

A Guide for Using  
*Missing May*

in the Classroom

*Based on the novel written by Cynthia Rylant*

*This guide written by Janet Buckley and Lauren Corcoran*



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# Introduction

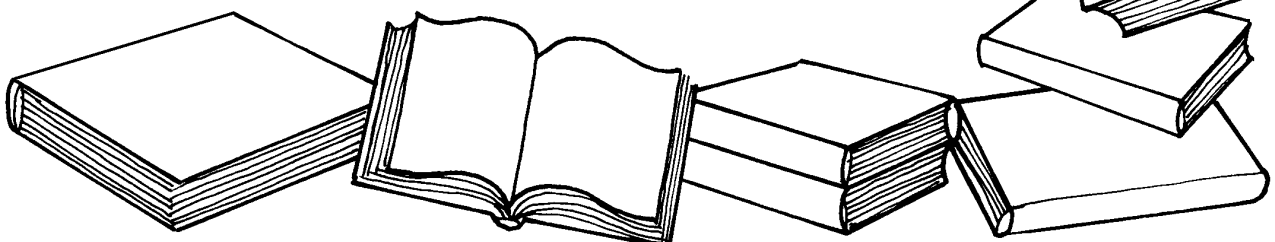
Some books, through thought-provoking story lines and striking imagery, transport readers directly into the stories and are recognized for this artistry. They can stimulate our imaginations, inform our minds, inspire our higher selves, and fill our time with magic! With a good book, we are never lonely or bored. A good book only gets better with time because each reading brings us new meaning. Each new story is a treasure to cherish forever.

In Literature Units, we take great care to select books that will become treasured friends for life. The book *Missing May* by author Cynthia Rylant has received both the John Newbery Medal and the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award. The book is about what it means to be loved, losing someone dear, and learning to live with hope on the other side of bereavement. The author has written with honesty, sensitivity, and flashes of humor. Students everywhere are learning to love Summer, the main character, who wants to be a writer. They willingly climb aboard the story and travel the journey with her while she is learning about herself and missing May.

Teachers using this unit will find the following features to supplement their own valuable ideas.

- A Sample Lesson Plan
- Pre-reading Activities
- A Biographical Sketch and Picture of the Author
- A Book Summary
- Vocabulary Lists and Suggested Activities
- Journal Activities
- Chapters grouped for study, with each section including the following:
  - quizzes
  - hands-on projects
  - cooperative learning activities
  - cross-curriculum connections
  - extension activities to relate to the reader's own life
- Post-reading Activities
- Book Report Ideas
- Research Ideas
- Culminating Activities
- Three Different Options for Unit Tests
- Bibliography of Related Resources
- Answer Key

We are confident that this unit will be a valuable addition to your literature planning. Through the use of our ideas, your students will increase the circle of “friends” they have in books!



# Vocabulary Activity Ideas

You can help your students learn and retain the vocabulary in *Missing May* by providing them with interesting vocabulary activities. Here are a few ideas.

- ❑ **Cue Cards**—This is a partner activity. Using 20 vocabulary words per page, divide a page into two columns. In each of the columns, list ten different vocabulary words and their definitions. Fold the page lengthwise (blank-side in) and laminate it. Students sitting opposite each other can take turns quizzing their partners to match words with definitions.
- ❑ **Content Clues**—Before reading the chapters, find the sentence with the vocabulary word in it. Read the sentence to the students, leaving out the vocabulary word. Have students guess possible words before you reveal the word.
- ❑ **Mini Dictionary**—Make a small dictionary, using the vocabulary words. Alphabetize the words and write a definition for each one. The dictionary can be extended by including sentences showing word meaning, adding parts of speech, guide words, and illustrations.
- ❑ **Value of Words**—How much does each word cost? Consonants cost 1 cent, vowels cost 25 cents, and syllables cost \$1.00. Which word is the most expensive? least expensive?
- ❑ **Vocabulary Game Boards**—Divide students into groups of three or four. Give each group a large piece of paper or cardboard on which to create their game. Assign each group a section of the vocabulary words from the book. Each group should design a game board, create rules, and make clues for the vocabulary words on their list. Ideas for clue cards may include riddles, sentences with words left out, or scrambled letters.
- ❑ **Baseball Spelling**—Divide the class into two teams. Designate first, second, third, and home bases around the classroom. If the player up to bat (spelling the word) spells it correctly, he or she moves to first base. The team with the most runs wins the game.
- ❑ **Categorize**—Categorize words into five groups: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, or other.
- ❑ **Silent Match-Up**—Make two sets of cards. Each set has vocabulary word cards and definition cards. Divide the class into two teams. Each player takes a turn matching one definition at a time. If one player sees a wrong match, he or she can correct it. The team with the most correct matches wins.
- ❑ **Beanbag Toss**—The student in possession of the beanbag takes a turn using one of the vocabulary words in a sentence. Afterward, he or she tosses the beanbag to another student who then chooses another vocabulary word and makes a new sentence. This continues until all the words are used or all students have had the opportunity to make a sentence.
- ❑ **Go Fish**—Create a deck containing vocabulary word cards and definition cards. In groups of four, players are dealt five cards and play “Go Fish,” matching words with their definitions to form a “book.” The player with the most “books” wins.
- ❑ **Mixed-up Words Game**—Have student teams scramble vocabulary words for other student teams to unscramble.
- ❑ **Vocabulary Stories**—Have two to four students in a group write on any subject and include at least ten words from the vocabulary words listed on page 8.

# Quiz Time

Answer the following questions about Chapters 1–3. If you need more writing space, use the back of this paper or a separate piece of paper.

1. Who were Summer, May, and Ob?

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2. Where and with whom did Summer live before coming to live with May and Ob?

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3. Why did May and Ob bring Summer home with them?

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4. What were some ways May and Ob showed their love for Summer when they first brought her home?

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5. How did May feel when they would pack to go visit relatives in Ohio?

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6. Did Summer believe May’s spirit had visited Ob?

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7. How did Summer and Ob keep their minds off May?

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8. Why did May have a hopeless kind of fear about water?

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9. Who was Cletus, and how does he know Summer?

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10. On the back of this paper, answer the following question: Explain what Summer means when she says that after all those years of having nobody, having Ob and May was her idea of dying and going to heaven.