“Any Novel” Novel Study Guide

For grades 6-12

Includes:

• Chapter-by-Chapter Exercises
• Vocabulary
• Writing Projects
• Optional Art Projects and Craft Projects
• Analytical Projects—for those who dislike writing!
• Character Sketches
• Theme Study
• Extra Activities
“Any Novel”
Novel Study Guide

A novel guide to help homeschoolers in grades 6-12 read and analyze any novel!

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A novel is like a best friend. You can get to know characters so intimately that you feel like you’re walking right alongside them. Novels can stay with you and influence you for the rest of your life because they are so realistic, interesting, and poignant.

We’re going to launch into studying your novel right now! This study provides the resources and the outlines you’ll need to do the detective work and figure out how the book is structured, what the author is trying to say, and what you can learn from the novel.

To begin, let’s get familiar with what we’re going to be studying. When you study a novel, the main things to understand are:

- Characters
- Setting
- Plot
- Theme

In the appendix, you’ll find worksheets that you can fill out as you’re reading the novel that relate to each of these things.

Now we need to work out a schedule! We’re going to do a four-week study. To do that, we’re going to take three weeks to read the novel, and then spend the final week looking at the themes.

First, let’s plan a realistic reading schedule. Try to divide your novel into three more or less equal parts, though some may be longer than others, depending where chapter breaks come:

Week 1: Page ________ to Page ____________ (total pages: ________)
Week 2: Page ________ to Page ____________ (total pages: ________)
Week 3: Page ________ to Page ____________ (total pages: ________)

As you read, you will be looking for four things:

- Clues to the theme
- Information on the characters
- Vocabulary words
- Plot summaries
After reading each chapter, you will take a few minutes and:

1. **Fill out information on the character worksheets.**
   As you read the book, choose 4-5 main characters and 3-4 minor characters about whom to enter information.

2. **Write one-sentence plot summaries.**
   After each chapter, write out a one-sentence summary of that chapter on a separate piece of paper. Ideally, you want 25-40 sentences at the end of the book. If your book only has 10 long chapters, write 2 or 3 sentences for each chapter. Write them sequentially (one after another) on your paper.

3. **Fill out Vocabulary Words**
   Also after each chapter, write out any vocabulary words you don’t know. You should find 10 each week, so be on the lookout for new words!

4. **Think about the Themes**
   Finally, as you begin reading, prepare the page called “Themes” (included at the back). When a thought strikes you, write down what you think the author is trying to show in the book. It might be a moral, an insight into life, or a lesson to be learned. You’ll keep coming back to this, and by the end of the book the theme will be clearer. Try to write down specific instances in the book that illustrate a theme.

   Don’t worry if you don’t know how to do these things now! As we get started, you’ll be introduced to each of these things, one at a time, so that you understand how to do them.

   That’s the broad outline of how you’re going to tackle the book. Additional assignments will come up each week that will give you insight into other aspects of the book. But if you keep filling these things out regularly, you’ll find understanding the novel is a breeze!

   Now let’s get started!
**WEEK 1**

Further subdivide your reading into four days (the fifth is project day).

Week 1: Page __________ to Page ______________ (total pages: ________)

Day 1: Page __________ to Page ______________ (total pages: _____)
Day 2: Page __________ to Page ______________ (total pages: _____)
Day 3: Page __________ to Page ______________ (total pages: _____)
Day 4: Page __________ to Page ______________ (total pages: _____)

**Day One:**

Read your chapters.

**Let’s Learn How: Vocabulary Words**

In every book, you’ll come across words that you don’t know yet. In your notebook, set aside two pages for Vocabulary Words. Put these in the back of your notebook.

Everyday, as you read, jot down words that you don’t know. Double space them so you have room to write definitions later. After you’re finished your reading for the day, pull out your dictionary and look the words up. Write the definition down on your paper. Aim to have 10 words a week, or 2-3 a day as you read.

Remember to keep your notebook handy as you read! It’s much easier to write down words as you go along than to try to go back and find them later!

Today, write down any new vocabulary words, and look up their definitions.

**Let’s Learn How: Sentence Summaries**

Throughout this novel study, you’ll be writing a one-sentence summary of each chapter you read. Most books have between 20 and 30 chapters in them, so one sentence is about right. If your book only has 10 chapters, try to write two sentences. By the time you finish reading the book, you should aim to have 25-40 sentences.
First impressions matter. Do you remember the first time you met your pastor? Piano teacher? Soccer coach? What did you think? Has your impression changed?

We tend to stick to our first impressions, and authors know that. That’s why authors deliberately try to give you first impressions of characters.

The very first sentence of *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* gives us a first impression:

“There once was a boy named Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it.”

What does that make you think of Eustace? Can you see how C.S. Lewis was trying to get you to think a certain way about the boy?

Or what about this description of Mary Lennox, from *A Secret Garden*:

“...She was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen...She had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair and a sour expression.”

Does Frances Burnett, the author, want us to like little Mary? Or does she want us to feel something very different?

Throughout this novel study, you’ll be analyzing the characters in your novel, and to do that, you need to keep track of your first impressions. Today we’re going to start on our character sheets, which are included at the end of this guide. As you work through this study, you’re going to choose seven characters to analyze: four main characters and three minor characters. The main characters are usually easy to choose, since they tend to be introduced early in the story, and chances are they’re even described on the back cover! The minor characters you may not meet until later, so we’ll leave them for now.

Today, pick two main characters and begin to write details on your character pages. Pay specific attention to when and how they are introduced. What are they doing? How are they described? What adjectives are used? Write these things down. And here’s the good news: these are just notes! You can use point form if you don’t want to use full sentences. But be detailed!

I’ve done this! 🧑‍🏫
**Writing Assignment:**
What is the setting of the novel? What is the historical period? Where is the action happening? For instance, is it in New England at the start of the American Revolution? Rural Saskatchewan during the Great Depression? Prince Edward Island at the turn of the twentieth century? What are the main political issues or struggles of the day? Write 5-6 sentences in a paragraph describing the setting of the novel. Don’t talk about the characters in this paragraph; just discuss the setting is like. Remember to include a topic sentence! Edit your paragraph, and then write the good copy in your notebook.

If you don’t see any struggles the characters face, just talk about what kind of lives the people in the book have. Are they farmers? Does the novel take place in an urban setting? How do most people make their living? Be as specific as possible!

I've done this!

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**Day 5: Project Day**

Choose one of the following projects to complete today (the I did it! box is at the bottom of all of them). The projects are divided into three different categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>![Hammer Icon]</th>
<th>For more analytical minds, the “hammer” exercises will focus on maps, charts, logic, schedules, and analysis.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Paintbrush Icon]</td>
<td>For more creative types, the “paintbrush” exercises will focus on art, drawing, creativity, and imagination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Pen Icon]</td>
<td>For more literary types, the “pen” exercises will focus on essay writing and honing communication skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Option 1: Sketch a building**

Sketch an architect’s drawing of one of the main buildings/properties in the novel. For instance, you might sketch the layout of the house in *Little House in the Big Woods*, along with the stable and smokehouses in the yard. Or you can sketch Bilbo’s house from *Fellowship of the Ring*.
WEEK 2

Further subdivide your reading into four days (the fifth is for a project day).

Week 2: Page __________ to Page ______________ (total pages: ________)

Day 1: Page ________ to Page ____________ (total pages: ________)
Day 2: Page ________ to Page ____________ (total pages: ________)
Day 3: Page ________ to Page ____________ (total pages: ________)
Day 4: Page ________ to Page ____________ (total pages: ________)

Each day, read your chapters and:

1. Update your character sheets.
   Add any new information about each character, like any struggles they have, or any new character traits that are revealed.

2. Make a list of vocabulary words. You must have ten vocabulary words by the end of the week!

3. Write out your one-sentence summaries of each chapter.

Day 1

(Hint: Before you read your chapters for the day, read over the assignment. It will be easier to do if you have it in mind while you’re doing your reading!)

Read your chapters, and continue to fill out:

- Character Sheets (you should have three sheets started. Choose one more main character today).
- Vocabulary Words
- One-sentence summary of each chapter.

Writing Assignment:

Authors often use literary devices called similes and metaphors to get a concept across. These add description and interest to their writing.