

Novel·Ties

A Family Apart JOAN LOWERY NIXON



A Study Guide

Written By Jacqui Byrne

Edited by Joyce Friedland and Rikki Kessler

LEARNING LINKS

P.O. Box 326 • Cranbury • New Jersey 08512

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For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide to use in conjunction with the novel *A Family Apart* 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 own 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 child. 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 students' 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. Read the Background Information about the Children's Aid Society started by Charles Loring Brace on page two of this study guide. Do you think poor immigrant families were justified in sending their children west? What other alternatives did they have? Are there any modern day counterparts to this situation?
2. Read the Background Information on the potato famine on page two of this study guide. Do some additional research to learn the life stories of some Irish immigrants to the United States during the 1800s.
3. Create a K-W-L chart, such as the one below, about the Underground Railroad. Fill in the first two columns before you read the book. Fill in the last column after you finish the book.

What I Know -K-	What I Want to Know -W-	What I Learned -L-

4. After reading the Background Information about the Homestead Act on page two of this study guide, do some additional research to learn about the people who accepted the government's offer. Make a list of the reasons that people had for accepting the government's offer and moving west. Find out how the people who took advantage of the Homestead Act fared on the land.
5. Most families have difficulty affording everything their children want. What do you think families should provide for their children?
6. *A Family Apart* is a book of historical fiction, one in which fictional characters act out their lives against a historical background. Have you ever read any books or seen any films that were fiction based on history? What eras did they portray? What is the benefit of historical fiction over historical text or documentary films?
7. Many people make sacrifices in *A Family Apart*. What other books have you read, or movies have you seen, in which people make sacrifices? How did they make the decision to sacrifice their own happiness for someone or something else? Did the characters feel that the sacrifices were worth the effort?

Chapter 1 (cont.)

Questions for Discussion:

Do you think adults should share memories of their childhood or family history with young friends or children? What might be gained and lost through such a discussion?

Literary Device: Flashback

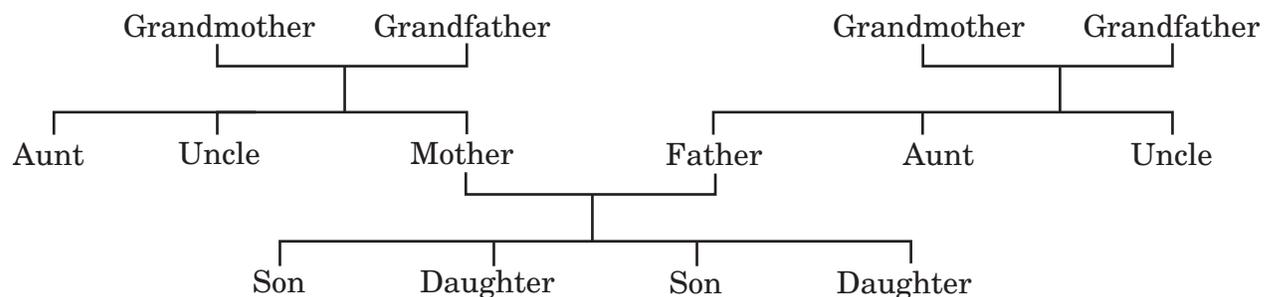
A flashback in literature is a scene or series of episodes that break the normal time order of the plot to describe an event or events that happened in the past. How does the author lead into the flashback at the end of Chapter One?

Why do you think the author chose to begin a story about the 1800s with a chapter set in modern times?

Can you think of any other novels you have read which include a flashback?

Social Studies Connection:

Create a family tree for your family. Ask relatives for information so that you can include as many generations as possible. The following diagram shows you a format for creating a family tree.



Writing Activity:

Frances Mary's husband advised his wife to write a journal to capture all of her stories. He suggests that she begin when she is very young. Write a short memoir telling about one of your very first memories.