



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

The Pinballs

based on the book by

Betsy Byars

Written by

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## A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Betsy Byars

BYARS, Betsy (1928- ). Betsy Byars was born in North Carolina. As a child she read a great deal, but never thought of herself as a writer. That all changed when she was a young mother at home with her four kids. In those days, she used to read *The Saturday Evening Post*. At the back of the magazine there was a page called Postscript. It was full of funny things that people sent in. She used to read it and say to herself, "I could do that, that is not so hard." That's how she got started. She wrote a Postscript, sent it in to the magazine, and they paid her \$75. It was good for her confidence to make a sale the very first time she tried.

Betsy Byars thinks of her novels as scrapbooks of her life. When she gets an idea for a book, she writes it down immediately. Even if she only gets the title, she writes it down. If she's in the middle of writing another book, she breaks away from it for a few minutes and writes down the new idea, just to get it started. She finds she has a lot of creative energy at the beginning of a new project and she doesn't want to lose that energy.

Betsy writes in a log cabin which is a ten-minute walk from her home. The room she writes in is small--about eight feet by ten feet. Some people say it makes them claustrophobic, but she likes it. She has lots of things on the walls like posters, letters, and pictures from kids. She admits that her surroundings don't matter to her very much because when she starts writing she's not very aware of where she is.

Byars has written more than twelve books for children, including *The Summer of the Swans* (1979) which was awarded the Newbery Medal. *The Pinballs* (1977) was the basis of a popular ABC-TV Afterschool Special. Some of her other books include: *The Two-Thousand Pound Goldfish* (1982), *Cracker Jackson* (1985), *The Burning Questions of Bingo Brown* (1990), and *Wanted... Mud Blossom* (1991).

## INTRODUCTION - *The Pinballs*

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *The Pinballs* by Betsy Byars. It includes eighteen lessons supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to the topic of the novel by Betsy Byars. Following the introductory activity, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit.

The **reading assignments** are approximately twenty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of Pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This Pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for ten or less vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes. It might be a good idea to make transparencies of your answer keys for the overhead projector.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately ten or less vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete extra discussion questions, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

Following the reading of the book, two lessons are devoted to the **extra discussion questions/activities**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel. These questions are done as a **group activity**. Using the information they have acquired so far through individual work and class discussions, students get together to further examine the text and to brainstorm ideas relating to the themes of the novel.

The group activity is followed by one **report and discussion/ activity** sessions in which the groups share their ideas about their research of the Seventies pop culture with the entire class; thus, the entire class gets exposed to many different ideas regarding the themes and events of the book.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment gives students the opportunity to express personal opinion: students will keep lists about themselves throughout the reading of the novel. The second assignment is to persuade: students will try to convince Mrs. Mason, their foster mother, to allow them to obtain a puppy to cheer up Harvey. The third assignment is to inform: students are to select a topic of interest to them from the Seventies pop culture, research it, and write an article about it.

In addition, there is a **nonfiction reading assignment**. Students are required to read a piece of nonfiction related in some way to *The Pinballs*. In this case, it ties in with their Writing Assignment #3. After reading their nonfiction pieces, students will fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinions. During one class period, students make **oral presentations** about the nonfiction pieces they have read. This not only exposes all students to a wealth of information, it also gives students the opportunity to practice **public speaking**.

Another feature of this unit is the **speaker** day. This provides an extension of the theme of foster care. A professional in this field will be asked to share insight, law, and experiences on this topic.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: all multiple choice-matching-true/false or with a mixture of matching, short answer, and composition. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **unit and vocabulary resource sections** include suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra vocabulary worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The student materials may be reproduced for use in the teacher's classroom without infringement of copyrights. No other portion of this unit may be reproduced without the written consent of Teacher's Pet Publications, Inc.

## UNIT OBJECTIVES - *The Pinballs*

1. Through reading Betsy Byars's *The Pinballs*, students will gain an appreciation for the basic need of belonging.
2. Students will analyze characters and be able to determine their status as static or dynamic.
3. Students will become familiar with and able to identify the Seventies pop culture.
4. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical and personal.
5. Students will gain appreciation for and demonstrate proficiency in identifying and using figurative language.
6. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
7. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *The Pinballs* as they relate to the author's theme development.
8. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
9. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
  - a. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas  
Note: Students will demonstrate ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.
  - b. To check the students' reading comprehension
  - c. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
  - d. To encourage logical thinking
  - e. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *The Pinballs*

<b>Date to be Assigned</b>	<b>Chapters</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
	Chapters 1-5	
	Chapters 6-9	
	Chapters 10-14	
	Chapters 15-17	
	Chapters 18-22	
	Chapters 23-26	

**UNIT OUTLINE – *The Pinballs***

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Introduction  PVR Ch. 1-5	Study ? Ch. 1-5 Writing Assignment #1  PVR Ch. 6-9	Study ? Ch. 6-9  Grammar  PVR Ch. 10-14	Study ? Ch. 10-14  PVR Ch. 15-17	Study ? Ch. 15-17  PVR Ch. 18-22
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Study ? Ch. 18-22  Oral Reading Evaluation	Writing Assignment #2  PVR Ch. 23-26	Study ? Ch. 23-26  Theme & Characterization	Work Session  Writing Conference	Figurative Language
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
Extra Discussion Questions	Extra Discussion Questions/ Activities	Vocabulary Review	Writing Assignment #3	Speaker
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>		
Nonfiction Discussion	Review	Test		

Key: P=Preview Study Questions V= Vocabulary Work R= Read



## LESSON ONE

### Objectives

1. To introduce *The Pinballs* unit
2. To give students some background information on *The Pinballs*
3. To distribute books and other related materials: study guides, reading assignments
4. To model effective oral reading skills by reading aloud Chapter 1
5. To have students identify point of view

### Activity #1

Ask students what they know about foster care and/or foster homes. Examine reasons a child would be placed in foster care. Do they see this type of placement as positive or negative. Have them explain their answers. Ask them if anyone they know has experienced this kind of situation and what were the results? Do they see foster care as a temporary situation or a permanent one? Why? Tell students that in the book they'll be reading, three young people close to their age, are placed in a foster home for reasons completely out of their control.

### Activity #2

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides Students should preview the study guide questions before each reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in that section. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

Vocabulary Prior to reading a reading assignment, students will do vocabulary work related to the section of the book they are about to read. Following the completion of the reading of the book, there will be a vocabulary review of all the words used in the vocabulary assignments. Students should keep their vocabulary work as study materials for the unit test.

Reading Assignment Sheet You need to fill in the reading assignment sheet to let students know when their reading has to be completed. You can either write the assignment sheet on a side blackboard or bulletinboard and leave it there for students to see each day, or you can make copies for each student to have. In either case, you should advise students to become very familiar with the reading assignments so they know what is expected of them.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *The Pinballs*

### PROMPT

You are going to read a story about three young people who are placed in foster care due to problems that are out of their control. One of those characters learns a great deal about himself during this time by keeping lists about himself.

Your assignment is to make ten lists about yourself during the time we are reading this novel. Each list must be at least eight to ten items long. You may make your lists longer, if you wish.

### PREWRITING

What will you write about? After your reading assignments have been completed, go back and review the events in it. Respond to some of the ideas or topics brought up in the reading. Harvey starts out by making a list entitled "Bad Things That Have Happened to Me." Of course, he chooses this topic because of his ever-present painful situation. Is there something that you are concerned about at the moment? Something that you question? Something that you're interested in knowing more about? Something you're proud of? Something that fascinates you? Let your imagination lead you. You may be surprised what you'll learn about yourself.

### DRAFTING

What is important is that you sit down and write after each reading assignment or even more frequently. Lists are not formal, written papers; they are a form of personal expression. There is no right or wrong thing to include in your list. There is no formal structure- just take the time to get comfortable and let the ideas flow.

### PROOFREADING

It can be quite a self-revealing exercise to go back and reread your earlier lists- not so much for proofreading purposes, but to re-evaluate yourself and your feelings. One of the best ways to get to know yourself is to keep lists, or as an extension of that idea, a diary.. We are all too frequently rushing here and there, with fleeting thoughts coming and going like wisps of smoke. It can be very helpful to slow down at some point, and record your thoughts and feelings for the day. Hopefully, this will not be the last list or diary you will ever write.