

# Parental Involvement

## Middle School Literacy Novel Units

The North Dakota State Parent Information Resource Center (NDPIRC) and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction are pleased to provide schools with a CD of Parental Involvement Middle School Literacy Novel Units.

Literacy is fundamental for learning in school and is the foundation for succeeding in life. The Title I and Special Education units are proud to sponsor this project in collaboration with NDPIRC.

During the summer of 2010, NDPIRC contracted with three North Dakota educators to create Parental Involvement Middle School Literacy Novel Units for grades 6-8. Each CD is filled with numerous grade level activities and ideas for promoting literacy in the home. We would like to acknowledge and commend the three exemplary educators who helped create this resource for North Dakota school personnel.

- ◆ Bethany Higdem, Wahpeton
- ◆ Danette Brown, Minot
- ◆ Rebecca Pitkin, Dickinson

Every middle school in the state of North Dakota is receiving one CD with Parental Involvement Middle School Literacy Novel Units to share among all staff in the building. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), signed by President Obama in February 2009, provides a significant amount of additional funds for local school districts. These funds create an unprecedented opportunity for educators to implement innovative strategies in schools that improve education for at-risk students and close the achievement gaps. Schools are encouraged to use their Title I and Special Education ARRA funds to make duplicate copies of the literacy activities on the CD for grades 6-8.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact either the Department of Public Instruction or NDPIRC.

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction  
Title I Office/Special Education Office  
Dr. Wayne G. Sanstead, State Superintendent  
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 201  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0440  
888-605-1951

North Dakota State Parent Information  
Resource Center (NDPIRC)  
1600 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. SW, Suite 29  
Minot, ND 58701-3459  
888-763-7277



**Title:** Special Days

**Purpose of Activity:** Comprehension and application of novel ideas.

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** Parents will discuss a tradition with the child and will help them understand the origin or reason for the tradition. Parents will discuss similarities and differences of traditions in the novel and their own.

**Rationale for Activity:** Identifying characteristics of celebrations are central to understanding this novel. Comprehension is aided in this activity as students are required to identify the components, and to compare and contrast them to their own experiences. Research indicates that the task of comparing and contrasting aids in analyzing story line and is an important literacy task.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

6.2.5 Use prior knowledge and experiences to aid text comprehension.

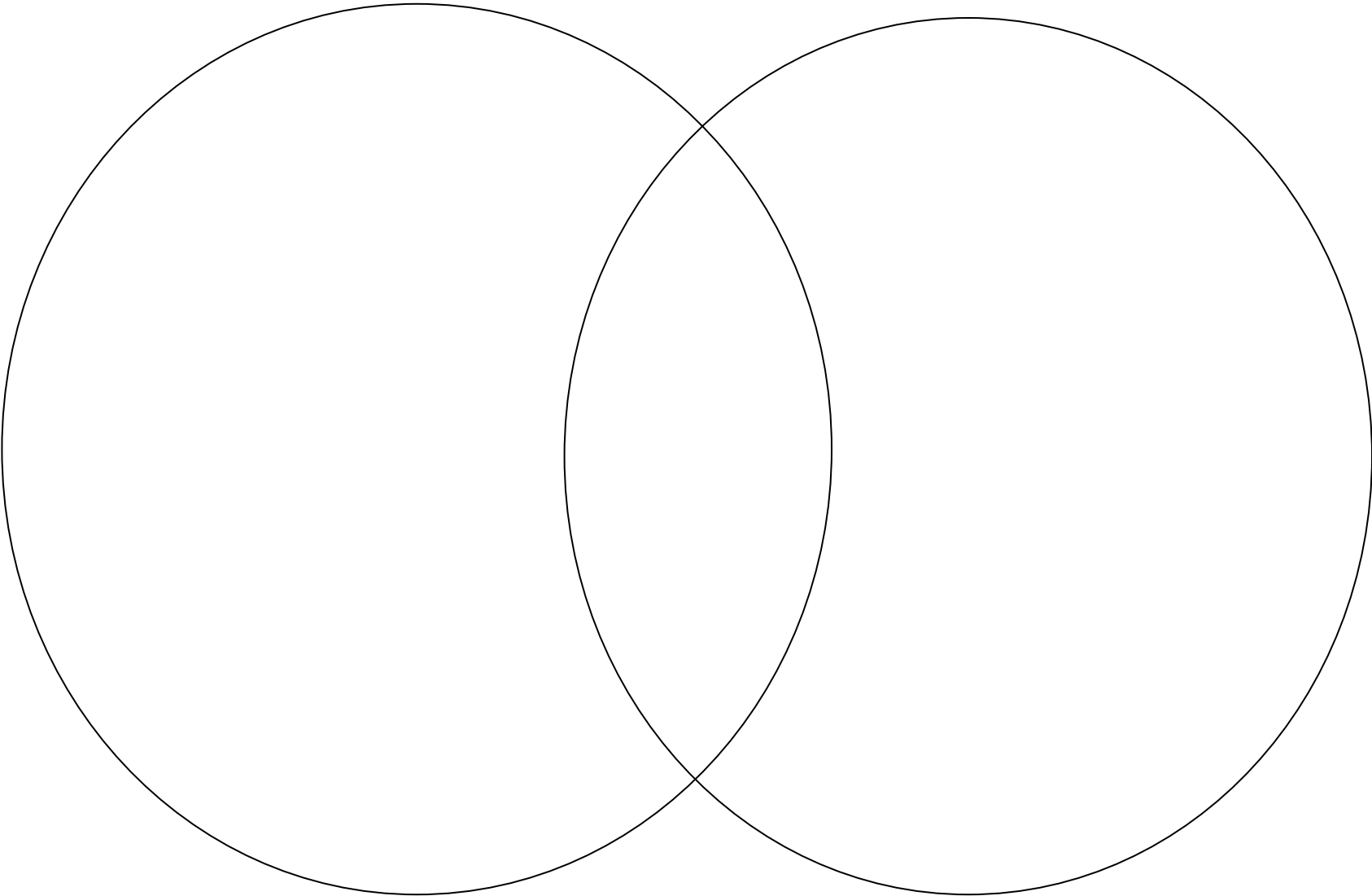
**Title of Novel:** The Devils' Arithmetic

**Author:** Jane Yolen

**Materials:** Graphic organizer

**Directions for use:** At the beginning of the book, Hannah's family was celebrating the Jewish holiday Passover. The family had specific customs and foods during the celebration. The main purpose of the Passover was "remembering". The events of the celebration were done every year in the same way. Think about a holiday or special event that your family celebrates or participates in year after year. Have your parents help you and list some things about it on the graphic organizer. Also, list the unique traditions of Hannah's Passover Seder. Are there any similarities? If so, write them in the middle of the graphic organizer. Finally answer this question:

Why do you think it is important to have celebrations and customs and traditions?



**Title:** How Math Relates to the Book Title

**Purpose of Activity:** To determine the significance of the title, The Devil's Arithmetic

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** Assist the child in analyzing the significance of the novel title. Write the "rule" for the math problems and have the child explain the "problem" with math in the novel.

**Rationale for Activity:** Reading a novel requires that students not only understand the story itself, but also the significance of the title, setting, and implications of "what is not stated". The title in this novel is significant as it is the focus of the story. Student will gain a deeper understanding of this novel as they align the "Devil's arithmetic" with regular math, something they are familiar with.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

6.2.5 Use prior knowledge and experiences to aid text comprehension.

**Title of Novel:** The Devil's Arithmetic

**Author:** Jane Yolen

**Materials:** Math problem sheet

**Directions for use:** The Jewish people in the concentration camp each had a number tattooed on their body. Rivka's number (chapter 14), was J18202. Rivka also explained that the way to survive the camp was to abide by the "Devil's arithmetic"

Several of the following questions are based on chapter 14. All of these questions relate to the novel's title. Answer in complete sentences.

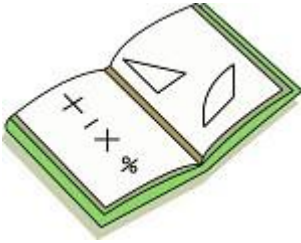
1. Why are there good numbers and bad numbers?



2. Explain why arithmetic is brutal.



3. In chapter 16, “one plus one plus one” is the Devil’s arithmetic. What does this statement mean?



4. What is wrong or evil about the arithmetic rules in this novel? After answering these questions, give your parents the “arithmetic” paper and have them write the rules that go with each problem.

## Parent Math Sheet

Directions: For each math problem, write the “rule” about how to solve the problem. For example, if it is addition, then the rule would be to carry the number. Some problems have more than one rule. Have your child help you find the rule!

Example:

$456 + 694$  Rule: Carry the numbers in the tens column

$1/5 \times 3/5$  Rule:

$2/4 + 4/8$  Rule:

$23.45 + 45.46$  Rule:

$12.15 + 1.56$  Rule:

89000-75999 Rule:

**Title:** What is Most Valuable?

**Purpose of Activity:** Students engage in a text-to-self activity, applying the concepts of the novel.

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** The characters in this story lost all their possessions and the focus became on saving their very lives. Discuss your view of possessions and what you believe to be the most important items in life. Assist them in seeing the balance of possessions and people. Also, answer any questions they make ask you as they apply the concepts of the novel.

**Rationale for Activity:** Text-to-text novel activities increase comprehension because they require that students understand the concepts of the novel in order to apply it to their own lives. Students need to focus on what happened in the novel in comparison to their own situation and this deepens comprehension.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

6.3.3 Produce persuasive writing; e.g., opinion, essay, and business letter.

**Title of Novel:** The Devil's Arithmetic

**Author:** Jane Yolen

**Materials:** Possession chart

**Directions for use:** In chapter 10 of the book, the soldiers took the Jewish prisoners' prized possessions that they had brought from their homes: jewelry, baby toys, clothes, and personal items. They were never returned. Imagine you and your parents had to suddenly evacuate your home and each person in the house could only take 10 items with them. Think about what 10 items you would take and why you would take them. Find out what your parents would take and write them on the chart. You do not know where you are going so chose carefully.

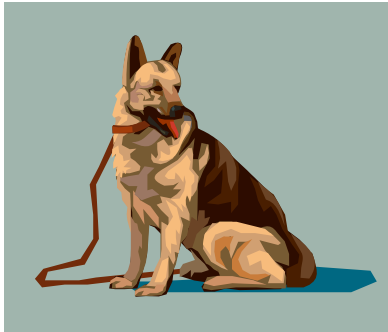
Finally, on a sheet of paper, write a paragraph explaining **why** you chose the 10 items.

Possessions

<i>Items I Would Take</i>	<i>Items My Parents Would Take</i>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.



What would you take.....?



**Title:** Genre Vocabulary

**Purpose of Activity:** Distinguishing fact from fiction and developing vocabulary.

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** Share with your child any information you know about the Holocaust. Help them write a list of words that come to mind when they think of the Holocaust. Help them arrive at the key vocabulary that relates to this historical event. You can use the included information.

**Rationale for Activity:** Vocabulary building is a key literacy skill. Understanding vocabulary allows students to unlock the text and leads to increased understanding. The content in this novel is also related to content area vocabulary and will transfer to a social studies class.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

6.2.4 Use graphic organizers and summarizing to enhance comprehension.

**Title of Novel:** The Devil's Arithmetic

**Author:** Jane Yolen

**Materials:** Information on the Holocaust

**Directions for use:** The genre of this book is historical fiction. At the end of the book, the author explains the true parts of the story. Much of the story is based on some of the author's experiences. From the list below, categorize each word into fact or fiction. Put them in the chart. Next, list the words your parent gave you.

Finally, use four of the words in sentences to show their meaning.

### **Novel Vocabulary**

- Head shaving
- Malnutrition
- Chaya
- Gitl
- Auschwitz
- Incineration
- Tattooing of numbers
- Shmuel
- Rivka
- Smokestacks
- Midden pile

Look at the words in the fiction section. By looking at the words, can you tell what the definition of historical fiction?

Fact	Fiction
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.
11.	11.
12.	12.
13.	13.
14.	14.
15.	15.
16.	16.

## **Holocaust Information**

The Holocaust was a time of devastation and corruption. It was a time of cruelty and it was terribly in-humane. The Holocaust and its supporters tried vainly to make the world perfect, but only succeeded in killing millions. Unbelievably, some people think the Holocaust never happened, but it did.

The Nazis and Adolph Hitler spoke against Jews even before the start of World War II; they blamed them for everything; from the defeat of World War I, for the Depression, and for the fall of the Czar of Russia. People were looking for someone to blame and coincidentally Adolf Hitler was there to urge them on. This hatred grew into what was called the Holocaust. Many Jews were high-ranking, and no doubt the citizens were jealous, so that gave them even more reason to dislike them. Eventually Jews were considered dirt.

After the beginning of World War II in 1933, the Jews were taken away from their homes and sent to ghettos and concentration camps. Some Jews tried to fight for their rights. The most famous revolt was the Warsaw Revolt in Warsaw, Poland which lasted 28 days. After the Jews were sent to the camps, some of them were taken to gas chambers and were killed with deadly gas. After the war, the camps were turned into memorials and museums.

Many other people were killed in Germany during World War II. Not only were the Jewish people killed, but Hitler and his group of supporters weren't happy with that. They wiped out the mentally ill and the physically handicapped. Hitler remarked them "unworthy of life". The Nazis even kidnapped children with a German origin. Catholic priests and nuns were also Nazi targets.

As a result of the Holocaust, the Nazi party leaders were convicted at the Neuberger Trials and guilty of crimes against peace and humanity. Even though justice was served in some cases, they never really got what they deserved.

<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/h-warsaw.htm>

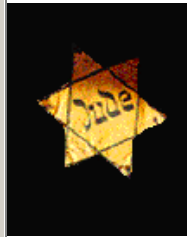
## HOLOCAUST INFORMATION

This page has some brief information for kids about the Holocaust. It includes some photos and definitions of words. This page will change periodically, with more information, about various aspects of this history and how it relates to diversity and tolerance education for children. If you have any suggestions for additional material please send an email.



National Archives photo

**ADOLF HITLER:**  
This is Adolf Hitler. He was the leader of the Nazis in Germany from 1933-1945. Hitler wanted to create a new and better Germany by ridding the country of all the Jewish people who lived there. He felt that they were the cause of Germany's problems. He hated Jews and other groups of people who were not like him.



### JEWISH STAR OF DAVID

Hitler forced all Jews to wear this star on their clothes so that everyone could see they were Jewish and he felt they should all be captured, arrested or killed.

National Archives photo



### CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Concentration camps held Jews and other prisoners for slave labor, medical experiments, starvation and death. It happened every day for many years to men, women and children.

National Archives photo

	<p><b>NAZIS-Symbol of Fear</b></p> <p>This is a swastika, the Nazi symbol of terror. The Nazis were a political group who wore this symbol on uniforms. They believed that Jews were evil and should be killed simply because they were different.</p>
<p>National Archives photo</p>	



**LIBERATION:** Liberation of a concentration camp at the end of the war in 1945. Six

million Jews died and 1.5 million children were killed, along with many other groups, just for being different.

National Archives photo

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### **Holocaust-related DEFINITIONS:**

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- anti-Semitism – The hatred of Jewish people, which dates back to Biblical times
- Propaganda – Using persuasion and untruths to change someone’s mind about something
- Stereotype – Unfairly generalizing and lumping one person into a certain group of people
- Prejudice – Not liking someone because of their ethnic race, religion or other unique differences.
- Liberation – Freedom from oppression, to be set free by something or someone.

<http://www.tolerance4kids.com/holocaust.html>

**Title:** New Vocabulary and Poem Writing

**Purpose of Activity:** Vocabulary Development

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** Parents will engage in a discussion of their child's strengths and then will develop a poem that models the poem in the novel, with their child. Parents and student will engage in discussion about vocabulary words, especially those specific to the time period and genre of this novel. Parents will help student make application of novel terms to current times.

**Rationale for Activity:** Successful comprehension is, in some significant part, dependent on the student's knowledge of word meanings in a passage. Vocabulary instruction improves comprehension, as does using the words in various contexts and activities. Students retain the meaning of new words when they use them in multiple ways and have to apply them in sentences development or oral language.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

6.2.3 Use word recognition skills and vocabulary building strategies to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and make sense of text; e.g., synonyms/antonyms, prefixes/suffixes, multiple meaning words context clues, and word reference aids – dictionary, glossary, thesaurus, and base words

6.3.2 Produce narrative writing; e.g., short story, descriptive play, poetry meaning words, context clues, and word reference aids e.g., dictionary, glossary, thesaurus, and base words

**Book Title:** The Devil's Arithmetic

**Author:** Jane Yolen

**Materials:** Paper with a border and markers or sharpie

**Directions for use:**

**Student:** Look in the novel to find the meaning of each of the words. Write the definition in the middle section. Then, explain the meaning of the word to your **parent**. Have your **parent** write the word in a sentence in the final column.

Word from the novel	Student definition	Parent
Yahrzeit (chapter 2)		
Yarmulke (Chapter 3)		
Shmatte (chapter 6)		
Badchan (chapter 7)		
Shadchan (Chapter 7)		

**Parent and Student:** Many of the words and customs in The Devil's Arithmetic come from the Jewish culture. In our American culture, we do not have badchans, but we do have individuals who are similar to badchans. Ask your parents where these individuals might be found and what their jobs might be. Write this in the space below.

The badchan in the story sang a rhyming song for Hannah (chapter 7). The song is below:

"Pretty girl, with faraway eyes  
 Why do you look with such surprise?  
 How did you get to be so wise?  
 Old girl in young-girl disguise."

**Together with your parent, write a poem about you. Make the lines of the poem have the following in them:**

- Line 1: Write a **line to describe you**
- Line 2: Ask a question about **a character trait**
- Line 3: Ask **another question** about a character trait
- Line 4: Write a line **describing you**.

Next, it is your turn to write a poem about your parent using the same format. Share your poem with them.

Write the final copy of both poems in the poem sheet. Use a marker or sharpie.

**Title:** Figurative Language

**Purpose of Activity:** Students will identify figurative language.

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** Parents and students will identify the figurative language from the story, as well as generate some of their own examples.

**Rationale for Activity:** Identifying figurative language is a necessary skill for reading comprehension. Knowledge of figurative language allows students to utilize higher order thinking and to apply their understanding of language. It is a tool that students can use in all subjects. The more tools students have to understand language, the better they will achieve and remember.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

6.2.9 Identify figurative language, including personification, simile, and metaphor.

**Book Title:** The Devil's Arithmetic

**Author:** Jane Yolen

**Materials:** None

**Directions for use:**

Several characters in the story use expressions that are examples of figurative language. With your parents, figure out what each of the following expressions means:

1. The snake smiles but it shows no teeth.
2. Better the fox to guard the hens and the wolves to guard the sheep.
3. Fayge prefers the dark wolf she knows to the dark one she does not.

We also use figurative language in our every day speech. Ask your parents what expressions they use. Perhaps they use ones such as “a horse a piece” or “that car is a lemon”.

Brainstorm with your parents other figurative language expressions, also called idioms. List them below. Try to think of at least 5.

## 6th Grade Supply List

### The Whipping Boy

- 2 cake mixes, 4 loaf pans, flat top ice cream cones, 2 cans white frosting, various candies, information on medieval castles, 4 ice cream cones, the book Castle, by David Macaulay
- Drawing paper, crayons, markers
- Butcher paper, white paper, ribbon, glue

### Where the Lilies Bloom

- White paper, crayons, markers
- North Dakota map

### The One-eyed Cat

- Thesaurus
- Crayons, markers
- Certificate for free ice cream (optional)
- Poster paper

### Freak the Mighty

- Disposable camera
- Dictionary
- White paper
- Markers

### The Cay

- Poster board
- Markers
- Crayons
- Map of North Dakota (optional)

### Catherine Called Birdy

- Post-it notes in various colors
- Cookbook(s) optional
- White paper
- Markers/crayons

### The Devil's Arithmetic

- Paper with a border
- Markers
- Sharpie

### Island of the Blue Dolphins

- Resource book on animals of North Dakota (suggested book: North Dakota Wildlife Viewing Guide) by Joseph Knue, paperback,
- Shoe box
- Colored paper
- Crayons, markers
- Glue
- Clay
- Colored pencils
- Poster board

### Summer of the Swans

- Colored paper
- Markers
- White paper
- Ugly Duckling story (included with lesson)

### The Westing Game

- Game pieces
- Cardboard
- Markers, crayons
- Colored paper