

Curriculum Guide

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The Newspaper Club

BY
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The Newspaper Club Series BOOK 1

NELLIE MURROW LIVES FOR THE NEWS—not that there’s much of it in the sleepy town of Bear Creek, Maine, where’s she’s just moved. But soon, rumors of vandalism and theft at the only park in town abound and Nellie, named for one of the fiercest journalists who ever lived and the daughter of two (former) newspaper reporters, is itching to get the scoop. When she discovers that Bear Creek’s only newspaper is not interested in investigating, she knows it’s up to her.

Nellie wants to break the story, but she can’t do it alone. She needs a whole club if she’s going to start the town’s first independent newspaper: *The Cub Report*. Creating a newspaper from scratch is going to be tough; but for Nellie, making friends in a new town may prove even harder.

This first book in award-winning author and former journalist Beth Vrabel’s new series is sure to inspire middle grade readers.

★“Getting to know a plethora of characters through Nellie’s eyes is as much fun as watching Nellie blossom. . . . Nellie Bly’s contemporary namesake does her proud.”

—KIRKUS REVIEWS, starred review

“A solid mix of personal story and intriguing mystery, along with the fun of starting a new enterprise.”

—BOOKLIST



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The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions, activities, and worksheets in this guide are noted throughout. For more information on the Common Core, visit corestandards.org.

Discussion Questions

Unless otherwise noted, all discussion questions meet the following Common Core State Standards: [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#)

- * * How does the author begin the story of Nellie Murrow and the newspaper club she wishes to start? Why do you think the author chose to organize the story events in this way? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.5](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.5](#)
- * * Nellie is new to the town of Bear Creek and has mixed feelings about making new friends. Who is Min Kim-Franklin and why does Nellie consider Min her “nemesis”?
- * * Much to Nellie’s dismay, her new town has only one gas station, one diner, and one newspaper. The only thing that Nellie initially likes about Bear Creek are the swings at the park. Why are the swings significant for Nellie?
- * * Newspapers are very important to Nellie. What is her background with newspapers and who is she named for?
- * * Describe Nellie’s reaction to the commotion she witnesses while she is swinging at the park. How does Chief Rodgers react to the incident and to Nellie’s interest?
- * * Nellie recalls that her dad often said “You’ve got to put yourself out there” when he talked to her about making friends. How does Nellie follow her dad’s advice when she meet her neighbor Thom?
- * * Nellie looks at most situations through the eyes of a reporter. What leads her to think that there is a story connected to Miss Julia and her ice cream shop?
- * * How do you think Nellie feels when she goes to visit the offices of the *Bear Creek Gazette* and is greeted by sad faces and people packing boxes? How does this scene inspire Nellie’s next move to share information with the citizens of Bear Creek?
- * * What does it mean to be a source for a story? What role does Arlene Austin play as a source for information about the incidents at the park?
- * * Describe the character of Chief Rodgers. How does he become an adversary to Nellie and her newspaper project?
- * * Nellie is able to recruit another person for her newspaper at Wells Diner. Compare the characters of Gloria, whose father owns the diner, and Nellie. How are they similar? How are they different? How do these similarities and differences affect their roles at the newspaper? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#)
- * * As Nellie’s idea for a newspaper starts to take shape, she shares that, “It felt right in a way that nothing had felt right since we moved to Bear Creek.” What do you think contributed to Nellie’s positive feelings about the newspaper and her more positive attitude about Bear Creek?
- * * In the beginning of the story, Nellie tells everyone that her dad is gone on a business trip in Asia. What clues are given to readers that slowly reveal the true nature of Nellie’s dad’s absence? Reread the scene beginning on page 115 where Nellie is talking with Miss Juliet about Happy Jalapeño ice cream and describes how her Dad “put hot sauce on everything, even mac and cheese.” She quickly corrects herself to say he “puts” hot sauce on everything. Why does Miss Juliet offer to talk to Nellie and her mom anytime they want? What unique tie exists between Nellie and Miss Juliet?
- * * What is Min’s role in creating a masthead and a name for the newspaper? How does Nellie react to Min’s work? How do Nellie’s feelings about Min change over the course of the novel?
- * * What important lessons does Nellie learn as a result of connecting to people and starting a newspaper in Bear Creek? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#)

Activities for Students



Class News

Start your own classroom Newspaper Club! Assign reporters, editors, copy editors, photographers, layout editors, columnists, and editorial cartoonists. Report on stories important to your school—a profile of cafeteria worker, an interview with the school secretary, an article on the most popular books checked out of the library, etc. Choose a name and design a masthead for your newspaper. Print copies and share them throughout your school. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1 \(for editorials and book reviews\)](#) and [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2 \(for informative/fact-based articles\)](#)

Visual Clues

Read the descriptions of Min's and Nellie's houses on pages 29–30. Create a T-chart and label the two columns: Nellie's House and Min's House. Draw detailed pictures of each character's house based on text information. Write a few sentences below each illustration about what each house reveals about the people who live inside of them. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.7](#)

Friend-Making Handbook

Nellie regarded her first-grade teacher, her father, and the reporters at her father's newspaper as her only real friends before she moved to Bear Creek. Often her dad would give Nellie advice and strategies on how to make friends. He even gave Nellie her first reporter's notebook to help her deal with social interactions at a classmate's birthday party. Design a how-to book for making friends. Include steps and strategies that a person seeking a friend could use. Include an introduction and conclusion in your book. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2](#)

Crow Know-How

Nellie knows that a good reporter needs to do research to better understand the topics of her newspaper articles. Nellie senses that the crows in the park have something to do with the trouble people have been experiencing. She and Gordon visit an ornithologist at the local college to find out more about crows. Do your own research on crows: their physical characteristics, behavior, prey and predators, and any other interesting facts. Compile your research into a report. Include drawings and/or photos. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2](#)

Newspaper 101

Looking at a printed newspaper, work with a partner to identify the following elements from the glossary at the end of *The Newspaper Club*: beat, the big five, columnist, lede, masthead, top of the fold. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#)

The discussion questions, activities, and worksheets in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, Ph.D. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public elementary school in San Diego, California. She holds both master's and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

NAME: _____



Getting the Scoop

Nellie's father emphasized that newspaper reporters must answer five main questions when writing an article. Think of an issue at your school or in your community. Record information that addresses "the big five" about your topic. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2**

WHO? _____

WHAT? _____

WHERE? _____

WHEN? _____

WHY? _____

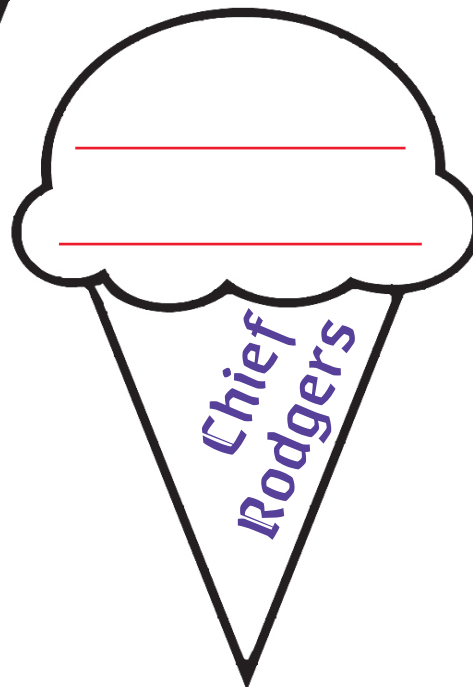
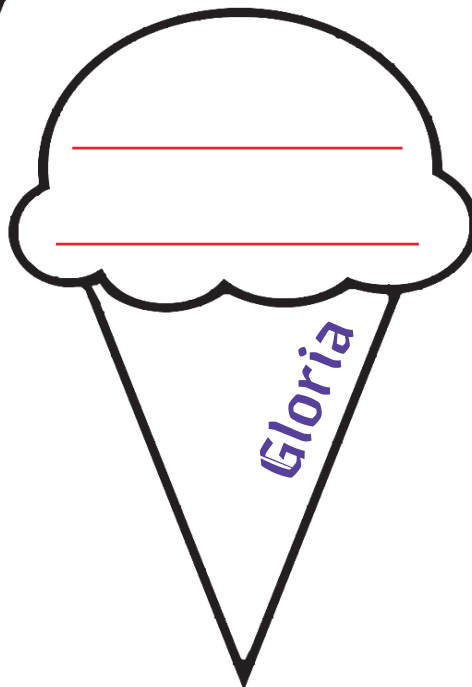
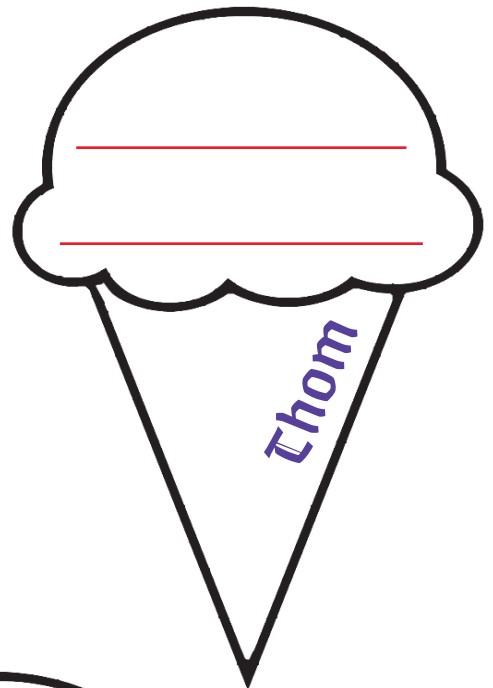
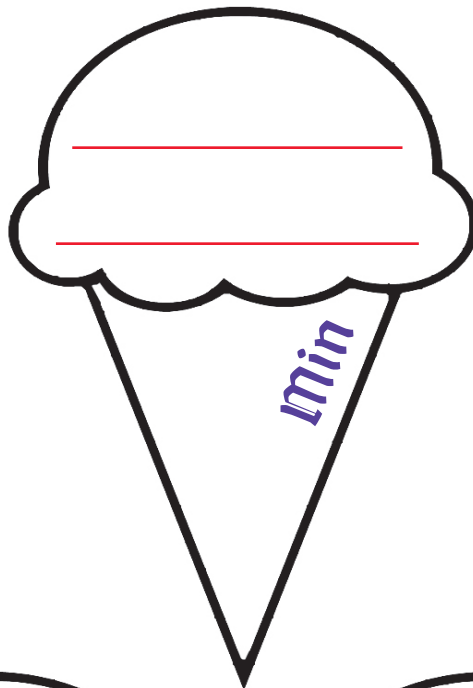
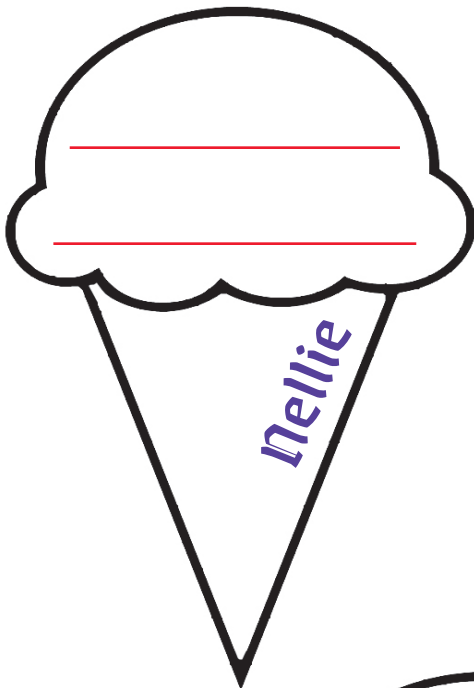
NAME: _____



What's in a Name?

From Melancholy Mango to Hopeful Honey, Miss Juliet's ice cream flavor names at Bear Creek Creamery reflect her emotional state. Think carefully about the characters in the story. How would you describe them in terms of their interests and personalities? Create an ice cream flavor for each character that reflects that character's nature. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3;**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3



NAMES: _____

Newspaper Word Search



Nellie identifies Charlotte as someone who would make a great copy editor for *The Cub Report*. As a copy editor, Charlotte needs to know about vocabulary and grammar. Find a partner and hunt through a newspaper for examples of the following types of vocabulary and grammar. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.3;**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.4.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.5.3

Types of vocabulary and grammar	Examples from the newspaper
Two words that end with the suffix “-ing”	
Two words that begin with consonant blends	
Two compound words	
Two possessives	
Two plurals	
Two words in the past tense	
Two words in the present tense	
Two words in the future tense	
Two words with a prefix	