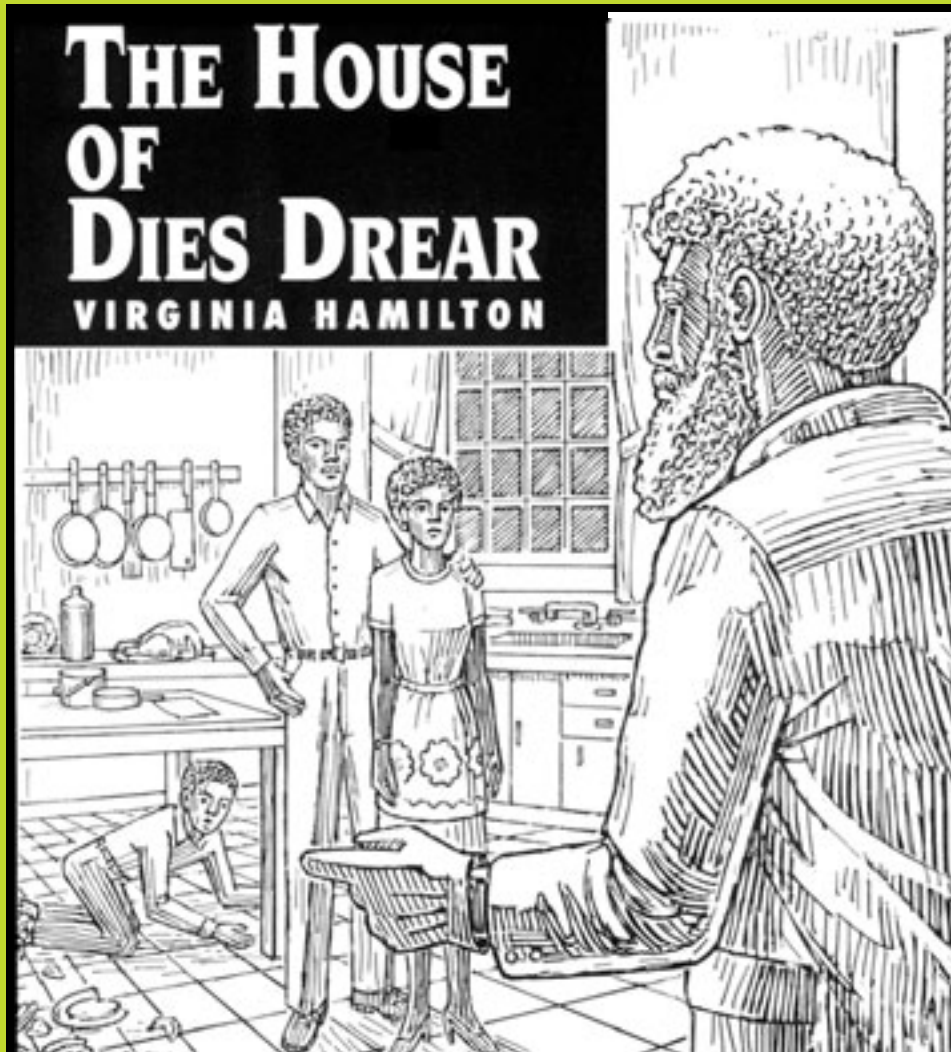


# Novel·Ties



## A Study Guide

Written By Estelle Kleinman

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 a specific novel 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 on 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 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 AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Preview the book by reading the title and the author's name and by looking at the illustration on the cover. What do you think the book will be about? Where and when do you think the story takes place? Have you read any other books by the same author?
2. Read the Background Information on page two of this study guide and do some additional research to find out how slaves escaped via the Underground Railroad before 1861, the year the Civil War began. Find out what happened to slaves if they were caught. If you were a slave at the time, would you have risked escaping? If you were a free citizen, would you have risked helping escaping slaves?
3. In your research on slavery, try to find illustrations of slave auctions, diagrams of slave ships, and prints showing the lives of slaves. You may also find photographs of plantation homes that remained intact after the Civil War and the clever interiors of homes that were used to hide escaping slaves. If possible, display these pictures in your classroom while you read the book and study this historical era.
4. Make a list of books and movies about slavery in the United States. Do you think it is important to continue to remember this time in history? Do you think that school courses and textbooks tell enough about the time and the conflicts that led up to the Civil War?
5. In *The House of Dies Drear* a boy must adjust to a new home. Under ordinary circumstances, what problems might a thirteen year old face in adjusting to a new place? How might this person overcome these problems?
6. **Cooperative Learning Activity:** Since this novel is a mystery, work with a small group of your classmates to discuss the elements that characterize a mystery. Make a chart listing these characteristics and meet with your group as you read the novel to fill in the chart.
7. A legend surrounds Dies Drear's house. A legend is a story handed down from the past. It is not considered as true history, although it is partly based on true history. How do you think legends begin? What causes them to survive throughout the centuries? What purpose do you think they serve?
8. In this novel, the townspeople are unfriendly toward an old man whom they consider strange. Why do people sometimes dislike and distrust those who are different from them? Have you ever seen examples of this attitude?
9. What does the word "heritage" mean to you? What do you know about your own heritage? How important is it in making you the person you are?
10. Virginia Hamilton, the author of *The House of Dies Drear*, often uses her hometown as the setting for her novels. Read the Author's Note at the end of the book. In what ways is it an advantage for authors to write about their hometowns? What disadvantages might it present? If you were writing a novel, would you choose your hometown as a setting?
11. Use the Response Journal sheet on page four of this study guide to record you own reactions to the chapter units and respond to the "Response Journal" section in many of the chapter units. Make copies of this page as needed.

**CHAPTERS 1, 2**

**Vocabulary:** Synonyms are words with similar meanings. Draw a line from each word in column A to its synonym in column B. Then use the words in column A to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

- | <u>A</u>      | <u>B</u>      |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. craven     | a. cuddled    |
| 2. desolation | b. peculiar   |
| 3. nestled    | c. slavery    |
| 4. subdued    | d. cowardly   |
| 5. bondage    | e. active     |
| 6. eccentric  | f. loneliness |
| 7. spry       | g. calmed     |

.....

1. We knew the infant would fall asleep quickly, \_\_\_\_\_ in her mother's arms.
2. Wearing mismatched clothes could make a person seem \_\_\_\_\_, not necessarily crazy.
3. Being \_\_\_\_\_ for his age, the elderly man was able to perform all the duties required of a caretaker.
4. Sending an anonymous letter threatening physical harm is a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ act of revenge.
5. The cries of the hungry children were \_\_\_\_\_ by the sight of a feast that awaited them.
6. As I sat absolutely alone in the empty house, a feeling of \_\_\_\_\_ came over me.
7. After successfully escaping, many slaves returned to those still in \_\_\_\_\_ in order to free them.

**Questions:**

1. What mixed emotions does Thomas have about moving?
2. What reveals that Thomas has a close relationship with his great-grandmother?
3. Compare the different ways in which Thomas, Mr. Small, and Mrs. Small view the new house. What probably accounts for the differences in their points of view?