



Novel Study Kit

For

The Gravesavers

CanLit for Kids and CanLit for Teens are now offering our own professionally developed, comprehensive, Novel Study Guide Kits, for selected books from our book packages. [Sample guide attached below](#)

Each kit includes the following:

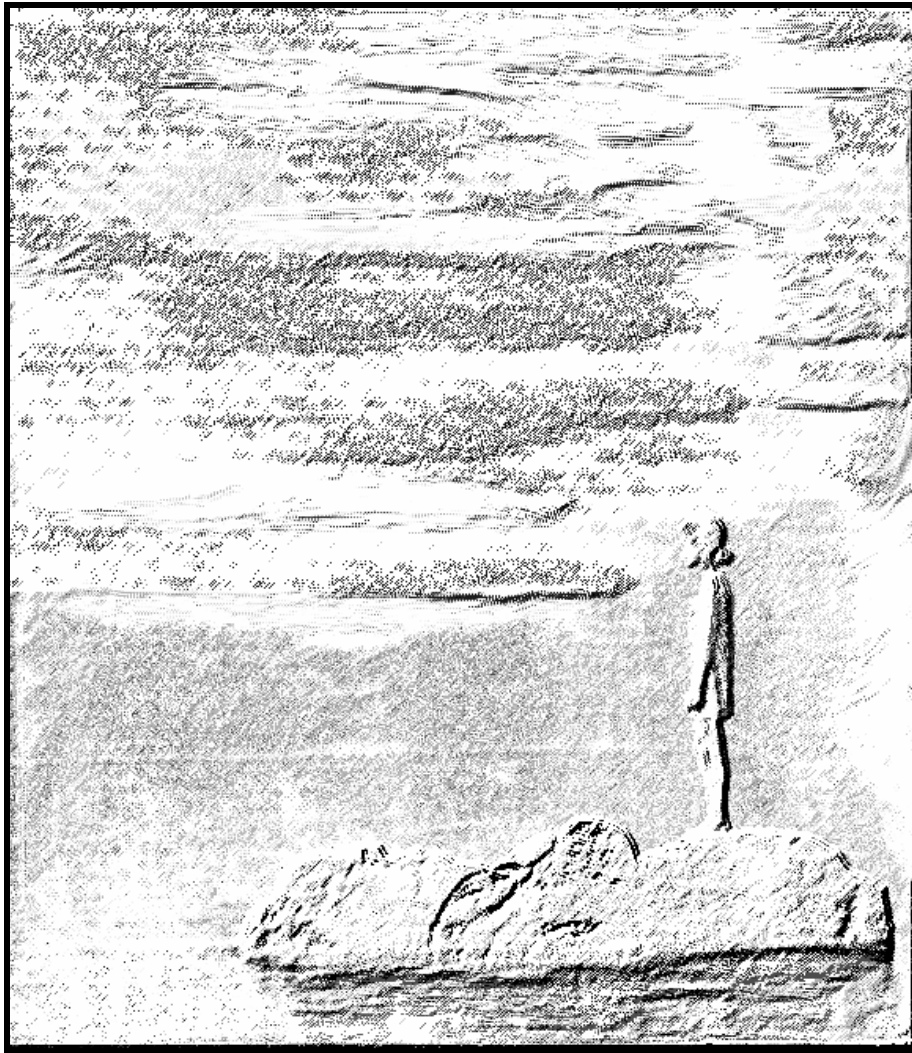
1. Six additional copies of the novel – *The Gravesavers*
2. One copy of the Student Novel Study Guide, including blackline masters (and permission to make as many copies for your students)

Total retail cost of the kit = \$150.00

This Novel Study Guide kit is offered at a special 50% discount rate to any existing CanLit customer. (\$75.00)

Others may contact CanLit (canlit@shaw.ca) and make arrangements to purchase the guide and any number of books to accompany each guide.

Additional copies of the novel (beyond the six in the kit) can be purchased at a 25% discount. [Sample guide attached below](#)



Novel Study Guide

To accompany
The Gravesavers by Sheree Fitch

Prepared by
Glen R. Turnbull

CanLit For Kids Books Limited

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Introduction

Over a century ago, one of the worst Canadian maritime disasters occurred right off the coast of Nova Scotia, Canada, near the town of Terence Bay. The ship, the SS Atlantic of the White Star Line was on its 19th trans-Atlantic voyage from Liverpool, England destined for New York and a new life for close to 900 passengers aboard. The voyage, anticipated to take 11 days, was never completed. Upon reaching North America, the Captain, fearful of running out of fuel and not making it to New York, decided to turn the steamship passenger liner back to Halifax to take on additional coal for the boilers. Passing along the unfamiliar shoreline in rough weather, the ship went aground. Many passengers did not make it to their final destination as the SS Atlantic sank about 40 meters from Meagher's Island. Of the 957 persons on board, roughly 545 lost their lives. Only one of all of the children on board survived the ordeal.

Two hundred and seventy-seven (277) who lost their lives that night were buried in a churchyard mass grave beside the ocean. Entire families were among those buried from the wreck. Over the years, erosion caused the shoreline to crumble into the ocean leaving many of the buried bones exposed. Over 10 metres of the bank had disappeared since the burial. Community volunteers spent long hours reburying the bones when they appeared but this did not solve the problem. The volunteers asked for government financial support and private donations to help fund a stone breakwater on the exposed North Atlantic coast, to protect the graves from further erosion. Today, that wall protects the remaining gravesites of those who perished and a monument has been erected in their memory.

Today, the S.S. Atlantic Heritage Park is the burial site and a memorial to those who perished in the sinking of the SS Atlantic on April 1, 1873. It stands as a tribute to those who took part in the rescue efforts that fateful evening and a final resting place for those who did not survive the journey.

It is rumoured that after visiting the site and realizing that the sinking of the SS Atlantic was the single most tragic maritime disaster prior to the sinking of the Titanic, Sheree Fitch was inspired to include the story of the SS Atlantic tragedy as a subplot within her novel *The Gravesavers*.

In this young adult novel, Canadian author Sheree Fitch tells the story of a fictitious character (Minn) and her attempts to come to grips with her own inner secrets and journey into maturity. *The Gravesavers* is both a heart warming and heart-breaking journey of determination, survival and hope. Recommended for students aged 12 and up, it is an excellent novel for teachers to use to explore literary elements of character and the themes of conflict, family, friendship and humanity. It is also a good spring board for learning about maritime history and the challenges faced by early immigrants to Canada

The Gravesavers is published by Doubleday Canada



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Pre-Reading Activities

“Skimming” a Novel

A one page activity that can be given to students to complete, requiring them to look up and record the author name, publisher name, publication date, number of chapters and number of pages. Complete the **“Skimming”** sheet individually or as a group activity. This is a pre-reading activity to familiarize students with the physical characteristics of the novel and provide an opportunity to scan for interesting detail. Discussion can focus on the potential interest in the novel.

Book Overview - Introduction

The following approach will help students to develop a better understanding of the story by encouraging them to focus on character, setting and plot. Provide ample opportunity for students to ask questions and make predictions. Have students listen to or read the first four chapters of the book (up to page 15) and complete the **“Book Overview – Introduction”** sheet individually or as a group. The teacher should try to guide the discussion of these first few chapters keeping the students focused on the more significant details.

Orientation Activities

Setting

Display a map which shows the Atlantic Ocean with England and The Maritime Provinces evident. If available, display a larger scale map of Nova Scotia. Highlight some of the places that are referenced in the novel.

Plot Structure

Discuss the two main types of plot structure used in story writing: linear and circular structures. Plot structure is the way that an author organizes and tells the events of a story. For instance, a story that unfolds in chronological order is an example of a linear plot structure. Explain to the students that in a circular plot, the protagonist leaves home, struggles and overcomes obstacles, and then returns home able to assume a more fulfilling life. Examples: A recent CanLit title, *Sea Chase* by Curtis Parkinson; *Treasure Island* and *Peter Rabbit*. With respect to *Gravesavers*, it would be worthwhile to read aloud to the class or group, the picture book *“The Story of Ping”* (book reviewed at this site <http://www.reznor.com/mirrors/amazon1/>). Explore with the students how Ping’s decisions and actions send him on his journey and how, after his many experiences, he returns home to his family as a changed character. For more mature groups of students, this book has been used as an analogy to a technical term called “ping”, over the Internet and can be presented in that context (see reviews at web site above).



Characters

Authors will sometimes use the first few chapters of a story to introduce the main characters. Based on what you have read in the first four chapters of the story, what have you learned about each of the following characters? Complete the sheet – “**Character Exploration**”



“Skimming” the Novel

Usually, when you first get a book you make a quick examination. This kind of casual look is called “skimming”. Skimming helps us to decide if the book will be interesting to read. The following exercises will give you some practice at “skimming” a novel using *The Gravesavers* by Sheree Fitch.

TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER

DATE OF PUBLICATION	NUMBER OF PAGES	NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

Front Cover:

- 1) What does the cover of the book show you?
-

- 2) Does the cover make you feel that you want to look inside the book to find out more? Why? Why not?
-

Back Cover:

Read the summary (THE SCHOOL YEAR IS OVER...) at the back of the book.

- 3) Does this summary make you more interested in the book? Why? Why not?
-

Scan the Book

Do this three times. Fan through the pages of the book and stop anywhere you like. Read a few paragraphs.

- 4) What did you read?
-

- 5) Did this interest you? Why? Why not?
-



Book Overview – Introduction

Teacher Copy

Chapter – TODAY

WHO?	Narrator, Harv, audience, parents
WHERE?	gravesite
WHEN?	Daytime - today
WHAT?	Funeral for John Hindley

PREDICTION	Narrator will deliver the speech
------------	----------------------------------

Chapter – PROPER INTRODUCTIONS

WHO?	Cinnamon Elizabeth Hotchkiss (Minn), Ray (father), Dory (mother)
WHERE?	At home
WHEN?	summer
WHAT?	Baby died last winter

PREDICTION	Minn will meet the dead person, John Hindley
------------	--

Chapter – THE START OF THE BEGINNING

WHO?	Minn, father, mother
WHERE?	home
WHEN?	Winter following the Spring when the baby died
WHAT?	Mother lost baby, depressed, wouldn't do anything

PREDICTION	Minn will try to help her mother to cope
------------	--

Chapter – THE WEIRDNESS OF WORDS

WHO?	Minn, father
WHERE?	Living room at home
WHEN?	After the baby had died and mother became depressed
WHAT?	Miscarriage, father cried

PREDICTION	Minn will try to help her father to cope
------------	--

Discuss or make entries in a reading response journal the following:

What additional information would you like to learn about a character from this story?

Write about one possible direction the story could have taken from the end of the fourth chapter.

What events were very important to find out about early in the first four chapters of the story?

Write about anything else you are wondering about thus far into the story



Chapter – TODAY

WHO?	
WHERE?	
WHEN?	
WHAT?	

PREDICTION	
------------	--

Chapter – PROPER INTRODUCTIONS

WHO?	
WHERE?	
WHEN?	
WHAT?	

PREDICTION	
------------	--



Chapter – THE START OF THE BEGINNING

WHO?	
WHERE?	
WHEN?	
WHAT?	

PREDICTION	
------------	--

Chapter – THE WEIRDNESS OF WORDS

WHO?	
WHERE?	
WHEN?	
WHAT?	

PREDICTION	
------------	--



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