



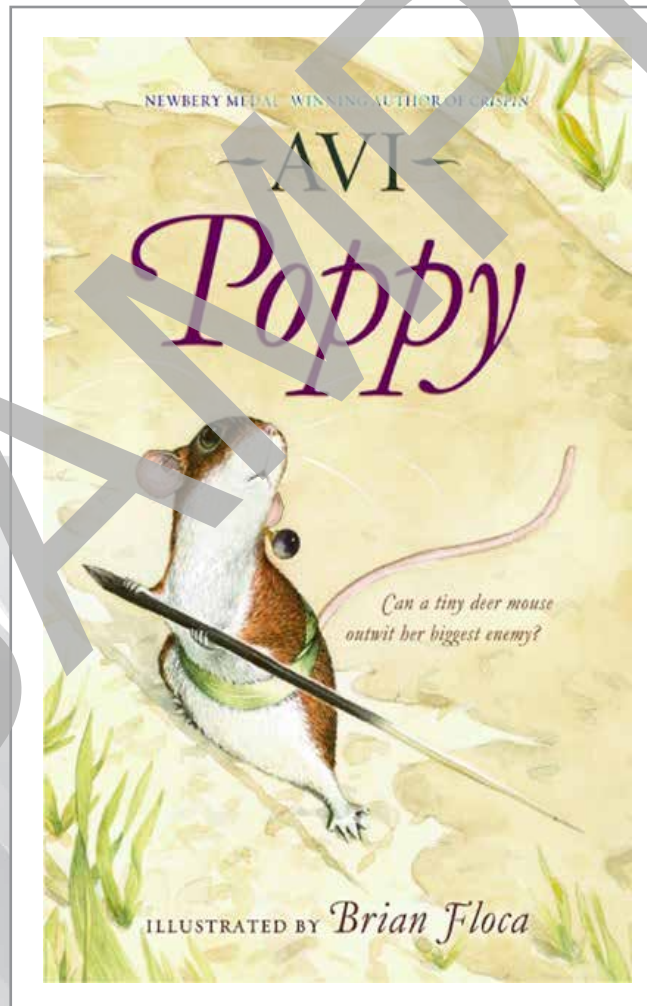
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Poppy

Avi



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Poppy

Avi

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

Irony, conflict, similes,
characterization, fantasy,
story elements, theme,
allegory

Comprehension

Comparison/contrast,
predicting, sequencing

Vocabulary

Compound words, synonyms,
antonyms

Writing

Letter-writing, newspaper,
definition, reporting,
description, journaling

Thinking

Visualizing, sorting, research,
brainstorming

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, drama,
pantomime

Summary of *Poppy*

Poppy is a deer mouse whose extended mouse family is terrorized by a mean-spirited great horned owl, Mr. Ocax. Poppy witnesses her sweetheart's murder on Bannock Hill by Mr. Ocax. Meanwhile, the extended mouse family faces food shortages and starvation unless some of them can move from the Gray House to a new home and food supplies. Poppy's father and the mouse leader, Lungwort, is denied permission to move to New House by Mr. Ocax, who purports to protect the mice from porcupines. When Poppy sets out to New House to discover Mr. Ocax's true motivation, she makes friends with Ereth, a vegetarian porcupine, and discovers that porcupines don't hunt mice and that Mr. Ocax is afraid of a large fake owl mounted near New House. Mr. Ocax dies when Poppy spears him with a porcupine quill and the owl dive-bombs into a salt lick. The mice relocate to an old barn adjacent to a corn field, near New House.

This delightful fantasy is an allegory, teaching how bullies use big lies and how little gals can prevail with a little help from their friends.

About the Author

The author, whose full name is Avi Wortis, writes under the three-letter moniker Avi. Born in 1937, in New York City, he grew up in an artistic environment. Both parents, his grandmother, his great-grandparents, a twin sister and an aunt were writers. Within the extended family were painters, a composer, and others active in music, theater and film. Raised in Brooklyn, his family was active politically in various liberal causes. As a student, he suffered with dysgraphia, a marginal impairment in his writing abilities that caused him to reverse letters or misspell words.

An avid reader, Avi considers this love to have been his first step toward writing professionally. He attended Antioch University (where he studied playwriting as a prelude to his writing career), and earned a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 1964, he earned an M.S.L.S. from Columbia. He worked as a librarian in Performing Arts Research at the New York Public Library from 1962 to 1970 and was an assistant professor and humanities librarian at Trenton State College from 1970 to 1986.

Now writing full-time, Avi interacts with children in talks at schools about his writing. Avi married Joan Gabriner, a weaver, in 1963, divorced, and later married Copelia Kahn, an English professor. He has two children and a stepson.

Other Books by Avi

The Man Who Was Poe (Novel Unit available); *Punch and Judy*; *The Barn*; *The Bird, the Frog, and the Light: A Fable*; *Blue Heron*; *Bright Shadow*; *Captain Grey*; *City of Light/City of Dark: A Comic Book Novel*; *Devil's Race*; *Emily Upham's Revenge: A Massachusetts Adventure*; *Encounter at Easton*; *The Fighting Ground* (Novel Unit available); *The History of Helpless Harry: To Which is Added a Variety of Amusing and Entertaining Adventures*; *Man from the Sky*; *Night Journeys*; *No More Magic*; *Nothing but the Truth* (Novel Unit available); *A Place Called Ugly*; *Romeo and Juliet, Together (and Alive) at Last*; *S.O.R. Losers*; *Smuggler's Island*; *Something Upstairs*; *Sometimes I Think I Hear My Name*; *Tom, Babette & Simon*; *Three Tales of Transformation*; *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* (Novel Unit available); "Who Was That Masked Man, Anyway?"; *Windcatcher*; *Wolf Rider: A Tale of Terror*.

Using Character Webs in the Novel Unit Approach

Attribute webs are simply a visual representation of a character from the novel. They provide a systematic way for students to organize and recap the information they have about a particular character. Attribute webs may be used after reading the novel to recapitulate information about a particular character, or completed gradually as information unfolds. They may be completed individually or as a group project.

One type of character attribute web uses these divisions:

- How a character acts and feels. (How does the character act? How do you think the character feels? How would you feel if this happened to you?)
- How a character looks. (Close your eyes and picture the character. Describe him/her to me.)
- Where a character lives. (Where and when does the character live?)
- How others feel about the character. (How does another specific character feel about our character?)

In group discussion about the characters described in student attribute webs, the teacher can ask for backup proof from the novel. Inferential thinking can be included in the discussion.

Attribute webs need not be confined to characters. They may also be used to organize information about a concept, object, or place.

Attribute Web

The attribute web below will help you gather clues the author provides about a character in the novel. Fill in the blanks with words and phrases which tell how the character acts and looks, as well as what the character says and what others say about him or her.

Acts

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Feels

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Character

Looks

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Says

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

-
5. How does Lungwort discredit Ragweed? *(By criticizing his grammatical usage.)* What do you think of Lungwort's methods? *(Answers will vary.)*
 6. What is Poppy's rationalization for the death of Ragweed? *(He didn't ask Mr. Ocax's permission to be on Bannock Hill.)* How is it reminiscent of Mr. Ocax's rationalization? What do you think of rationalizations?

Supplementary Activities

1. Play a vocabulary game trying to get classmates to recognize and say selected words without using common descriptive words. (Usually comparisons help in the definitions.)
2. Think about the kind of music that you would choose to represent each of the characters in this book. What variations would you use for Chapters 1 and 2?
3. What do you think of the book's illustrations? What do they add to the book?

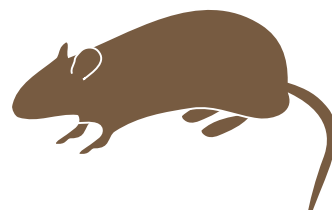
Chapter 3: "Poppy Alone"—Pages 16-24

Vocabulary

pellet (17)	clacked (17)	crevice (18)	haven (18)
pistons (19)	plummeted (20)	careening (21)	catapulted (21)
impudent (22)	lair (22)		

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. How does Poppy figure out her situation and the dangers she faces at the beginning of Chapter 3? *(She checks out the time of day by looking to the east and considering Mr. Ocax's usual comings and goings.)*
2. On page 16, Poppy figures the area she needs to traverse is "the length of four cornfields." How long is that? How do you know? *(The length cannot be determined exactly because there are many different lengths of cornfields.)*
3. Why are there bigger spaces between some of the paragraphs in this chapter? *(The author is moving between Poppy and her point of view and Mr. Ocax and his point of view. The spaces are used between the different points of view.)*
4. Why does Mr. Ocax want to keep the mice terrified? *(He likes the feeling of power. Keeping the mice in one place keeps a ready supply of food for the owl.)*
5. What is your reaction to the illustration on page 19? *(Answers will vary—fear, apprehension for Poppy, speed, acceleration, the dreaded shadow.)*
6. How has Mr. Ocax's anticipation of a meal foiled him again? *(Poppy heard Mr. Ocax's beak clack and took evasive action.)*
7. Why is Poppy particularly bothersome to Mr. Ocax? *(She escapes him twice; never had a mouse done that before.)*
8. What does the red flag mean? *(It is a call for a mouse clan meeting.)* Why is this meeting called? *(Answers will vary.)*



Supplementary Activities

1. How do the animal characters in the book figure things out differently from what you do? Fill in the chart below.

	Animals in the Book	You	Nineteenth-Century Folks	Plains Indians	Eskimos
Time					
Location					
Distance					

2. What are the themes that are emerging in this book? Start a class listing.
3. Continue to fill in a story map with the details of the story as you know them so far.

Chapter 4: "The Emergency Meeting"—Pages 25-35

Vocabulary

lopsided (25)
revulsion (28)

wanly (26)
brethren (31)

delegation (28)

formality (28)

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What is the reason for the emergency meeting? (*The mouse clan has grown too large to be supported in their present environment. They need to move or split into two groups, with one moving to another location.*) What ideas from your science study are relevant here? (*survival of the fittest, cycle of life and death*)
2. How has Lungwort prepared for the meeting? (*He has checked on food shortages, results, and discovered a possible place for relocation.*)
3. What is the one stumbling block in Lungwort's plan? (*They need permission from Mr. Ocax to relocate.*)
4. How does Poppy get into the predicament of having to accompany Lungwort in talking to Mr. Ocax? (*She doesn't look down when the meeting with Mr. Ocax is mentioned.*)
5. What is the "object lesson" from Ragweed's death? (*He didn't ask Mr. Ocax's permission and paid with his life.*) What is an object lesson? (*Usually, an object lesson is a negative event or circumstance which teaches a truth.*) What are some examples of object lessons you've heard about?

A Photo Collage for *Poppy*

Directions: In each of the mat holes, illustrate one or a group of the important animals and places in the book. Include identification sentences in the manner of a photo collage.

