

The Night Diary



By

Veera Hiranandani

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

Each chapter of the novel study focuses on several journal entries of *The Night Diary* and is comprised of four distinct sections:

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

A **portfolio cover** (page 7) as well as a **Checklist** (page 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 India and Pakistan, courage and persistence, the importance of friends and family, hatred and prejudice, personal growth, sacrifice, finding one's voice, and appreciating people for who they are.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Identification of root words
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. Identify *personification*.
10. Identify *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. 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 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

It's 1947, and India, newly independent of British rule, has been separated into two countries: Pakistan and India. The divide has created much tension between Hindus and Muslims, and hundreds of thousands are killed crossing borders.

Half-Muslim, half-Hindu twelve-year-old Nisha doesn't know where she belongs, or what her country is anymore. When Papa decides it's too dangerous to stay in what is now Pakistan, Nisha and her family become refugees and embark by train and on foot to reach her new home. The journey is long, difficult, and dangerous, and after losing her mother as a baby, Nisha can't imagine losing her homeland, too. But even if her country has been ripped apart, Nisha still believes in the possibility of putting herself back together.

Told through Nisha's letters to her mother, *The Night Diary* is a heartfelt story of one girl's search for home, for her own identity...and for a hopeful future. [Courtesy of the Publisher]

Author Biography

Veera Hiranandani

Veera Hiranandani is the author of *The Night Diary* (Kokila), which has received many awards including the 2019 Newbery Honor Award, the 2019 Walter Dean Myers Honor Award, and the 2018 Malka Penn Award for Human Rights in Children's Literature. *The Night Diary* has been featured on NPR's Weekend Edition, is a New York Times Editor's Choice Pick, and was chosen as a 2018 Best Children's Book of the Year by The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR, Amazon, School Library Journal, and Kirkus Reviews. She is also the author of *The Whole Story of Half a Girl* (Yearling), which was named a Sydney Taylor Notable Book and a South Asia Book Award Highly Commended selection, and the chapter book series, *Phoebe G. Green*. A former book editor at Simon & Schuster, she now teaches creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College's Writing Institute and is working on her next novel. [From the author's website]



The Night Diary



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Name: _____

The Night Diary

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Part 1 – July 14, 1947 – start of July 20, 1947



Before you read this section:

The **protagonist** of *The Night Diary* is twelve-year-old Nisha, who is half-Muslim, half-Hindu and lives in India in the year 1947 – a very dangerous time in that particular region of the world for people of either religion. Having an interesting protagonist is critical in the telling of any good story. Who would you say is your favorite character in a book you have recently read or a movie you enjoyed watching?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

sequins	pistachios	prosperous	lentils
partition	independence	scorpions	cricket

1. Make sure to shake out your boots before putting them on in case of _____.
2. Her jean jacket was decorated with several colorful _____.
3. Nisha's father was a _____ doctor.
4. One of the most popular games in New Zealand is _____.
5. In 1947 it was decided to _____ India into Muslim and Hindu regions.
6. India was granted its _____ from Great Britain on August 15, 1947.
7. Do you prefer _____ which are salted or unsalted?
8. _____ are known for their lens-shaped seeds.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** for most of the events described in this section?

2. How would you describe Nisha's personality? Give two possible characteristics supported by proof from the story.

	Characteristic	Proof
1		
2		

3. Kazi in the kitchen. Match the following foods on the left with the correct description on the right. (You may need to do some research to complete this exercise.)

a	kheer		1	A piece of vegetable or meat, coated in seasoned batter and deep-fried.
b	poori		2	A thin pancake of unleavened whole-grain bread.
c	pakorras		3	Sweet rice pudding.
d	chapati		4	Whole wheat bread that puffs up when deep fried.

4. The first couple of sentences of Nisha's first entry is a bit mysterious. Nisha is making the entry addressed to her mother on her twelfth birthday. She then goes on to say that it was on this day that her mother left, without saying where it was she went. Where do you think her mother went? Why do you think Nisha didn't spell this out more clearly?

5. What was your impression of Nisha's twin brother, Amil? What was there from the diary entries that helped to create this impression?

6. Both Nisha and Amil have learning difficulties. Describe each of these difficulties.

Nisha	
Amil	

7. There seems to be a serious crisis developing in India at this time. From the details you read in this section, how would you describe what is happening and how might this affect Nisha and her family?

8. What is causing much conflict between Amil and his dad?

9. Who seems to be a source of comfort in Nisha's household? What is his/her role and how does he/she accomplish this?

Language Activities



A. Investigate.

Several historical figures are mentioned in this section – people who were very important in the history of India and Pakistan: Jawaharial Nehru, Lord (Louis) Mountbatten, Mahatma Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Choose one of these prominent men and then using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three important facts about this historical figure.



Person of Choice:	
1	
2	
3	

B. 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 this section of *The Night Diary*.

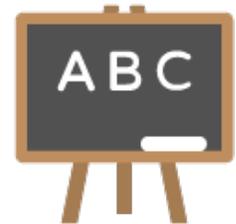
Word	Anagram	Clue
secret		Builds.
clean		A short spear.
words		An ancient weapon.
finger		The edge of something.
draws		Separate rooms in a hospital.
brain		A child (Scottish).
start		Tasty desserts.

C. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. An example from this section is, . . . *the blue satin winks back at you*. How does this example qualify as an example of personification?

Use personification to describe the following: the ocean on a stormy day.

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.

D. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Although alliteration is usually seen as a series of several words beginning with the same consonant (i.e. *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers*) the following also serves as an example of this literary device: *After, we bought potato pakorras at the roadside cart . . .*

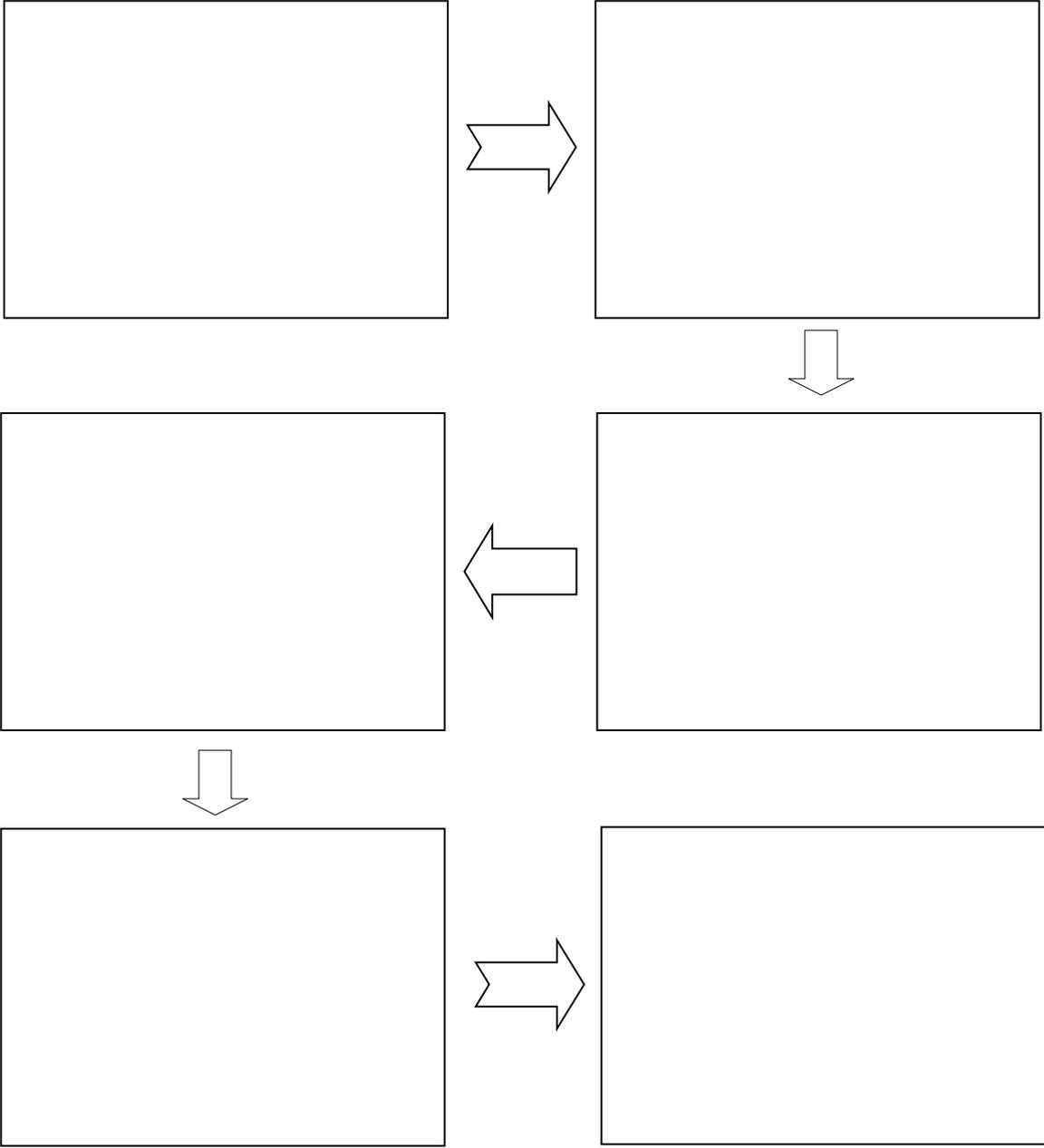


Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

A beautiful sunrise.	
A wolf's lonesome howl.	
Your choice.	

E. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in this section. In each of the six boxes below list the six events that you have chosen, describing what happened and telling why you consider this to be an essential part of the story.



Extension Activity



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words



Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and end of this section.

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