



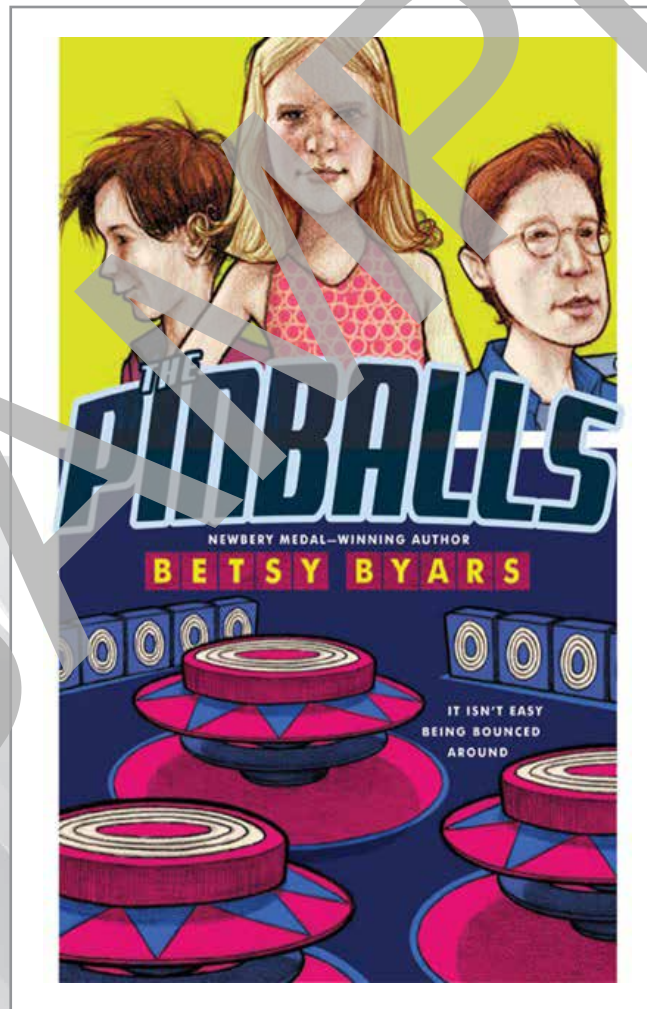
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Pinballs

Betsy Byars



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Pinballs

Betsy Byars

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

Brainstorming, classifying
and categorizing, evaluating,
analyzing details, comparing
and contrasting, synthesizing
ideas

Vocabulary

Synonyms/antonyms,
analogies

Writing

Letters, limerick, similes,
narrative

Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion,
drama—role play

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,
cause/effect, inference,
comparison/contrast

Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot
development, figurative
language

Summary of The Pinballs

Carlie, Thomas J and Harvey are three children who feel like they have been pushed around like pinballs*. Although from varied unhappy homes, they have coincidentally been sent to spend the summer with foster parents, the Masons. It is here that they learn that pinballs can't help what happens to them, but that they can. (*Pinball: A game played on a device, a pinball machine, in which the player operates a plunger to shoot a ball down a slanted surface having obstacles and targets. The author uses the word pinballs to refer to the balls themselves.)

About the Author

Betsy Cromer Byars was born on August 7, 1928, in Charlotte, North Carolina. She married Edward Ford Byars, a professor of engineering on June 24, 1950. They have four children, Laurie, Betsy Ann, Nan, and Guy. She attended Furman University, 1946-48; Queens College, B.A. in 1950.

Byars had a happy childhood. Her father worked at a small cotton mill, so brought home free cloth, enabling Byars to learn to sew at an early age. "I sewed fast, without patterns, and with great hope and determination, and that is approximately the same way that I write." When she went to college, she majored in math, for that is what her father wanted her to do, and what her sister had done before her. "I had discovered early in life that things were easier all around if I lived up to my father's expectations." However, calculus was the determinant that made her go to her father to tell him that she could not be a mathematician. She switched her major to English, and married after graduation so that her only writing during the next few years was of letters and shopping lists. When her husband went back to school to study for his doctorate, Byars started her creative writing. His doctorate completed, Byars and her family moved to West Virginia, where her children's novels were written.

Byars was awarded the Newbery Medal for *The Summer of the Swans* in 1971. Her books have been translated into nine languages, and many have been dramatized on national television. She has said, "There is no activity in my life which has brought me more pleasure than my writing."

Note

Please be selective, and use discretion when choosing the activities that you will do with the unit. It is not intended that everything be done, but that discretionary choices made are most appropriate for your use and group of students. A wide range has been provided, so that individuals as well as groups may benefit from these selections.

Using Predictions in the Novel Unit Approach

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how the conflict will be resolved, which details given by the author will be important to the plot, which details will help to fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses. As students work on predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give us to help us in making our predictions? Why are some predictions more likely than others?

A predicting chart is for students to record their predictions. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, you can review and correct previous predictions. This procedure serves to focus on predictions and to review the stories.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own knowledge.

Use new information that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions:

Vocabulary

technique 17

vaccine 20

Vocabulary Activity

Use both of the vocabulary words in the same sentence. Define each word. Make an illustration to go with the sentence.

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Why is Thomas J surprised at Carlie's reaction to the found earring? *(Page 18, The twins had been very happy when Thomas J had found their father's missing watch for them. They called him, "good boy," and had patted him. It was the only time that they had ever touched him on purpose. Page 19, Carlie practically accuses Thomas J of stealing the earrings.)*
2. Why does Thomas J want Carlie to like him? *(Page 18, Thomas J wants Carlie to like him because he admires her long flowing hair.)*
3. What do we learn about Carlie and Thomas J in this chapter that may be added to their webs?
4. What do you think that Carlie means when she says, on page 19, "I guess even a blind pig can come up with an acorn every now and then." Who is Carlie comparing to a blind pig? Why?

Postreading Activities

1. Why do you think that Mrs. Mason is given foster children to care for by the court? What qualities do you think that a foster mother should have? Make a list.
2. Do you think that it would be harder to be a foster mother than a birth mother? Why do you think as you do?

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. On page 56, the reader is told, "They [Mr. Mason and Thomas J] were halfway home when they remembered about the Kentucky Fried Chicken." Why do you think that Mr. Mason and Thomas J forgot to stop for the Kentucky Fried Chicken? (*Opinion—answers will vary.*)
2. When Harvey sees Mr. Mason and Thomas J arrive without the red-striped boxes, "he felt like crying." (*page 56*) Why do you think that Harvey is so upset by the forgotten chicken? (*Opinion—answers will vary.*)
3. Dramatize the interaction between Harvey and Carlie. Start mid-page on 56, with the paragraph, "Harvey was on the front porch waiting for them." Finish that page, page 57, and the first 3 lines printed on page 58. It ends with, " 'Thank you,' Harvey said."

Postreading Activities

1. Carlie tells Harvey that she is going to be a nurse when she grows up. Make arrangements for a nurse to come and be interviewed by the group. (Please emphasize the fact that there are male as well as female nurses.) Have the students establish beforehand what it is that they wish to learn from this interview. Prepare questions, so that time and effort are not wasted.
2. Do you think that Carlie would be a good nurse? Do you think that Carlie would have any difficulty getting into a nurse's training program? Give your opinion, and tell why you think as you do.
3. Collage: An artistic composition of materials and objects pasted/glued over a surface, often with unifying lines and color.
 - a) Choose one of the characters in the story of *The Pinballs*.
 - b) Cut words and pictures from magazines, to form the base for a character collage.
 - c) Think of other things that would help to depict this character, such as things from Kentucky Fried Chicken to add to a collage made about Harvey. Arrange the things that you have prepared on the background sheet of the collage. When the arrangement pleases you, glue the things onto the background. Add dimension to the collage by gluing some of the things only part way down, or on end. If you wish to unify the materials, yarn, string, and/or very thin strips of paper work well. Give a title to your work. If you wish, make a caption to go with it.