

# The Wolves in the Walls



Are you looking for a great reading activity to do this Halloween season with your students? *The Wolves in the Walls* is the perfect scary book/movie combination. The book by Neil Gaiman, author of *Coraline*, has been made into a 360° VR film. This means students will really enjoy making comparisons between the two.

Begin by locating different versions of the story. If your library doesn't have a copy of the book, my Google search came up with both printable and YouTube readings. You might have to complete your own search as links like this change continually:

### **Printable Book**

[http://ieas-szeged.hu/downtherabbit-hole/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Neil\\_Gaiman\\_Dave\\_McKean\\_The\\_Wolves\\_in\\_the\\_Walls\\_2005.pdf](http://ieas-szeged.hu/downtherabbit-hole/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Neil_Gaiman_Dave_McKean_The_Wolves_in_the_Walls_2005.pdf)

### **YouTube > Readings of the Book**

This first link takes you to an excellent reading of the book. The reader does a fantastic job. The camera scrolls over the pages and not all the words can be seen. If you want students to read along, I have provided links to videos that do that.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytsKeZTfRV8>

These two links are also readings of the book. The pages are static and students can read along.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9I7K9wVasQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6QdKCpLHRA>

In this version the author, Neil Gaiman, reads his book to his son. Watching a few minutes of this film is great to show students the book from the author's perspective; however, the author does not show the pictures to the camera.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VuL\\_wrSUG](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VuL_wrSUG)

### **YouTube > Movie 360° VR**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zk01ZqXXmXQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oi9TVlwOo38>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JV7Vi0G-N0w>

### **YouTube > Play**

This YouTube trailer is from Little Angel Theatre. They have created a puppet version of the story.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2g7wbzVEbEU>

### **Audible**

You can also get the audio version of the book from Audible. I recommend playing the 2 minute preview and having students discuss the advantages and disadvantages of listening to the story instead of reading the book.

<https://www.audible.com/pd/The-Wolves-in-the-Walls-Audiobook/B002V57QKE>

## Teacher Information

### Reading Level

The Accelerated Reading Level for *The Wolves in the Walls* is 3.9 with a Lexile: 500L. Due to the scary content of the book, I recommend using the book with 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders. The book is ideal for struggling older readers as its interest level is higher than its reading level.

### Genre

*The Wolves in the Walls* is a fantasy picture book. A number of pages in the book are structured like graphic novels making the book appeal to an older audience.

### Skills

This book is excellent for making predictions. At several points in the book, ask students to look at the illustrations and tell what they predict will happen.

The book can be used to teach perspective as well. Have students tell the story from Lucy's perspective and then again from the wolves' perspective.

### Vocabulary

I selected 7 words from the story that students may not know. On the next two pages you will find a vocabulary list with these words including sample sentences from text, definitions, synonyms, and parts of speech.

I selected the two verbs for additional practice. I feel students will remember vocabulary words much better if you limit their number and provide two or three practice exercises with each instead of more words and less practice for each word.

## Vocabulary

**scheme** (noun) a plan or plot  
synonyms: plan, plot, conspiracy

She could hear the wolves in the walls. Plotting their wolfish pots, hatching their wolfish **schemes**.



**poppet** (noun) In British dialect, poppet is used as a term of endearment for a girl or child.

synonyms: dear, love, darling, sweetie, honey

"I don't think there are, **poppet**," he told her.



**brochure** (noun) a small booklet usually with pictures used for advertising  
synonyms: catalog, leaflet, flyer, information sheet

He practiced his tuba, and read travel **brochures**.



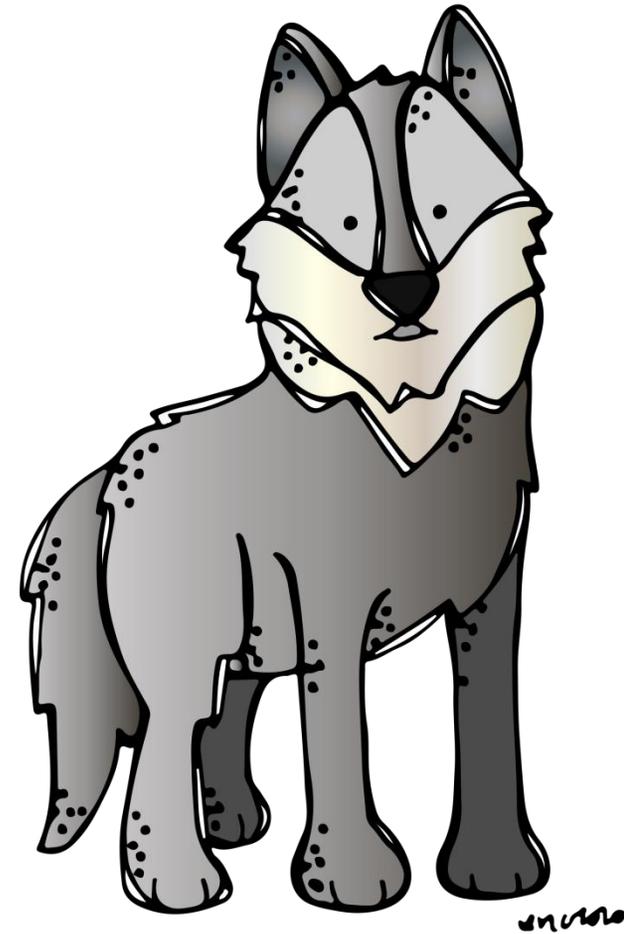
**rhubarb** (noun) a plant with long green or red stalks used to make pies and other desserts

They tried sleeping in the shed, but it smelled too much of lawnmowers and of the fertilizer used for the **rhubarb**.



**banister** (noun) the rail of a staircase  
synonyms: handrail, bar

There were wolves sliding down the **banisters**.



Note: The samples sentences for the next two vocabulary words contain spoilers. I have provided alternative sentences to use for teaching context clues.



**brandish** (verb) to wave or shake a weapon-like object in a threatening way  
synonyms: wield, wave, handle, display

### Sentence from Text

And the wolves ran and they ran and they ran and ran and they didn't stop running until they got somewhere where there would never be any people in the walls who would come out in the middle of the night whooping and singing people songs and **brandishing** chair legs.

### Alternative Sentences

The lady **brandished** a stick at the dog.

The hero jumped in front of the angry man **brandishing** a bat at the crowd.



**sustain** (verb) to keep something without interruption or weakening  
synonyms: maintain, continue, keep going

But eventually everything was back the way it had been before, except for Lucy's father's second-best tuba, which had **sustained** severe jam damage.

### Alternative Sentence

The young girl was no longer able to **sustain** hope of going to the outdoor concert after it was postponed twice due to stormy weather.



## Discussion Questions

1. Why did the author most likely select a pig for Lucy's pet instead of a more traditional stuffed animal such as a teddy bear?

Using a pig plays off the story *The Three Little Pigs*. Wolves are considered enemies of pigs.

2. Approximately how old is Lucy and her brother? Give proof of your answer.

Lucy is about 8-years old. (Her age is told in the game version of the story.) She still sleeps with a stuffed animal. Her brother is a little older. He goes to school when Lucy stays home. Especially in the animated version of the story, you can see the height differences.

3. Lucy's brother wants to live in outer space with fozzles and squossucks. What are fozzles and squossucks?

These are made up space creatures. Lucy asks her brother what fozzles and squossucks are. Her brother's reply is they are outer space things.

4. Define low fantasy or intrusion fantasy. Explain how *The Wolves in the Walls* belongs to this subgenre of fantasy fiction.

A low fantasy takes place in a normal world with a realistic environment. The story turns into a fantasy through events such as when animals or toys take on human-like characteristics.

The story takes place in a real location (the house of a family) not a magical setting.

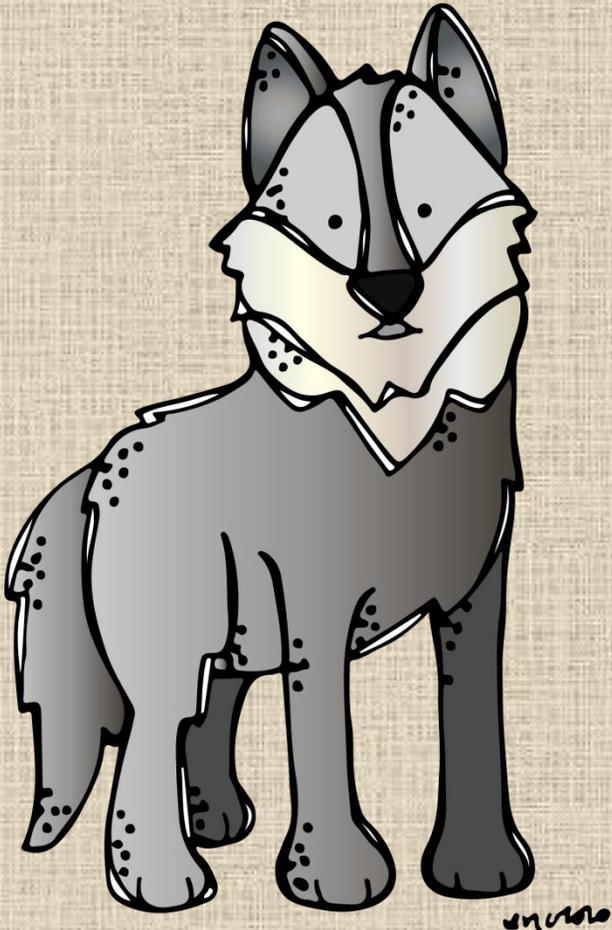
5. How is text used to enhance the story?

- Speech is a different font .
- The text is written at different angles and in different sizes. Text is used to “illustrate” the sounds coming from the walls. The text also conveys movement such as traveling up and down stairs and speech.
- The font becomes bold to emphasize words.
- The font also changes colors. This may be for easier reading.
- On page 25, the text is broken up (enjambment)...

Quick as the  
**flick**  
of the wing  
of a bat,

Lucy slipped into the wall.

# Student Packet



You can get the digital version of these activities as [Google Slides here.](#)

## Vocabulary Practice

1. Read the definitions of **sustain**. Write a, b, c, or d to show which definition is used in each sentence.

- a) to provide someone with the things they need in order to live or exist
- b) to make something continue for some time without becoming less
- c) to experience something bad
- d) to hold up or support weight without breaking or falling

\_\_\_\_\_ The stock market **sustained** heavy losses falling 4% on a single day.

\_\_\_\_\_ The teens took trail mix along on the hike to **sustain** them on the long walk.

\_\_\_\_\_ Even though her speech was long, Marcy was able to **sustain** everyone's interests with attention-grabbing details.

\_\_\_\_\_ The ice is not thick enough to **sustain** the weight of people walking upon it.

\_\_\_\_\_ After losing his job, the man was not able to **sustain** his extravagant lifestyle.

\_\_\_\_\_ After months of snowy weather, the salt the road crews left behind hurt the soil so badly that it could no longer **sustain** plant life.

\_\_\_\_\_ Few animals can **sustain** running long distances the way humans can; however, an ostrich can run distances of 20+ miles at an average speed of 30 mph.

2. Place the words from the word box onto the correct locations of the chart.

|          |          |           |           |         |                |
|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|---------|----------------|
| brace    | carry on | encounter | feed      | hold up | keep you going |
| maintain | nurture  | preserve  | reinforce | suffer  | undergo        |

| Sustain meaning<br>nourish | Sustain meaning<br>continue | Sustain meaning<br>experience something bad | Sustain meaning<br>support |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|----------------------------|
|                            |                             |   |                            |
|                            |                             |   |                            |
|                            |                             |   |                            |

# Vocabulary Practice

3. Circle the six synonyms of **brandish**.

|       |          |      |         |          |            |
|-------|----------|------|---------|----------|------------|
| wield | conceal  | hide | display | disguise | camouflage |
| cover | cover up | wave | handle  | flourish | show off   |

4. Read the definitions of **brandish**. Write a or b to show which definition is used in each sentence.

- a) to wave or shake a weapon-like object in a threatening way
- b) to display in an aggressive manner

- \_\_\_\_\_ The protesters **brandished** their signs in a threatening manner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sam walked into the room **brandishing** the new shirt he bought.
- \_\_\_\_\_ She answered all the questions correctly **brandishing** her intellect.
- \_\_\_\_\_ During the bank robbery, the thief **brandished** his pistol at the crowd.

Write a sentence using a form of either **brandish** or **sustain** for each picture.



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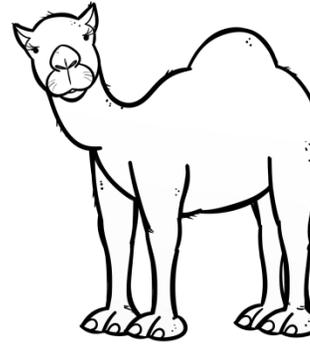
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# Comprehension

1. From which point of view is the story told?

- a. 1<sup>st</sup> person
- b. 2<sup>nd</sup> person
- c. 3<sup>rd</sup> person

Who is telling the story?

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2. Which would best describe the text in the story? Check all that apply.

- \_\_\_\_\_ visual text (the words make shapes)
- \_\_\_\_\_ acrostic (the first letters of each line might together spell out a word or a phrase)
- \_\_\_\_\_ calligraphy (fancy lettering)
- \_\_\_\_\_ sound effects like onomatopoeia

3. Using inference skills, tell which type of jam is Mom most likely making?

- a. apple
- b. blueberry
- c. rhubarb

Explain why you selected this answer.

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4. Write S for simile, M for metaphor, A for alliteration, and R for rhyme in front of each phrase from the story.

- \_\_\_\_\_ hustling noises and bustling noises
- \_\_\_\_\_ creeping, crumpling noises
- \_\_\_\_\_ a howling and a yowling
- \_\_\_\_\_ quieter than any mouse
- \_\_\_\_\_ quick as the flick of the wing of a bat



5. Match each family member to the place s/he wants to go.

- |               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| _____ Mom     | a. Arctic Circle |
| _____ Dad     | b. Sahara Desert |
| _____ Brother | c. outer space   |

6. Everyone except Lucy thinks they should...

- a. confront the wolves
- b. call pest control
- c. leave and find a new place to live
- d. smoke the wolves out of the house

7. Which would make a good theme for *The Wolves in the Walls*?

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8. How do the illustrations add to the story.

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# Constructed Response ~ Summarizing

List the ten most important events that happened in the story.

2 - \_\_\_\_\_  
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# Constructed Response ~ Humor versus Fright

Complete the T-Chart.

| Examples of Humor | Examples of Scary Parts |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
|                   |                         |
|                   |                         |
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|                   |                         |

Why did the author most likely use both humor and scary parts?

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## Constructed Response ~ Idiom

Explain what this idiom means...

Keep the wolf from knocking at the door.



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How does this idiom tie in with the story *The Wolves in the Walls*?

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# Answer Key

## Vocabulary Practice

1. Read the definitions of **sustain**. Write a, b, c, or d to show which definition is used in each sentence.

- a) to provide someone with the things they need in order to live or exist
- b) to make something continue for some time without becoming less
- c) to experience something bad
- d) to hold up or support weight without breaking or falling

c The stock market **sustained** heavy losses falling 4% on a single day.

a The teens took trail mix along on the hike to **sustain** them on the long walk.

b Even though her speech was long, Marcy was able to **sustain** everyone's interests with attention-grabbing details.

d The ice is not thick enough to **sustain** the weight of people walking upon it.

a After losing his job, the man was not able to **sustain** his extravagant lifestyle.

a After months of snowy weather, the salt the road crews left behind hurt the soil so badly that it could no longer **sustain** plant life.

b Few animals can **sustain** running long distances the way humans can; however, an ostrich can run distances of 20+ miles at an average speed of 30 mph.

2. Place the words from the word box onto the correct locations of the chart.

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| maintain | nurture  | preserve  | reinforce | suffer  | undergo        |

| Sustain meaning<br>nourish | Sustain meaning<br>continue | Sustain meaning<br>experience something<br>bad | Sustain meaning<br>support |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| feed                       | maintain                    | undergo  | hold up                    |
| nurture                    | carry on                    | suffer   | brace                      |
| keep you going             | preserve                    | encounter                                      | reinforce                  |

# Vocabulary Practice

3. Circle the six synonyms of **brandish**.

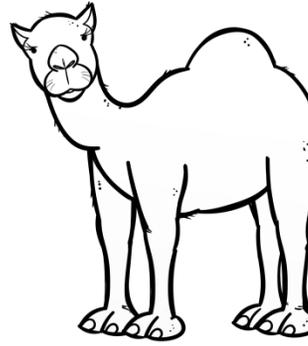
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| wield | conceal  | hide | display | disguise | camouflage |
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4. Read the definitions of **brandish**. Write a or b to show which definition is used in each sentence.

- a) to wave or shake a weapon-like object in a threatening way
- b) to display in an aggressive manner

- a   The protesters **brandished** their signs in a threatening manner.
- b   Sam walked into the room **brandishing** the new shirt he bought.
- b   She answered all the questions correctly **brandishing** her intellect.
- a   During the bank robbery, the thief **brandished** his pistol at the crowd.

Write a sentence using a form of either **brandish** or **sustain** for each picture.



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# Comprehension

1. From which point of view is the story told?

- a. 1<sup>st</sup> person
- b. 2<sup>nd</sup> person
- c. 3<sup>rd</sup> person

Who is telling the story?

The story is told through a narrator through Lucy's perspective. At the end of the story, the perspective changes to the wolves as they run away from the house.

2. Which would best describe the text in the story? Check all that apply.

- visual text (the words make shapes)
- acrostic (the first letters of each line might together spell out a word or a phrase)
- calligraphy (fancy lettering)
- sound effects like onomatopoeia

3. Using inference skills, tell which type of jam is Mom most likely making?

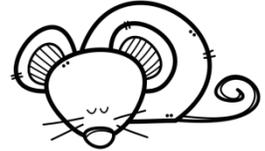
- a. apple
- b. blueberry
- c. rhubarb

Explain why you selected this answer.

The jam is red. The family has fertilizer for their rhubarb plants in the shed.

4. Write S for simile, M for metaphor, A for alliteration, and R for rhyme in front of each phrase from the story.

- R hustling noises and bustling noises
- A creeping, crumpling noises
- R a howling and a yowling
- M quieter than any mouse
- S quick as the flick of the wing of a bat



5. Match each family member to the place s/he wants to go.

- |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| <u>b</u> Mom     | a. Arctic Circle |
| <u>a</u> Dad     | b. Sahara Desert |
| <u>c</u> Brother | c. outer space   |

6. Everyone except Lucy thinks they should...

- a. confront the wolves
- b. call pest control
- c. leave and find a new place to live
- d. smoke the wolves out of the house

7. Which would make a good theme for *The Wolves in the Walls*?

Answers will vary.

People should trust one another. No one believes Lucy when she first tells them about the wolves.

Brave people are often rewarded. Lucy successfully goes back into the house alone to get pig-puppet.

8. How do the illustrations add to the story.

Answers will vary.

The illustrator uses a combination of photos and drawings in a collage-like manner to give the story a eerie feeling.

The pictures set the mood for the events that are taking place. For example, the wolves appear almost ghost-like with just pencil outlines. At other times, the wolves appear shadow-like with dark colors.

## Constructed Response ~ Summarizing

List the ten most important events that happened in story.

2 - Lucy tries to tell each family member about the noises. Mom thinks Lucy hears mice. Dad thinks Lucy hears rats. Lucy's brother thinks Lucy is bats. All family member go about what they were doing without any concern.

4 - Lucy's family runs out of the house into the garden. They talk about places they could go to get away from the wolves...the Artic Circle, the Sahara Desert, outer space.

6- The next day, Mother goes to work, Brother goes to school, and Dad practices his tuba and looks at brochures thinking about where they should move.

8 - After checking out the shed, the family decides to go back inside.

10 - Later, Lucy thinks she hears an elephant about to sneeze in the walls of her home. She decides not to tell anyone.

1 - Lucy hears noises coming from inside the walls of her home.

3 - Lucy goes to bed thinking the house is too quiet. In the middle of the night, the wolves come out of the walls.

5 - Lucy sneaks back inside the house to get her pig-puppet. She sees the pigs playing games and eating her mother's jam. Lucy finds her pig-puppet and goes back to the garden. She tells her family what she did and then goes to sleep.

7- That night the family again discusses places they could live.

Lucy tells her family they should go back inside the house and live inside the walls where they can be warm.

9 - During the middle of the night, the wolves were making so much noise that Lucy's family woke up. Each exclaimed at the wolves' destruction of their property.

The wolves became frightened of the people and ran away.



## Constructed Response ~ Humor versus Fright

Complete the T-Chart.

| Examples of Humor  | Examples of Scary Parts   |
|--|---|
| A huge wolf was sleeping on Lucy's bed is wearing her socks.   | All the onomatopoeia creates a mood of frightening sounds.  |
| One wolf is ruining Lucy's brother's high game scores.   | The wolves who had been eating jam have red faces and paws. This makes the reader think of blood. |
| Father flees from the house with Lucy and his best tuba.   | The tree in the garden took on the shape of a wolf about to eat a pig.                            |
| The wolves were behaving like children – eating popcorn with the television blaring, sliding down the banister, etc. | Most of the illustrations depict scary-looking wolves.  |
| The wolves are afraid of people coming out of the walls. They repeat the human's words... "it's all over."           |   |
| The end of the story definitely causes a chuckle from the audience, when Lucy thinks she hears an elephant.          |   |

Why did the author most likely use both humor and scary parts?

Most likely, the author did not want the story to come across as too scary because it is meant for a young audience. The comedy balances out the scary parts causing the reader to laugh and not take the story too seriously.

## Constructed Response ~ Idiom



Explain what this idiom means...

Keep the wolf from knocking at the door.

This phrase is used with someone is facing financial difficulty.

Example: When people have just enough money to buy food, clothing, and other things needed to live, they make just enough to keep the wolf from the door.

This idiom is also used when a danger or threat is close.

Example: Our nation must keep the wolf from knocking at the door.

How does this idiom tie in with the story *The Wolves in the Walls*?

Wolves are considered threats in many stories.

Little Red Riding Hood

The Three Little Pigs

The Boy who Cried Wolf

The Wolf and the Fox

The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids

In this story, the wolves are a threat to the family. Instead of knocking on the door, they come inside the home and frighten the family away.



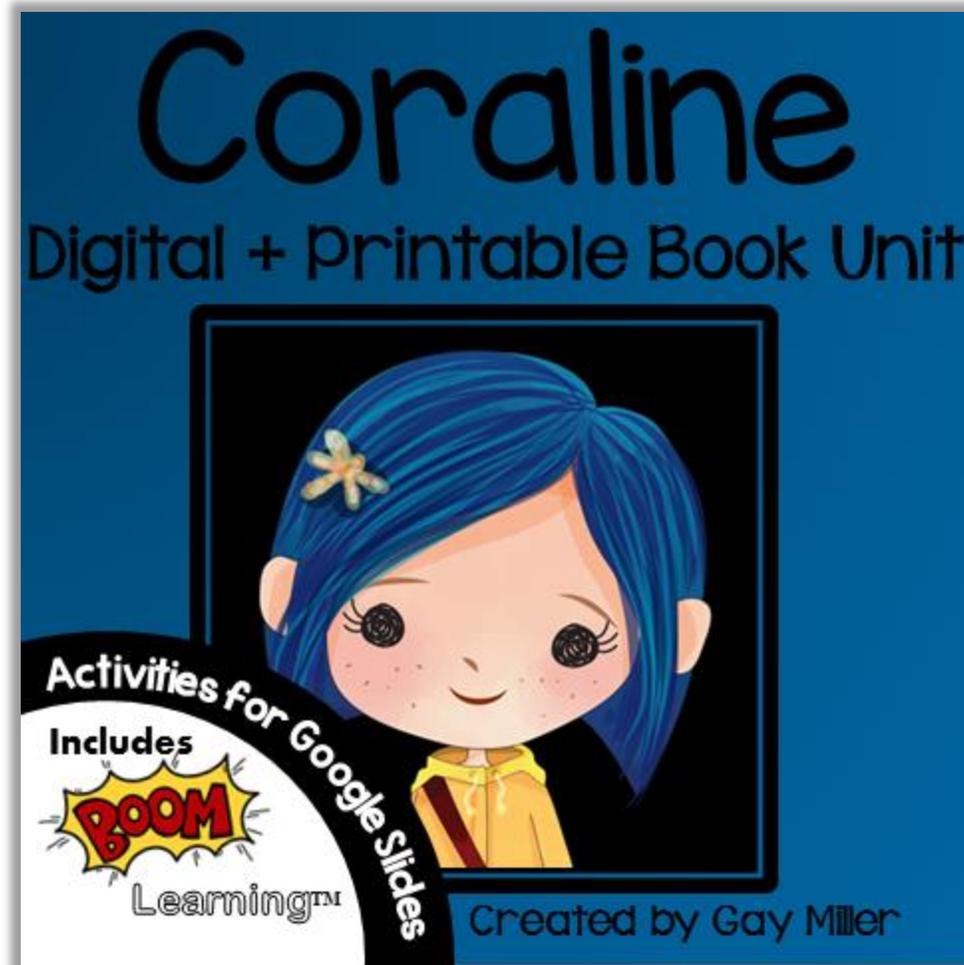
# Constructed Response ~ Movie versus Book

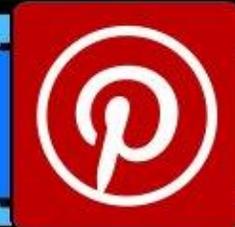
Complete the diagram.



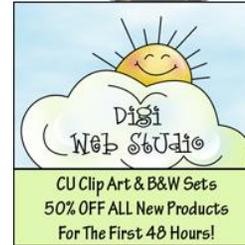
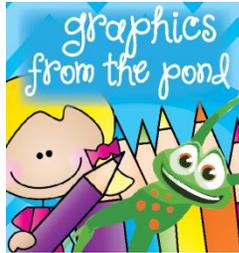
| Book  | Both  | Movie  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>The book won awards for the New York Best Illustrated Children's Book (2003), the IRA/CBC Children's Choice (2004) award, and the British Science Fiction Association award for Short Fiction.</p> <p>Illustrations and text set the mood.</p> | <p>Both versions tell the same story.</p> <p>The characters are drawn the same.</p> | <p>The film won an Emmy for Outstanding Innovation in Interactive Media. The film is a VR adaptation in which the viewer can experience the story by looking around the setting.</p> <p>The movie includes more details.</p> <p>Lucy's imaginary friend (represented by a chalk-like drawing of hands) helps her.</p> <p>Mom takes jam to clients. Lucy hears Mom talking about her.</p> <p>Illustrations and music help set the mood.</p> <p>Lucy's grandmother is included in the story. Lucy reads about wolves from a journal that belonged to her grandmother while she is in the attic.</p> <p>Lucy mixes up a potion to protect pig-puppet.</p> <p>The movie changes from 3D to 2D with black and white pictures to show scary parts.</p> <p>While sitting around the fire the family remembers Nana.</p> |

If you enjoyed this resource, you might want to check out my novel study for Coraline at Teachers Pay Teachers.



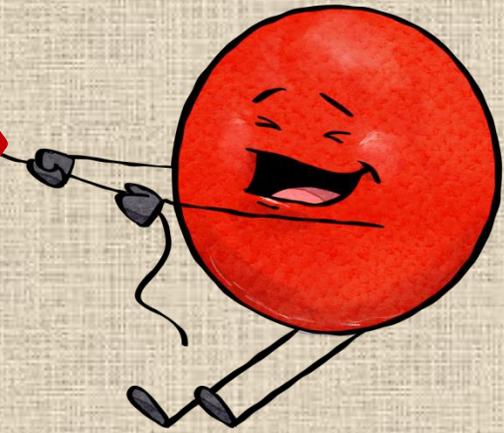


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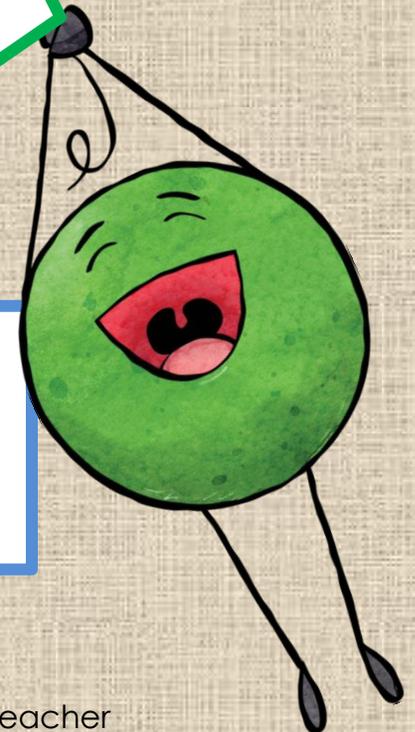
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