

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing



By

Judy Blume

A Novel Study
by Joel Michel Reed

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each section of the novel study focuses on one chapter of *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* and is comprised of 5 of the following activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language Activities
- 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. Students will also be expected to provide clear answers to questions and well-constructed explanations. It is critical as well that students be able to relate events and the feelings of characters to their own lives and experiences and describe their own interpretation of a particular passage.

A strength of the unit is that 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) so that students may organize their work and keep it all in one place. A **Student Checklist** is also included (p.6) so that a record of completed work may be recorded.

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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. Use of singular / plural nouns
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Determining alphabetical order
11. Identify *personification*
12. Identify/create *similes*

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 the climax of the novel.

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Complete a character comparison
3. Relating personal experiences

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Sheet
8. Write a short story.

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Create an Information Card
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Create a comic strip
6. Create a topical sketch

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Synopsis

Two is a crowd when Peter and his little brother, Fudge, are in the same room. Grown-ups think Fudge is absolutely adorable, but Peter and his pet turtle, Dribble, know the truth. From throwing temper tantrums to smearing mashed potatoes on the wall, Fudge causes mischief wherever he goes. (The Publisher – Puffin Books)

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found on the following website:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tales_of_a_Fourth_Grade_Nothing

Author Biography

Judy Blume

Blume was born and raised in Elizabeth, New Jersey, the daughter of homemaker Esther (née Rosenfeld) and dentist Ralph Sussman. She has a brother, David, who is five years older. Her family was Jewish. She graduated from Battin High School in 1956, then enrolled in Boston University. In the first semester, she was diagnosed with mononucleosis and took a brief leave from school before graduating from New York University in 1961 with a Bachelor of Education degree.

A lifelong avid reader, Blume first began writing when her children were attending preschool, and published her first book, *The One In The Middle Is The Green Kangaroo*, in 1969.

The decade that followed proved to be her most prolific, with 13 more books being published, including many of her most well-known titles, such as *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. (1970), *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* (1972), *Otherwise Known as Sheila, The Great* (1972), and *Blubber* (1974). Judy Blume has won more than 90 literary awards, including three lifetime achievement awards in the United States. (Courtesy of Wikipedia)



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Name: _____

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

Considering the unusual title of the novel, briefly predict what you believe the plot of **Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing** will be about.



Vocabulary:

Synonyms are words with similar meanings. Using the context of the sentences below, think of an appropriate synonym for the underlined words in each sentence.

1. At first I felt badly that I didn't get a goldfish too.

2. There's a soft, cushioned bench to sit on if you're too tired to stand.

3. "I've already name him ... Dribble! Isn't that a great name for a turtle?"

4. Some people might think that my mother is my biggest problem.

5. Fudge said, "No touch." Then he laughed like crazy.

Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story as Chapter One begins.

2. Which of the following three narratives is used in our novel, *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*? Give reasons for your answer.

First Person

Second Person

Third Person

3. How did Peter win his pet turtle, Dribble?

4. What did Peter's mother keep smelling around the house?

5. According to Peter, why was Fudge such a nuisance?

Fascinating Facts

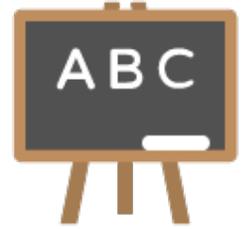
Peter's pet turtle was most likely the species known as the **red-eared slider**. The **red-eared slider** is the most common pet turtle found in North America, and is also known to be one of the most invasive species found across the world. Many owners have been known to release their pet turtles into the wild once they reach a certain size or age, which has led to an over-population of turtles in many areas.



Language Activities



A. There are many writers that enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device in which the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's an example of an alliteration: “grouching, grouching, grumbling, griping about something or other.”



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

The sounds of children playing.	
The appearance of your favorite animal.	
The sounds of nature (think of an appropriate setting)	

B. PERSONIFICATION is giving human qualities to something that is not human. The following is an example of personification: “*The popcorn leapt out of the bowl.*”

Why do you think personification is a popular literary device used by many authors?

Create your own example of personification.

C. Turtles – Fascinating Facts

Did you know that there are more than three hundred various species of turtles living in the world today? The **leatherback sea turtle** is the world's largest living turtle, and is also one of the most endangered. The largest known **leatherback sea turtle** measured nearly seven feet in length, and weighed over fourteen hundred pounds!



There are many other mesmerizing facts about this mysterious creature that I am sure you are dying to learn about. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet do a further investigation of turtles (on any known species). See if you can uncover at least three astonishing facts about this amazing animal with which to impress your friends. Try to glean your facts from a variety of topics. Happy hunting!

1	
2	
3	

D. Write the plural of the following nouns written below. Be careful – you may wish to consult a dictionary for some of these words.

Singular Noun	Plural Noun
Child	Children
Suitcase	
Tooth	
Party	
Country	
Mouse	
Family	
City	
Foot	
Sheep	

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

1	2
3	4
5	6