

Curriculum Guide

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Common Core Connections: Grades 3-6

3rd Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7

Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

4th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3

Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.9

Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

5th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3

Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7

Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).

6th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9

Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.



Discussion & Comprehension Questions

Chapters 1-5

Chapter 1

“Even people who can ignore KEEP OUT are probably afraid of DANGER. And there are always people who will be fooled by THIS MEANS YOU into thinking someone specifically wrote the sign for them. But that’s not the kind of girl I am.” (p. 1)

- Why does Dagmar see the “NO TRESPASSING” sign on the fence as an invitation?
- Describe the forest surrounding Dagmar.
- Where did Dagmar’s dad find the Word-a-Day Calendar?
- Who is “the gnome”?
- What does Santi say he is afraid of?
- According to Trent, what is “unobtainium”?

“... a lot of people waste things, so why not put those things to use?” (p. 5)

- What is the tug that Dagmar feels on her ankle?
- What does Dagmar see in the forest that makes her forget about Santi?
- Why does Dagmar decide to run away?
- What almost crushes Dagmar and Santi?
- What stops the dogs from chasing Dagmar and Santi?
- Who do you think set up the log trap?
- Describe the boy who appears with the dogs.

Chapter 2

- Why does Dagmar and Santi's room smell so bad?
- Why do you think Leya tells Dagmar that if she wants new summer clothes, she'll have to get them from the Salvation Army?
- Who hired Trent to build a tiny house?
- Why does Dagmar love the tiny house?
- What do Dagmar's parents say instead of "divorced"? Why does Dagmar think they used these words instead?
- What is Dagmar's mom's job?
- Why do Trent and Kristen at first ask Dagmar to call them by their names instead of "mom" and "dad"?
- What, according to Dagmar, is the good part about living with Trent? What is the hard part?
- Where is Kristen working?
- Why does the tiny house belong to them? What happened to the people who asked Trent to build it?

“Bigger isn’t necessarily better,” he said. “Think of it as your tiny mansion.” (p. 17)

- Why does the idea of living in a tiny house upset Dagmar?
- How long does Trent say they will be living in the tiny house?
- What happens as Dagmar leaves to go outside? How does she feel?
- When Dagmar explains, “Unfortunately, some things can’t be put back together with a screwdriver,” what kinds of other broken things could she be thinking about?

Chapter 3

- What does Santi tell Trent and Leya that Dagmar told him not to tell?

“I think he’s afraid that if he keeps the thoughts in, they’ll die of loneliness.” (p. 19)

- Why do you think Leya is worried about someone discovering they are staying in the forest?
- What do they name the house?
- What does Trent call the place in which they were staying?
- Describe the “compound.”
- Why do Trent and Leya say no to roasting marshmallows?
- What kinds of things does Leya enjoy making? What kinds of things does Trent enjoy making?

- What is Trent trying to build around their compound?
- What are Dagmar's chores?
- What is Dagmar's plan to get home?

“She had planted seedlings, but I was growing unhappiness.” (p. 26)

Chapter 4

- Why does Dagmar hate the boy when he enters the compound?
- How do Trent and Leya react when the boy tells them his parent's names?
- Why do you think Blake comes down to the compound?
- Why is Blake's father famous?

“He changed life for everyone on the planet without making a single thing you can touch.” (p. 32)

- Why does Dagmar dislike Leya's burritos?
- Why does Dagmar like to sleep outside?

“I didn't want to change the world. I would have been happy with changing even one thing for one person: me.” (p. 34)

Chapter 5

- Why does Dagmar have trouble falling asleep?
- Compare how Trent makes burritos to how Leya makes burritos. Which does Dagmar like best?

- How do they take showers?
- How does Dagmar sabotage the milk and the granola?
- How does Dagmar sabotage Leya's garden?
- Why does Dagmar hide from Santi?
- What kind of trap does Dagmar see hanging in a tree?
- Who do you think is setting the traps?
- Who does Dagmar hear arguing in the forest?





Chapters 6–10

Chapter 6

- How do you think Blake feels when he finds Dagmar on his property again?
- Why does Blake throw the firecracker towards the arguing adults?
- How do the dogs react when Dagmar lands on Blake?
- Do you think the adults know that Blake threw the firecracker?
- Why does Dagmar agree to go with Blake to his house?
- What is Dagmar's reaction when she first really sees Blake's house?
- Describe what Blake's house looks like, according to Dagmar.

“You’ve seen one crumpled-aluminum-foil house, you’ve seen them all.” (p. 49)

- In which ways is Blake's house like where you live? In which ways is it different?
- Why do you think Dagmar thinks about Leya's old computer as Blake shows her his amazing house?
- Why is Blake's house so cold?
- How do you think Blake feels about living in his house?
- Who do you think the giant man is?

Chapter 7

- What is Vladimir's job?
- Why does Dagmar want Vladimir to drop her off on the road instead of taking her all the way back to the compound?
- What does Dagmar realize when Leya hands her a bowl of milk and granola?
- How does Trent react to the gritty granola and sour milk? How does Leya react?
- Describe how Dagmar makes the baskets.
- Why do you think Dagmar makes the second, bigger basket?

Chapter 8

- How does Dagmar lure Santi to her trap?
- How does Santi feel when the basket falls on him?
- Why does Dagmar decide to trap Santi?
- Why does Dagmar refuse to release Santi from the trap?
- Do you think Dagmar knew how upset Santi would get?
- Why does Trent have trouble believing Dagmar set the trap?
- Why do you think Dagmar insists on reminding people that Santi is her HALF brother?
- How does Trent decide to punish Dagmar?
- What kinds of books does Dagmar like?
- What does Dagmar find in the drawers of the tiny house?

- How much was Trent supposed to earn from selling the tiny house? What was that money going to be used for?

Chapter 9

- Who shows up at the compound the next morning?
- Where does Blake ask Dagmar to go?
- What is a “manny”?
- What does Vladimir say to Trent that convinces him to let Dagmar go to the mall?
- Why does it upset Dagmar so much when Leya and Trent insist that Santi should go to the mall, too?

“Do you really need a bodyguard?” I asked Blake.

“It makes my dad feel better,” he said with a shrug. “I think he’s really trying to protect me from myself.” (p. 75)

- Why does Dagmar feel “ratty and gross” when they get to the mall?
- When Blake tells Vladimir to give Santi and Dagmar money to spend, why does Dagmar try to give it back?
- Why does Dagmar suddenly feel mad and envious of Blake?
- Why do Dagmar and Santi eat so much at the food court?
- Why does Santi buy so much food?
- Why does Dagmar think Blake needs a word-a-day calendar?

Chapter 10

- Why does Dagmar follow Blake, even though she admits she has “zero reasons to trust” him?

“I was tempted to run off to security and report my crazy friend. Wait—WAS he a friend? There was no point jumping to conclusions.” (p. 83)

- Do you think Vladimir REALLY expects Blake to run off? Are Blake and Vladimir really playing a game?

“We can’t make this too easy. He WANTS us to try to escape. Otherwise his job would be boring. Remember, he’s trained as a bodyguard, not a babysitter. (p. 86)

- Why do you think Blake’s parents REALLY hired Vladimir?
- What does Blake say to Dagmar that makes her furious?





Chapters 11–16

Chapter 11

- Where does Dagmar end up after running away from Blake and Santi?
- How many times do Dagmar's friends text her? How does that make Dagmar feel?
- Why doesn't Dagmar want Kristen to know that Blake is from a famous family?
- What does Dagmar hope Kristen will say or do after she finds out about Trent's money problems?
- Why does Dagmar delete the pictures her friends sent her?
- Describe what Dagmar sees when she leaves the empty store.

Chapter 12

- Why do you think Dagmar decides she needs to rescue Santi from Blake before ending the challenge?
- Who ends up grabbing Santi away from Blake?
- Why do you think the challenge is so important to Blake?
- Why does Dagmar decide to crash into the planter?
- How does Dagmar finally stop her slide down the escalator?

Chapter 13

“... even though Trent always told me there was no shame in getting caught by security guards, there was no benefit to surrendering.” (p. 106)

- Why are people running away from the escalators?
- What does Blake yell out that surprises Dagmar?
- Who ends up winning the challenge/game?
- Why does Dagmar think Vladimir might want Blake to lose?

“I invited you because I thought you liked escaping too.” (p. 111)

- Is Blake correct? Does Dagmar actually enjoy escaping, just like he does?

“It gave me a weird, shivery feeling to think that Blake, of all people, actually knew something about me.” (p. 11)

- What does Dagmar think will happen if Trent and Leya find out what happened at the mall?
- Why do you think Blake put his number into Dagmar’s phone?

“There are two parts to work: the work itself and the reward you get from it. Some people just work so they can get money and buy things, and the work itself may not be anything they enjoy. Other people find satisfaction in the task itself.” (p. 114)

- Compare Trent’s view that “hard work is its own reward” to Kristen’s view that “money is the reward for hard work.”

- Why does Dagmar remove the spark plug from the generator? Do you think her reasons are strong or weak?

“Usually, a running engine helps you move. In this particular instance, I hoped stopping it would make us go.” (p. 117)

Chapter 14

- Why do you think Dagmar feels “funny” about leaving Trent to deal with the spark plug and Santi? Can you think of another word for this “funny” feeling?
- How does Dagmar feel about the wall Trent is building?
- Describe how the relationship between Dagmar and Blake is changing. Has it reached the level of friendship? Why or why not?
- How does Blake feel about his father?

“And then, as he turned and walked deeper into the forest, I realized something: Blake was trying to make friends. For him, it was like each dare or challenge was a test to see if I was good enough.” (p. 124)

- What does Dagmar decide she has to do in order for Blake to agree to be friends with her?
- Describe the contests Blake invents to “test” Dagmar in the forest.
- What happens when Dagmar beats Blake at arm wrestling?

Chapter 15

- What does Dagmar decide is the reason why Blake is a “sore loser”? Do you think this is the only reason?
- What happens to Dagmar as she tries to find her way back to the compound?
- Describe Blake’s uncle.
- What is a “frenemy”? Why does Dagmar feel like Blake might be her “frenemy”?

“Just because you’re paranoid, doesn't mean they aren’t out to get you.” (p. 132)

- Why do you think Lyndon makes all the traps?
- Compare and contrast Lyndon’s house with Blake’s house. How are the two houses different? Are there any ways in which they are similar?
- How many people live on Blake’s family’s land?
- According to Lyndon, whose ideas did Reynold (Blake’s father) use to make all his money?

“I wish someone could help him realize his products are doing more harm than good. He’s creating a world where everything is done for you, without realizing he’s making people helpless in the process.” (p. 135)

Chapter 16

“But even though we argued sometimes, and my little half brother was as annoying as an alarm clock without an off button, at least we didn’t try to hurt each other.” (p. 136)

- Why does Dagmar feel guilty about tattling to her mom about Trent and how they are living?
- Why does Dagmar decide to walk down the road?
- How does Dagmar feel when she sees the pictures and videos from Imani’s party?
- Why doesn’t Dagmar tell her friends the truth about Blake?

“But it also felt dumb to try to make myself sound cooler just because I knew someone rich and famous. Trent and Leya always said that was a cheap way to try to make yourself more interesting, and I suppose I thought they were right about that.” (p. 144)

- Why does Dagmar text Blake, even though she thinks he’s a jerk?

“... doing nothing with someone else was better than doing it alone.” (p. 145)

- How are Dagmar’s friendships with her friends in Oakland changing? How is her friendship with Blake changing?





Chapters 17–22

Chapter 17

- Why is Dagmar so certain that Blake is lying about getting caught in one of Lyndon’s traps?
- Explain why Blake acts angry about admitting he got caught in Lyndon’s pit trap.
- How do you think Blake feels, knowing his aunt and uncle are both angry with his dad?
- Describe Blake’s Aunt Penelope.

Chapter 18

“Animals have pure spirits and love unconditionally,” she said.
“It’s we humans who have bad motivations.” (p. 158)

- Explain why Blake doesn’t try to help his father, aunt, and uncle stop fighting until he meets Dagmar.

“Sometimes too much togetherness has a way of making us not like our loved ones.” (p. 159)

- Describe what happened between Penelope, Lyndon, and Blake’s father to make them so angry at each other.
- Why does Blake think his father won’t care about making peace with Penelope and Lyndon?

“There’s nothing wrong with being nice.” I said.
“I don’t think he has time for that,” said Blake.” (p. 161)

Chapter 19

- What does Dagmar mean when she says she is “feeding the forest”?
- What is Dagmar’s REAL reason for “feeding the forest”?

“... even when I was trying to do something right, I couldn’t help doing everything wrong.” (p. 164)

- How does Dagmar hurt her ankle and hip?
- Compare the ways Leya shows her anger to how Trent shows his anger.
- Why does Dagmar wish Trent would just yell at her?
- Explain why Dagmar starts crying when Trent asks her, “You know our family needs that food, right?”
- How does Dagmar try to fix the things she sabotaged?

“Well, what you did was wrong, too, Trent—taking me away from my friends and making me live in the middle of nowhere!” I said. And all because you made bad decisions and you’re bad at business, so you can’t afford to pay the rent!” (p. 169)

- What makes Trent finally start to show his anger?
- Compare Dagmar’s feelings about the papers to Trent’s feelings. Does Dagmar have a right to look at them without asking? Does Trent have a right not to tell Dagmar and Santi everything about his business?

“Life isn’t as simple as it seems when you’re twelve years old, Dagmar. Sometimes things don’t work out the way we want them to.” (p. 170)

- Is Dagmar only angry at Trent? Who else might she be angry at?

“I’m sorry we can’t all earn lots of money like your mom. But we all make choices. I chose to be with you. That may not count for much right now, but it’s all I’ve got.” (p. 170)

- Describe how Dagmar’s feelings towards Trent, Leya, and Santi are changing.
- How does Dagmar show Trent she’s sorry?
- Dagmar and Trent promise each other to make different choices. Explain why it is important for both of them to promise to change?

Chapter 20

- What startles Dagmar when she goes for her walk?
- Why does Dagmar run away from the cows?

- Who follows Dagmar through the gate?

“It was as if my guilty conscience had become real and taken the form of a five-year-old boy with boogers under his fingernails.” (p.

- When Dagmar and Santi get to Blake’s house, who answers the door?
- Compare what Dagmar EXPECTED Blake’s dad to look like to how Blake’s dad REALLY looks.
- How does Dagmar feel about all the touchscreens in Blake’s house?
- How are Dagmar’s feelings about Helen Wheels changing as she sees more of Blake’s “smart home”?

“Money is weird, I thought. It changed the way most people behaved. Vladimir obviously needed the money Blake’s family was paying him, or he wouldn’t have taken orders from a rude twelve-year old. And maybe, just maybe, Blake wouldn’t have been so rude if his dad didn’t have so much money.” (p. 180)

Chapter 21

- Describe the swimming pool at Blake’s house.
- What kind of snacks does Blake’s mom bring out?
- How does Dagmar feel about eating the oyster?
- What does Dagmar suddenly smell? What does she think it is at first?
- What does Dagmar see that makes her realize what the smell REALLY is?
- What do Blake and Dagmar see on the screen in the living room?
- Whose house is closest to the wildfire? Whose house is farthest away?

Chapter 22

- How do Dagmar's feelings about Blake's house change after the power goes out?
- What stops Blake and Dagmar from leaving to rescue Aunt Penelope?
- How do Blake and Dagmar manage to get out of the house?
- How are Aunt Penelope's animals behaving?
- Where do Blake and Dagmar finally find Penelope?
- What does Penelope insist on bringing with her?
- How does Dagmar manage to bring the cat with them?

“Behind the cottage was a towering orange wall that reached to the treetops and gave off a light like a settling sun. Penelope's house looked small and completely doomed.” (p. 198)





Chapters 23–28

Chapter 23

“Fear of being burned to a crisp is a powerful motivator.” (p.190)

- What happens each time the power comes on in Blake’s house?
- Why can’t everyone just drive out of the forest and away from the fire?
- Describe Reynold’s feelings about saving his sister and brother from the fire.

“He turned his back on you,” said Penelope, “Because you turned your back on him, and because of what you represent. If you asked him, I think he would come.” (p. 202)

- Why does Blake’s father lie about putting a security camera on Lyndon’s land?
- When Blake’s father finds Lyndon on the video, what is Lyndon doing?
- Where does everyone decide to wait for the helicopter?
- Why doesn’t the helicopter land to pick them up?

Chapter 24

“In the living room, Reynold stared at the useless tablet in his hands, his expression completely blank, and suddenly I saw how he would have needed his brother and sister.” (p. 210)

- How does Reynold react after the helicopter flies off and his house no longer has any power?

“You constructed this perfect glass fortress in the forest, and now what? When the power goes out, you might as well be living in a cooking pot, waiting to boil.” (p. 211)

- Compare the personalities of Reynold, Penelope, and Lyndon. How are they different? How are they similar?
- What is the source of the loud THUMP sound?
- As Dagmar watches Reynold, Penelope, and Lyndon start arguing again, what does she realize about Santi?
- Why is Dagmar a good choice to take charge of their escape from the smart house? What about her personality and skills makes her a good leader?
- Who has the idea to jump into the pool to get wet?
- How does Dagmar feel about the fact that Reynold, Penelope, and Lyndon are STILL arguing while everyone else is getting ready to escape the fire?

“It made me sad to think about how this forest, which must have taken hundreds or even thousands of years to grow, was going to get wiped out in just one day.” (p. 216)

- Why is Reynold sad to see the forest burn? Compare his feelings to Dagmar's.
- Why does Lyndon suddenly disappear?

Chapter 25

- What does Reynold say to make Summery, the cook, decide to quit her job?
- Why is Reynold so willing to leave Lyndon in the pit while everyone else escapes?
- If Santi had been the one to fall into the pit, do you think Dagmar would have been willing to leave him behind?
- What idea does Vladimir have to get Lyndon out of the pit?
- As they are pulling Lyndon out of the pit, what does Reynold do to make Vladimir also decide to quit his job?
- What makes Penelope declare that she is quitting as well, telling her brothers, "You're both one hundred percent bananas"?
- Once they find Trent and Leya, what keeps everyone from finally escaping the fire?

Chapter 26

- How do Lyndon and Reynold get stuck in the fence?
- What else do they discover needs to be rescued?

"...maybe you didn't always have to like the people you loved, or even think their ideas were any good—if they were family, you just had to back them up." (pp. 231-232)

- Who takes charge of rescuing the cows?
- How do the people and dogs work together to guide the cows to safety?
- Describe how Trent's wall helps save the cows.
- Who comes up with the plan to get everyone to safety?

Chapter 27

"I had expected the grown-ups to say NO or BUT or WAIT A MINUTE, THAT WILL NEVER WORK, but instead they listened and accepted my plan without suggesting a single change. (p. 236)

- Why does Dagmar wish the adults had changed or disagreed with her plan?
- How do they get the water from the pump to the compound? What is the water for?
- Why doesn't Reynold want to go inside the tiny house? How does Leya save the day?
- Once all the people are in the tiny house or the truck, what stops them from leaving?
- How does Dagmar finally get the cows to move?
- When they finally start driving down the road, what does Vladimir see?

Chapter 28

- Although everyone makes it safely past the burning tree, how is Dagmar feeling about their escape?
- When Dagmar looks out the back window, what does she see?

- What does Dagmar decide to do?
- Why do Vladimir, Blake, and Dagmar think it is better to keep driving than to stop and put the fire out?





Chapters 29–31

Chapter 29

- Why does Blake crawl out the truck window to help Dagmar instead of staying safely in the truck?
- Discuss how Blake has changed since we first met him at the start of the story.

“Be careful!” scolded Leya as I scrambled back down.

Why do parents always say stuff like that? Who WOULDN'T be careful going down a ladder into the back of a moving vehicle?” (p. 255)

- Who manages to get the bucket back after Dagmar drops it?
- Why are the firefighters and TV news reporters so surprised to see the truck, tiny house, and cows?

Chapter 30

- Where does everyone spend the first night after escaping the fire?
- Did the experience of escaping a forest fire change Reynold's personality or behavior?
- What is Dagmar surprised to learn about Vladimir and Summery?

“You did very good job. I think you would be excellent bodyguard.”

That was pretty great to hear. After all, Vladimir was one of the few grown-ups I knew who really had his act together.” (p. 263)

- When Blake is about to leave, what does Dagmar expect him to do? What does he do instead?
- What is Kristen’s reaction when she hears about the forest fire and Dagmar’s escape?
- How does Dagmar feel when her mother tells her they will live in Zurich, Switzerland?

“It gave me a funny feeling to see everything burned down to the ground. I had hated being there at the start of the summer, but now that it was all gone, I had a lonely, empty feeling inside, like we were truly homeless.” (p. 267)

- Compare Dagmar’s feelings about seeing the burned-out compound again to her feelings when she sees Blake’s ruined mansion.

“... something can always be salvaged from even the worst disaster.” (p. 268)

- Why are Penelope and Lyndon willing to try to go into business with Reynold?
- Why doesn’t Trent follow Dagmar’s suggestion to stay in the forest and help build houses?
- Why does Dagmar think it makes more sense to stay in the forest?

Chapter 31

- Describe Dagmar's plan to live in Oakland while making sure Trent is able to take the job building houses for Blake's family.
- Who do you think changed more over the summer: Dagmar or Blake?

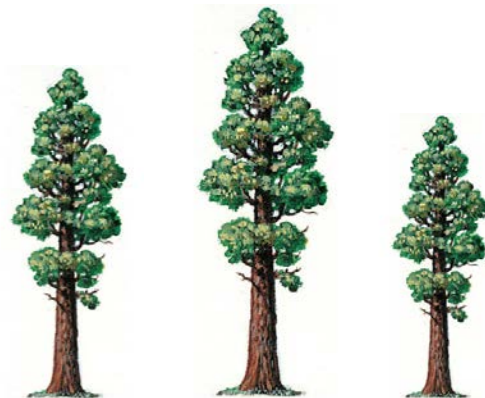
"...he said, "You know, I couldn't have done what you did during the fire. You were smarter than all the adults and braver than everybody." (p. 273)

- Why do you think Reynold, Lyndon, and Penelope are unable to get along?

"Rich people are ridiculous. I felt sorry for them, honestly. I mean, nobody's family is perfect, but sometimes they're all we've got. And after getting to know the Bertholds, I realized Blake's life was a lot weirder than mine." (p. 274)

- Why does Dagmar keep the locking mechanism from Blake's ruined mansion in the forest?

". . . I decided it was a sculpture formed by the catastrophe. It was a symbol of what happens when you keep people out but also when you let them in." (p. 275)





Along-the-Way Vocabulary

Chapter 1

primeval of or relating to the earliest ages in the history of the world (p. 2)

Chapter 2

copacetic in excellent order (p. 12)

oxymoron a figure of speech containing apparently contradictory terms (p. 17)

Chapter 3

alleged questionably true (p. 21)

compound a fenced or walled-in area containing a group of buildings (p. 22)

sabotage 1) destruction of an employer's property or disruption of production by discontented workers.
2) destructive or obstructive action carried out by non-soldiers to hinder a nation's war effort
3a) An action intended to impair or damage
3b) intentional subversion (p. 25)

subversion an organized effort to overthrow or undermine a government by persons working secretly from within (p. 25)

Chapter 4

archaeologist scientist who studies the material remains of past human life and antiquities (p. 28)

antiquities relics or monuments of ancient times (p. 28)

Chapter 6

prodigious causing amazement or wonder (p. 48)

nonpareil having no equal (p. 48)

anomalous deviating from what is normal, usual, or expected (p. 48)

Chapter 7

pliable bending freely without breaking (p. 57)

Chapter 8

irony something contrary to what was expected and therefore amusing (p. 61)

surreal possessing a dream-like or irrational quality (p. 63)

hypocrite a person who acts in contradiction to her stated beliefs (p. 68)

Chapter 11

discombobulated upset or confused (p. 89)

aggravated angry or displeased (p. 89)

Pyrrhic victory a battle won at too great a cost to the victor (p. 90)

Chapter 12

prognostication foretelling from signs (p. 101)

Chapter 13

pandemonium a wild uproar of anger or excitement in a crowd of people (p. 110)

Chapter 15

utterly carried to the utmost point or the highest degree (p. 130)

Chapter 16

charade an empty or deceptive act (p. 139)

charades getting someone to guess something without using words (p. 139)

Chapter 17

soliloquy a speech (usually in a play) where a character talks to herself (p. 148)

Chapter 18

analogous similar or comparable to something else (p. 157)

Chapter 19

disconsolate without consolation or solace; hopelessly unhappy; inconsolable (p. 164)

Chapter 21

natatorium an indoor swimming pool (p. 182)

Dagmar day maiden (Old Norse) (p. 188)

beatific having a blissful appearance (p. 196)

Chapter 26

bovine the characteristic of placidity or dullness (p. 231)

Chapter 28

beeves plural of beef (p. 248)

Chapter 30

habitable capable of being lived in (p. 267)

Along-the-Way Vocabulary

WORDS are among the many things that spark Dagmar's curiosity. For each chapter containing one or more of Dagmar's new words:

1. Write down the word.
2. Copy Dagmar's definition.
3. Offer one idea about why YOU think Dagmar likes the word.
4. EXTRA: Write down and define a word that YOU like from the story.

Word: _____

Definition: _____

Why does Dagmar like this word? _____

Word: _____

Definition: _____

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Definition: _____

Why does Dagmar like this word? _____

Word: _____

Definition: _____

Why does Dagmar like this word? _____



Comprehension & Exploration Activities

Graphic Organizers

- Venn Diagram: Enemies, Frenemies, Friends
- Character Study: Dagmar
- Story Timeline

Tiny House Design

From Past to Present: Indigenous People of California's Redwood Forests

Map It Out

Creating Art from Found Objects

Writing Prompts

Thematic At-Home/Virtual Learning: Resources and Ideas

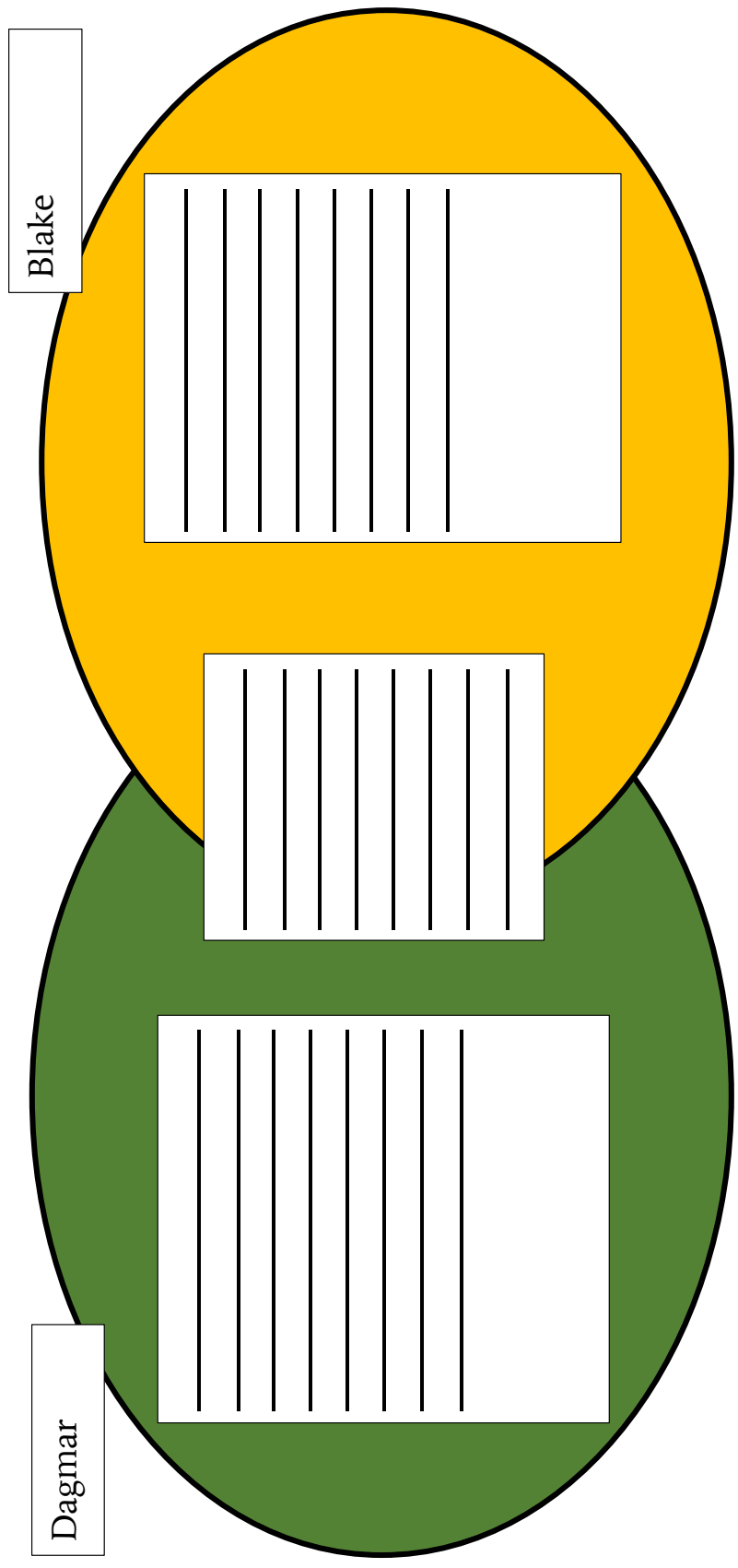
About the Author

Name _____

Enemies, Frenemies, Friends

When Dagmar first meets Blake, she's sees him as an enemy. As they get to know each other she begins to see ways that they're kind of similar.

In the venn diagram below, list the personality traits and behaviors that make Dagmar and Blake so different, and then in the middle list the ways that they are more alike.

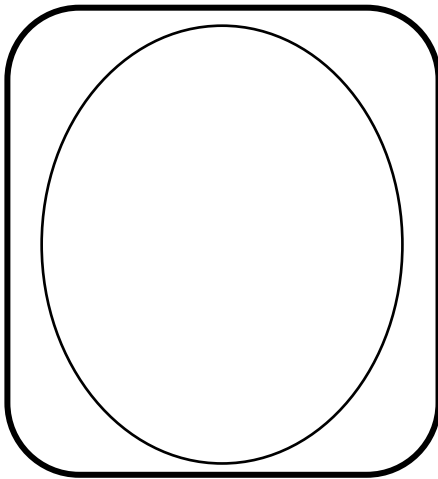


Name: _____

Character Study: Dagmar

In *The Tiny Mansion*, the story is told from Dagmar's point of view. We get to learn about her family, the things that make her angry and sad, and the things that make her happy. Dagmar seems like a real person because she isn't perfect. She makes mistakes and bad choices, but she also does amazing things.

Complete the Character Study below. Use details from the book to be as specific as you can.



Draw Dagmar

Character traits: What kind of person is Dagmar?
What are her faults? What are her strengths?

Family members:

Where is Dagmar from?

Where is she living
now?

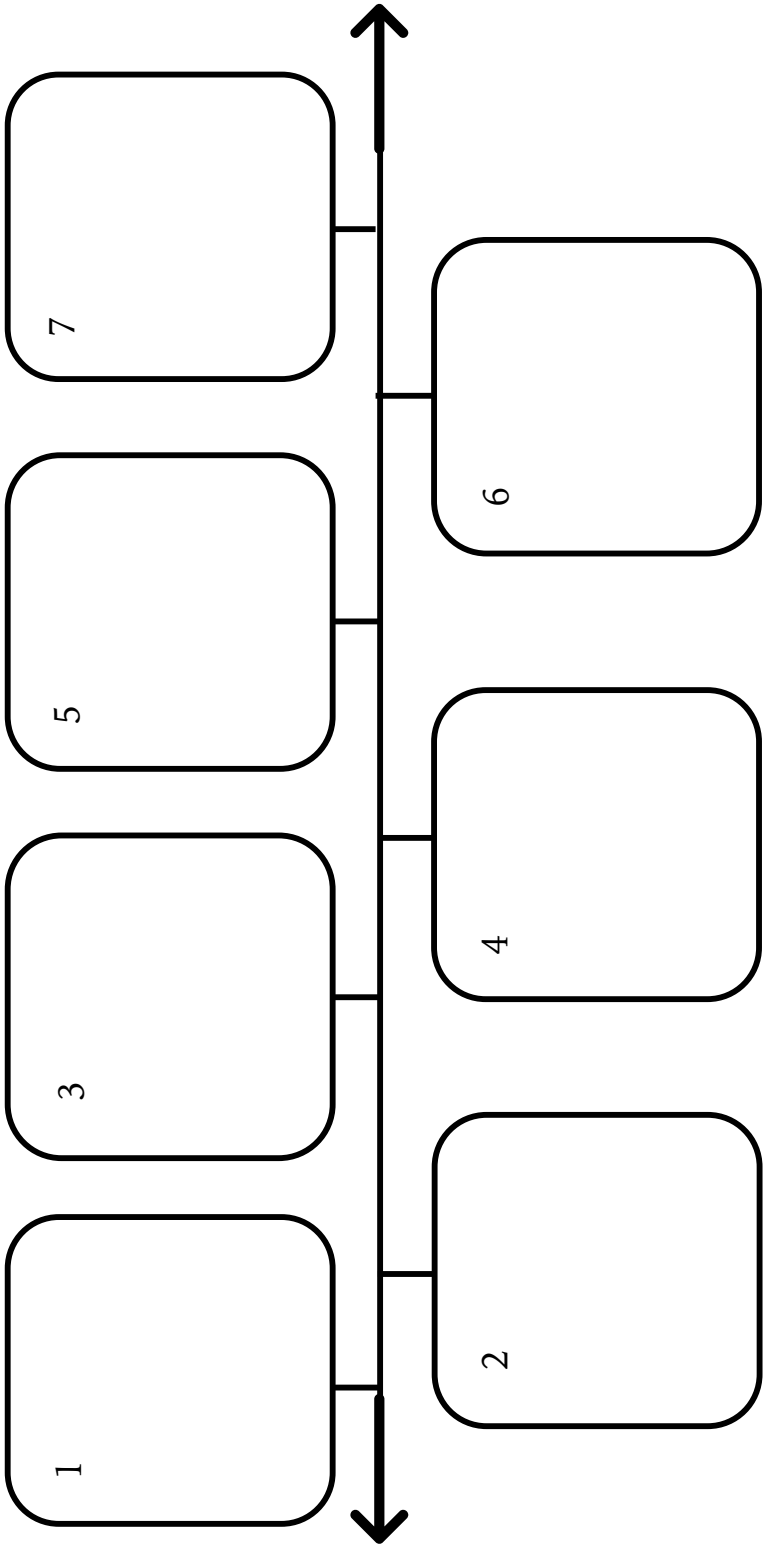
Where does her mom
live?

Dagmar's favorite things:

How does Dagmar change by the end of *the book*?

Name _____

The Tiny Mansion: A Story Timeline





Tiny House Design

Topic	Creative Writing, Art
Purpose	Using inspiration from <i>The Tiny Mansion</i> , design a tiny house that meets your needs and shows your personality
Key Questions	<p>Need vs Want: Which elements do you NEED to live safely in your tiny house and which elements do you WANT, simply because they are things you like?</p> <p>How will you decorate your tiny house?</p> <p>Will your tiny house have a name? If so, what will it be?</p>
Materials	<p>Poster-sized piece of paper</p> <p>Post-It notes</p> <p>Pencils and erasers</p> <p>Colored pencils or markers</p> <p>Scissors</p> <p>Ruler</p> <p>Printouts or visual examples of tiny homes</p>

Preparation

(This activity can be done virtually with small or large groups using a shared screen or virtual whiteboard.)

1. **Research:** Look at images of tiny houses, both inside and outside.
2. **Brainstorm:** Individually or as a group, brainstorm everything you would like to have in your house, no matter what size it is. Think of things you'd want for cooking, decoration, entertainment, staying clean and healthy, sleeping, etc.
3. **Take notes:** Write down as many ideas as possible.

Activity

1. Choose one or more of the templates to help you design your tiny house.
2. You can create your tiny house project as:
 - a. A drawing on paper or poster board
 - b. A digital drawing and/or floor plan
 - c. A 3D model or diorama using a medium-sized box
3. Once you have sketched a rough plan for your tiny house, create a final picture or model that includes:
 - a. What it looks like INSIDE
 - b. What it looks like OUTSIDE
4. Consider these things when creating your tiny house:
 - a. How many people will be living in it?
 - b. The size of essential items such as sinks, refrigerators, stoves, bathrooms, beds, etc.
 - c. How you will make sure nothing falls or breaks if you decide to move your tiny house from place to place

Follow Up

Present your tiny house plan to your classmates, either in person or online. Be sure to discuss:

1. The most important parts of your tiny house for taking care of your needs
2. The parts of your tiny house you most wanted to have
3. Who will be living in your tiny house with you?
4. Your tiny house's name, if it has one

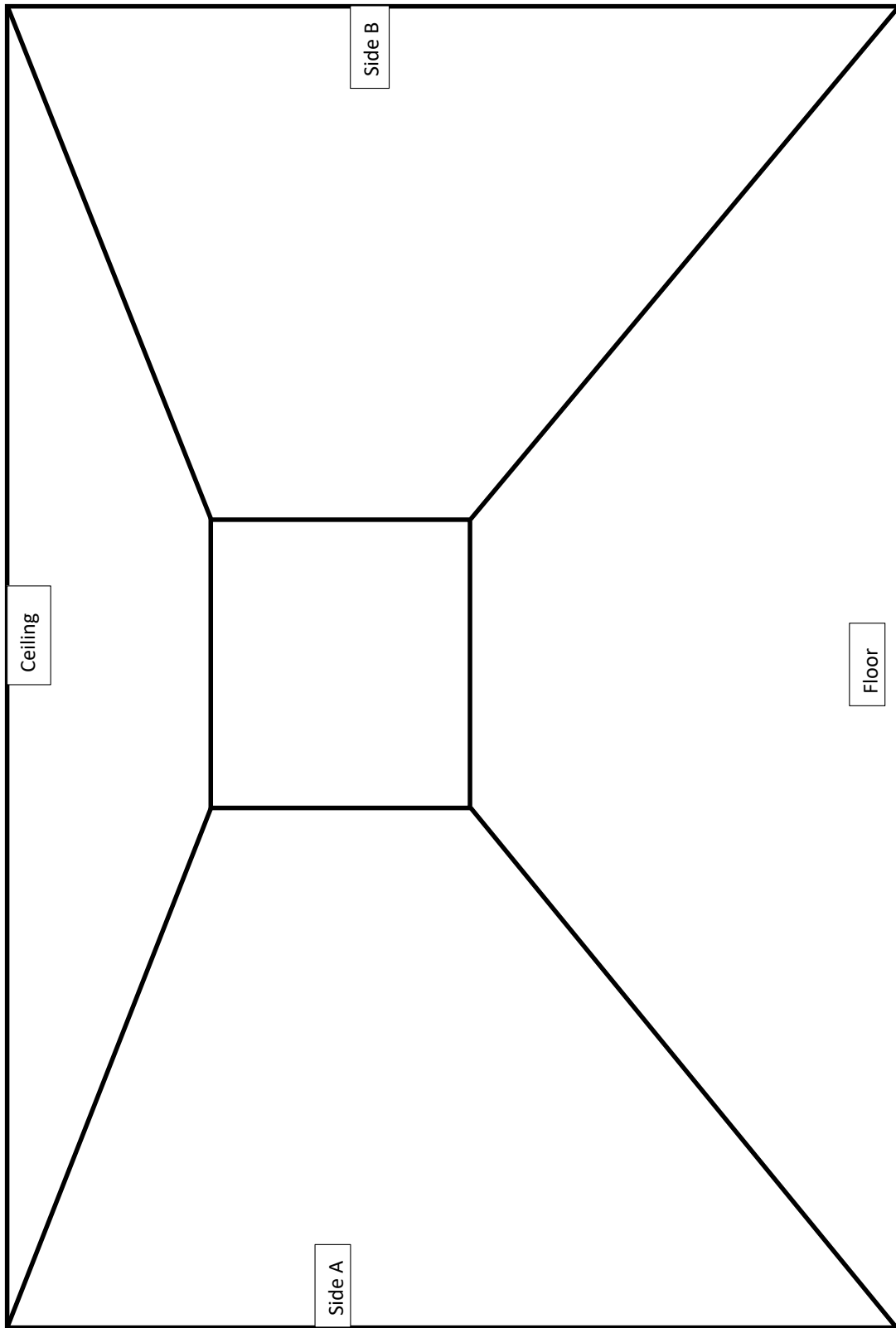
Resources

<https://climatekids.nasa.gov/tiny-houses/>

www.tinyhomebuilders.com/tiny-houses

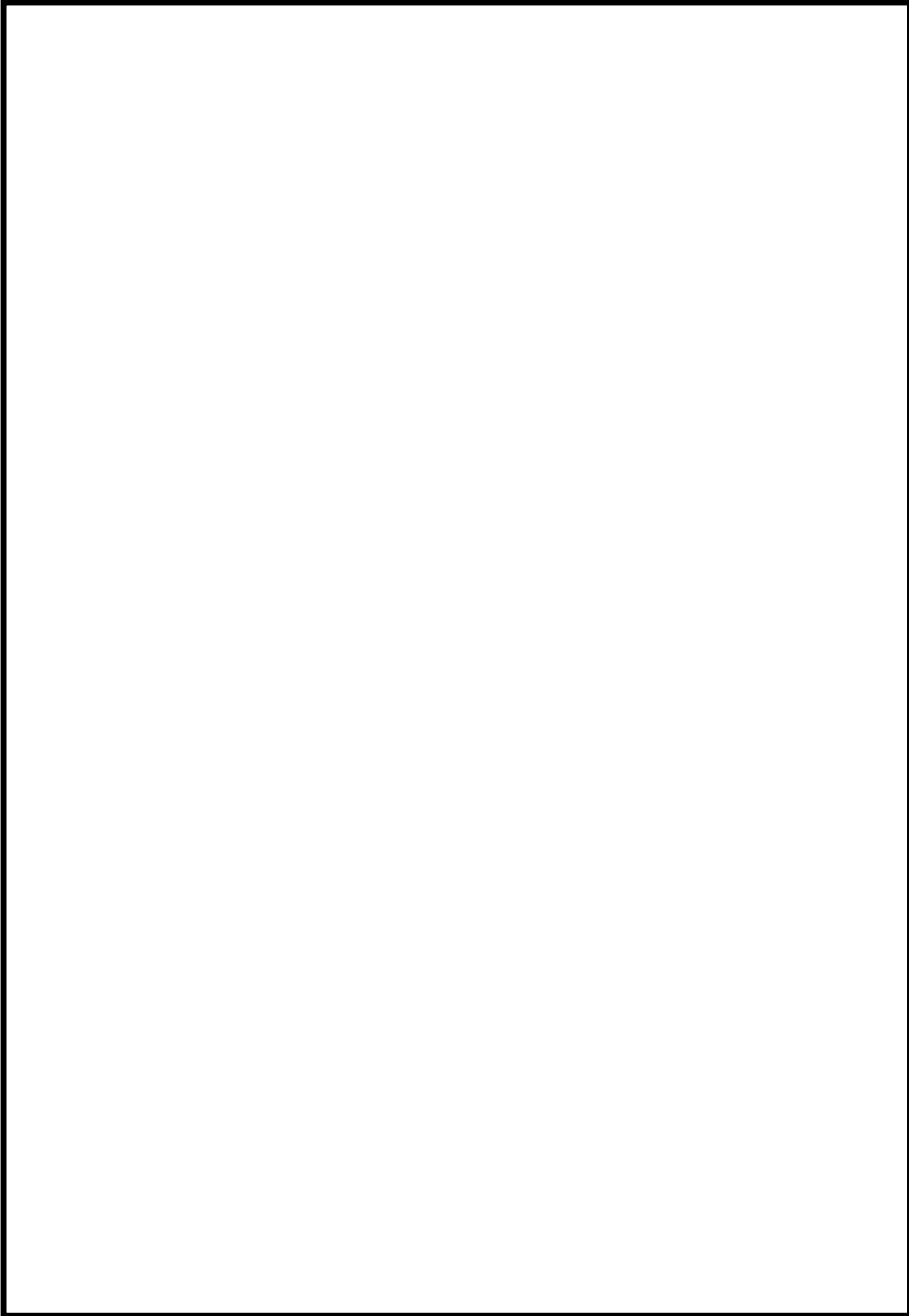
www.environment.sa.gov.au/goodliving/posts/2017/07/build-cubbies-at-home

Tiny House Template: End View



Tiny House Template: Floor Plan

Back



Side A

Side B

Front



From Past to Present: Indigenous People of California's Redwood Forests

The Northern California redwood forests in which Dagmar and her family camp, and where Blake's father built his mansion, once belonged to Indigenous people who lived there LONG before this story takes place. While many redwood forests are considered the property of the United States of America, they also are home to Indigenous people for whom the land and everything in, on, and around it is part of their history and culture.



In fact, every part of the United States once was home to Indigenous people who lived here before people came from Europe and forced them off their land in order to turn this country into the United States of America.



When learning about the history of Indigenous people, some people will think that maybe all the tribes are now gone. WRONG! The people are still here, keeping alive their people's culture, customs, and traditions through celebrations, dances, language, food, and much more.

The map on the next page shows the remarkable number of Indigenous tribes calling California home.

Name: _____



Indigenous People of California's Redwood Forests

Look closely at the two maps below. Compare these maps to identify the tribe (or tribes) that live (or lived) in the location of these California cities featuring redwood forests like the one in which Dagmar and Blake live.

City Name	Tribe Name(s)
Oakland, CA	
Mariposa, CA	
Eureka, CA	
Santa Cruz, CA	



Indigenous People of California's Redwood Forests: A Deeper Discussion

Right or Wrong?

Ever since Europeans first arrived in North America, and on the land that eventually became the United States, Indigenous people have been forced off their lands so white, European settlers could live there. Why would the Europeans believe THEY WERE RIGHT to take the land? Why would the Indigenous people believe THEY WERE RIGHT to fight to keep it? Who do you think was right?

Seeing is Believing?

Indigenous people are often talked about as if they only existed in the past. But they are everywhere, living, working, and going to school while trying to keep their cultures alive and thriving. While many tribes do have special ceremonial clothing, and hairstyles for special occasions, most of the time Indigenous people wear the same kinds of clothes you do. When people try to guess the cultural identity of another person based only on how they look, they are making ASSUMPTIONS, which can turn into negative STEREOTYPES.

Think about the ways people might try to guess out WHO or WHAT you are. Is it important for us to know what country or culture a person comes from? Are there kind and respectful ways to find out?

Additional Sources

<http://gorhistory.com/hist383/OriginalCalifornians.html>

<https://bayareaequityatlas.org/about/indigenous-populations-in-the-bay-area>

<http://muwekma.org/>

<https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/california/articles/a-brief-history-of-the-muwekma-ohlone-people/>



Map It Out

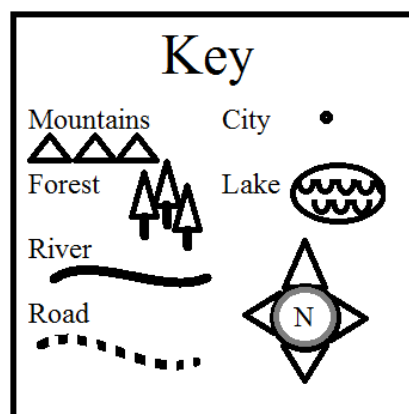
Project Have students combine story details with their own imaginations to create a map of the forest where Dagmar and Blake meet and live

Key Questions Why do people create maps?
How could Dagmar have used a map of the forest?
What kinds of information should a map include?

Materials Large piece of paper, cardboard, or poster board
Pencil and eraser
Black marker (Sharpie or similar)
Colored pencils or washable markers

Preparation Have students make a list of all the details from the story that will help them create a map

Consider having them make a Map Key. For example:



Activity

Using a large sheet of paper, cardboard, or poster board, choose a place to begin drawing the clearing where Dagmar's family parks Helen Wheels

With this as a starting point, have students list of details and their imagination to pencil in more details about the forest.

Remind students not to draw your details too big!

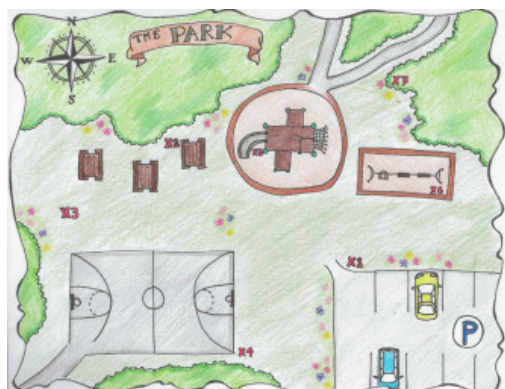
Once all the details are marked in pencil, have students outline them with black marker and add color!

Resources

How to Draw a Map: <https://youtu.be/9u1-i7y-CfA>

Make a Map in Minecraft: www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Map-in-Minecraft

Examples:





Map It Out: Use the Story

Stories often have a lot of GENERAL information about a place—where it is, how it looks, what it feels like to be there—but usually don't include the kind of SPECIFIC information you need to make a map of where things happen.

Below are some details from the story to help you get started. Use the book to find more and use the extra space on this page to write them down.

Story Details

the compound

the fence with the sign

the path leading to Blake's house

the locations of Lyndon's traps

Lyndon's house

Penelope's house

Trent's wall

the creek

the pump

the mall

the junior high school
(where everyone spends the night
after the fire)



Creating Art from Found Objects

Leya loves to create art out of found objects. Trent enjoys making useful things out of found objects (or “unobtanium” as he calls them). Humans create staggering amounts of waste every minute of every day and most of it ends up buried in landfills or burned, polluting of land, water, and air. But many things in our trash COULD be repurposed to create not only art but useful things.

Topic Art, Ecology

Purpose To see common trash as having the potential to be recycled or reused in new and creative ways

Key questions What kinds of useful materials might be found in common trash?

Which things can be recycled? Which things could be reused?

How can we encourage people to recycle and reuse items they would otherwise throw away?

Materials reusable materials collected over a period of days/weeks (paper, fabric, plastic, metal/foil, glass, etc.; items should be cleaned of food or dirt and washed with soap and hot water before use)

scratch paper to plan project (encourage reuse by using blank sides of unwanted printed matter)

glue, masking tape, clear tape, string or yarn (materials to use to connect items together)

scissors, hole punch

washable markers, Sharpie pens

Preparation

1. **Assemble your materials:** Individually, with a partner, or as part of a group, lay out the collected reusable items to see what you have to work with.
2. **Brainstorm:** What can you make out of the materials you have? Will it be something to use, or will it be a piece of art? How will it fit together? How will the intended use of your materials be transformed?
3. **Take notes:** Use your scratch paper to list project ideas, take notes, assign responsibilities, and sketch or diagram the finished project.

Activity

Create your useful object or piece of art. Pay attention to details such as:

1. Colors and textures
2. How materials can be connected without glue or tape
3. Size—are you creating a large item out of many small things, or creating a small item from pieces of larger things?

Follow Up

When all creations are complete, make a museum and invite other classes to come see! Your museum can be displayed in a classroom or virtually as a video chat, recorded video, or photos and descriptions on your class website.

What makes a place feel like home?



Writing Prompts

What does
FAMILY
mean to
you?

If a fire was threatening your home and you and your family had to leave, and you could only take what you could carry in your arms, which items would you choose? Explain your choices.

What is the difference between things we **NEED** and things we **WANT**? What does Dagmar and her family **NEED**? What does Blake and his family **NEED**?

How are **MONEY** and **POWER** similar?
How are they different? If you could choose one to have for the rest of your life, which would you choose?

Is the easy way to do things always the best way?

How important is it to win?

Thematic At-Home/Virtual Learning

Resources & Ideas

Thematic projects and explorations are a great way to dig deeper into subjects and concepts across multiple types of instruction including standard in-class instruction, virtual learning, home schooling, and hybrid combinations.

A careful combination of guidance and trust in the young learner is necessary for thematic projects to work. To this end, daily or biweekly two-minute check-ins with each student go a long way toward building success and enthusiasm.

On the next page are thematically arranged online resources appropriate for student use so young learners can explore their topics of choice.

Tips for thematic projects you may find useful:

- Projects can incorporate or focus on humanitarian issues, social justice, or activism as well as standard topics.
- Think outside the traditional box for your student's thematic project. Projects can be presented as PowerPoint presentations, videos, photo collages, graphic novel-style reports, or standard written reports. Don't rule out ways to incorporate drama, acting, or music as well!
- Start students off by determining what the end product will be:

video	photo collage with captions	PowerPoint
oral presentation	piece of art	performance piece
written piece	community project	activism
experiment	research project	informational project



Online Resources for Thematic At-Home/Virtual Learning

Kid-Safe Search Engines

KidzSearch: www.kidzsearch.com

Kiddle: www.kiddle.co

Fire

Project idea: What makes fire burn?

Fire Facts for Kids: www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/fire.html

Fire: <http://kinooze.com/fire>

What Is Fire? www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMDKeBaLWDw

Plants and Fire

Project idea: Are forest fires always bad?

How Trees Survive and Thrive after a Fire: www.nationalforests.org/our-forests/your-national-forests-magazine/how-trees-survive-and-thrive-after-a-fire

Why Certain Naturally Occurring Wildfires are Necessary:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNVZEVq3KzY

Giant Sequoias Need Fire: www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pp5k9tbM_Q

Why the Giant Sequoia Needs Fire to Grow:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmNZGr9Udx8

Redwood Forests

Project idea: All about the Redwoods

Redwood National and State Parks:

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/nature/redwoodnationalandstateparks>

Redwood Facts: www.visitredwoods.com/listing/redwood-facts/186/

Coastal Redwoods vs. Giant Sequoias: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hmh2vmEnvA

Exploring the Redwood Forest: www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6tc5EEJbsg

Tree Climbing

Sequoia National Park: www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEM4b8n0JTc

Climbing Redwood Giants: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-8OCecOmEQ

Measuring Redwood Giants: www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2lWZ4BSHQ4

Smart Homes

Project idea: Predicting the future: What will YOUR home look like when you're an adult?

Walter Cronkite, "The 21st Century": www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7TUZ_x57d8

Smart Home of the Future: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bUj-xZekf8

Smart Homes: www.alliantenergykids.com/InnovationsinEnergy/SmartHomes

Animal Rescue

Project idea: Rescuing Pets vs Rescuing Wildlife

Lions and How to Save Them: www.youtube.com/watch?v=YENib6Zthh0

Mission Animal Rescue:

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/nature/mission-animal-rescue>

Found an orphaned or injured baby wild animal?

<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/found-orphaned-or-injured-baby-wild-animal>

Maps

Project idea: Create a map of the forest where Dagmar and Blake meet and live

See "Map It Out," earlier in this curriculum guide.



Q&A with the Author Keir Graff

What kinds of books do you write?

I write funny, fantastical novels for readers who love adventures!

What are your favorite things to write about?

I am inspired by seeing unusual homes and imagining the people and stories inside. In *The Tiny Mansion*, Dagmar is smushed into a tiny house with her whole family. In *The Phantom Tower*, identical twins Colm and Mal move into a creepy old apartment building that has a curse on it—and its own ghostly twin. And in *The Matchstick Castle*, Brian and his cousin Nora discover a HUGE and dangerously dilapidated wooden house that is home to a forgotten family of adventurers.

What is your own home like?

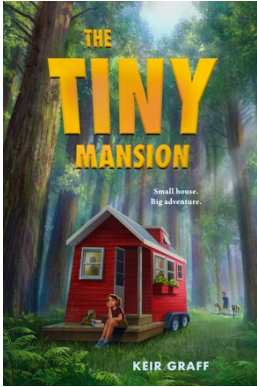
I live in the creepy old apartment building that inspired me to write *The Phantom Tower*! (You can even find a floor plan to my apartment in the front of the book.)

Where are you from?

I grew up in Montana, which is why I love forests so much. Now I live in Chicago, which has forests of buildings, not trees!

Find answers to more questions at www.keirgraff.com/about/qak

Middle-Grade Books by Keir Graff



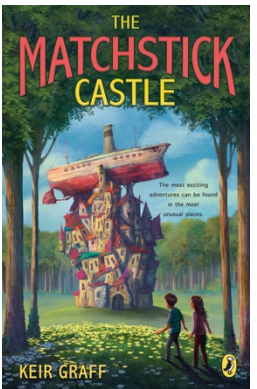
The Tiny Mansion

After a sudden financial setback, Dagmar's family is evicted from their apartment and forced to spend the summer crowded into a tiny house under the towering redwoods of Northern California.



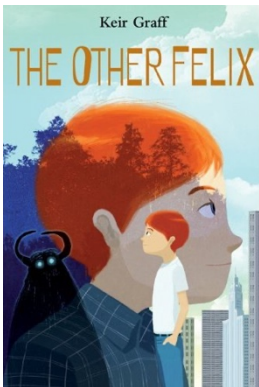
The Phantom Tower

Identical twins Colm and Mal move to Chicago for a fresh start after their dad's death, only to discover their new building has a curse on it—and a ghostly twin of its own.



The Matchstick Castle

Brian's summer in Boring, Illinois, is just as bad as it sounds until he gets lost in the woods and discovers a huge, dangerously dilapidated wooden house that is home to a family of explorers.



The Other Felix

When Felix falls asleep, monsters chase him, and they're getting closer every night. Then he meets a boy who looks just like him and knows how to fight the monsters.

Learn more at www.keirgraff.com/books-for-kids



The Tiny Mansion

Curriculum Guide

2020

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