



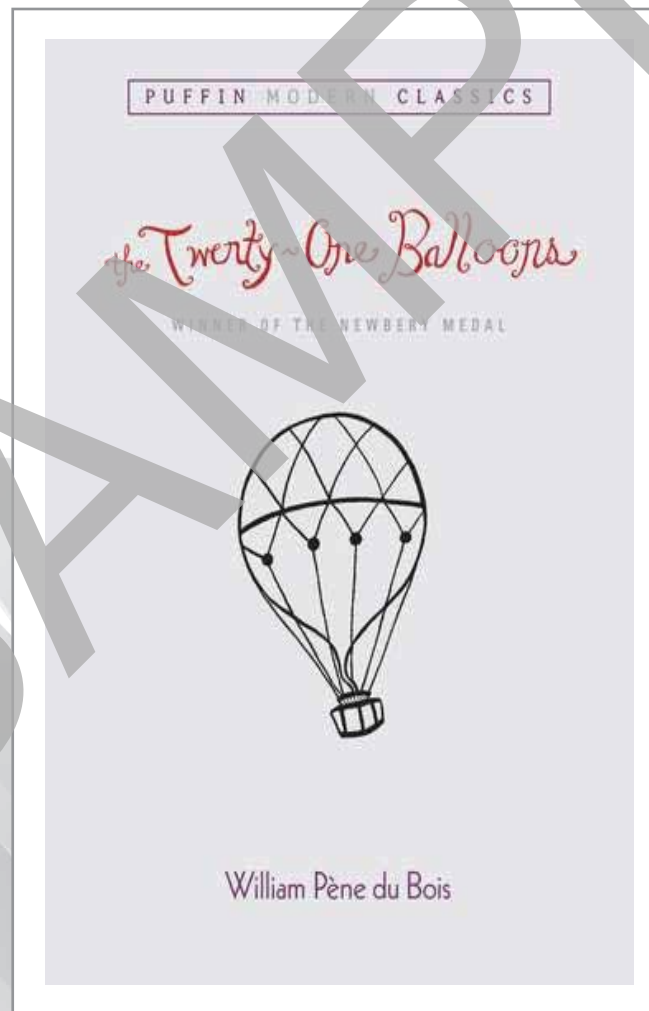
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Twenty-One Balloons

William Pène du Bois



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Twenty- One Balloons

William Pene du Bois

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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Table of Contents

Summary	3
Cross-Curriculum Suggestions	3
Initiating Activities.....	3
Introduction and Ten Chapters.....	11
Each section contains: Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Supplementary Activities	
Culminating Activities	23
Journal/Writing Prompts	23
Vocabulary Activities.....	24
Background Information	26
Bibliographies.....	26
Assessment.....	28

Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, visualization

Comprehension

Predicting, compare/
contrast, cause/effect

Writing

Narrative, descriptive,
persuasive, journals

Vocabulary

Word mapping, classifying

Listening/Speaking

Discussion

Literary Elements

Characterization, story
elements, similes,
protagonist

Summary

Professor William Waterman Sherman retired from teaching arithmetic at a San Francisco boys' school to float around for a year. After designing and having built an elaborate balloon conveyance, he set out from San Francisco amid minimal fanfare. The first days passed pleasantly and then his balloon was burst by annoying pecking sea gulls who caused his beaching on Krakatoa. That island was thought to be uninhabited because of an earlier volcanic eruption. But such was not the case! Professor Sherman met 20 congenial families whose egalitarian society was based on gourmet dining, a vast diamond mine on the island, and dealing with daily rumbling caused by the still active volcano which had caused the earlier explosion.

Just as Professor Sherman was settling into life on the island, the "big one" erupted and the island's population escaped on a balloon-propelled platform as the island disappeared. The families parachuted to safety in various countries, leaving Professor Sherman to crash his now twenty-one balloons in the Atlantic Ocean three weeks after he left San Francisco. He became a national sensation and the U. S. President provided the Presidential train for his triumphant trip to the San Francisco Western American Explorers' Club to which he told his tale.

Cross-Curriculum Suggestions

1. Social Studies: Considering the egalitarian model of the Krakatoans, develop a bill of rights and laws for a new country.
2. Science: Chart the stops Professor Sherman makes on his balloon ride. Also, study weather, volcanoes, and building and designing ideal houses.
3. Math: Estimate food requirements for the balloon journeys. Graph the results.
4. Art and Music: Devise a new flag and a song for the Krakatoans.
5. Health: Study nutrition and food preservation necessary for the balloon journeys.
6. Physical Education: Exercise in limited space. Discuss the results (i.e., problems and solutions).

Initiating Activities

1. Read the Introduction of the book aloud. Have the students make predictions about the book, and supply evidence for their reasoning. (See pages 5-6 of this guide.)
2. Have students complete a K-W-L chart on ballooning. Complete the "Know" column based on prior knowledge of balloons and ballooning. Use the "W" to pose ideas about what you expect to learn in the book. The "L" column is completed after reading the book to summarize what was learned about balloons and ballooning based on the text.

What I KNOW	What I WANT to find out	What I LEARNED

3. Provide a historical account of Krakatoa. As a class, make predictions for a book in which Krakatoa is critical.
4. Ask students to focus on Professor Sherman and the facts given in the introduction. How do you judge his thinking? What kind of story has such a protagonist?
5. Show a video of *Around the World in Eighty Days* or read parts of the book. What do you expect from a book reminiscent of *Around the World in Eighty Days* and other travelogues?

Using Predictions in the Novel Unit Approach

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how a conflict will be resolved, which details will be important to the plot, which details will help fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses as they read the novel.

As students work on their 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 to help us make predictions? Why are some predictions more likely to be accurate than others?

Create a chart for recording predictions. This could be either an individual or class activity. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, students can review and correct their previous predictions about plot and characters as necessary.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own prior knowledge.

Apply any new information (i.e., from class discussion) that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions:

-
4. On page 152, the narrator comments on the noise levels for various kinds of transport. Rate various kinds of transportation, including 19th century and modern, for noise level.
 5. Use an atlas to trace the Professor's journey to Krakatoa. (*page 138*)
 6. Using comic strip-type frames, explain how the giant balloon life raft would work. (*1. Each family would assemble at their balloon station. 2. Hydrogen hoses would be connected to inflate the balloons. 3. Once the lifting power of the filled balloons was strong enough, the balloon platform would break loose from the hydrogen tanks on the ground. 4. The platform would be kept level by adding hydrogen to the balloons on the low side, using a smaller hydrogen tank on board. 5. Families would exit in family parachutes over chosen countries.*)

Chapter X: "What Goes Up Must Come Down"—Pages 155-180

Vocabulary

gusto 155	minstrels 156	sinister 159	bedlam 164
catapulted 165	concussions 166	rationing 170	meager 170
perishable 171	melodrama 171	vaudeville 178	

Discussion Questions

1. How did Professor Sherman entertain the Krakatoans on "D" Day of the Month of Lamb? (*He spoke for over three hours about incidents in San Francisco.*)
2. Why was it fortunate that Professor Sherman's hosts were all listening to him after lunch on that day? (*The volcano erupted violently and all the Krakatoans could quickly get on the escape platform.*)
3. How was the saying, "The best laid plans of mice and men can oft go awry" appropriate to this chapter? (*Page 164, "The first moments on the platform were bedlam." Though the Krakatoans had practiced escaping on the platform, they experienced a lot of panic, disarray, and disorganization when it was a real escape.*)
4. How did the story end? (*Professor Sherman planned to sell his diamond cuff links and have another balloon built on which to spend a full year.*)

Supplementary Activity

1. Conduct a simile search in this chapter.

Page 160, "like a blow on the head"
Page 164, "like a huge plum pudding"
Page 168, "like flapjacks in a skillet"
Page 174, "like dogs in garbage cans"

Then brainstorm possible similes to describe the first night the Krakatoans spent on their platform over the volcano.