



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

I Am the Cheese

Robert Cormier



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

I Am the Cheese

Robert Cormier

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!

ISBN 978-1-50203-876-0

Copyright infringement is a violation of Federal Law.

© 2020 by Novel Units, Inc., St. Louis, MO. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission from Novel Units, Inc.

Reproduction of any part of this publication for an entire school or for a school system, by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers, or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Novel Units is a registered trademark of Conn Education.

Printed in the United States of America.

To order, contact your
local school supply store, or:

Toll-Free Fax: 877.716.7272

Phone: 888.650.4224

3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

novelunits.com

Table of Contents

Plot Summary	3
Background on the Author	4
Initiating Activities.....	5
Vocabulary Activities.....	8
Chapter-by-Chapter.....	9
Chapter Summaries, Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, Literary Analysis, Writing Ideas, Activities	
Post-reading Discussion Questions	28
Post-reading Extension Activities.....	29
Evaluation	35

Skills and Strategies

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, Interview,
Booktalk, Debate, Speech

Thinking

Compare/Contrast,
Classify/Categorize,
Brainstorming

Comprehension

Predict, Compare, Story Map,
Attribute Web

Writing

Description, Narrative, Poetry,
Journal, Letter, News Story

Vocabulary

Word Maps, Context,
Synonyms, Word Grids

Literary Elements

Figurative Language, Irony,
Leitmotif, Imagery, Tension,
Characterization, Circular
Ending

Plot Summary

I Am the Cheese tells the story of Adam Farmer, a 14-year-old whose investigative-journalist father testified against organized crime figures. When the family received threats, they were relocated by the U. S. Department of Re-Identification. The program, however, protected the family from neither organized crime nor from the government itself, and Adam's parents were killed. Adam, now an amnesiac, has been interrogated for three years by Brint, a man posing as a psychiatrist who is actually a government agent pumping Adam for information that his father may not have divulged. As Adam's amnesia clears and his memories return, he realizes he is in a hopeless situation. His only recourse is to regress.

This story is told in a multi-level fashion, and the reality of the story does not become clear until the last few pages. There is Adam's first-person account of riding his bike from Monument, Massachusetts, to Rutterberg, Vermont, ostensibly to visit his father. Interspersed with these chapters are transcripts of taped conversations with Brint, followed by third-person accounts of Adam's memories.

Most readers are very confused as they read *I Am the Cheese* because Cormier seems to be giving us two "presents" for Adam—both the bike ride and the sessions with Brint. It is only at the very end that we realize the bike ride was a fantasy that Adam concocted as he rode his bike around the grounds of the institution where he is being kept.

Due to the unusual structure of *I Am the Cheese*, the section-by-section discussion questions provided in this guide are divided into two types: those to be used after reading each section and those to be used for closer analysis after students have read the entire novel.

Summaries, Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, Writing Ideas, Literary Analysis

Pages 11-38

Summary

The Bike Ride

Adam Farmer takes off on an old bike from Monument, Massachusetts, to see his father in Rutterberg, Vermont. He threw his medicine down the disposal and wrapped a package for his father. In Aswell, an old man advises him to watch out for the bad guys—although you can't tell who they are any more. As he pedals along, Adam sings "The Farmer in the Dell," a favorite of his father's. There is a terrifying incident when a dog attacks Adam's bike, but he escapes unharmed.

The Tapes

OZK001: Adam remembers hearing his parents discuss a trip, then riding on a bus and feeling as though they were running away from something. OZK002: Brint asks Adam about the name "Paul Delmonte," and Adam is too upset to talk about it. OZK003: Adam is suspicious of Brint, but finds he can step outside himself during the sessions and "go somewhere else."

Vocabulary

claustrophobic 12	immensity 12	philosophically 13	resolute 14
provisions 14	omen 15	wavered 15	caresses 15
impressions 16	tentatively 17	receded 18	aura 20
anxiety 26	raucously 29	confronts 31	vulnerable 31
rational 31	momentum 31	impaled 31	straightaway 32
hurtling 32	distracted 33	obliterating 34	cunning 34
sentinel 35	perilously 37		

Discussion Questions (Use after reading this section.)

1. Adam says he is a coward (p. 12). What things scare him? (*closed-in spaces, open spaces, dogs, snakes, all animals*)
2. Where do you think Adam's father lives? Why are his clothes in the basement back home? Do you think his parents are divorcing? Or is his father ill?
3. What kind of pills do you think Adam threw down the garbage disposal? Might they have something to do with controlling his fears?
4. Who is the "T" of the taped interviews? (*Brint—a doctor or psychiatrist*) Do you trust Brint? Does Adam? (*p. 33, He says he doesn't feel comfortable with him (p. 20) and later says he feels Brint is "looking down the barrel of a gun."*) Who is the "A" of the interviews? (*Adam, the narrator of the bike ride sections*)
5. What do you notice about the narrative voice on page 17? (*Adam's early memories are related by a third person narrator in past tense, while Adam's bike odyssey is in first-person present tense.*)

-
6. Why do you think Cormier included the chapter about the old man in Aswell (pp. 22-25)? Is he just paranoid, or is he warning Adam about something? What do we learn about Adam's father in this chapter? (*Adam says his father is in a hospital in Rutterberg.*)
 7. What was Adam's early childhood like? (*He felt safe, warm, loved by both parents.*) Why do you think he keeps singing "The Farmer in the Dell"? (*He remembers his father singing it while he and his mother laughed; the family's last name is "Farmer."*)
 8. Where do you think Adam "goes" when he "steps outside himself" (p. 34)? Have you ever done this? Where did you go?
 9. Do you find anything odd about the incident with the dog? (*The dog is guarding an abandoned house; Adam says he feels as if the dog will never stop chasing him.*)

Supplementary Activities

Writing Idea

Adam fears many things. Some fears are rational, while some are illogical. Identify a justifiable fear you have and explain your reasoning. Then identify an irrational fear that you or someone you know has. Explain why you believe it to be irrational.

Closer Analysis: (Use after students have read the entire novel.)

1. What images from this section can be tied to Adam's actual "present situation"?
 - hospital (p. 11) = where Adam is institutionalized
 - Adam's panic and fear = the terror he feels about his situation.
 - the pills = anti-anxiety drugs and "truth" drugs he is being given at the hospital.
 - old man in Aswell (p. 22-25) = Mr. Harvester, the maintenance man at the hospital (p. 212)
 - German Shepherd who attacked Adam = Silver, the dog at the hospital (p. 213)
 - smell of Adam's mother's lilac perfume (p. 19) = the smell of the hospital (p. 213)
 - Pokey the Pig, the jacket and the hat—returned to Adam by Dr. DuPont (p. 216)
 - the car (p. 37) is connected with Adam's parents' deaths (p. 206)
2. What new meaning does the old man's advice (p. 24) now have? (Adam now knows he can trust no one.)
3. What connections can you now make with the following?
 - Paul Delmonte = Adam's real name
 - Brint = government agent, not a psychiatrist
 - abandoned house = Adam's family home
4. What other passages strike you, looking back at them now, as having deeper meaning?