

# Coraline



By

Neil Gaiman

A Novel Study  
by Nat Reed

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**About the author:** Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, please visit the websites [www.reedpublications.org](http://www.reedpublications.org) and [www.novelstudies.org](http://www.novelstudies.org).

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## Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one chapter of **Coraline** and is comprised of four different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Activities

### Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters . . . respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. It is important, too, that students be encouraged to relate their own feelings and experiences in certain contexts, and describe their own interpretations of particular passages.

- Students can work on the activities at their own pace.
- Every activity need not be completed by all students.
- A **portfolio cover** is included (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) to keep a record of completed work.

Students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included as well as a **Student Checklist**.

**Themes** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include: personal initiative and responsibility, selflessness, courage and adjusting to new and difficult circumstances.

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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms & antonyms
3. Identifying anagrams.
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Listing compound words
7. Identifying / creating similes
8. Use of singular/plural nouns
9. Using content clues: analogies
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identifying / creating *alliteration*

### Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

### Plot Activities

1. Complete a 5 W's Chart
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify *foreshadowing*
4. Identify the climax of a novel
5. Write a synopsis
6. Predict and outcome
7. Complete a Sequence Chart

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Compare two characters
3. Understand concepts such as *meeting a challenge*
4. Relating personal experiences

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write an editorial on an issue
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a Book Review
8. Compare the novel and movie version.

### Art Activities

1. Design a cover for the novel
2. Create a comic strip
3. Create a Storyboard.

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## Synopsis

Coraline and her parents have moved into a strange old house in the country, and after only a few short days, she is already bored stiff. Her parents are busy with their work, the other people who live in the house are quite odd, and Coraline has absolutely nothing to do. When Coraline discovers a strange door which can be opened with an even stranger-looking key, her curiosity is peaked - but alas - the inside of the door has been blocked-up with bricks.

One night a strange noise leads Coraline back to the door, which she finds curiously unblocked. She cautiously goes through the door and down a tunnel to another part of the house - a part where she finds almost-identical replicas of her parents - parents that are oh-so-welcoming - but have strange buttons for eyes.

It isn't long before Coraline realizes that her *other mother* is actually a very wicked person who is keeping the souls of her parents and several other children captive. When it looks like Coraline will suffer the same fate, she poses a challenge to her other mother - that she can retrieve the souls of her parents and the children. With the aid of a friendly cat, Coraline sets out on the challenge of her young life - one that not only saved her life but *saved some other people's deaths as well*.

## Author Biography

Neil Gaiman

**Neil Richard Gaiman** (pronounced /'geɪmən/) was born 10 November 1960 in Portsmouth, England. As a child and a teenager, Gaiman was influenced by the writings of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Edgar Allan Poe. In 1984, he wrote his first book, a biography of the band Duran Duran. Gaiman has written numerous comics for several publishers. He is the author of the award-winning *Sandman* comic series, which began in 1989 and ran until 1996.

Neil Gaiman now lives near Minneapolis, Minnesota in an "Addams Family house". He is divorced from Mary McGrath with whom he has three children: Michael, Holly, and Madeleine.



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## Student Checklist

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

# Coraline



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Name:

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## Chapter 1



### Before you read the chapter:

Much to her annoyance, the main character of the novel, *Coraline*, is often called *Caroline*. Having an unusual first name like Coraline can be troublesome. Use your imagination (or your own experiences) to list one good thing about having an unusual first name.




### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence. [Be careful, some words may be appropriate for more than one sentence - try to pick the best fit.]

haughty	trodden	eventually	currently	coloration
disguised	expedition	distorted	intensely	scuttled

1. The boys went on an exciting \_\_\_\_\_ to an island in the Caribbean.
2. She wasn't even aware that she had \_\_\_\_\_ on the alligator's tail.
3. Dr. Perot was an \_\_\_\_\_ private individual.
4. It seems that \_\_\_\_\_ Timothy must come out of the house.
5. I think you will find Miss Marchand to be a \_\_\_\_\_ young actress.
6. The ladybug \_\_\_\_\_ across the kitchen floor when we weren't looking.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the child's toy had faded with the years.
8. The bagel manufacturer is \_\_\_\_\_ the best in the business.
9. If James hadn't been \_\_\_\_\_, he might have been arrested.
10. When he woke up from his coma everything seemed strangely \_\_\_\_\_.



# Questions



1. What does the expression "trod the boards" mean?


2. The **setting** of a story includes not only where but when the story takes place. What is the setting of Chapter One?


3. State one interesting fact about the following people living in Coraline's house:

Miss Spink & Miss Forcible	
Crazy old man Who lived upstairs	

4. Despite that the fact that Coraline didn't have a friend to play with, she kept herself amused - rain or shine. Complete the chart below listing one activity for each category.

When it was nice outside	
When it was raining	

5. What three tasks did Coraline's dad give her to keep her occupied exploring the flat?

1	
2	
3	

6. Why did Coraline object to her father making a meal for them?


7. Describe what was so unusual about:

a) the black shape that Coraline discovered in the drawing room.


b) the door in the drawing room


8. ***Foreshadowing*** is a literary device in which the author drops hints about what is to come later in the story. If the ending of Chapter One is an example of foreshadowing, what hints might the author be providing the reader?


9. Do you think you would enjoy living in a large, old house with many unexplored rooms? Explain your answer.




## Language Activities

**A.** During Coraline's explorations she discovers a **hedgehog**. The hedgehog is one of nature's most fascinating animals.

Using resources found in your school library or on the Internet research four interesting facts about this amazing creature.



1	
2	
3	
4	

**B.** Place the following words from this chapter in alphabetical order.

Coraline	1.
cat	2.
circus	3.
court	4.
counting	5.
can	6.
currently	7.
carry	8.
cars	9.
crack	10.

### C. Who is going to help the poor old action word?

An **adverb** is a part of speech defined as *a modifier (or helper) of a verb* (usually an action word). Often an adverb will end in the letters **ly** (i.e. **slowly**). Our novel features a good many creative adverbs.

1. She thought the old man was probably making it up.

→ In this sentence, which verb does **probably** modify? \_\_\_\_\_

2. ... which smelled dreadful if you accidentally trod on them.

→ In this sentence, what verb does **accidentally** modify? \_\_\_\_\_

3. ... and the net had mostly rotted away ...

→ In this sentence the adverb \_\_\_\_\_ modifies the verb \_\_\_\_\_

### D. Homonyms

Homonyms are words which sound the same but have different meanings. An example is **air** and **heir**. These chapters feature words which are examples of homonyms. In the chart below, create sentences which show the meaning of each set of homonyms.

Homonyms	Sentence
1. fairy	
2. ferry	
1. board	
2. bored	
1. hole	
2. whole	
1. in	
2. inn	

## E. A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words

Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and conclusion of Chapter One.

Beginning Picture:	Beginning:
Middle Picture:	Middle:
Concluding Picture:	Concluding: