

***On Newland Avenue* Educational Material**

***On Newland Avenue* Overview**

On Newland Avenue is a 241-page book written at a Lexile range of 410-600. The main characters are three children aged 9-10. The book will be enjoyed by readers aged 8 and up.

Genre: Historical fiction. Set in Chicago, Illinois, 1939 to 1940.

Synopsis: Eleanor and her parents have lived with extended family since she was an infant because of the financial straits of the Great Depression. With the improving economy of the late 1930s, Eleanor's father moves his family of three into the rented first floor of a house. The story follows Eleanor as she adjusts to living away from her grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Her character arc brings her maturity, independence, and the joy of a close friendship with neighbor girl and classmate Betty Ann. During her ten months on Newland Avenue, Eleanor fulfills her dream of learning to play piano, she suffers loss for the first time when neighbor boy Jack dies, and she comes to the realization that she is truly blessed to have a close and nurturing family after she observes the difficulties in Betty Ann's home life. Secondary story lines include the growth arc of Eleanor's mother as she matures and learns to manage her own household, the Depression-induced struggles in Betty Ann's family, the limited medical care of the 1930s that leads to Jack's death, and the aftereffects of World War I on the lives of Americans as shown through Mr. and Mrs. Hanson, Eleanor's downstairs neighbors. The story ends with Eleanor and her parents inviting Betty Ann to live with them, thus ensuring Betty Ann's safety and bringing Eleanor the sister she always wanted.

On Newland Avenue, rich in period details, creates a vivid and realistic picture of life in Chicago in the 1930s. The book would align well with a social studies unit on the Great Depression. It also stands alone as an entertaining piece of literature.

Keywords: Great Depression, Chicago, 1930s, family, friendship, childhood

The following pages provide additional resources for extended learning. The suggested questions and topics can be used to help guide classroom lessons, homeschool learning, and/or book club discussion.

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A. Social/Emotional Learning - Questions for large or small group discussion

- **Friendship:**

1. What does it mean to be a good friend?
2. Is lying to protect your friend the right thing to do?
3. Is asking your friend to lie to protect you the right thing to do?
4. Have you ever had an experience like this with a friend?

- **Punishment and Consequences:**

1. What is the distinction between these two? Or are they exactly the same?
2. Did Eleanor's consequences fit her misbehavior? Too harsh? Too lenient? Just right?
3. When have you misbehaved and suffered consequences?

- **Experiencing Change:**

1. Have you ever had to move? What was it like? Did it bother you?
2. What other types of changes have you experienced, other than moving?
3. Do you like change, or do you resist change?
4. Was Daddy right? Does change make us grow?
5. How did the move make Eleanor grow?

- **Death and Loss:**

1. Death is a difficult experience. What makes it so hard?
2. Would you like to share about someone you know who died?
3. Death is a loss, but there are other ways to lose someone. Discuss some of those other ways that we lose people in our lives.
4. Betty Ann suffered many losses. Can you list some of them? How did those losses affect her?

- **Growing up:**

1. Eleanor (dynamic character) changes and grows throughout the book. List some of the ways in which you see her changing.
2. What are some ways in which Eleanor does not change? Are there certain not-so-good character traits that she continues to exhibit?
3. This book is a "coming of age" story. The character grows up and becomes less childlike because of experiences she lives through over the course of the story. We see Eleanor coming of age when she begins to see things through the eyes of her parents and when she can put herself in Betty Ann's shoes and understand some of the loss Betty Ann has suffered. Think about some things that you have experienced in the past year or two that are helping you to "come of age."

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B. Historical Learning - information about life in Eleanor's time

- **The Great Depression and financial problems of the 1930s**
 1. people out of work
 2. people unable to pay their mortgages and losing their homes
 3. extended family living together to share expenses
 4. men unable to provide for their families sometimes gave up on life
 5. children placed into orphanages because families couldn't support them

- **The Great War (WWI) and Armistice Day**
 1. known as the "War to end all Wars" because of the modern fighting tactics
 2. U.S involvement 1917-1918
 3. Armistice Day the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month

- **Health and wellness in the 1930s**
 1. no health insurance
 2. very few specialty doctors
 3. no antibiotics; no vaccines
 4. no reliable medical ambulance service in the city

- **Life and times in the 1930s - some good research topics**
 1. the ice box and the ice man
 2. electric ice box
 3. the lamplighters
 4. Monopoly
 5. Shirley Temple
 6. Music of the times
 7. Circuses as entertainment
 8. *The Wizard of Oz* and "Somewhere Over the Rainbow"
 9. radio - but no television, no computer
 10. wringer washing machine; no dryer
 11. party line telephones on the wall or table; no cell phones
 12. McGuffey Readers in school
 13. flagpole sitting
 14. the home food-canning process

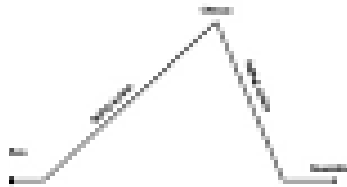
- **Chicago in the 1930s**
 1. Marshall Field & Co
 2. Montgomery Ward store and *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* ad campaign
 3. trolley cars
 4. Chicago Park District Toy Rooms

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C. Literary Analysis - Analyze and discuss the literary elements of the story

- **Moral dilemma - difficult choice between two actions, neither of which is totally ethical**
 1. By buying an icebox, people are essentially putting Mr. Garvey out of business. Is this cruel, or is this just life?
 2. Mother leaves young Eleanor home alone on the stormy night to help a neighbor.
 3. Mother and Daddy don't believe they should interfere in the Gopps' life, but Betty Ann is possibly in danger.
- **Theme - ideas that flow throughout the story**
 1. change brings personal growth
 2. family, friends, and neighbors are more valuable than money
 3. helping others is of utmost importance
- **Characters - dynamic characters change during story; static characters - no change**
 1. Daddy - static (he is kind and mature throughout)
 2. Mother - dynamic (at first, tentative and unsure of herself; grows up and matures)
 3. Eleanor - dynamic (at first, she is immature; then she begins to help more with chores, take an interest in helping others; learns about friendship, loss, and death)
 4. Betty Ann - dynamic (she becomes more assertive; asks for what she wants)
- **Plot - the events of the story**
 1. Inciting event - the move to Newland Avenue
 2. Rising action - Eleanor meets Betty Ann and Jack, mysterious hints about the neighbors below her, Betty Ann's family problems, the piano lesson misbehavior, Jack's illness, Eleanor's grandparents' financial problems
 3. Climax - the storm, meeting the Hansons, Jack's death
 4. Falling action - Eleanor moves away from Newland Avenue
 5. Resolution - Betty Ann will come to live with the Shafers.

Plot Diagram Graphic Organizer



- **Setting - has two parts: location and time**
 1. The location (Chicago)
 2. The time period (1939, Great Depression)
 3. Talk about how both parts of the setting are very important to this story. It would not be the same story if it took place in modern times or a different city. Ask the students for examples of how this story is specific to the time period and location.

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D. Cultural Literacy - Phrases and Proverbs

These sayings, embedded in American culture, have been used throughout the generations. Discuss the literal meaning of each and then explain the figurative meaning. Also discuss whether the saying is applicable to our world today.

(Numbers refer to the chapter in which each saying appears.)

1. "Think before you speak."
3. "A place for everything, and everything in its place."
4. "Children are to be seen and not heard."
 "Laughter is the best medicine."
5. "His bark is worse than his bite."
6. "Money doesn't grow on trees."
 " Don't cut off your nose to spite your face."
7. "Where there's a will, there's a way."
 " Practice makes perfect."
8. "Many hands make light work."
 "A friend in need is a friend indeed."
9. "Don't judge a book by its cover."
18. "Two wrongs don't make a right."
21. "A watched pot never boils."
22. "It's always darkest before dawn."

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E. Vocabulary

(Numbers refer to the chapter in which the word appears.)

1. quivered - (*verb*) shook or trembled, often because of fear
shuddered - (*verb*) trembled because of fear
stoop - (*noun*) on a house, a small porch or landing at the top of an outside stairway
2. snickered - (*verb*) laughed in a short, scornful way
Inquisition - (*noun*) a time of great questioning that took place in Europe many centuries ago
3. curly-cue - (*noun*) a fancy carved decoration, often on a piece of furniture
6. beckoned - (*verb*) used a hand motion that encourages someone to follow or come closer
abruptly - (*adverb*) suddenly and unexpectedly
7. hobbled - (*verb*) walked in an awkward way because of pain
8. migrant - (*noun*) a person who moves from place to place looking for better conditions
11. sympathetic - (*adjective*) showing sympathy, feeling pity or sorrow for someone's misfortune
consequence - (*noun*) something that happens as a result of an action or behavior
13. jutted - (*verb*) extended out or over the main body of the object; poked out or protruded
precious - (*adjective*) very valuable
14. flushed - (*adjective*) describes a person's skin, usually the face, that is very reddened and hot
gurgled - (*verb*) made a bubbling sound, like water going down a drain
15. fretted - (*verb*) showed worry and discontent
proclaimed - (*verb*) announced something in a public way
16. hypnotized - (*adjective*) to be under a spell, to be in a trance
19. new-fangled - (*adjective*) different from what someone is used to; modern
21. torrents - (*noun*) fast-moving stream; strong, sudden, violent outpouring of something, usually water
Ovaltine - (*noun*) chocolate-flavored hot drink made from sweet brown powder and milk
22. ladled - (*verb*) spooned up using a soup ladle
hospitable - (*adjective*) acting in a friendly and welcoming way; showing hospitality
23. lulled - (*verb*) soothed and calmed
24. frail - (*adjective*) weak and delicate
25. cringed - (*verb*) dipped the head or body in a feeling of embarrassment, awkwardness, or fear
skimpy - (*adjective*) not enough; limited; meager

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F. Slang of the 1930s

take a hike - leave. “**Go take a hike.**”

piece of cake - easy. “**That test was a piece of cake.**”

if that doesn't beat all - isn't that amazing? “**An electric ice box. If that doesn't beat all!**”

snazzy - stylish. “**Your new dress is snazzy.**”

that's history - over and done with. “**Stop worrying about your bad grade. That's history.**”

flivver - broken down old car. “**Grandpa's flivver is parked at the curb.**”

lick of music - short little segment of a song. “**Play a lick on the accordion.**”

riot - lots of fun. “**He's a real riot at parties.**”

cup of tea - something you like. “**That party was just my cup of tea.**”

make tracks - leave quickly. “**It's late. We've got to make tracks.**”

burns me up - makes a person angry. “**That really burns me up.**”

abyssinia - I'll be seeing 'ya “**Goodbye for now. Abyssinia.**”

aces - fantastic; the best “**Your accordion playing is just aces!**”

keen - having enthusiasm for something “**I'm keen on learning to play piano.**”

G. Extend the Reading Experience

1. Plan a Newland Avenue week with games and activities

- Classroom post office
- Valentine boxes
- May baskets
- Create a paper piano and learn the C scale
- Speak or write in 1930s lingo
- Party games: Hide the Thimble, Feed the Elephant; Pass the gift box to music
- Sidewalk games: Hopscotch, Stone School
- Table games: Bunco, Monopoly, chess

2. Map skills - study a map of the area and see if you can find these places:

- Eleanor's house at 3616 N. Newland Avenue
- Betty Ann's house two doors north
- Bridge School on New England
- The market on Addison
- Shabbona Park on Addison