



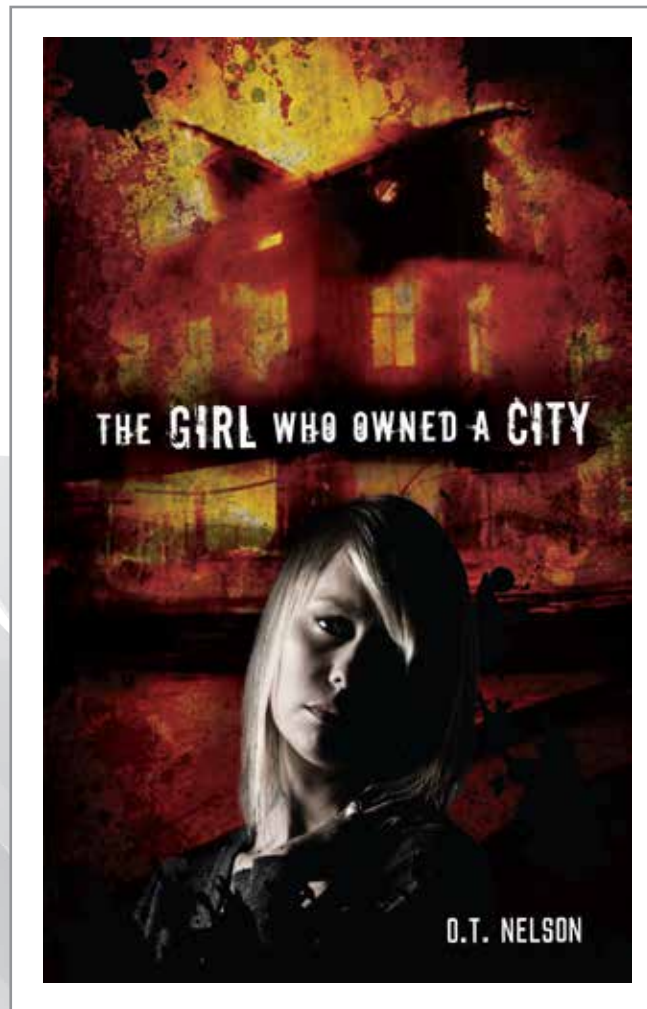
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **The Girl Who Owned A City**

O.T. Nelson



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

# The Girl Who Owned A City

O.T. Nelson

## 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

### Listening/Speaking

Storytelling, discussion, oral reports, interviewing, dramatizing

### Comprehension

Predicting, facts and details, sequencing, cause/effect, context clues, summarizing, feelings and emotions

### Literary Elements

Literary analysis, story mapping, plot development, setting, character analysis, symbolism, point of view

### Vocabulary

Word maps, synonyms, antonyms, parts of speech, defining, context clues, crossword puzzle

### Writing

Event diary, personal writing, creative writing, newspaper, directions, poetry, reports, essays, letters, television commercial

### Thinking

Identifying attributes, research, compare/contrast, drawing conclusions, making inferences, brainstorming, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking

### Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—developing maps, history; Science; Math—estimation, averaging, graphs, charts; Art—illustrations, collage; Health—diet, first aid

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**Genre:** fiction

**Setting:** Glenbard, a town with no adults

**Point of View:** third-person narrative

**Themes:** survival, fear, triumph, challenges, respect

**Conflict:** person vs. person, person vs. himself/herself

**Style:** third-person narrative

**Tone:** mostly optimistic, with harsh reality showing through at times

**Date of First Publication:** 1977

## Summary

Lisa Nelson and all other children under age twelve are the only survivors left in the world after a deadly plague kills all the adults. The children are forced to survive any way they can. In the beginning, Lisa steals food from vacant houses to support herself and her brother, Todd. But Lisa begins to think for herself and solve the long-term problems of finding food. She forms a militia on her street and eventually leads hundreds of children in a city called Glenbard. She learns that earning your life is far better than taking from others.

## About the Author

O. T. Nelson owned and operated a house-painting business before he became a writer. He sold his successful business in 1976 and decided to try writing. His first book, *The Girl Who Owned a City*, remains popular. Nelson resides in Minnesota and is writing a sequel to his first book.

## Introductory Activities

1. **Previewing the Book:** Have students study the cover and answer the five Ws: Who? What? Where? When? Why? Based on their answers, students predict what the book will be about.
2. **Character Journal:** List the main characters of *The Girl Who Owned a City* and have students choose one. As they read the book, students write regular entries from that character's point of view. The students should use their journal entries to reflect on the events in the story. At various points in their reading, have students share their journals with classmates.

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3. Critical Thinking: Ask students to write what they know about survival in our world if there were no adults. Have them consider the following questions:
    - How would you get food?
    - What food would you eat?
    - Where would you live?
    - Where would you get medicine? vitamins?
    - What is the most important thing you would need to survive? Why?
  4. Prediction Chart: Have students set up a prediction chart to use as they read the book (see pages 7-8 of this guide).
  5. Attribute Web: Create an attribute web (page 11 of this guide) with students for each of the following ideas: survival, respect, fear, and happiness. Ask students to brainstorm what each word brings to mind. Encourage students to elaborate on particular ideas. Ask students to predict how each idea will be brought to light in the book.
  6. Freewriting: Give students the following prompts. Ask them to choose one and freewrite about it for at least ten minutes.
    - Write about a time when you were left to fend for yourself. What did you do?
    - What do you think life without adults in the world would be like? What would you change?
    - Describe a time when you felt lonely.
    - Describe a time when you took control of a situation and everything turned out fine.
  7. Sequencing: Write the first and last paragraphs from *The Girl Who Owned a City* on index cards. Then select and copy five to seven random paragraphs from the middle of the book. Share the cards with students and challenge them to place the cards in sequential order. Guide them to place the first and last paragraphs correctly; don't worry about the middle paragraphs. After they agree on the order, ask students to write paragraphs predicting what the book will be about.
  8. Sentence-Starter Story: Write the first paragraph from *The Girl Who Owned a City* on notebook paper. Pass the paper to a student. Ask the student to be creative and add the next sentence in the story. Have that student choose someone else to pass to next. Continue in this manner until everyone has added a sentence. Read the story aloud. Reread the collaborative story after reading the book to see if it is similar to what actually happens.

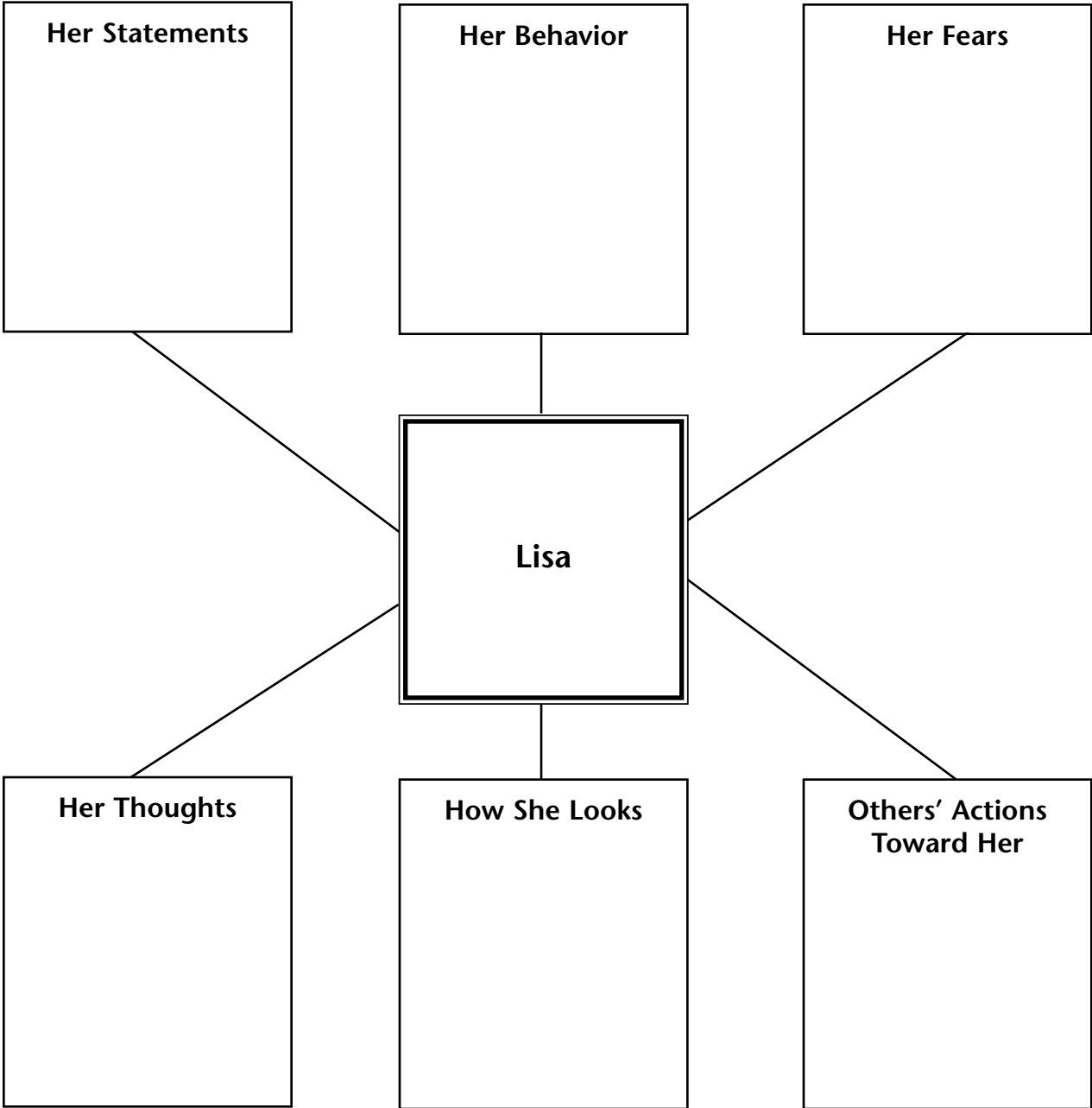
## Vocabulary Activities

1. Crossword: Have students create a crossword puzzle with some of the vocabulary words from the book to assess prior knowledge. Helpful hint: When creating crossword puzzles, have students use grid paper first, even if they will transfer the puzzles to a computer.

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# Attribute Boxes

**Directions:** Record evidence about Lisa’s character within the other boxes.



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## Chapters One–Two

### Vocabulary

patiently (7)	abruptly (7)	dimness (7)	ironic (8)
maggots (8)	civilized (8)	looting (8)	bothersome (9)
plague (10)	vaccine (10)	fondly (11)	calculations (12)
eerie (12)	generation (12)	conveniences (13)	reverie (15)
sentiment (17)	image (18)	instincts (20)	obvious (21)

### Discussion Questions

1. Why is the girl glad that the house she breaks into is empty? *(She doesn't want to break in and find anyone still at home. It would scare her.)*
2. Why does the girl take the lady's purse? *(She thinks there might be something valuable inside.)*
3. Is the girl stealing, even if the homeowners will never return? Why or why not? *(Answers will vary.)*
4. Why do you think the phone company and postal systems aren't operating anymore? *(When the adults died, there was no one left to run them.)*
5. How do some of the children feel in a world with no adults? *(fearful, frustrated, etc.)*
6. What makes something valuable? *(An item is valuable when it is in short supply and everyone wants it.)*
7. Why do Lisa and Todd hide their food under the stairs? *(If the gangs break in, they won't know where to look for it to steal it.)*
8. How do you think Lisa knows that she has to boil the water from Lake Ellyn to make it safe to drink? *(Answers will vary; She may have learned about the bacteria in lake water from her parents or at school.)*
9. Where else do you think the children could look for food? *(Answers will vary.)*
10. How have the roles of all children changed since the adults died? *(Lisa has become more than a sister to Todd. She is more like his mother. The oldest children become the old generation, helping the younger children survive.)*
11. What is the irony of what Lisa and Todd found at the White Hen Pantry? *(They discovered that the shelves of the store had been cleared of candy, chips, and sodas. The shelves were full of foods that were good for them. The first looters would have stomachaches after eating all the junk food.)*
12. Why was Lisa glad that all of the junk food was gone from the shelves of the White Hen Pantry? *(She knew that Todd would only have eaten nutritionless food if they had brought it home.)*
13. What responsibilities have the children had to assume since the deaths of their parents? *(taking out the garbage, bringing in water, washing dishes, cooking, cleaning, getting food, etc.)*

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14. Why does Lisa tell Todd the fishing story that night? *(She wants to show him that one must be patient when fishing, and to remind him that fish often swim near large rocks in a lake.)*
  15. Why does Lisa think that animals are lucky? *(She thinks animals are lucky because they have their instincts to tell them what to do when they need food.)*
  16. What gives people the advantage over animals? *(their ability to think and plan)*
  17. Why is Lisa anxious for the next day to come? *(She has plans to solve her problems and wants to start working on them.)*

### Supplementary Activities

1. Writing: Ask students to reread the letter from Mr. Williams to his son on pages 9-10. Ask students to consider the information they would like to have had left to them in a letter if all the adults in the world died. Have students make lists of this information and share with the class.
2. Research: Discuss the children's canned food diet. Ask students the following question: Do you think you can have a balanced meal eating only food in cans? Help students review the food pyramid and the basic food groups. Then have them go home and see if they can find a balanced meal from canned food only. Have students report the results at the next class meeting.
3. Graphing: Write the following categories on the chalkboard: meat, milk, fruit, vegetable, grains, oils, sugars. Instruct students to go home to their own pantries to evaluate the food inside. Lisa estimated that each home had a two-weeks supply of food. Have students create a graph showing the quantity of each of the categories listed above. Remind students that these items must be in cans or boxes and not depend on refrigeration. When students report back with their graphs, have them tell whether they think there would be two weeks worth of food in their houses.

## Chapters Three–Four

### Vocabulary

anxious (22)	securely (23)	mounting (24)	clattered (24)
occupied (25)	intersection (25)	venture (26)	evidence (26)
repetitious (29)	bewildered (29)	rehearsing (29)	screeched (31)
accomplished (32)	conjuring (40)	logical (40)	fumbled (42)
efficient (42)	satisfied (43)	adjustments (44)	sarcastically (50)

### Discussion Questions

1. Why does Lisa hesitate to tell Todd to go fishing? *(She knows she has been too bossy lately, and thinks Todd will be more receptive to a suggestion as opposed to an order.)*
2. Why does Lisa think Todd has given up on looking for worms? *(He returns from the woods too quickly.)*