

# UNIT OVERVIEW

## *Skinnybones* Novel Study

### **OVERVIEW**

This novel study provides teachers with a highly structured format for teaching language arts as students develop a love for reading longer materials like novels. Various areas such as reading comprehension, vocabulary development, spelling, grammar and writing are all entwined in this integrated approach eliminating the need for teaching these skills separately. Activities are divided into three main sections:

#### **1) Chapter Questions**

For each chapter, students answer a thorough set of questions requiring answers in complete sentences. Reading comprehension is key as students must read and understand the *entire* book in order to answer the questions. (One major strength of the novel study approach is that students *must understand* the novel or they will be unable to do the required assignments.)

#### **2) Vocabulary and Language**

Each chapter also includes activities dealing with such things as word meanings, use of the dictionary, spelling, parts of speech, antonyms/synonyms, syllables, punctuation and grammar.

#### **3) Writing and Creativity**

In this section, students apply what they have learned about language and grammar skills to write more effectively. Creative writing is the focus of this less-structured segment, allowing teachers more opportunity to incorporate their own ideas into developing creative writing skills.

### **READING STRATEGIES**

A variety of reading approaches seems to work best. One proven method is for the teacher to read the book out loud to the entire class the first time through, stopping after a chapter or two. In answering the questions, students will essentially be required to reread the chapter on their own. Not only does this "out loud" method ensure that students are read to daily, but it also helps all students to understand the book regardless of reading level.

Having students read sections silently by themselves, out loud with partners, or in small groups are all possible variations that will help keep student interest high.

#### **\*\*\*Note\*\*\***

One way to gain a measure of the effectiveness of the novel study and to gauge student interest is to instruct students *not* to read ahead on their own. Basic reverse psychology dictates that students will invariably be slouching down into their desks to sneak in a chapter while the teacher knowingly turns a blind eye.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

With the assignments, teachers can photocopy entire booklets for each student, or only the portions that the teacher wishes to use. One possible method of reducing this large amount of photocopying is to have students write down chapter questions and answers in their notebooks.

Teachers are free to pick and choose assignments as they see fit, as well as adding in any optional lessons they develop. (The main difficulty with this is that it alters the marking totals.)

## CHAPTERS 3, 4

### *Writing and Creativity*

1. Write a **CINQUAIN poem** about one of the following:

- a) Alex's cat                      b) Alex's uniform                      c) T.J.'s baseball

A cinquain poem has the following rhyme patters: Line 1 – 1 syllable, Line 2 – 5 syllables, Line 3 – 7 syllables, Line 4 – 6 syllables, Line 5 – 1 syllable

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. In Chapters 3 and 4, we read about many examples of name-calling. In Chapter 3, T.J. called Alex two different unkind names. What were they?

- a) \_\_\_\_\_                      b) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you ever been called a name? (Yes or No) How did you feel?

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4. Why do you think T.J. kept calling Alex these names? (Answer in two good sentences.)

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5. What do you think the consequences (punishment) should be for kids who continually (always) call others names? (Answer in three good sentences.)

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## CHAPTERS 7, 8

### Questions

#### Chapter 7

1. List three reasons Alex hated baseball.

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

2. For Alex, what is the one positive (good) thing about baseball?

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3. What does Alex really love about his grandmother?

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4. Why was his grandmother upset when Alex put his baseball cap on her head?

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5. If the barber was in a bad mood, why didn't Alex want to be in there?

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6. How did Alex keep people from seeing his terrible hair cut?

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7. What was Alex's big dream?

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8. T.J. may be a good pitcher, but Alex is very good at something, too. What is it?

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## CHAPTERS 9, 10

### Vocabulary and Language

1. Using your dictionary, **FIND THE MEANING** of each of the following words.

- a) bleachers \_\_\_\_\_
- b) screech \_\_\_\_\_
- c) panic \_\_\_\_\_
- d) confidence \_\_\_\_\_
- e) miracle \_\_\_\_\_
- f) umpire \_\_\_\_\_
- g) fortunate \_\_\_\_\_
- h) encourage \_\_\_\_\_

2. Place these words in **ALPHABETICAL ORDER**.

- |              |          |           |
|--------------|----------|-----------|
| confidence   | 1. _____ | 7. _____  |
| graduation   | 2. _____ | 8. _____  |
| excitement   | 3. _____ | 9. _____  |
| conversation | 4. _____ | 10. _____ |
| screamed     | 5. _____ | 11. _____ |
| ridiculous   | 6. _____ | 12. _____ |
| booga booga  |          |           |
| weekend      |          |           |
| exit         |          |           |
| strike       |          |           |
| God          |          |           |
| batter       |          |           |

3. Write the **ROOT WORD** (main part) of each of the following.

- |                   |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| a) noticed _____  | g) sunniest _____ | m) shutting _____ |
| b) taking _____   | h) spotted _____  | n) winning _____  |
| c) madder _____   | i) grounder _____ | o) yelled _____   |
| d) hollered _____ | j) tried _____    | p) carrying _____ |
| e) making _____   | k) batted _____   | q) turning _____  |
| f) running _____  | l) mopped _____   | r) wringing _____ |