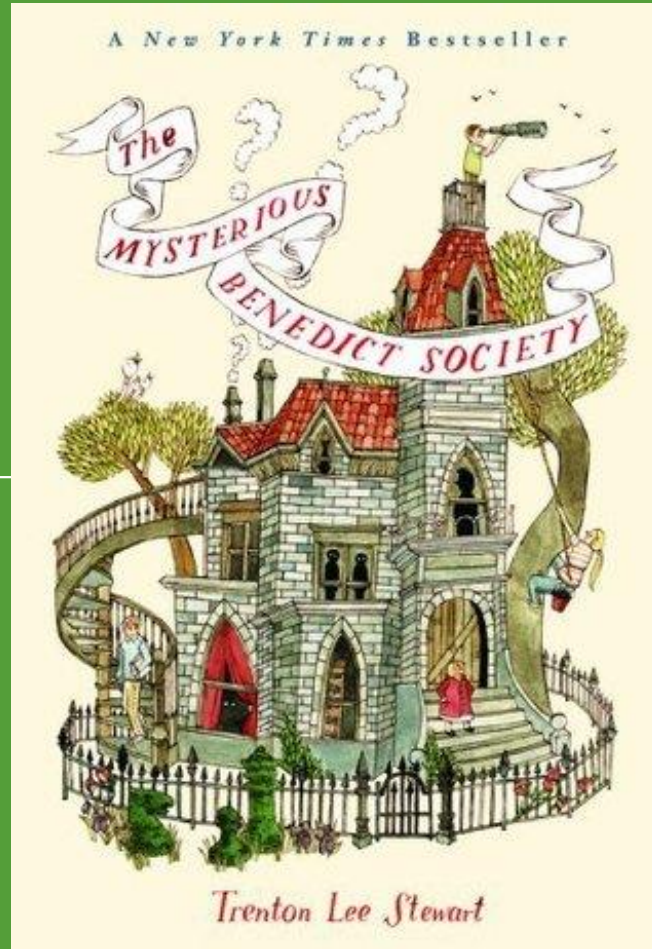


# THE MYSTERIOUS BENEDICT SOCIETY BY TRENTON LEE STEWART



4<sup>th</sup> Grade Talented and Gifted Literacy Unit

Sarah Cutsforth

# The Mysterious Benedict Society by Trenton Lee Stewart

This novel was selected for 4<sup>th</sup> grade students identified as gifted in the area of literacy. A very popular novel among upper-elementary and middle schoolers, students who participate in the Extended Learning Program may find special meaning in the text on both an intellectual and social-emotional level. On gifted children demonstrating bravery, creativity, teamwork and friendship, the novel provides a basis for discussion and intellectual engagement. Students will learn new, advanced vocabulary words, demonstrate above grade-level writing skills, and develop unique opinions on what it means to be gifted, brave, and creative.

Lexile level: 840L

Grade-level equivalent: 6.3

# Reading Standards

- Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions). **RL.4.3) (DOK 1,2,3)**
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes. **(RL.5.4) (DOK 1,2,3)**
- By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently. **(RL.5.10) (DOK 1,2,3,4)**

# Writing standards

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
  - a. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
  - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
  - c. Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.
  - d. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
  - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.**(W.5.3.) (DOK 3,4)**
  
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. **(W.5.4.) (DOK 3,4)**

# Speaking and listening standards

- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 4 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
  - a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
  - b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
  - c. Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.
- Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion. **(SL.4.1.) (DOK 1,2,3)**
- Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace. **(SL.4.4.) (DOK 1,2,3)**

# Language standards

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
  - a. Use relative pronouns (*who, whose, whom, which, that*) and relative adverbs (*where, when, why*).
  - b. Form and use the progressive (e.g., *I was walking; I am walking; I will be walking*) verb tenses.
  - c. Use modal auxiliaries (e.g., *can, may, must*) to convey various conditions.
  - d. Order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns (e.g., *a small red bag* rather than *a red small bag*).
  - e. Form and use prepositional phrases.
  - f. Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.\*
  
- Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., *to, too, two; there, their*). **\*(L.4.1.) (DOK 1,2)**
  
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
  - a. Use correct capitalization.
  - b. Use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text.
  - c. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.
  - d. Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed. **(L.4.2.) (DOK 1)**

# Language Standards Cont.

- Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
  - a. Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.\*
  - b. Choose punctuation for effect.\*
  
- Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion). (L.4.3.) (DOK 2)
  
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 4 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
  - a. Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
  - b. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., telegraph, photograph, autograph).
  - c. Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases. (L.4.4.) (DOK 1,2,3)
  
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
  - a. Explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors (e.g., as pretty as a picture) in context.
  - b. Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.
  
- Demonstrate understanding of words by relating them to their opposites (antonyms) and to words with similar but not identical meanings (synonyms). (L.4.5.) (DOK 1,2,3)
  
- Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., wildlife, conservation, and endangered when discussing animal preservation). (L.4.6.) (DOK 1,2)

# Social Studies Standards

## History: Intermediate (3 - 5)

***Understand how and why people create, maintain, or change systems of power, authority, and governance.***

Understand groups and institutions work to meet individual needs and the common good of all.

Understand that belief systems affect government policies and laws.

Understand the consequences of governmental decisions.

***Understand the role of individuals and groups within a society as promoters of change or the status quo.***

Understand how democratic values have been exemplified by people, events, and symbols.

Understand that specific individuals had a great impact on history

***Understand the role of innovation on the development and interaction of societies.***

Understand the influence of cultural, scientific, and technological decisions on societies.

## Geography: Intermediate (3 - 5)

***Understand how human factors and the distribution of resources affect the development of society and the movement of populations.***

Understand the role of technology in resource acquisition and use, and its impact on the environment.

Understand the development and widespread use of alternative energy sources have an impact on societies.

## Behavioral Sciences: Intermediate (3 – 5)

***Understand the influences on individual and group behavior and group decision-making.***

Understand that people involved in a dispute often have different points of view.

Understand that communicating different points of view in a dispute can often help people to find a satisfactory compromise.

Understand that resolving a conflict by force rather than compromise can lead to more problems.

Understand that family, groups and community influence the individual's daily life and personal choices.

Understand the role of cultural unity and diversity within and across groups.

***Understand how personality and socialization impact the individual.***

Understand that various factors contribute to the shaping of a person's identity.

Understand that human beings have different interests, motivations, skills, and talents.

Understand the rights and responsibilities of the individual in relation to his/her social group.

Understand various meanings of social group, general implications of group membership, and different ways that groups function.

***Understand current social issues to determine how the individual formulates opinions and responds to issues.***

Understand that the way a person views an issue reflects personal beliefs, experiences, and attitudes.



# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Standards

## Technology Literacy (Intermediate: 3-5)

- **Essential Concept and/or Skill:** *Use interactive technologies in a collaborative group to produce digital presentations or products in a curricular area.*
- Use a variety of technology tools to work collaboratively with others inside and outside the classroom.
- Use telecommunication tools efficiently to communicate information and ideas to multiple audiences.
- Access remote information using technology.
- Engage in learning activities with learners from other countries and/or cultures
- Appropriately contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems using technology.

# Student learning Targets

SWBAT demonstrate mastery of unit vocabulary.

- I CAN define, spell, and contextualize all of the unit vocabulary words.

SWBAT conduct research on an assigned topic using a variety of methods.

- I CAN use the internet and library to do research on a topic and create a presentation on the subject.

SWBAT demonstrate creativity, text analysis, and understanding of grammar and conventions.

- I CAN write a short story about my life as a spy.

SWBAT demonstrate confidence and skill in speaking aloud to peers.

- I CAN share my short story aloud in front of the class.
- I CAN share my research aloud in front of the class.

SWBAT demonstrate maturity in discussing a variety of topics.

- I CAN share and listen respectfully and maturely during class discussions.

# Unit Contents

- Vocabulary activity #1: Vocab Skits
- Vocabulary activity #2: I Have/Who Has
- Comprehension activity: Online discussion of comprehension prompts
- Writing activity #1: Short story
- Writing activity #2: Research project
- Additional activities: Big Jar O' Vocab, Cloze Passages, Exit Tickets, Whole-Group Discussion
- Final Assessment: The final assessment for the unit is focused on demonstrating mastery of unit vocabulary. Students will be expected to spell, define, and contextualize all unit vocab words.

# Interactive Activity/Anticipatory Set

- **Quick Write:** In two minutes, write down your thoughts on the questions below. Do not make any attempt to edit, just get something down on the page that reflects your immediate thinking.
- What does it mean to be “gifted”? In what ways do you think a person can be gifted?

# Interactive Activity/Anticipatory Set

- Read each statement below, and mark which you agree with. When we have concluded the novel, review the statements and mark those which you believe the author would agree with.

- 1. There are many ways to be part of a family.
- 2. The best way to become brave is to behave courageously.
- 3. It is better to be happy and comfortable than to struggle against the authorities.
- 4. Technology always helps society to achieve progress.
- 5. It is possible for an enemy to eventually become a friend.
- 6. Facing challenges helps us to grow and change for the better.
- 7. Parents should not expect too much of their children.
- 8. It is important to hide feelings of grief and loneliness from others.
- 9. Words can exert a powerful influence on people.
- 10. If we ignore a threat, chances are it will disappear.



# Vocabulary Activity: Vocab skits

- In groups of 2 to 4, students will be assigned a vocabulary word from the unit. They will be asked to develop a visual or verbal mnemonic device for the spelling, definition, and proper usage of the word. This may take the form of an image, a rhyme, a song, a skit...whatever the group of students devise. Mnemonics should be simply and easy to remember, but complex enough to communicate spelling, definition and usage of the assigned word. Students may choose to create one mnemonic for all three aspects, or one each for spelling, definition and usage. Students will be expected to create something unique that both forms new knowledge and activates prior knowledge. An ability to work with a group and see multiple perspectives is critical in this activity. Students must understand how their peers perceive the meaning of a word, and work to correct any misconceptions. This may help to explain the link to behavior sciences standards. Students will record their performances using the class set of cameras. Once recorded, they will upload their videos to the class Weebly site to create a “Digital Dictionary” of the unit vocabulary. All students will have access to this site both at school and at home, and may use the mnemonics devised by their peers to practice the unit vocabulary.
- Scaffolding: Students who require scaffolding to meet their potential will be given words known to be easier to define. Additionally, they will be provided with teacher support when necessary.
- Challenge: Students who require an additional challenge will be given words that are known to be difficult to use correctly in a sentence. They will be asked to develop a way for peers to learn and remember the correct usage. Some groups may be assigned more than one word.
- Formative Assessment: Students will be observed throughout the activity, with the teacher paying close attention to proper usage of the word and appropriateness of the mnemonic. Students observed to be struggling will be given direct assistance from a peer or the instructor.
- Summative Assessment: The summative assessment for this activity will take the form of both a rubric for the uploaded video and the final vocabulary test for the unit.

# Vocabulary Activity: Vocab skits

- Conspicuous: obvious, standing out
- Deviate: depart from what is normal
- Ferocious: fierce
- Hasten: hurry up
- Melancholy: thoughtful sadness
- Slogan: memorable phrase used in advertising
- Solitude: aloneness
- Timid: shy
- Baffled: confused
- Clandestine: secret
- Nuisance: an annoying person or thing
- Ponder: think carefully
- Smuggle: bring something somewhere secretly
- Somber: gloomy
- Belligerent: hostile



## Writing Activity: Short story with vocab



Quizlet  
.com

[Quizlet.com/miss\\_patterson](https://www.quizlet.com/miss_patterson)



# Writing Activity

- Students will be asked to learn a set of vocabulary words. In order to practice proper usage and spelling of these words, each student will create a short story, featuring themselves as an undercover agent similar to the characters in the novel that uses 10 of the unit vocabulary words. In their stories, students will take the point of view of a child in the Mysterious Benedict Society, trying to gather information on the villainous Mr. Curtain and his evil plot. They may compare themselves to other characters in the novel, or create entirely new details from their own imaginations. However, student created stories must be characteristically similar to the novel; events must be believable within the novel's universe. In order to be successful in this task, students must use knowledge from the novel to create a compelling story as well as knowledge from class to use vocabulary words appropriately. When complete, students will share their stories aloud with the class. Students will use the class Quizlet page to create digital flashcards of the unit vocabulary word(s). This will allow all students to practice each word and play a variety of vocabulary and spelling practice games. Information and scores from this site are viewable by teachers, so this could also be used as a formative assessment. Students will be expected to use the Quizlet to demonstrate mastery in the spelling and definitions of their chosen 10 vocabulary words **before** they move on to the short story activity.
- Scaffolding: Students will be assigned 7 vocabulary words (rather than 10) determined to be less challenging to find appropriate uses for. Some students may be asked to partner up to assist each other in coming up with ideas, but each student will still be expected to produce a unique story of their very own.
- Challenge: Students will be assigned 15 vocabulary words (rather than 10).
- Formative: While working on their short stories, students will be observed carefully. Once their short stories are complete (hand written), students will have a one-on-one conference with the teacher to advise them in the editing and revising process. Teacher will provide students with quality feedback and instruction for editing before allowing them to type their short story. A peer review process may also be used after the one-on-one conference, time permitting.
- Summative: The summative assessment for this activity will take the form of a rubric for the short stories, with regard to appropriate use of vocabulary words, attention to detail, and conventions.

## Comprehension Activity: Online discussion

- Why do you suppose Reynie, Sticky, and Kate were the only children to pass the three tests? What might have disqualified the other applicants?
- Why do you think the children were placed in situations that tested their honesty and ingenuity as well as their knowledge?
- What characteristics do you imagine orphans might share?
- Why do you suppose that the successful test-takers did not feel competitive toward one another?
- In what ways do you think a person can be gifted?
- In what ways do you think the children's lives are going to change?



# Comprehension Activity

- In order to demonstrate comprehension, understanding, and analysis of the text, students will participate in an online discussion forum throughout the unit. Before class, teacher will post a discussion question relevant to the previous night's reading. On the blog section of the class website, students will respond to discussion prompts both in class and outside of class. As part of this activity, verbal guided discussions will give students the opportunity to craft responses with regard to peer postings. Examples of discussion questions may be found on the previous page.
- Scaffolding: Students observed to be struggling with their responses will be given re-worded prompts as well as teacher scaffolding in the form of verbal guidance. Some students may need assistance in shaping a response worded in the way they wish, and help will be provided when necessary. Students who have difficulties with typing or vision (re: computer screen) will be given the opportunity to discuss verbally with teacher and peers. Because this is intended for use in a gifted class, the span of abilities will be somewhat narrow.
- Formative: While participating on the discussion forum in class, students will be observed by the teacher. Additionally, all postings will be read and evaluated by the teacher once online. Students will be directed to respond fully to the discussion question, respond to peers when appropriate, and use online etiquette
- Summative: The summative assessment for this activity will take the form of a rubric for appropriate online discussion, with regard to respectful participation and meaningful analysis of the text.

# Additional Activities

- **Cloze passages:** As a form of practice and in order for the teacher to get a sense of student understanding, students will work to complete cloze passages using the unit vocabulary words. These passages will take the form of sentences taken from the novel with vocabulary words left blank. Students will require an understanding of the vocabulary in order to fill in the blanks properly.
- **Big Jar O' Vocab:** This non-graded practice activity will help students build familiarity with vocabulary words and work towards mastery of their spelling and definitions in a fun way. A large plastic jar is filled with the unit vocabulary words, written on notecards. As a group, students will pass around the jar, take a vocabulary word from inside, read it aloud, and define it correctly. This may take the form of a timed practice, a game, or a quick transition between other unit activities. Alternatively, the teacher could pull words from the jar and ask students to either define or spell them.
- **Exit ticket:** Throughout the course of the unit, students will be asked to define or spell a vocabulary word as their “exit ticket” for leaving class. This will provide valuable practice with a variety of vocabulary words.

## CLOZE ACTIVITY

The following passage has been taken from the chapter "Codes and Histories." Read it through completely. Then fill in each blank with a word that makes sense. Afterwards, you may compare your language with that of the author.

It took Kate Wetherall about three seconds to embrace her new role as a secret agent. While the other children \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> blinked, and pinched themselves to be sure \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> weren't dreaming (actually, Constance pinched Sticky, who \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup> and pinched her back)—in short, while \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup> other children were adjusting to the news, \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> was peppering Mr. Benedict with questions: What was \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup> mission to be? Would they need code \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup>? Was it possible to use a somewhat \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup> code name?

Mr. Benedict waited until they'd all \_\_\_\_\_<sup>9</sup> down. Then he explained their mission: how \_\_\_\_\_<sup>10</sup> were to be admitted to the Institute \_\_\_\_\_<sup>11</sup> following day, how he would draw up \_\_\_\_\_<sup>12</sup> the necessary papers, and how (much to \_\_\_\_\_<sup>13</sup> disappointment) they would not be required to \_\_\_\_\_<sup>14</sup> code names. They must be themselves, Mr. Benedict \_\_\_\_\_<sup>15</sup>. They would have secrets enough to keep.

"\_\_\_\_\_<sup>16</sup> are we to do, exactly?" Sticky asked.  
"\_\_\_\_\_<sup>17</sup> what they want you to do," said \_\_\_\_\_<sup>18</sup>.  
"Learn. You must be excellent students. One \_\_\_\_\_<sup>19</sup> the few things we know about the \_\_\_\_\_<sup>20</sup> is that certain privileges are granted only \_\_\_\_\_<sup>21</sup> top students. No doubt it is these \_\_\_\_\_<sup>22</sup> the Sender uses to send his hidden \_\_\_\_\_<sup>23</sup>."

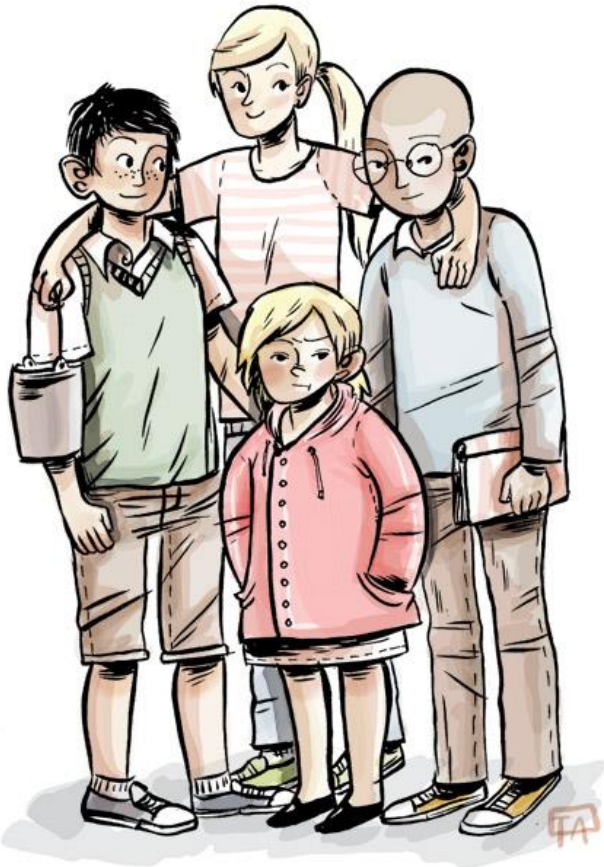
"So you're hoping we'll gain some secret \_\_\_\_\_<sup>24</sup>," Reynie said.  
"Indeed. How the Sender's messages \_\_\_\_\_<sup>25</sup> such profound effects, what the particulars of \_\_\_\_\_<sup>26</sup> plan are—anything you uncover may help \_\_\_\_\_<sup>27</sup> find a way to defeat him."

"So \_\_\_\_\_<sup>28</sup> it?" Sticky said. "You just want us \_\_\_\_\_<sup>29</sup> be students?"

"Much more than that," Mr. Benedict \_\_\_\_\_<sup>30</sup>. "For not only must you learn what \_\_\_\_\_<sup>31</sup> teach, you must also try to learn \_\_\_\_\_<sup>32</sup> they do *not* teach. Every odd detail, \_\_\_\_\_<sup>33</sup> suspicious aspect of the Institute—any unusual \_\_\_\_\_<sup>34</sup> at all, you must report to me. \_\_\_\_\_<sup>35</sup> never know what curious tidbit might hold \_\_\_\_\_<sup>36</sup> key to the Sender's entire plan. Anything you notice may be of use."



# Sources



<http://www.teachercreated.com/products/i-have-who-has-language-arts-game-grade-5-6-7832>

Stewart, Trenton Lee. (2007). *The Mysterious Benedict Society*. Little, Brown and Company.

Alexander, Carol. (2010). *The Mysterious Benedict Society: A Study Guide*. New York: Learning Links Inc.