

Novel·Ties

SKINNYBONES

BARBARA PARK



A Study Guide

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LEARNING LINKS

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For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide to use in conjunction with the book *Skinnybones* consists of lessons for guided reading. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

In a homogeneous classroom, whole class instruction with one title is appropriate. In a heterogeneous classroom, reading groups should be formed: each group works on a different novel at its reading level. Depending upon the length of time devoted to reading in the classroom, each novel, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in three to six weeks.

Begin using NOVEL-TIES for reading development by distributing the novel and a folder to each student. Distribute duplicated pages of the study guide for students to place in their folders. After examining the cover and glancing through the book, students can participate in several pre-reading activities. Vocabulary questions should be considered prior to reading a chapter; all other work should be done after the chapter has been read. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. The classroom teacher should determine the amount of work to be assigned, always keeping in mind that readers must be nurtured and that the ultimate goal is encouraging student's love of reading.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits formed by practice in focusing on interpretive comprehension and literary techniques will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Preview the book by reading the title and the author's name, and by looking at the cover illustration. What do you think the book will be about? Do you think it will be humorous or serious? Do you think it takes place in present or past time? Have you ever read any other book by the same author?
2. Many people call baseball the national pastime of America. Do you understand the rules of baseball? Set up a panel discussion on baseball with a group of "experts" from your class. Each person on the panel will explain one of the topics listed below. At the end, the panel members will answer questions from the class.
 - Who are the players on a baseball team?
 - How is a baseball field laid out?
 - How is the game of baseball played?
 - How is baseball scored?
3. Learn the song "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" and practice it with your class.
4. Have you ever gotten yourself into a situation you couldn't handle? Was it one where you knew you were going to be embarrassed? How did you act? Were you able to get yourself out of the difficulty? Did you do better than you expected? Looking back, are you glad or sorry that you had to go through with something you did not want to do?
5. What do you think is funny? Make a list of the people you think are funny—your friends and relatives and people on television. Compare your list with those of other people in your class. Talk about what makes a person or a situation funny. Is it what happens? Is it what someone does? Is it what someone says? Is it the way someone says things? Can you think of any times when you worried that it might be cruel to laugh at something or someone?
6. What do you think you would do if someone challenged you to a contest you knew you would lose? Would you try to avoid it, or would you agree to do it? Who would you ask to help you decide?
7. **Cooperative Learning Activity:** Work with a small, cooperative learning group to prepare a choral reading of the poem "Casey At the Bat," a narrative poem written by Ernest L. Thayer. Decide which voices should read solo sections and which voices should read in unison. Rehearse together in preparation for reading the poem to your class.
8. Read the Background Information on the Little League on page two of this study guide and have a class discussion on the topic. Discuss the pros and cons of organized athletic teams for young people.

Chapters 1 – 3 (cont.)

Questions:

1. Why did Alex dump the kitty litter on the kitchen floor?
2. How did Mother outsmart Alex over the kitty litter mess?
3. Why did Fluffy get sick?
4. How did Alex become class clown?
5. How did Alex feel about T.J. Stoner when he first met him? How did T.J. feel about Alex? Why do you think both boys felt as they did?
6. Why did Alex resent getting the Little League award for Most Improved Player?

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do you think Alex's humor appealed to children more than it did to adults? Do you think he was funny?
2. How do you think Alex felt about himself?
3. Do you think Alex's father really understood how his son felt about Little League?

Literary Devices:

- I. *Allusion*—An allusion in a book is a reference to a well-known historical, mythological, religious, or literary event. What is Alex's mother alluding to in the following statement:

If you were Pinocchio right now we could saw off your nose and have enough firewood to last the winter.

- II. *Point of View*—Point of view in a book refers to the person telling the story. How is the language in *Skinnybones* typical of a story told by a young boy such as Alex? Give an example.
