

The Vanderbeekers of 141st Street



By

Karina Yan Glaser

A Novel Study
by Nat and Joel 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 two chapters of *The Vanderbeekers of 141th Street* 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 family bonds, community and belonging, empathy and understanding, perseverance, courage when facing adversity, and personal growth.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

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

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. Create a friendly letter.
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. Create a poem

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

The Vanderbeekers have always lived in the brownstone on 141st Street. It's practically another member of the family. So when their reclusive, curmudgeonly landlord decides not to renew their lease, the five siblings have eleven days to do whatever it takes to stay in their beloved home and convince the dreaded Beiderman just how wonderful they are. And all is fair in love and war when it comes to keeping their home.

As *ALA Booklist* commented in a starred review: "Few families in children's literature are as engaging or amusing as the Vanderbeekers, even in times of turmoil." [The Publisher]

Author Biography

Karina Yan Glaser

Karina Yan Glaser grew up in Illinois and California, and when she was young her favorite place in the whole entire world was New York City. She ended up going to college in New York City and never moved away. She now lives in Harlem with her husband, two daughters, and an assortment of rescue animals.



Karina started writing *The Vanderbeekers of 141st Street* when her uncle dared her to write a book. Now she is a New York Times bestselling author; her books include *The Vanderbeekers of 141st Street*, *The Vanderbeekers and the Hidden Garden*, and *The Vanderbeekers to the Rescue*. She is currently working on books four and five in the Vanderbeekers series. Find her online at www.karinaglaser.com. (Courtesy of the Publisher)

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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-2



Before you read this section:

As you read the first couple of chapters, you might find it difficult to keep the five Vanderbeeker children straight. What might be an advantage to having more than one **protagonist** (main character) in a novel?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

indignation	skeptical	protocol	frivolous
rotund	potential	notorious	discreet

1. Carson was _____ for always having a messy bedroom.
2. "Please try to be _____ when asking personal questions," Tim advised.
3. My aunt was filled with _____ when her house was burglarized.
4. What is the correct _____ when meeting the king?
5. If you want to buy her a _____ gift, try the Joke Palace Emporium.
6. The detective was very _____ about whether he was telling the truth.
7. I believe that Karen has a lot of _____ as a hockey player.
8. The stove was made of cast iron and was very _____ in appearance.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One?

2. Match the characters with the correct description.

	CHARACTER		DESCRIPTION	CORRECT #
1	Isa	A	Twelve years old and wore glasses.	
2	Laney	B	A landlord.	
3	Jessie	C	Magic Jay.	
4	Oliver	D	Repaired computers.	
5	Hyacinth	E	Thought their house was the best in the world.	
6	Mama	F	Had many doggie friends.	
7	Papa	G	Captain Kidd.	
8	Beiderman	H	Was very interested in listed apartments.	
9	Franz	I	Jessie's twin.	
10	Jimmy L	J	Six years old.	

3. How do Mama and Papa have very different personalities?

4. It is said that every good story should have an interesting crisis. Describe the crisis facing the Vanderbeeker family.

5. What did Jessie mean by comparing Newton's Third Law to their situation?

6. What was the purpose of Operation Beiderman?

7. The Vanderbeekers were a biracial family. Can you find any clues in Chapter Two indicating what races are represented by their parents?

8. How would you describe the creativity (or lack of it) in the ideas the children come up with to win Beiderman over?

9. As the meeting of the children breaks up, Isa was very worried. Why?

10. Why was Uncle Arthur such a hit with Oliver?

11. How did Oliver know that Jimmy L was taking news of his possible move very seriously?

Language Activities



A. 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 Vanderbeekers of 141st Street***.

Word	Anagram	Clue
scale		Shoe ___.
leaped		Done to an orange.
stairs		Long-necked Indian lutes.
artist		A narrow passage of water.
sleek		Plants related to the onion.
lamps		A sacred song.
topic		Relating to the eye or vision.

B. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here is an example from this section: . . . *the ancient radiator whistled cheerfully*. The author is using personification by giving the radiator a cheerful personality.

Think of a way to use personification when describing a bus stopping for a passenger..

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.

C. An Acrostic Poem

There are many forms of poetry available to the aspiring poet other than the rhyming poem. An ACROSTIC poem is one example. In an acrostic poem the first letters of each line are aligned vertically to form a word. The word often is the subject of the poem. Here is an example written by the acclaimed poet, Atrocious Halitosis:

The Firefly

Freaky-looking
Itches me when I touch
Restless at night
Early or late
Fearless
Little
Yellowfly



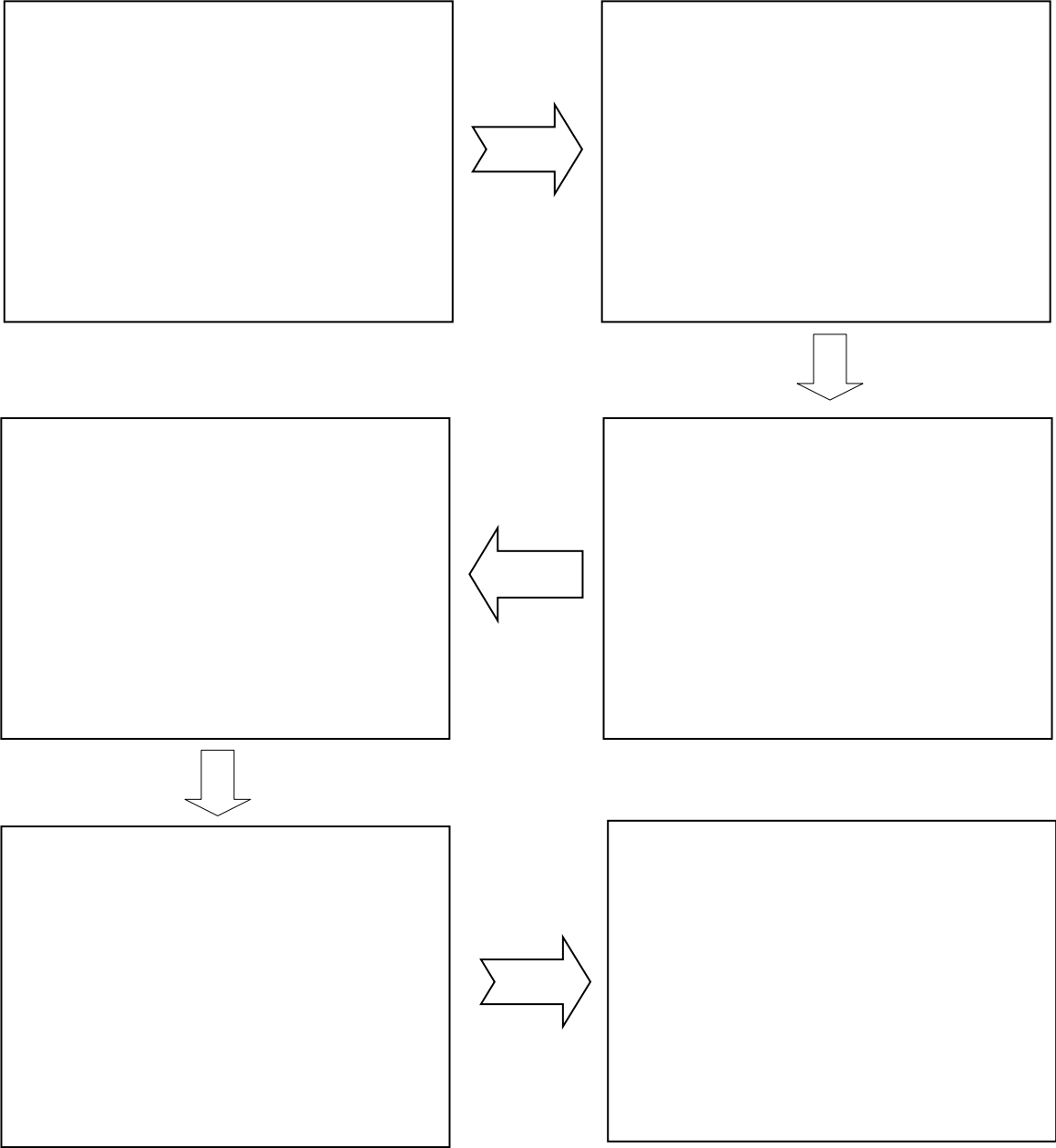
The Acrostic Poem

Now create your own Acrostic Poem on a subject featured in this novel. Your poem must have at least four lines (and doesn't need to rhyme).

Title: _____

D. 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: