

# 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)  
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**Title:** Characters in Disguise

**Purpose of Activity:** Students will distinguish between characters who have something to hide and those who do not. They will identify elements of the story that give them this impression and apply the concept that characters in books and movies that are “not what they seem”. This prepares them for future discussions of static and dynamic characters and ways that characters change.

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** Talk to your child about a movie that you and they have seen together, or a book they have read where a character has something to hide, or a book or movie where the character changes from what they were at the beginning. You could also discuss a book or movie in which your opinion of the main character changes as you learn more about them.

**Rationale for Activity:** Identifying the theme of a book or novel is an important literacy concept. The theme of a book is the reason it was written or the message the author wants the reader to understand. By identifying the theme, comprehension is increased. Themes can be abstract and identifying them requires higher level thinking and application and is a skill that will be used in most literature classes.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

6.2.8 Identify literary elements, including plot, setting, characters, conflict, resolution, dialogue, and flashback

**Title of Novel:** The Westing Game

**Author:** Ellen Raskin

**Materials:** Clue sheet character sheet






**Directions for use:** Below is a list of characters from The Westing Game. Next to their name, write “yes” if they had something to hide in the story and then **tell what it is they were hiding**. Write “no” if you think they have nothing to hide.

<i>Name of Character</i>	<i>Did they have something to hide? What was it?</i>
Madame Hoo	
James Hoo	
Doug Hoo	
J.J. Ford	
Angela Wexler	
Denton Deere	
Chris Theodorakis	
Turtle Wexler	
Floral Buam	
Gracia Windkloppel	
Jake Wexler	

Otis Amber	
Berthe Erica Crow	

Now it is your turn to hide an object and then write clues for your family to find the object. Follow these directions:

1. Find an object
2. Hide it in your house
3. Write four clues on the chart below, and give them to your parents. See if they can find the object. Write your clues so they are **not too hard** and **not too easy**. Be sure they do not find the object on the first try!
4. At the bottom of the clue sheet, tell if your parents found it easily or not. Good luck and remember how clever the clues were in The Westing Game!

Clue Number One	
Clue Number Two	
Clue Number Three	
Clue Number Four	
Did they find it on four clues? What was the object?	

**Title:** Story Setting

**Purpose of Activity:** Students will explain examples of how setting affects novel plot.

**Literacy Skill:** This activity will address the literacy skill of novel setting.

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** Help your child think of the settings of various books or movies and how the setting affected what happened to the characters or the plot.

**Rationale for Activity:** Setting is an important literacy concept because understanding the setting, time, and place of a novel increases comprehension. Understanding setting allows students to increase their knowledge base of events and periods in history that are outside their own experience and this broadens their knowledge base.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

6.2.8 Identify literary elements, including plot, setting, characters, conflict, resolution, dialogue, and flashback.

**Title of Novel:** The Westing Game






**Author:** Ellen Raskin

**Materials:** Setting chart (below)

**Directions for use:** Setting plays an important role in The Westing Game. The author would have had the characters act differently if the setting was changed. On the chart below, tell how the setting of this novel affected what happened in the story. Then, list three other books you have read or movies you have seen, what the setting was, and how it affected the plot or what happened in the story. An example has been done for you. Ask your parents to help you think about some books or movies and their settings.

<b>Name of Book or Movie</b>	<b>The Setting</b>	<b>Ways the Setting Affects the Plot</b>
<u>Hatchet</u>	Forest, northern Canada, remote	Brian had to survive in a remote climate with little chance of rescue
1. <u>The Westing Game</u>	1. An apartment building	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.

Next, explain how the setting of The Westing Game would be different if the story had taken place in the following places:

<p>Setting</p> 	<p><i>Ways the Story Would Change</i></p> 
<p>1. In the jungle</p> 	
<p>2. In the desert</p> 	
<p>3. In a campground</p> 	

**Title:** Making a Game

**Purpose of Activity:** Students will develop a game of their own and compare it to the one in the novel.

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** Parents will together with their child make a board game and play it with them.

**Rationale for Activity:** Research indicates the positive relationship between reading, writing, and comprehension. Developing a game and the directions for its use allow opportunity for organized writing, explanation, and use of directional words such as first, next, and last.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

6.3.5 Use strategies to write for different audiences and purposes.

**Title of Novel:** The Westing Game

**Author:** Ellen Raskin

**Materials:** Game pieces, cardboard, markers, crayons, and colored paper

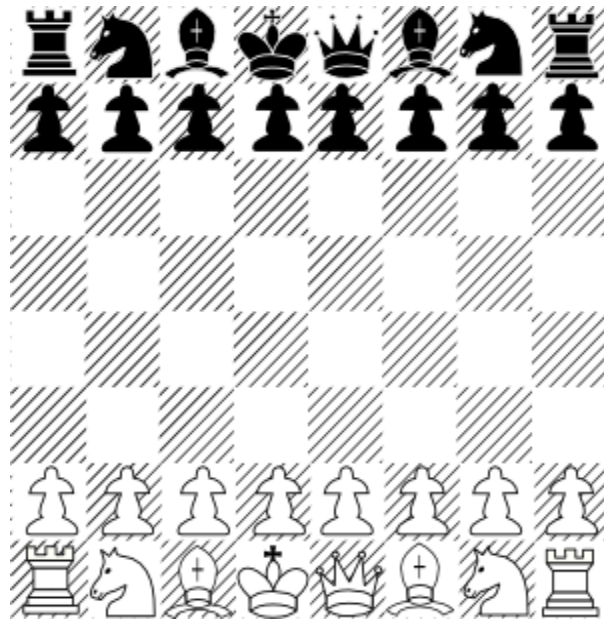
**Directions for use:** The Westing Game had some unique and unusual rules. The author was creative and much of the game was really about being tricky and mysterious. All games do not have to be tricky.

Together with your parents, make up a board game. Give it a name; decide how many people can play, and what the board will look like. Write the directions for your game below and then play it with your family.

Name of Game:

Directions:

How is your game the same or different from The Westing Game? Write your answer below the game.



**Title:** Descriptive Paragraphs

**Purpose of Activity:** Students will write descriptions of friends, using the model in the novel.

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** Read the description of Theo below. Then, write a paragraph about your child. Begin with their age and add some phrases about what they like to do or want to be, and some phrases about their personality.

**Rationale for Activity:** Writing skills are increased when students follow a model. Motivation is increased when students can complete an activity successfully and then they have the background knowledge to complete the task. This activity requires writing to a model, as well as asking students to write about something they know well. This will aid in developing descriptive language when writing.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

6.3.2 Produce narrative writing; e.g., short story, descriptive play, and poetry.

**Title of Novel:** The Westing Game

**Author:** Ellen Raskin

**Materials:** None

**Directions for use:** In The Westing Game, the author gives descriptions of each character. Here is an example of one for Theo:

Theo Theodorakis: Age 17a high school senior working in family coffee shop. Wants to be a Writer and seems lonely he can't find anyone to play chess with him.

This short paragraph tells the name, age, interests, and several unique characteristics about Theo. Pick three family members, relatives, or friends. Using the descriptions in the novel as a model, write four paragraphs, one for each person you chose. Your parents will write one about you! Parents write in the box below.

## PERSON 1

Parents: Follow the model of Theo and write a paragraph about your child in here.

**person 2**

**Person 3**  
**Person 3**

**Title:** Write Your Own Mystery

**Purpose of Activity:** Student will create a mystery

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** Parent will assist child in creating a mystery. Parent will fill in the character chart.

**Rationale for Activity:** The more students write, the better they become at expressing their ideas in written format. Students need to read and write a variety of genres and this activity provides a format for students to develop their ability to model the genre of the novel.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

6.2.8 Identify literary elements, including plot, setting, characters, conflict, resolution, dialogue, and flashback.

**Title of Novel:** The Westing Game

**Author:** Ellen Raskin

**Materials:** "Write Your Own Mystery" graphic organizer

**Directions for use:** The Westing Game was a mystery because the characters were supposed to figure out who killed Mr. Westing. What they really found out was who Mr. Westing was and was not! What was supposed to be the crime scene really wasn't. Create your own mystery using the graphic organizer. Please choose a non-violent crime. Perhaps all the books in your classroom are missing or the trays in the lunch room have mysteriously disappeared. Have your parents help you. Fill in the first two boxes yourself and have your parents fill in the third box; then, you figure out how your mystery will be solved. Creating a mystery will help you see how clever authors who write the genre of mystery need to be!

# WRITE YOUR OWN MYSTERY



Draw, describe, or explain the crime scene.

Write four clues. Two of the clues should lead the reader to the culprit. Two other clues should distract the reader's attention from the culprit.

Choose the detective, a suspect, or a victim and write four words to describe that character.

Write a brief description of how the mystery was or will be solved.

**Title and Purpose of Activity:** Students will create an agency and engage in writing skills

**Parent Engagement Strategy:** Assist child in writing a “motto” for their agency. It can be a statement such as “we love to see you smile”, or “leave no child behind” or another catchy motto that states what the agency the child has created.

**Rationale for Activity:** This activity requires students to create a brochure that aligns with a concept from the novel. Students need to be able to write a variety of different genres. This activity combines a variety of writing activities and incorporates creativity into developing persuasive writing.

**Standards/Benchmark Targeted:**

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

**Title of Novel:** The Westing Game

**Author:** Ellen Raskin

**Materials:** White paper and markers

**Directions for use:** In The Westing Game, several characters acted like detectives to try to solve the mystery. Create your own detective agency. Plan for the following parts (your parents will do part of it with you).

- **Name of Agency:** Be sure the name reflects your personality and what you hope to specialize in. Missing Pet Agency would be a good name for an agency that is looking for missing pets. Be creative.
- **Motto:** Most companies create a motto to identify the agency. Your parents will help you develop the motto.
- **Qualifications:** What makes you qualified to do the work you are advertising? Do you have the education, the experience, or other things that make us want to hire you? You can list cases that you have solved in the past and prior experiences that show you are qualified.
- **Radio Script:** You will need to advertise on the radio so think about what you will say.

Once you have decided all of these parts, make a brochure or flyer that you can hand out to your customers. Include all the parts that you have decided from above. Write the radio script on the back. You can decorate it if you would like. Now you can begin your business!

## 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