband (Bob), two dogs (Coyote and Samantha), two fish, and plenty of outdoor creatures. You can visit her online at [www.stephanietolan.com](http://www.stephanietolan.com)



[Biography courtesy of the publisher]



# Surviving The Applewhites



*By Stephanie S. Tolan*

Name:

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## Chapters 1-3



### Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. One of the two main characters of *Surviving the Applewhites* is Jake Semple, a boy who has already been kicked out of every school in his home state. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. Who would you say is your *most favorite* character ever? What made you select this character?




### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

pathological	tendency	impression	quaint
traumatic	hostile	recluse	spontaneity

1. I had the distinct \_\_\_\_\_ that his aunt was very lazy.
2. Being in a car accident is a very \_\_\_\_\_ event.
3. My cousin is a \_\_\_\_\_ liar.
4. Our acting coach had to rely on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the cast for success.
5. His van has an unfortunate \_\_\_\_\_ to pull to the right.
6. We stayed in a very \_\_\_\_\_ and rustic cottage.
7. The Toronto Blue Jays received a very \_\_\_\_\_ reception in Texas.
8. My grandfather became quite a \_\_\_\_\_ toward the end of his life.

# Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One.


2. Describe your first impression of Jake Semple.


3. Who was the only member of the Applewhite family who voted against letting Jake join them?


4. From which character's point of view are the following chapters written in?

Chapter 1	
Chapter 2	
Chapter 3	

5. Most readers would probably consider the Applewhite family to be quite unusual. Would you concur with this assessment? Why or why not?


6. How was E.D.'s personality different than the rest of the Applewhites?


7. What issue caused Randolph Applewhite to withdraw his three oldest children from the local school district?


8. What does the author mean by *The Creative Academy wasn't so much a home school as an unschool*?


## Language Activities



### A. Edith Wharton

E.D. Was named after her mother's favorite writer, **Edith Wharton**. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three fascinating facts about this famous writer and record them below. You may consider such facts as her personal life, accomplishments, etc.



1.	
2.	
3.	

## B. Character Match

Match the name of each character on the left with the proper description on the right.

CHARACTER		Correct Answer	DESCRIPTION	
1	E.D. Applewhite		a	Jake's grandfather.
2	Jake Semple		b	Novelist.
3	Aunt Lucille		c	Four years old.
4	Henry Dugan		d	Had his/her own social worker.
5	Randolph Applewhite		e	Breathtaking.
6	Cordelia Applewhite		f	The clan's patriarch.
7	Sybil Jameson		g	A recluse.
8	Zedediah Applewhite		h	Almost 13 years old.
9	Destiny Applewhite		i	The father of the Applewhite children.
10	Hal Applewhite		j	A poet.

## 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 three chapters of *Surviving the Applewhites*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
least		Stories.
state		Savor.
silver		Vital organs.
words		An ancient weapon.
table		A sheep's sound.
tear		Price.
eager		In accord with someone.

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

Word	Anagram	Clue

### D. A Quatrain Poem Celebrates Creativity.

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 the first four lines of the critically-acclaimed poem, ***The Artsy Type***, written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*Its fun to be the artsy type,  
To dance and sew and paint,  
I'm talented and oh so bright,  
But humble I sure ain't.*



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 three chapters of our novel (like ***creativity*** or ***juvenile delinquents***).

#### 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: \_\_\_\_\_


## 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?**



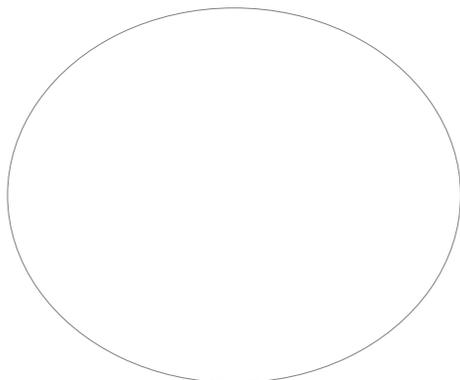
**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**



**WHY?**



**HOW?**

## Extension Activities



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



1	2
3	4
5	6

## B. Cartography

The Applewhite family have a very interesting collection of buildings on their property. E.D. Lists the following structures: the main house, eight cottages, a goat shed, toolshed and a barn. As the story unfolds we get some idea of the arrangement of these buildings, but for now use your imagination to create a map of the Applewhite property, indicating all of these buildings as well as the highway in front of the property, plus the main driveway.

