

The Boxcar Children



By

Gertrude C. Warner

A Novel Study
by Joel Michel Reed

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Table of Contents

Suggestions and Expectations	3
List of Skills	4
Synopsis / Author Biography	5
Student Checklist	6
Reproducible Student Booklet	7
Answer Key	53

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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 1 or 2 chapters and is comprised of five of the following different 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, 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 (page 7) as well as a **Checklist** (page 6) to keep a record of completed work.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/antonyms
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. Listing homonyms
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. Identify *cliffhangers*
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 activity
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Write about personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Sheet

Art Activities

1. Create a storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny are brothers and sisters. They're orphans too, and the only way they can stay together is to make it on their own. When the children find an abandoned boxcar in the woods, they decide to call it home – and become the Boxcar Children. (Summary courtesy of the publisher – Albert Whitman & Company)

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

Author Biography

Gertrude C. Warner

Gertrude Chandler Warner (April 16, 1890 – August 30, 1979) was an American author, mainly of children's stories. She was most famous for writing the original book of *The Boxcar Children* and for the next eighteen books in the series.

Warner was born on April 16, 1890, in Putnam, Connecticut, to Edgar Morris Warner and Jane Elizabeth (Carpenter) Warner. Her family included an older sister, Frances, and a younger brother, John. From the age of five, Warner dreamed of being an author, and began writing in ten-cent blank books as soon as she was able to hold a pencil. Her first book was an imitation of Florence Kate Upton's *Golliwog* stories and was titled *Golliwog at the Zoo*.



Warner never married. She lived in her parents' home for almost forty years, then moved to her grandmother's house. In 1962 she moved to a brown-shingled house, and lived there with her companion, a retired nurse. In her later life, before she died at age 89, Warner became a volunteer for the American Red Cross, the Connecticut Cancer Society and other charitable organizations. She's buried in Grove Street Cemetery, Connecticut.

Courtesy of Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gertrude_Chandler_Warner

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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

The Boxcar Children



By Gertrude C. Warner

Name: _____

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By Gertrude C. Warner



Chapter 1



Before you read the chapters:

Our novel deals with four children who become orphans after the sudden death of their parents. What do you think will be the most difficult obstacle for these children to overcome, and why?



Vocabulary:

Beside each word in Column A write the correct synonym or definition from Column B.

	COLUMN A	MEANING		COLUMN B
1.	Cross		A.	Perceived
2.	Polite		B.	Glanced
3.	Remarked		C.	Moved
4.	Carried		D.	Courteous
5.	Listened		E.	Famished
6.	Looked		F.	Angry
7.	Smiled		G.	Grinned
8.	Hungry		H.	Commented

Questions



1. Circle the correct narrative that our novel follows, and the reason for your choice.

First Person Second Person Third Person

2. What items did the children purchase from the bakery?

3. What did Jesse tell the baker they would do in exchange for sleeping in the bakery?

4. Why did the children want to run away from the baker?

b. Do you think the children were right to run away from the baker? Why or why not?

5. Why did the children believe that their grandfather didn't like them?

Language Activity



A. Many authors seem to enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's an example of an alliteration: "... **g**rouching, **g**rouching, **g**rumbling, about something or other."



Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** using three out of the five following topics. Each example must contain at least three words.

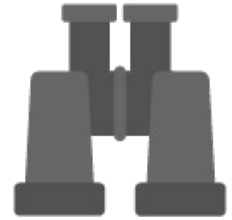
A child playing.	
A dog barking.	
One From Your Own Imagination	

B. PERSONIFICATION is giving human qualities to something that is not human. The following is an example of personification provided by www.yourdictionary.com: "*The bees played hide and seek with the flowers as they buzzed from one to another.*"

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

Create your own example of personification.

C. Chapter One contains an example of an important literary device called **foreshadowing**. Foreshadowing is defined as a warning or indication of a future event. **Example:** "We have a grandfather in Greenfield, but we don't like him," said Benny. "He is our father's father, and he didn't like our mother," said Henry. "So we don't think he'd like us. We are afraid he would be mean to us."



If this is an example of foreshadowing, predict what you think will happen later in the story regarding the fate of the Alden children.

D. Choose ten words from this chapter with two or more **syllables**. Indicate the syllables by drawing a line between each syllable. **Example:** some / time.

Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can describe one scene – or the entire novel.



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of ***The Boxcar Children***. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6