



The Misspellers
by Michael J. Martineck

Lesson Plan

Grade Levels: 6,7,8,9

Subjects: Reading and Language Arts

Overview: This plan breaks *The Misspellers* down chapter-by-chapter, focusing on reading comprehension, dramatic structure, themes and vocabulary. In addition, each chapter has an author's note, highlighting what he finds important, unusual or likeable about that chapter.

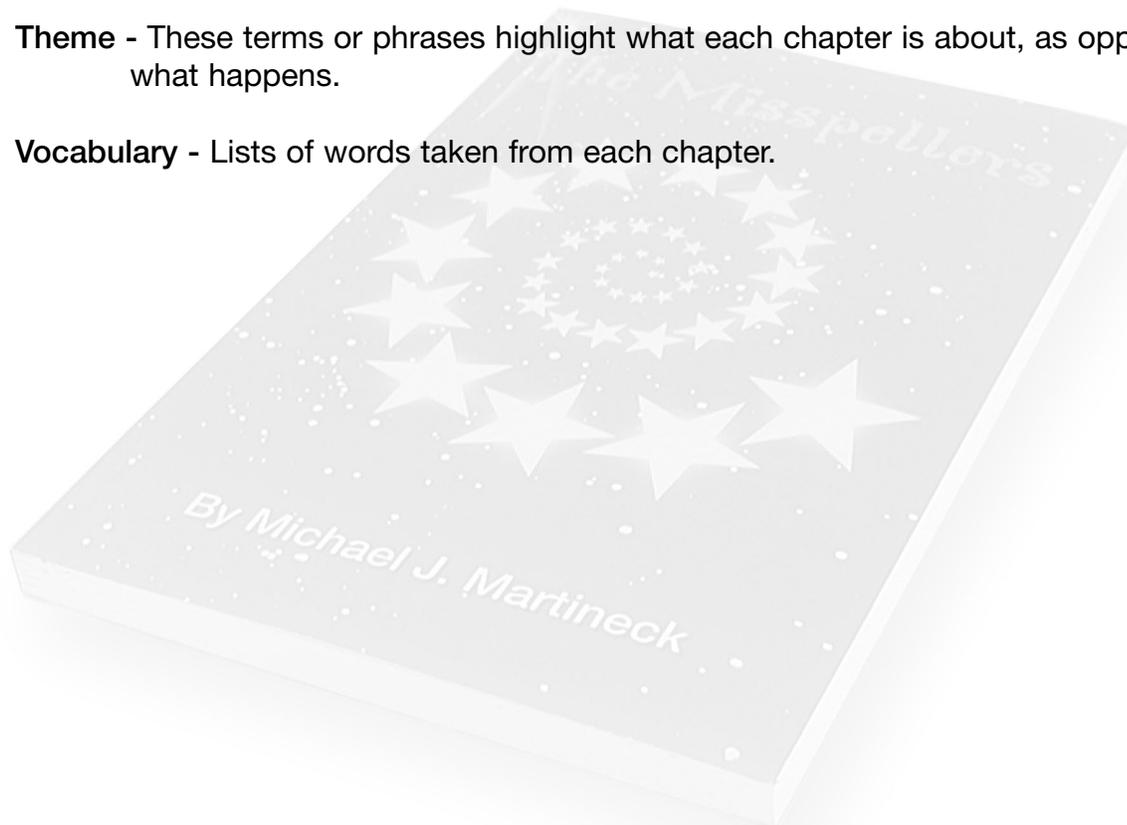
Objective: Increase a student's reading enjoyment. By reviewing how the parts of this novel work, students can improve their skills and apply them to more sophisticated works of literature. This plan addresses four skills.

Comprehension: Each chapter has three reading questions pertaining to the events of the novel in that chapter. Some of the events happen in the text, some happen outside of the text and must be inferred.

Story - Discussion points for each chapter, these define how the story of the novel is working in the chapter. Why is this a story, or in more basic terms, what is wrong?

Theme - These terms or phrases highlight what each chapter is about, as opposed to what happens.

Vocabulary - Lists of words taken from each chapter.



Chapter 1 - Mud Shower

Comprehension:

- Why does Jack want a paper route?
- Why doesn't Jack like Mr. Bough's house?
- What happens to Jack in the fields?

Story:

Jack ends the chapter worse off than he began the chapter: covered in mud.

Theme:

Work can be hard.

Author's note:

This chapter introduces Jack on what is going to be the worst day of his life. It shows a glimpse of Jack's normal life, without being boring, as most normal lives can be. Just a peek, before the novel's plot begins.

Vocabulary:

Attitude	previous	unmistakably	beeline	mammoth
Decoration	infested	physical	requirements	enchancements

Chapter 2 - The house that smelled

Comprehension:

- What object does Carlin think she is like?
- What does Carlin do to help Jack?
- What does Mr. Bough ask Carlin and Jack?

Story:

The things that have made Jack's day miserable, have made Carlin's day better. They are at odds in a way they do not realize.

Themes:

New favors lead to new friends.

Author's note:

Carlin, like Jack, will work for what she wants. She doesn't need money, like Jack, but she does need other things that a paper route can deliver.

Vocabulary:

Luggage	transition	idiocy	scrutinize	loganberry
Derailer	Khaki	Farsi	excellent	nonsense

Chapter 3 - The books that can't be read

Comprehension:

How do people get to Strawberry Island?
Besides the smell, what is so weird about Mr. Bough's house?
What do Carlin and Jack decide to do after diner?

Story:

Carlin can't ignore the mystery. Because she's been so nice, Jack can't ignore her.

Theme:

New friends lead to new interests

Author's note:

If Carlin wasn't so starved for something to do and Jack wasn't such a nice guy, the book would end here. Luckily, in this world, no nice deed goes unpunished.

Vocabulary:

Hodgepodge	fascinating	swags	cauldron	captivated
Chandelier	telegram	stoke	ancient	translate

Chapter 4 - What is the Latin word for terrible?

Comprehension:

Where does Jack go to meet Carlin?
What is out of place at Carlin's (besides Jack)?
What is out of place at Mr. Bough's house?

Story:

This chapter is full of foreshadowing, hints that the path Carlin and Jack are taking may not be a good one.

Themes:

Some things don't belong for a reason.

Author's note:

No good ever comes from translating Latin. And, tension comes from people and things being out of place. This chapter pushes and pulls both people and things out of place.

Vocabulary:

Expression	irritation	looming	touchpad	mussed
Cursor	obvious	billowing	spiral	Latin

Chapter 5 - Where am I?

Comprehension:

- What happens to Jack?
- What happens to Puck?
- Why does Carlin need to run?

Story:

Drama is created when things are not the way characters would like. Carlin and Jack are not at all happy with the circumstances arising in this chapter.

Themes:

Change . . . and change quickly.

Author's note:

What do you do when your world becomes a whole new world? Neither Carlin nor Jack is the type of person to roll up like a potato bug and wait to be rescued. They are doers, but don't know what to do.

Vocabulary:

Introduced	Looking-glass	snrack	askew	humdrum
Plunged	perked	aluminum	faerie	potato bug

Chapter 6 - The fourth rule of magic

Comprehension:

- Where is Jack now?
- Who is in the laptop computer now?
- With what do Carlin and Jack bargain?

Story:

Sometimes a short pause actually makes the story work better. Characters - and readers - need to assess their situations.

Themes:

Examine, analyze, think

Author's note:

No dreams, no cartoons — this chapter begins to eliminate logical possibilities, and even illogical possibilities, leading to one seemingly silly conclusion: magic is real.

Vocabulary:

Immediate	calmness	gibberish	ridiculous	waif
Permanent	condition	rune	encrusted	quell

Chapter 7 - More uninvited

Comprehension:

How did Puck find Carlin?
What is Professor Waddles?
Where is Jack at the end of the chapter?

Story:

Separating Carlin and Jack makes things worse, making the story more interesting.

Themes:

Be flexible, learn and adapt.

Author's note:

Carlin and Jack are starting to think clearly, despite the bizarre situation in which they find themselves.

Vocabulary:

Uninvited	whisked	compact	dormice	astonished
Scampered	presumably	mechanical	jumbled	porcelain

Chapter 8 - Web and Waddles

Comprehension:

Why is the telegram company important?
What does Willy do?
Why can't Jack find what he needs?

Story:

While Jack is certainly stuck, he is not helpless. Which is good. Complete helplessness is not very interesting.

Themes:

Use what you've got.

Author's note:

Jack is a computer. Ever so slightly, he begins to think as one, along logical lines. He does not fully become a computer, he is a blend.

Vocabulary:

Pedestal	financial	abstractions	woozy	merely
Overwhelming	Caduceus	firewall	internal	revved

Chapter 9 - Breaking things

Comprehension:

What rule does Carlin break?
Who is Barry?
What does Nilly do?

Story:

Now Carlin, Jack, Puck and the computer have been pulled apart, like a big, four-sided spring.

Themes:

Cause and effect.

Author's note:

The farther apart everyone-and every thing-gets, the more energy in the story. Pulling and stretching creates tension. Rules snap. The trick is to build energy without breaking things.

Vocabulary:

Disobeying	hesitated	potholders	maneuvering	frantic
Rank	mouthed	dispenser	blathering	blared

Chapter 10 - Boating

Comprehension:

Whose car was stolen?
Why is the laptop battery important?
How does being a boat affect Jack?

Story:

A plan. Carlin and Jack do not simply ponder circumstances; they set out to change them.

Themes:

Learning and working together. Research and risk go hand-in-hand.

Author's note:

One of the reasons Carlin and Jack can be called the heroes of the novel (and not simply protagonists) is the fact that they act, not just react.

Vocabulary:

Fantastic	grave	implications	throttle	convenient
Arched	nimble	Jakarta	conceivable	undoubtedly

Chapter 11 - Porsche

Comprehension:

What is a Porsche?
Where do Carlin and Jack go?
What are Willy and Nilly now?

Story:

Any machine can be 'alive'. That adds a little scariness to the tale.

Themes:

Taking control.

Author's note:

Being a car is fun and dangerous. Like everything in the book, it's got its good points and bad. Overall, though, it is pretty cool.

Vocabulary:

Sensation	pleaded	insistent	precise	astounding
Envious	tremendously	felled	excavator	monstrous

Chapter 12 - In the dumpster

Comprehension:

Why does Carlin laugh?
What has Mr. Bough been up to?
What is a misspell?

Story:

Every good story poses questions, then provides answers. For the story to continue, those answers should lead to more questions. In this chapter, we learn what a misspell is and why there is no technology in Mr. Bough's house. Of course, that might lead one to ask even more questions about the nature of magic and what is going to happen to Jack.

Themes:

Questions and answers.

Author's note:

There is another story going on off the pages. Mr. Bough has been watching it.

Vocabulary:

Blather	reconnaissance	dread	wince	perplexed
Spyglass	discern	reversible	civilians	subterfuge

Chapter 13 - Counter attack

Comprehension:

- What is a thin place?
- What is Puck's plan?
- What did the water do?

Story:

Another pause, to assess and sort. Taking the time to figure out how bad things are can heighten the drama of a story.

Theme:

Thinking things through.

Author's note:

If you look at the novel as a puzzle, it is only now that all the pieces are in front of the reader. Not that the pieces are obvious or easy. They are here, though.

Vocabulary:

Behest	intercepted	impressed	illuminated	entrusted
Diffused	lingering	interjected	focal	transmission

Chapter 14 - Havoc

Comprehension:

- What is Strawberry Island going to become?
- Why do Carlin and Jack need to get back the laptop?
- What's so bad about magic?

Story:

Carlin and Jack take action, based on what they know—not just what they know about their circumstances, but what they know about themselves. They have learned, now they are adapting.

Themes:

Fairness is a level playing field. (Literarily, in this book, leveled by a bulldozer.)

Author's note:

When anyone in this book says something like “This is not fun and games”, it probably is the opposite. Rules, fields, opponents - this book is all about fun and games, even if Mr. Bough doesn't know it.

Vocabulary:

Havoc	menacing	suspension	bulbous	imperfection
Doppelganger	devouring	reveling	golem	ricocheting

(bonus word: hegal, an old symbol for misfortune)

Chapter 15 - The end of it all

Chapter 16 - Clean up

These two chapters are combined, because they are both short.

Comprehension:

What should Puck have learned about Jack?

Who owns the helicopter?

Who helps Jack push the Porsche?

Story:

The climax of the novel pulls the plot's tension as tight as it will go, leaving Jack with a choice between bad and bad. The final few pages put things back to normal, though they can never really be the same. The book leaves the characters on a new and higher plateau.

Author's note:

Chapter 15 and 16 cover the same scene, but with such a huge turning point between them that a chapter break felt necessary. Everything after the climax of the book is necessary because, as Jack says, he cleans up after himself.

Vocabulary:

Grimace

poised

paisley

excessively

unison

Blurry

plummeted

admiration

transparent

stern

