

# The Borrowers



By

Mary Norton

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 two chapters of **The Borrowers** 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 fantasy, societal prejudices, families and friendships, loyalty, trust and survival, the early 1900s.

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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 *foreshadowing*.
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. Identify *anagrams*

### 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*

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. 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

### 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

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### Synopsis

Underneath the kitchen floor is the world of the Borrowers – Pod and Homily Clock and their daughter, Arrietty. In their tiny home, matchboxes double as roomy dressers and postage stamps hang on the walls like paintings. Whatever the Clocks need they simply *borrow* from the *human beans* who live above them. It's a comfortable life. Comfortable – but boring if you're a kid.

Only Pod is allowed to venture into the house above, because the danger of being seen by a human is too great. Borrowers who are seen by humans are never seen again. Yet Arrietty won't listen. There is a human boy up there, and Arrietty is desperate for a friend...  
(Courtesy of the publisher)

### Author Biography

Mary Norton

Mary Norton was born in Leighton Buzzard, England in 1903. Her father was a doctor and she was raised in an old Georgian house which apparently is the setting of *The Borrowers*. In 1952 she won the Carnegie Medal recognizing *The Borrowers* as the outstanding children's book by a British subject.

In 1927 she married Robert Norton and together they had four children. The Disney movie, *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* was based on her novel, *Bed-Knob and Broomstick*. Mary Norton died of a stroke on 29 August 1992.





# The Borrowers



*By Mary Norton*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Borrowers

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## Chapters 1-2



### Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *The Borrowers* is Arrietty Clock, a very likeable young girl, who experiences many exciting adventures as the story unfolds. 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.

marmalade	vicar	conceited	hesitate
ancestors	inverted	shrouded	intersecting

1. That old, deserted mansion is \_\_\_\_\_ in mystery.
2. I am positive that my \_\_\_\_\_ came to Canada from Scotland.
3. Please don't spread the \_\_\_\_\_ too thickly on your toast.
4. Please don't \_\_\_\_\_ to call home for a ride.
5. Did you notice that the \_\_\_\_\_ lines on the graph were at right angles?
6. After her facelift, Princess Matilda became more and more \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Patrick quickly \_\_\_\_\_ the test tube, allowing the liquid to run out onto the desk.
8. We did not expect the \_\_\_\_\_ to visit so soon after my grandfather's funeral.

# Questions



1. What event causes Mrs. May to introduce the topic of the Borrowers to Kate?


2. What additional explanation might there be for all the lost safety pins , needles, pencils and such?


3. Where had Mrs. May's brother seen the Borrowers?


4. According to the Borrowers, for what reason were human beings put on this earth?


5. The hole used by Pod, the Borrower, to enter his home was under the \_\_\_\_\_,  
below the \_\_\_\_\_.

6. What had Pod built to keep out the mice?


7. Research: In Pod's home there were several portraits of **Queen Victoria** as a girl. Find out what country Queen Victoria was born in; what years she reigned and her husband's name.


8. Match each character from these chapters with the correct description:

a	Mrs. May
b	Kate
c	Arrietty
d	Homily
e	Mrs. Driver
f	Pod

1	She loved to read and write in her diary.
2	Great-Aunt Sophy's cook. Ruled the house.
3	Her brother met the Borrowers.
4	Only he knew the passageways and could open the gates. A shoemaker.
5	Could not even say the alphabet. Pod's wife.
6	Mrs. May taught her to crochet.

9. What impressed you most about the home of the Borrowers?


10. How is the **setting** different from the start of Chapter 1 to the end of Chapter 2?


## Language Activities



**A. Personification** is giving human qualities to something that's not human. Here's one example in *The Borrowers*: "... and to fill with a strange silvery light, their own twilight; there is a kind of sadness in them then, but as a child it was a sadness Kate liked". Here the author **personifies** the twilight (it is sad).



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


Create your own example of personification.


### B. Translate

The author states: *They bathed in a small tureen, which once had held pâté de foie gras.*

1. What is a **tureen**? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Translate the phrase **pâté de foie gras** \_\_\_\_\_

### C. Investigate: Choose either #1 or #2 to research.

1. Some of the books Arrietty owns are "Tom Thumb" editions. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet research the origins of Tom Thumb (Hint: he's been a part of English literature since 1821.)
2. In Chapter One a painting of the **Battle of Waterloo** is mentioned. Find out the following about this battle. The armies of what two countries met on this battlefield? Name the main general from each side. Which country won the battle?

## D. Cinquain Poems

A Cinquain poem has five lines and most often does not rhyme. Write two Cinquain poems describing two of the characters from *The Borrowers* using what you know about them from this novel. With your teacher's permission you may wish to collaborate with a colleague in the creation of these poems.

<p>Line 1 is one word. Line 2 is two words. Line 3 is three words. Line 4 is four words. Line five is one word.</p>	<p><i>Santa Saint Nick Long white beard Christmas Eve present-giver Jolly</i></p>
---	---

Character 1 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Character 2 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

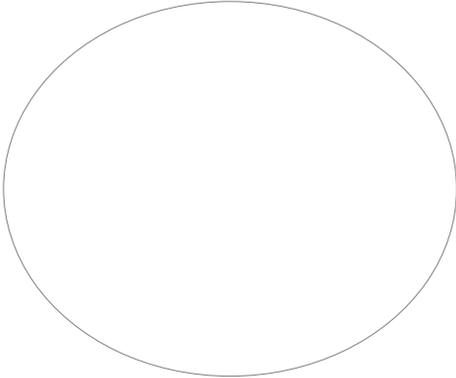
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

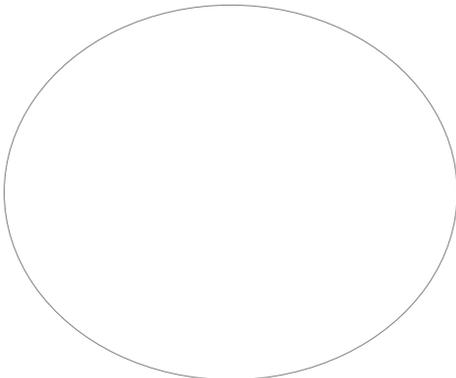
\_\_\_\_\_

**E. 5 Ws and an H.**

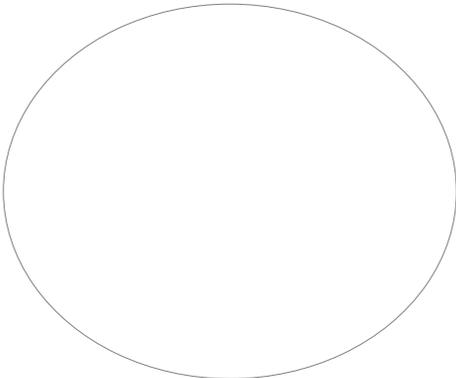
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



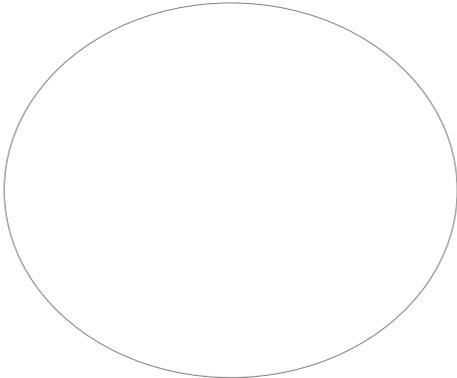
**WHO?**



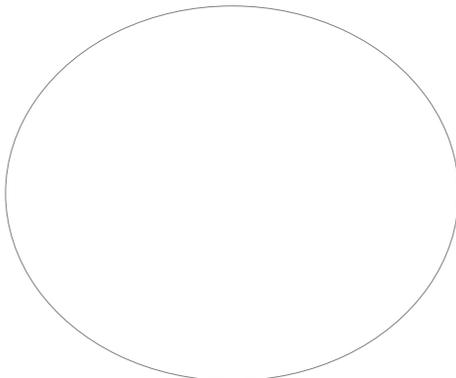
**WHAT?**



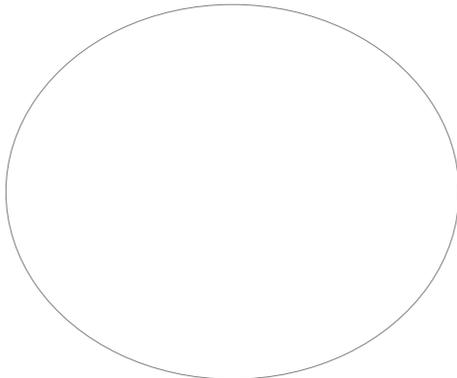
**WHEN?**



**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 two chapters of *The Borrowers*.



1	2
3	4
5	6