

Teacher Guide

Grades 5–6

Loser

Jerry Spinelli

 **NOVEL UNITS**



**NEW WAYS TO TEACH READING,
WRITING, & CRITICAL THINKING**



Novel Units® Single-Classroom User Agreement for Non-Reproducible Material

With the purchase of electronic materials (such as ebooks and print-on-demand teaching activities) from a Novel Units, Inc. (Novel Units) Web site, or that of a Novel Units authorized dealer's Web site, the customer (the purchaser or person for whom this product was purchased) is granted a single-classroom user license, which entitles the customer to use these materials for a single classroom (or home) only.

Sharing the digital files or reproduction of any part of this publication in any way or by any means for additional classrooms (or homes), an entire school, or a school system; by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers; or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Reproduction of any part of this Teacher Guide is strictly prohibited.

Use of the materials for anything other than classroom instruction is a violation of Novel Units intellectual property rights. Novel Units retains full intellectual property rights on all proprietary products, and these rights extend to electronic editions of print books or materials, excerpts of print books or materials, and individual teaching activities offered for sale in digital format.

To obtain more information, or, if you would like to use Novel Units products for additional purposes not outlined in the single-classroom license (described above), please contact customercare@ecslearningsystems.com.

LOSER

by
Jerry Spinelli

Teacher Guide

Written by
Monica L. Odle

Note

The Harper Trophy paperback edition, ©2002 by Jerry Spinelli, was used to prepare this guide. Page references may differ in other editions.

Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with them.

ISBN 978-1-60878-262-8

Copyright infringement is a violation of Federal Law.

© 2012 by Novel Units, Inc., Bulverde, Texas. All rights reserved. Reproduction of any part of this product is strictly prohibited. No part of this publication may be translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted or shared 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 multiple school terms, 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 Novel Units, Inc.

Publisher Information
For a complete catalog, contact—
Novel Units, Inc.
P.O. Box 97
Bulverde, TX 78163-0097

Web site: novelunits.com

For more digital resources, visit:
ecslarningsystems.com

Table of Contents

Summary	3
About the Author	3
Characters	3
Initiating Activities.....	4
Vocabulary Activities.....	4
Nine Sections	14
Each section contains: Summary, Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Supplementary Activities	
Post-reading Discussion Questions	24
Post-reading Extension Activities	25
Assessment.....	26
Scoring Rubric.....	27

Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research, pros/cons,
compare/contrast, analysis,
critical thinking, creative
thinking, brainstorming,
predicting

Comprehension

Cause/effect, decision-
making processes

Literary Elements

Characterization, simile,
metaphor, plot development,
setting, theme, irony,
allusion, genre, universality

Writing

Poetry, characterization,
essay, speeches, songs,
brochures, resumes, journal
entries, thank-you notes

Vocabulary

Definitions, context clues,
parts of speech,
pronunciation, antonyms,
sentences, illustrations,
application

Literary Elements

Setting, conflict, simile,
metaphor, characterization,
point of view, irony, writing
style, theme

Across the Curriculum

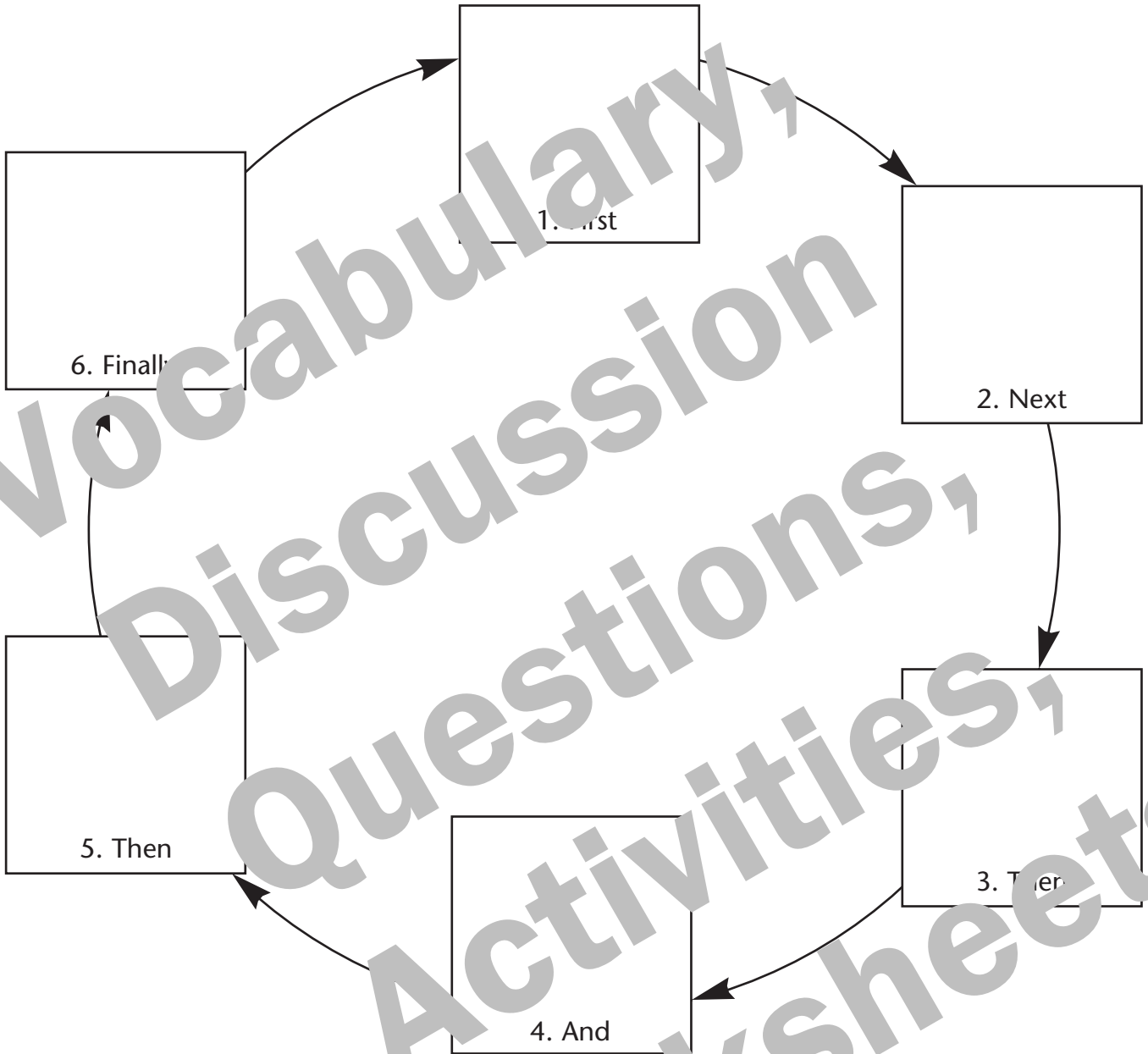
Art—caricature, collage,
drawing, sculpture; Drama—
skills, monologues; Math—
multiplication, percentages;
Science—research, weather;
Health—athletics, diseases;
History—Vietnam

Character Analysis Blocks

Directions: Select a character from the book to describe using the blocks below.

Who is the character?			
What does the character do?		Why does she do it?	
What, if anything, is significant about the character's name?	What is the nature of his character's actions? (reactive, proactive, important, consistent, secondary)	What is the significance of the book's time and place to the character?	
What is unusual or important about the character?	How does the character change in the story?	Does the character remind you of another character from another book? Who?	Do you know anyone similar to this character?

Sequence



peep when his name is called; His parents are actually in the center of the gym, and though they are not the loudest, his sister Polly gives him the wildest cheer of all. Answers will vary. pp. 158–160)

6. **Prediction:** Zinkoff is sad to leave elementary school. How will he enjoy middle school?

Supplementary Activities

1. Writing: Add to your simile/metaphor chart. Example **Simile**—“Like stones, he drops each sound...” (p. 149); “white hair...like a puff of cotton” (p. 153); “flute yips like a pinched sister” (p. 155) **Metaphor**—“up into the devil’s hand: warm paw (p. 160)
2. Drama: Zinkoff exhibits very good manners when he visits the old lady’s house. In groups, act out two skits: one describing how to act appropriately in a social setting and one showing how not to act in the same situation.

Chapters 21–25, pp. 161–186

Zinkoff enjoys the summer after graduating from elementary school, only to enter the daunting Monroe Middle School. There he sees his former neighbor, Andrew, again, but Andrew—“Lew” is too popular to hang out much with Zinkoff. And so Zinkoff sinks to a state lower than a loser: he becomes a nobody. Later that year during a snow blizzard, he overhears adults talking about a little girl who’s missing on Willow Street. He knows she’s Claudia. Through the cold, dark, and the danger, Zinkoff marches long into the night for his little friend.

Vocabulary
frolic (162)
trouncing (162)
veers (165)
interfere (165)
tarpaper (170)
skirmishes (170)
ricochets (173)
petrified (175)
sprawls (181)
notion (184)

Discussion Questions

1. What is ironic about how Polly responds when she loses at Monopoly? (*When Zinkoff was young like Polly, he was also content to simply play games and cared nothing for competition. Now that he cares about competition, the people who always allow to play with him never care if she loses.* 162)
2. Many times, an author will write about an experience that many readers can relate to, even though they are not the main character. What is unusual about the author’s description of Zinkoff’s first days at Monroe Middle School? (*Answers will vary. Suggestions: getting run over by older kids, tripping and falling things in a crowded hallway, seeing old friends who are very different from you now, going up to see if you get picked up on a team, etc.* pp. 162–168)
3. By the winter, Zinkoff “vanishes” into “nobodyness.” But even though others rarely notice him at school, the author says, “Like everyone else he sees himself as the star of his own life” (p. 169). What does the author mean by this statement? Do you agree or disagree with him? Why or why not? (*Answers will vary. Suggestion: A person is always aware of what he or she is doing. Each person is self-observant even though he or she may not always notice what others are doing.*)
4. What motivates Zinkoff to look for Claudia? What does this say about his character? (*Answers will vary. Suggestion: Claudia is his friend, and he knows how little she is. He also remembers when Polly was little and decided to run away. And he remembers how Polly reached up to him rather than their father when she finally decided to quit running away. Also, he is convinced he will be the one to find Claudia even though there are many others looking for her. Later we learn*

that Zinkoff does not want Claudia's mother to end up like the Waiting Man, waiting for her little girl to come home. Zinkoff is kind and self-sacrificing. He is also not the kind of person to give up on any task easily. inference)

- The author states, "a kid runs to be found and jumps to be caught" (p. 185). What does he mean? Explain why you agree or disagree with him. (Answers will vary. Suggestion: Kids don't really want to be alone. They trust the people who love them to find them when they are lost and catch them when they jump into trouble. It is when they know someone is willing to find and catch them that they know for certain they are loved. inference)
- Prediction:** Will Zinkoff survive the blizzard, and will someone find Claudia?

Supplementary Activities

- Writing: Add to your graphic organizer chart. Examples: **Similes**—"Zinkoff's marching is like bumper cars" (p. 187); "One hundred blocks...lit up like a carnival" (p. 173); "Zinkoff ricochets like a pinball" (p. 173) **Metaphors**—snowplow: tank (p. 172); spinning lights: a fallen spaceship (p. 172)
- Writing/public speaking: Zinkoff has an adventure during the blizzard. Write a speech describing an adventure you have had that has to do with the weather. If you cannot think of an adventure, make one up. Present your speech to the class.

Chapters 27–30, pp. 187–208

Zinkoff becomes disoriented as he looks for Claudia and eventually passes out in an alley. When he wakes up, he is in his parents' bed. He finds out Claudia was found early in the evening, and the search party he saw late into the night was actually looking for him. His neighbors and relatives soon hear that he has been found, and when they find out why he was lost for so long, they seem to see him in a new way. In the end, Zinkoff—the former nobody—gets picked to play football.

Vocabulary

dislodged (188)
harness (189)
hoarse (200)
trekking (206)
balmy (211)

Discussion Questions

- How does the author use a different type of writing to describe Zinkoff's last hour in the novel looking for Claudia? Why did he choose to write this section this way? (The writing makes the way Zinkoff is thinking. He is not thinking clearly and is delirious. The reader can better relate to what Zinkoff is going through because of the way the author wrote this part of the story. Answers will vary. pp. 190–196)
- As the story progresses, how are readers able to tell what time of night it is? (The author gives clues, such as when people turn off all of the lights in their houses. Also, the snow begins to get very icy, which often happens late in the night long after the warmth of the sun has disappeared. Answers will vary. p. 190)
- Why do Zinkoff's mother and other visitors give him a half-sad sort of smile after they discover he was out looking for Claudia? (Answers will vary. Suggestion: They are sad Zinkoff didn't know to come home since the little girl was found so quickly. They are also admiring Zinkoff's courage and kindness to look so long for a lost little girl. pp. 199, 205)