



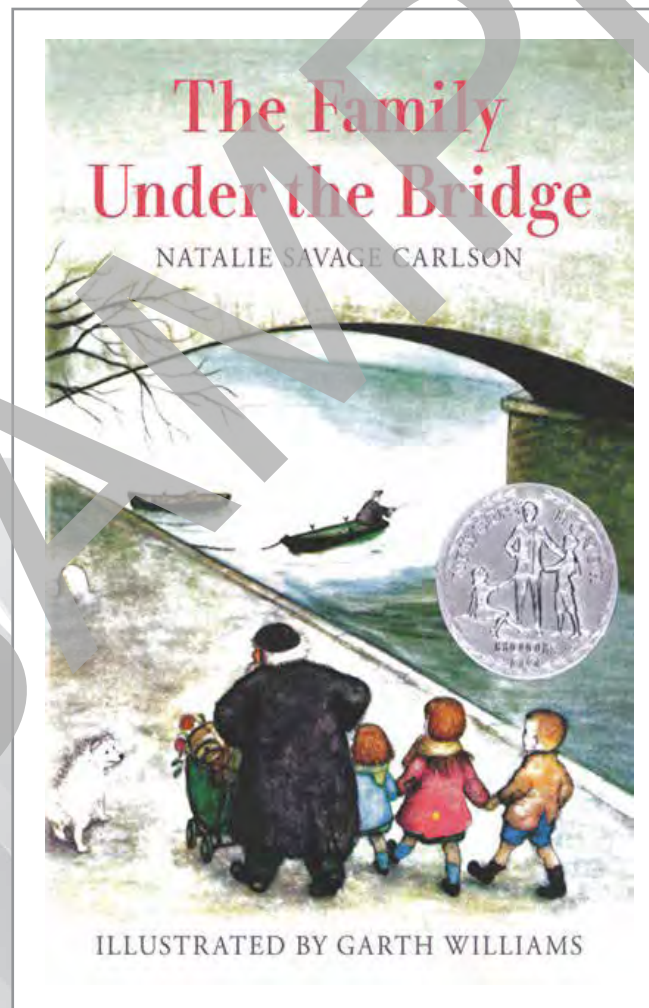
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 3-5**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **The Family Under the Bridge**

Natalie Savage Carlson



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

# The Family Under the Bridge

Natalie Savage Carlson

## 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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**ISBN 978-1-50203-778-7**

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Summarizing, brainstorming,  
visualizing

### Comprehension

Predicting, comparison/  
contrast, inference

### Vocabulary

Categorizing

### Writing

Description, opinion, letter  
writing

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, dramatizing

### Literary Elements

Characterization, similies,  
story elements, irony

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## Summary of *The Family Under the Bridge*

*The Family Under the Bridge* by Natalie Savage Carlson is a Newbery Honor Book. The book's main character is Armand, a homeless hobo who usually winters under a bridge over the Seine River, in Paris. Arriving at his chosen spot one December with his baby carriage of belongings, he finds the three Calcet children who are hiding lest the authorities take the children from their mother. Madame Calcet, recently homeless, works in a laundry and hopes to find a home soon. Armand, initially irritated by the children whom he calls starlings, is charmed by Suzy, Paul, Evelyne, and their dirty dog Jojo. A charming tale follows with visits to a gypsy enclave, Christmas Eve at Notre Dame, and panhandling among Christmas shoppers. All ends on an upbeat note with the homeless about to move into a new home.

### Introductory Activities

1. The setting of the novel is Paris. Open a discussion about the city of Paris by having the class investigate a series of books and references to generate a class "map" of information, or by dramatically creating an image of Paris with a reading.
2. Consult the book experts. *The Family Under the Bridge* is a Newbery Honor Book. What does this cause you to expect? How are the honor books selected?
3. Complete the pre-reading sheet on hoboes/poverty/gypsies.
4. Make a bookmark to use while reading the book. Include three predictions on your markers.
5. Speak a few words of French before telling children that the book is set in Paris.
6. Invite a speaker to talk about Paris.

#### *The Family Under the Bridge* Bookmark

My predictions:

1.

2.

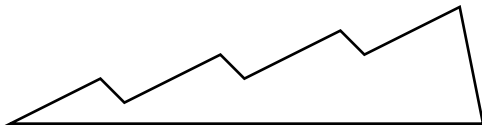
3.

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## Using Story Maps in the Novel Unit Approach

Story maps serve as graphic organizers for the important elements in a story. The **setting** is the time and place of the story. The **characters** are the main actors. The protagonist is the central actor around whom the action takes place. The **problem** or **conflict** provides the reason for the action. For example, in a typical murder mystery, the problem is solving the murder. The **action** includes the plot configurations as the story unravels. The **resolution** is the answer to the problem, the solution if you will.

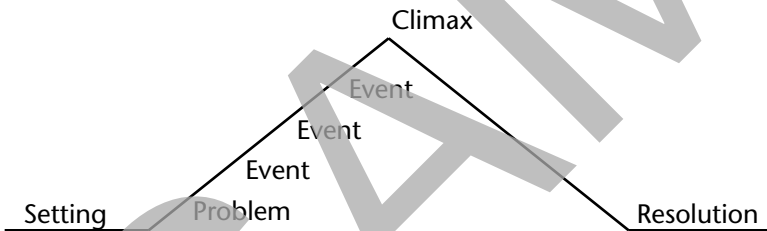
"When," "Where," "Who," "Why," and "How does it end?" are questions which elicit the story elements. Story maps can be used to record an entire novel or chapters or sections depending on the particular organization of the novel. They can also be used to organize information and ideas in pre-writing. Other uses include generating a class story by brainstorming the various elements or a divergent thinking exercise by changing one element of a story, such as *Cinderella* in the 21st century or *The Long Winter* in Australia.



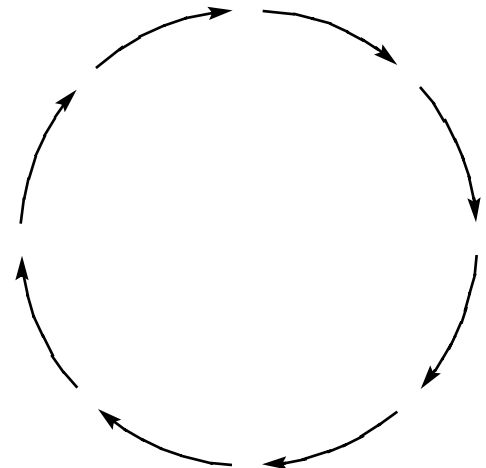
e.g., *The Borrowers*



e.g., *Jennifer, Hecate, William McKinley and Me,*  
*Elizabeth and Little House in the Big Woods*



e.g., *Charlotte's Web*



e.g., *Where the Wild Things Are*

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## Chapter One—Pages 1-8

### Vocabulary

hobo (1)	hidey-hole (1)	oleanders (2)	stalls* (2)
fastidiously (2)	wheedled (3)	droll (5)	roguish (5)
gargoyles (5)	quay* (7)		

### Discussion Questions

1. Read aloud the first paragraph of the chapter. What does this beginning suggest to you about the book? (*Story-telling, casual delivery; Armand is a main character; Paris is the setting.*)
2. What does the baby buggy tell you about Armand? (*He is homeless, but does keep his meager belongings with him.*)
3. Describe the flower market at the side of Notre Dame Cathedral. (page 2) Create either a class mural or a Classification Chart about the market. (See pages 13-14 of this guide.) Use the information the author gives you as well as what you know of markets.
4. Who is Mireli? (*a female gypsy friend of Armand's*)
5. What is Armand's attitude toward children? (*Armand calls the children starlings because they are loud, rude, and irritating.*) Is Armand's "starling" name for children appropriate? Give reasons for your answer.
6. Why did Armand jump back "in surprise and horror" when he arrived at the bridge? (*Page 7, Three children were snuggled under a worn quilt in the place he usually stayed.*)

### Supplementary Activities

1. Dramatize Armand's lunch. Then eat your own lunch in the Armand manner.
2. In a single sentence describe and summarize one of the following: the flower market, the gypsy lady, starlings, a Parisian hobo.
3. Select a vivid scene from another book or from your own personal experiences (such as a holiday family gathering, the first/last day of school, a school party, etc.). Complete a what you see, hear, and smell chart (see page 14 of this guide). Then write a short paragraph to explain what makes the scene most special or memorable.

## Chapter Two—Pages 9-19

### Vocabulary

francs* (9)	tinware* (13)	indignantly (15)	pushcart (15)
garlanded (16)	gnawing (16)	nursemaid (17)	implored (17)
fledglings (18)			

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# Character Cube

