



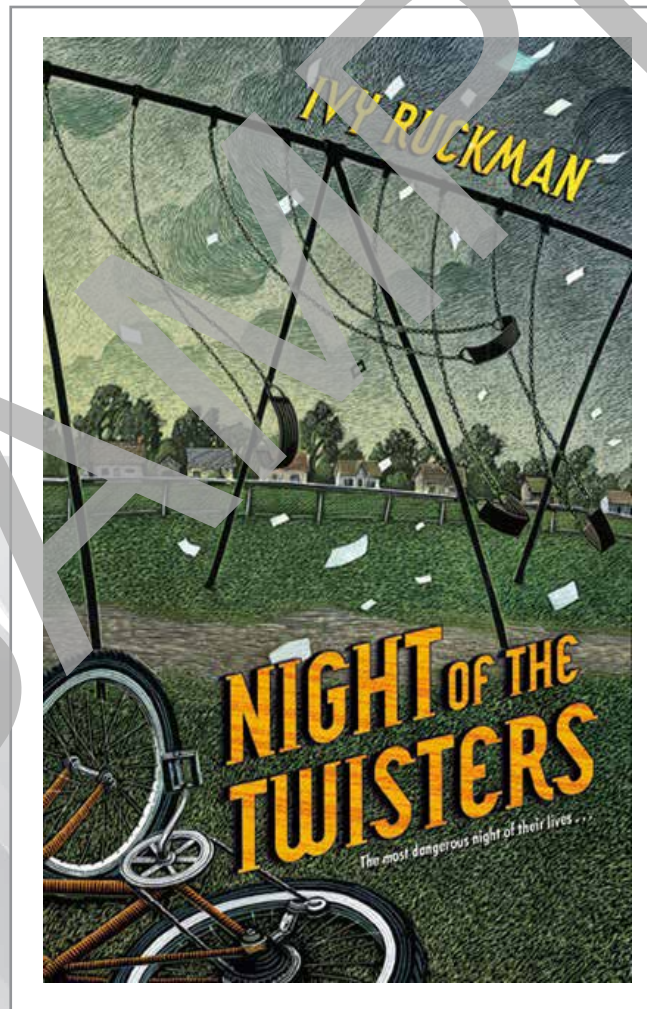
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Night of the Twisters

Ivy Ruckman



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Night of the Twisters

Ivy Ruckman

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

Thinking

Classifying and categorizing, comparing and contrasting, analyzing details, evaluating

Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot, conflict, figurative language, point of view, suspense

Writing

Response journal, poetry, descriptive, narrative, ballad

Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion, role play, presentation of reports

Vocabulary

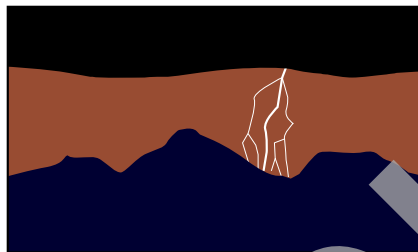
Synonyms/antonyms

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing, cause/effect, inference, comparing information from more than one source

Summary of *Night of the Twisters*:

In the fictional account of the night freakish and devastating tornadoes hit Grand Island, Nebraska, 12-year-old Dan, his baby brother, and his best friend, Arthur, take shelter in the basement as the tornadoes hit their town. What can they do as the storm subsides and they cannot find their families and a safe place to go? This is more than just an adventure story; it is a story of survival.



About the Author:

Ivy Ruckman was born in Hastings, Nebraska in 1931. She has worked as an English teacher and writing instructor. She grew up during the Depression with few toys but with books to read and an active imagination for play.

Mrs. Ruckman now writes full time specializing in middle-grade and young adult novels. She states, "For me, the writing itself is very difficult. If I can produce two to four pages of prose in a day, I feel I've done well (at top speed one day I wrote thirteen pages of a novel; another time, creeping like a snail, I produced one paragraph). I rely heavily on my 'ear' for realistic dialogue, for the flow of my prose, for the sentence balance I want to achieve. I may spend hours searching for the right word or an apt metaphor. The hardest part of writing, as I see it, is getting the story to work in the first place; the revising, or 'fine tuning,' is the most enjoyable. First and foremost, however, I want my characters to live. I want the reader to care about what happens to them, to laugh at their foolishness and cry over their sorrows. I become very much involved in the lives of my fictional 'children.' I succeed as a writer, I feel, only to the extent readers share my involvement." (*Something About the Author*. Vol. 37, pages 162-163.)

Prereading Activities:

1. **Previewing:** Have students examine the title and cover illustration. Also suggest that they flip through the book. Read the back cover. Predicting is a very important part of reading. What do you learn about the characters? What is the setting? When and where do you think this novel takes place? What do you think the problem of the story is? Do the covers make you want to read the book? Why or why not?
2. The author of this story uses very good descriptions. Here are some of them. Can you guess what the author is describing or comparing?

- (page 31) [trees]“ ...swayed in unison, like dancers in a chorus line...”
- (page 31) [clouds] “boiled so low you could almost jump up and grab them.”
- (page 42) [Minerva, the cat] “She’d be carried off like a tumbleweed in one of our stiff prairie winds.”
- (page 54) “The roaring [the tornado]...came bearing down on us like a hundred freight trains.”
- (page 57) “Once it [the hail] got going, it hit us with the force of buckshot.”
- (page 63) [Papers] “...Like white bats, they fluttered up and over the foundation in the gusting wind.”
- (page 74) [thunder] “...that rolled across the sky like kettledrums...”
- (page 75) [trees] “...looked as if some giant with a big, meaty hand had stripped the main branches and snapped off the rest.”
- (page 75) [the sky] “...looked like a landscape from a monster movie.”

3. This is a realistic story. Ask the students to give other words that mean realistic. Contrast realistic fiction and fantasy using the T-graphic comparison. Have the class give examples of stories, types of characters, setting, action and problems.

	Realistic Story	Fantasy
Setting:	Our world	Make-believe world
Characters:	Like us	Unusual (talking animals, etc.)
Action:	Could happen	Never could happen
Problem:	Could be ours	Unusual

4. The students will keep a response journal. The students will divide their papers in half (vertically). On the left side, they will keep short summaries of what has happened in each section using their own words. On the right side, they will react to what they have read. Reactions include answers to such questions as: How would I have felt in the character’s place? What is my opinion of what the character did? How does the character’s situation remind me of my own life?

Recommended Procedure:

Teachers are encouraged to adapt the Novel Unit to meet the needs of individual classes and students. You know your students best; we are offering you some tools for working with them.

“Midnight”—Pages 112-130

Vocabulary:

massive 113 glowered 114 sarcastically 115 jouncing 117
storm cells 124 squall lines 124 tranquilizer 128 auxiliary 129
generator 129

Vocabulary Activity:

Break the whole group into small groups of three. Assign several words to each small group. Each group is responsible for coming up with three clue cards for each word. Sample:

MASSIVE

It is a two-syllable
adjective

Antonym: diminutive

Synonyms: bulky,
imposing, large

Sets of clue cards are given to another small group of three. Each person takes one clue card for a given word, reads it aloud, and works with the other two teammates to figure out what the target word is.

Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. Why did Arthur, Dan and Stacey stay at the police headquarters? (*Pages 114-115, There was room for survivors and it was almost too dangerous to go anywhere else.*)
2. What is superstition? (*beliefs or practices resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown or trust in magic of chance*) How was Arthur superstitious? (*Page 123, He knew better but he wondered if he had caused the tornado by using the bull-roarer inside.*)
3. Make an attribute web for Stacey. Why is she such a special person? Why do you think Dan has a “crush” on her?
4. Why do you think the water pressure dropped? (*Page 126, There were many broken pipes in the town. There was no electricity so water could not be pumped. After the water in the pipes was used, the pipes were empty.*)
5. Why do you think Mama Darlington thought quoting Scripture was “like taking a tranquilizer”? (*page 128*) What effect did the Twenty-third Psalm have on Dan? (*Page 130, He went to sleep.*)
6. Stacey said she was scared when the generator went out. Why do you think Dan said he wasn’t scared at all? Was that a lie?

Prediction:

What will everyone do when they wake up after this very scary night?

Supplementary Activities:

1. Research: How is the Civil Defense organized in your area?
2. Research: What other agencies help in natural disasters like a tornado or hurricane?

“Early Morning”—Pages 131-142

Vocabulary:

welterweight 134 casualty 138 accelerating 139 choreographed 140
pivots 140

Vocabulary Activity:

Make a vocabulary activity for a classmate. Use more than the vocabulary from just one chapter. Pick five words and write synonyms. Arrange the words and synonyms so they may be matched. Write an answer key.

Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. What did Grandpa mean when he said he could smell tornado weather? (*Page 133, The humidity was very high and the air was heavy, musty and very hard to breathe.*)
2. Why did Dan have problems finding his family? (*Pages 137-139, Mrs. Hatch had taken the bus to the K-Mart relief center but when water began to cover the floors all the evacuees had been moved all over town. Dan decided to go back home even if the house was gone. It was there his folks found him.*)
3. Why was it so important that Grandpa’s farm had not been destroyed by the tornado? (*Pages 140-142, Dan and his family had a place to stay.*)

Supplementary Activity:

Have the students work in small groups to write a ballad about the events of the story. Encourage them to write their own music or set the lyrics to an already existing song. Share with the entire class.

“As Remembered One Year Later”—Pages 143-153

Vocabulary:

consolation 145 bafflement 146 velocity 146 menacing 146
atmospheric 150 insignificant 152