



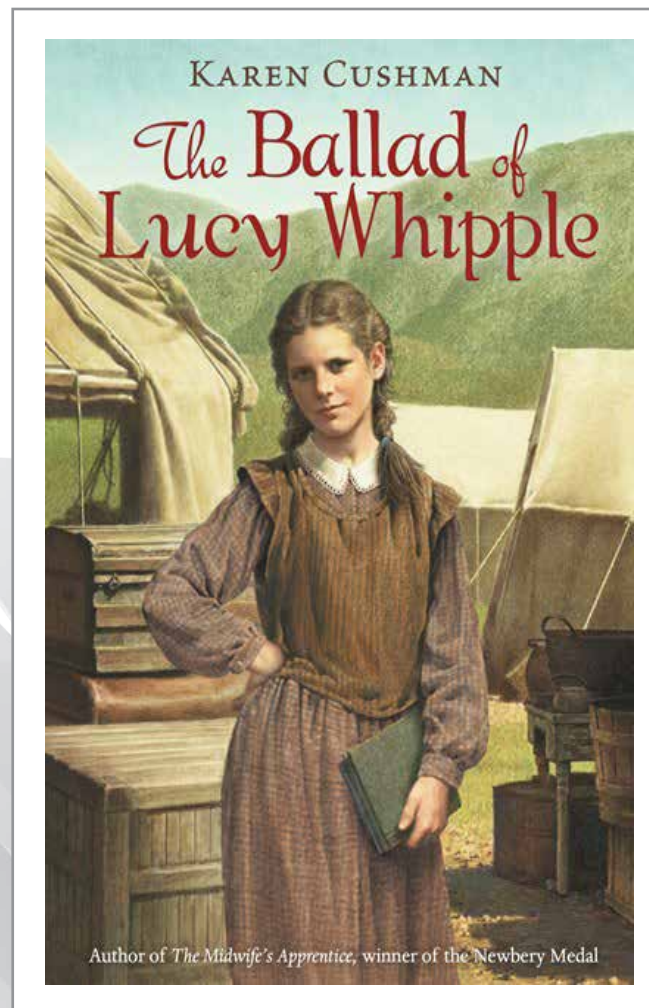
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **The Ballad of Lucy Whipple**

Karen Cushman



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# The Ballad of Lucy Whipple

Karen Cushman

## TEACHER GUIDE

### NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, evaluating,  
analyzing details

### Vocabulary

synonyms/antonyms,  
multiple meaning words,  
words in context

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, drama, role play

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,  
cause/effect, inference

### Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot  
development, story  
mapping, figurative  
language, point of  
view, conflict, dialect

### Writing

Descriptive, cartoon, chapter  
titles, letters, journal

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## Summary of *The Ballad of Lucy Whipple*

Following the death of Lucy's father, her mother moves her family from Massachusetts to California. In the rough-and-tumble gold-mining town of Lucky Diggins, Lucy feels out of place and longs for her grandparents, home, and the culture of the East. Lucy tells the story of traveling west and settling down in the dreadful, dirty prospecting town. She makes some unusual friends and has some adventures. Butte, Lucy's brother, dies and she assumes more family duties. Lucy and her mother work hard in a boarding house for miners. There are few women in the camp, so Mama has suitors of various sorts, all of whom Lucy disapproves. Eventually, Lucy matures, and when Mama chooses to marry Brother Clyde, a missionary, and move to the Sandwich Islands, Lucy decides to stay in Lucky Diggins and make her way in the west as the town librarian.

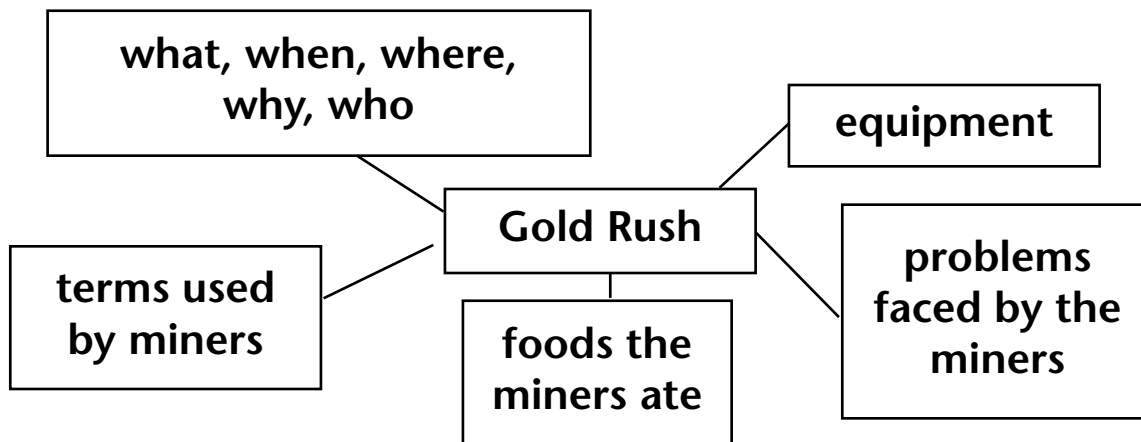
### About the Author

Karen Cushman was born in Chicago, Illinois, and currently lives in Oakland, California, with her husband, daughter, two cats, a dog, and a rabbit. Her first book was *Catherine Called Birdy* (Novel Unit available). Her second book, *The Midwife's Apprentice*, won the Newbery Medal. Both books are set in medieval England. Cushman cites a long-standing interest in history and a desire to tell about ordinary young people as her motivations for writing books.

Cushman has earned masters degrees in human behavior and museum studies. She is assistant director of the Museum Studies Department at John F. Kennedy University in the San Francisco Bay area.

### Initiating Activities

1. **Prediction:** Have students examine the book's cover illustration and title, then flip through the book, glancing at illustrations and chapter titles. What is a ballad? (*A ballad is a narrative poem with short stanzas written for singing or oral recitation. A ballad usually deals with an exciting or dramatic episode.*) In what time and place does the story take place? What do you suppose happened right before—and right after—what is shown on the cover? What do you predict this story will be about? Based on their names, what do you think the following characters might be like: Rattlesnake Jake, Jimmy Whiskers, Amos Frogge, Snowshoe Ballou, California (Lucy) Whipple, Brother Clyde?
2. **Reviews and Summary:** Read aloud the reviewers' remarks on the back cover and the information about the author on the inside back cover. Ask: From the reviewers' comments, what do you expect from this book? After reading these comments, would you choose this book to read on your own? (See Author's Note on pages 211–218.)



9. **Novel Sleuth:** This novel has many funny passages. Have students use small sticky notes or pieces of paper to flag the sections they find funniest for later sharing.
10. **Geography:** Have students trace on the map the route mentioned in the story—Buttonfields, Massachusetts, San Francisco, Sacramento, Marysville, and Lucky Diggins. Buttonfields and Lucky Diggins may be fictional towns and will not appear on maps.

#### **Background Information on the Gold Rush:**

The Author's Note has some interesting information, but students should be encouraged to expand on this by research in the following areas:

1. Gold panning—equipment and technique
2. Travel to California in the 1840's—by land and by sea
3. Daily life and living conditions in mining towns

One interesting site on the Internet devoted to the California Gold Rush is found at:  
<http://pwa.asusd.edu/~jross/goldrush.html>

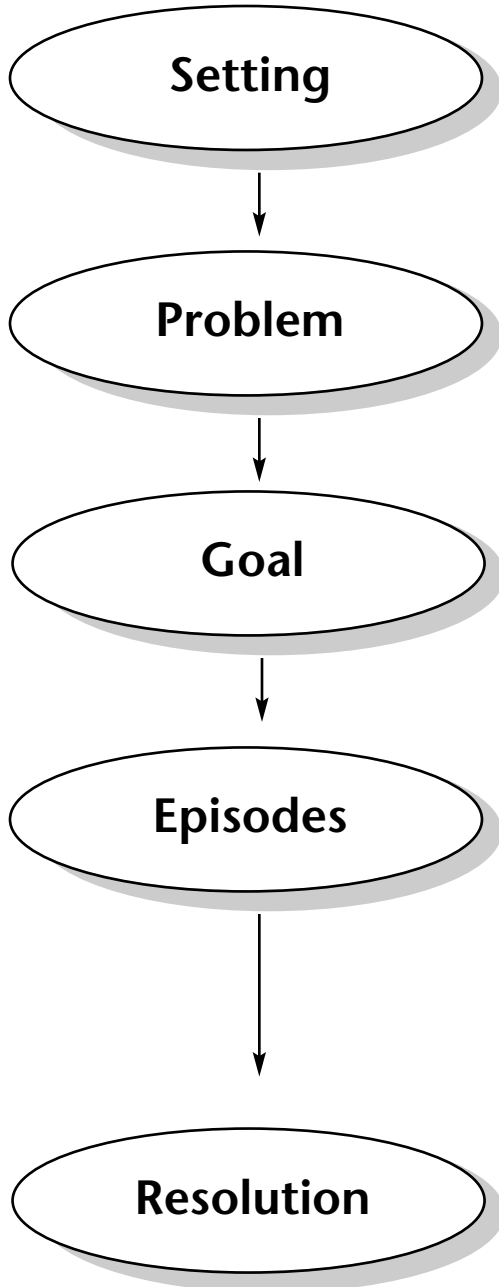
### **Vocabulary Activities**

Vocabulary reproducibles for this title are available in the corresponding Novel Units Student Packet.

1. Have students select the adjectives and adverbs from a given list of words and connect them with television/film characters, musicians, other students, or yourself.
2. Have students work in small groups. Divide up the words on a given list. Each student finds definitions for his/her assigned words and creates three clues. The clues are given to the group, one at a time. The group member who guesses the word gets points as follows: after one clue, 3 points; after two clues, 2 points; after three clues, 1 point.
3. Create analogies for the vocabulary words, pairing list words when possible. Have students solve each other's analogies.

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## Story Map



Characters \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Time and Place \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Problem \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Goal \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Beginning → Development → Outcome

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Resolution \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Supplementary Activities

### Literary Analysis: Dialect

Explain that dialect is the spoken, informal language a person uses. This local form of language may differ from the “standard” in pronunciation, grammar, and even vocabulary. Have students find and “translate” examples of dialect in *The Ballad of Lucy Whipple*.

page 21: “Kindly remove your carcass.”

page 31: “derns” and “dings”

page 35: “Dag diggety! Git your carcass off’n my claim afore I bury my shovel in yer yella hair, you diggety dog.”

page 40: “Heard tell of a prospector out Coyote Gulch who decided to turn tail and go home, his partner dying on him and no luck washing for color. ”

### Literary Analysis: Characterization

Explain that characterization is the way an author informs readers about what characters are like. Clues include what a character’s words, actions, and thoughts as well as what other characters say about him or her. Have students discuss their impressions of Lucy and her mother—and the details on which those impressions are based. Draw a chart like the one on the following page on the board, and have a student fill it in as you discuss characterization.

**Prediction:** What will happen in the next chapter?

## Chapters 5–6

## Pages 32–52

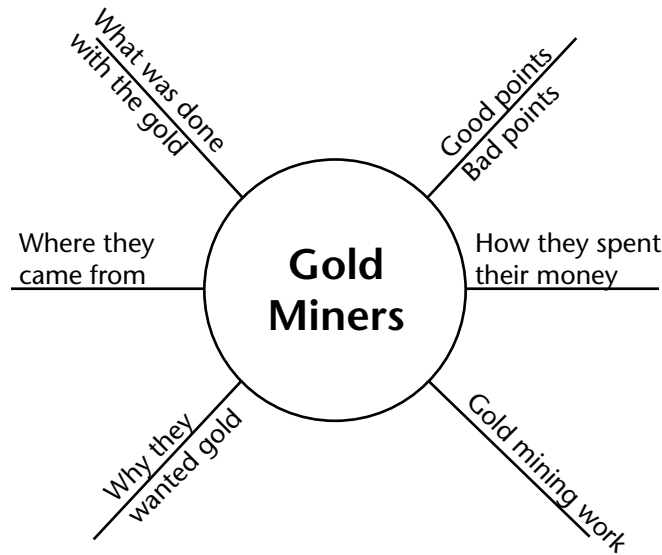
### Summary

California and Butte start selling pies to the prospectors. California is trying to save money to go back to Massachusetts. California changes her name to Lucy and writes letters to Massachusetts.

### Vocabulary

prongs (32)	artistry (32)	divert (32)	inspired (33)
blasphemous (35)	negotiations (37)	monstrously (37)	mite (37)
vulnerable (38)	vexed (40)	notional (42)	navigating (44)
dither (44)	exotic (44)	vagabonds (45)	scoundrels (45)
assassins (45)	weevils (47)	lamented (51)	

6. What happens to the pies when Lucy and Lizzie are talking in the fields? (*page 123, Miners eat the pies, but leave gold dust to pay for them.*) Does Lucy think the fourth of July is a good holiday? How do our fourth of July celebrations differ from hers?
7. How would you characterize the gold miners? What are their good points? Their bad points? How do they feel about their work? What makes their lives so hard? What do they do with the gold if they find some? How do they spend their money?



**Supplementary Activities**

1. **Drama:** Divide the class into groups. Find scenes that the groups may reenact.
2. **Art:** Have students create a bulletin board display depicting the characters they meet in the book, complete with the clothing or props to identify each. Draw and label the characters.
3. Write a prediction about what will happen in the next chapter.

**Chapters 13–14**

**Pages 125–145**

**Summary**

Butte never recovers after his fall into the river. During a long, hot summer he wastes away and dies. A cleaned-up Lizzie starts helping Lucy with the pie business. Lizzie’s mean, drunken father is found shot and Mrs. Flagg admits doing it. In the trial, Lucy helps her by telling the story of Rattlesnake Jake and the jury finds Mrs. Flagg not guilty—that she killed him in self-defense. Lucy thinks about death and dying and what life is all about.

**Vocabulary**

anvil (127)	upriver (131)	flumes (135)	diverted (135)
varmints (136)	gabbled (136)	convene (141)	vulgar (142)
contend (143)			