



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Miracle worker

William Gibson

READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Miracle Worker

William Gibson

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

Literary Elements

Characterization, story elements, foreshadowing, interior monologue, stage directions, pacing

Thinking

Brainstorming, synthesis, research

Comprehension

Predicting, inference

Writing

Letters, diary, narrative, descriptive

Vocabulary

Synonyms/antonyms, word mapping

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, interview, debate, drama

NOVEL UNITS: RATIONALE

How do you ensure that the needs of individual students are met in a heterogeneous classroom? How do you challenge students of all abilities without losing some to confusion and others to boredom?

With the push toward “untracking” our schools, there are questions that more and more educators need to examine. As any teacher of “gifted” or “remedial” students can attest, even “homogeneous” classrooms contain students with a range of abilities and interests. Here are some of the strategies research suggests:

- cooperative learning
- differentiated assignments
- questioning strategies that tap several levels of thinking
- flexible grouping within the class
- cross-curriculum integration
- process writing
- portfolio evaluation

Novel Units Teacher's Guides and *Student Packets* are designed with these seven facets in mind. Discussion questions, projects, and activities are framed to span all of the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Graphic organizers are provided to enhance critical thinking and comprehension. Tests and quizzes (included in the Student Packets) have been developed at two levels of difficulty (Level 1=lower; Level 2=higher). While most of the activities in the Teacher's Guides and Student Packets could be completed individually, many are ideal vehicles for collaborative effort.

Throughout the guides, there is an emphasis on collaboration: students helping other students to generate ideas, students working together to actualize those ideas, and students sharing their products with other students. Extension activities link literature with other areas of the curriculum—including writing, art, music, science, history, geography, and current events—and provide a basis for portfolio evaluation.

Finally, teachers are encouraged to adapt the guides to meet the needs of individual classes and students. The open-ended nature of many of the activities makes them useful for most any level.

You know your students best; we are offering you some tools for working with them. On the following page are some of the “nuts and bolts” for using these “tools”: a glossary of some of the terms used above that will facilitate your use of the guides.

Vocabulary, Discussion Questions Writing Ideas, Activities

Act I, pages 1-15

Vocabulary

vigil (5)	amiably (5)	indulgent (5)	jovial (5)
acute (6)	congestion (6)	emits (6)	bleat (6)
falters (7)	belfry (8)	crescendo (8)	vivacious (8)
insistent (8)	baffledly (8)	scowling (9)	pantomime (9)
benign (9)	indolent (9)	blandly (10)	oculist (11)
vigorously (12)	commence (12)	emphatic (12)	facetiously (12)
badgered (12)	impudence (12)	placating (13)	broach (13)
quack (13)	affliction (13)	morosely (14)	stalks (14)
swaddled (15)	unperturbed (15)	iota (15)	inexorably (15)

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the playwright opens the play with the scene showing the adults around the crib? How does that scene explain Helen's problem? What does the scene show you about the social background of Helen's parents? (This scene provides the audience with background on how Helen became blind and deaf; the Kellers are a well-to-do Southern family.)
2. Who are Martha and Percy? How much time passes between the opening scene and the one where Martha and Percy play with paper dolls? How can you tell? (Martha and Percy are two African-American children; Helen is now five; bells toll and the stage directions indicate that five years have passed.)
3. What do Martha and Percy think of Helen? Why? (Both are annoyed by the way Helen fingers their faces; Percy bites her finger angrily when she sticks it in his mouth and laughs at her rage; Martha is frightened—probably both afraid that Helen might hurt her and afraid that they might get in trouble with the grownups for provoking Helen.)
4. Why does Helen attack Martha? How does Helen's mother respond? How would you handle the situation? How do you think James would like to have seen the situation handled? (Martha tries to stop her fussing and Helen grabs a scissors; Kate pulls Helen off Martha, but lets Helen keep the scissors and does not punish her; James obviously thinks more should be done to control Helen.)
5. Why does Helen give up the scissors, finally? What does this show you about Helen? (Kate "tells" Helen that there is a doll in the house for her, by using the scissors like a doll; Helen likes dolls and gets what she wants.)

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6. Why won't Helen's father write to an eye specialist, as Aunt Ev suggests? Do you think he should? Is he less of an optimist than his wife—or just more of a realist? (He thinks it is pointless.)
 7. What does James mean when he says, "Good money after bad..." (p. 11)? Why do you suppose no one responds to his comment? Do you think he is being fresh—or does he have the right to "speak his mind" this way? (James resents how much money his parents have spent looking for medical help for Helen.)
 8. What is James' suggestion about what should be done with Helen? What do you think of this suggestion? What does his family think? What other options do they have? Do you think they have considered all their options? (James suggests putting her away in an asylum; Aunt Ev and Kate seem shocked, but do not actually say that an asylum is out.)
 9. What does Kate mean when she says to her husband, "It was not our affliction I meant you to write about, Captain"? What do you suppose is her tone of voice? (Kate means that the issue at hand is not how much pain Helen is causing Keller, but how much pain she suffers herself; her tone is wry, gently contradictory.)
 10. Why does Helen pull off Aunt Ev's buttons? What is ironic about Helen's action? (She wants eyes for her doll; she knows about eyes, but does not understand that hers are different from most people's.)
 11. Compare how Kate, Aunt Ev, James and Captain Keller react when Helen takes Aunt Ev's buttons for her doll. How does each feel? Do some of these adults care more about Helen than the others do? Do you think Helen should be punished? Why does Keller tell his son, "You talk too much"? (p. 14) Have you ever gotten anyone angry by agreeing with him or her? (James feels that Helen should be stopped, but Kate, Aunt Ev and Keller agree that Helen should be allowed the little things she wants; James gets into trouble for saying what the adults probably know, but find difficult to act upon: Getting her own way all the time does not help Helen.)
 12. Why do you think Helen overturns the cradle? Does she know she could hurt the baby? (Helen wants the cradle for her doll; she may also be jealous, but she doesn't seem to be trying to hurt the baby.)
 13. As her parents talk, Helen's face "darkens in the same rage as at herself earlier." (p.15) Why do you think she is so angry? (Kate may be right; she wants to talk, be like the others; she may also be upset because she senses that the others are arguing.)

Vocabulary Activity

Word mapping is an activity that lends itself to any vocabulary list. For words that have no antonyms, students provide a picture/symbol that captures the word meaning.



Prediction: James seems to feel a lot of anger toward his half-sister, Helen. Do you think he and Helen will warm to each other as the story progresses?

Writing Activity: James criticizes Kate for letting Helen have her own way. “Never learn with everyone letting her do anything she takes it into her mind to.” Write a letter to James about a child you know who often gets his or her own way. How is the situation similar to or different from the one in the Keller home? Do the adults you know feel sorry for the child? Are they making a mistake?

Literary Analysis: Characterization

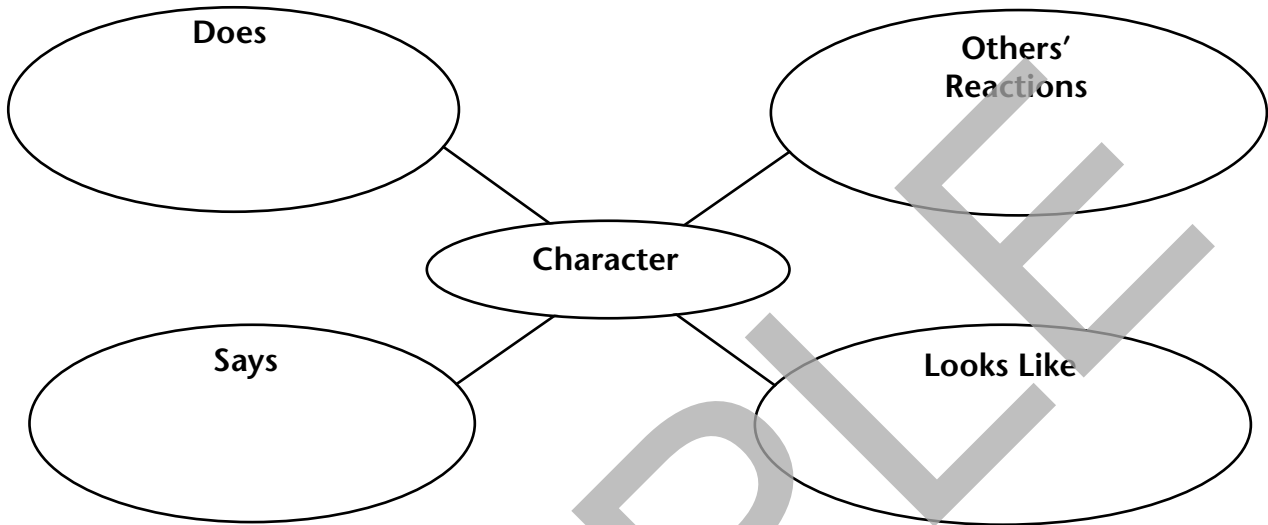
Have students begin an attribute web for Annie Sullivan. Information about Attribute Webs appears below and on the following page, along with some sample frameworks.

Using Character Webs—In the Novel Unit Approach

Character Attribute Webs are simply a visual representation of a character’s traits. They provide a systematic way for students to organize and recap the information they have about that particular character. Attribute Webs may be used after reading the story or completed gradually as information unfolds—done individually, or finished as a group project—as the basis for discussion, or as a pre-writing activity. Writers tell readers about their characters by showing—

- what the characters themselves do,
- what the characters themselves say,
- how other characters react to them, and
- how they look and act through direct description in expository passages.

This information can be organized into the following framework:



In another format, students use separate webs for separate categories of traits, such as traits revealed by a character's actions, traits revealed by a character's appearance, and traits revealed by what others say about the character. Advanced students can add extensions for citation of specific details and examples.

