The Thing

At the Edge of

Blundertown

By: Jane M. Bloom

Curriculum Guide

Dear Valued Educator,

Your time and space in the classroom are valuable. This curriculum guide has been designed as an instructional aid. You are the expert; this is merely a resource to help you accomplish several tasks: 1) Provide relevant and engaging material for all students; 2) Provide activities that can be completed in a realistic timeframe; 3) Provide activities that can be done in isolation (while still remaining meaningful) or built upon each other with activities that can be completed without technologies; and 4) Achieve academic rigor.

Academic Rigor

1. Get students to think critically about the text while drawing upon personal experiences and/or current examples.
2. Students demonstrate knowledge in a variety of formats.
3. Reading (narrative): Focus on plot development, character development, foreshadowing, conflict, point of view, and word choice.
4. Writing: short responses and longer, processed pieces in either a

narrative or expository format.

 *Pieces are CCSS aligned. Please reference teacher guide.*

We sincerely appreciate your partnership. Continuing these conversations with today’s youth has a profound impact on what type of future awaits us. Thank you for taking the time to make this book, *The Thing at the Edge of Blundertown,* a part of your curriculum.

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| Curriculum Components |

**I: Whole Novel Handouts**

1. **Character list**
2. **Plot breakdown**
3. **Vocabulary handout**

**II: Chapter Breakdowns**

1. **Teacher guide: Gives an overview of each component**

**III: Wrap-Up Activities**

1. **Reflective project**
2. **Writing projects**
	1. **Narrative**
	2. **Expository**
		1. **Short (1 week)**
		2. **Long (2-3 weeks)**

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| Character List |

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|  | Relationship to Main Character  | Character Description |
| Raelyn “Rae” Devine | Protagonist (Main Character) |  |
| Penelope “Penny” Devine |  |  |
| Jackson Devine |  |  |
| Vigil Devine |  |  |
| Joan Robin Devine  |  |  |
| Ms. Kelly Davis |  |  |
| Gil Richmond |  |  |
| Angelica “Angie” Quinn  |  |  |
| Ted Quinn  |  |  |
| Doc Goodman |  |  |
| Pumpkin Head/Ollie Jerkins  |  |  |

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| Plot Breakdown  |

Exposition

 What is the major setting of the story? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Who are your main character(s)?

Initiating Event/Inciting Incident

 What is the major event that gets the action going in the story?

Rising Action

 List ONE major event that happens in each chapter.

Climax

 What is the major turning point in the novel?

Falling Action

Resolution

 How does the story end?

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| Summary |
| Write a 5-8 sentence summary including the major events and characters of the story. |

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| Vocabulary  |

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| Ch. 1 | Ch. 2 | Ch. 3 | Ch. 4 | Ch. 5 |
| Rambunctious (p.4)Feigning (p.5)Baritone (p.5) | Sleuthing (p.10)Eliminate (p. 11)Chided (p.13)Inconceivable (p.14)Petrified (p.15) | Mortifying (p.21)Slacks (p.21)Fixated (p.26)Pantomime (p.26) | Cumbersome (p.29)Futile (p.33)Imposed (p.34)Conceding (p.36)Valiant (p.37) | Feral (p.39)Mutated (p.39)Offensive (p.46)Exhilarated (p.47)Persuasive (p.48) |
| Ch. 6 | Ch. 7 | Ch. 8 | Ch. 9 | Ch. 10 |
| Predecessor (p.55)Fervent (p.55)Dominate (p.55)Abstain (p.58)Turbulent (p.60) | Ransacked (p.65)Meticulously (p.66)Emboldened (p.66)Citation (p.67) | Acquainted (p.69)Civics (p.71) Fraud (p.71)Confidantes (p.73)Adjourned (p.79) | Propelled (p.86)Endearing (p.86)Reverberated (p.91)Percolates (p.95) | Sabotage (p.105)Outrageous (p.108) |
| Ch. 11 | Ch. 12 | Ch. 13 | Ch. 14 | Ch. 15 |
| Wailing (p.115) Diminished (p.116)Primitive (p.118)Vulgar (p.118) | Prominent (p.120)Justifiable (p.121)Consequences (p.137) | Sanctuary (p.142)Pallid (p.143)Hasty (p.146)Frivolity (p.148)Perpetually (p.148) | Amateur (p.152)Ingenuity (p.152)Abruptly (p.152) | Violated (p.157)Endorsed (p.158)Diffusing (p.162)  |
| Ch. 16 |  | Ch. 17 |  | Ch. 18 |
| Pontificating (p.166)Diminutive (p. 168)Fortuitous (p.175)Ominously (p.175)Executive (p.176) |  | Relayed (p.186)Protruded (p.194)Chaotic (p.196) |  | Convalescing (p.200)Infamous (p.204)Abolish (p.204) |

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| Teacher Overview: Chapter Breakdowns |

Part 1: Quick Write

 Quick writes are designed to be open-ended and help students get into the right headspace prior to reading the designated chapters. These can be used for short bell work activities, longer journal prompts, or serve as oral discussion questions (in a large or small group setting). They are designed to be quick activities that get students ready to learn.

Part 2: Bloom-Scaffolded Questions

 Part of the secondary curriculum is to get students thinking critically about a piece while being able to find evidence from the text to support their opinions. All of these questions, even the recall, require students to cite page numbers to support their evidence.

**ELA Literacy Standards R.1-R.6 anchor all questions in this section.**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R/1/): Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R/2/): Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R/3/): Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R/4/): Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R/5/): Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R/6/): Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Part 3: Reflection

 Reflections help tie everything together. They serve as the anchor and help students go deeper into the topic. These, just like the quick writes, can be completed as journal prompts, whole class or small group discussions, or virtual discussions. They are designed to be tailored to best meet the needs of the individual classroom.

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| Chapters 1 & 2  |

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| Quick Write-  |
| What is something that you love, or are passionate about in your life? Do you care enough about it to stand up for it? How far would you go trying to stand up/protect it?   |

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| Bloom’s  | Question | Page # (or #’s)  |
| **Remember**  | What three words were posted outside of Blundertown Park?  |  |
| **Understand** | How do you know when the narrator has changed? How many narrators have there been so far? Who are they?  |  |
| **Apply** | Who is Jackson? How is he connected to the Rae? Why do you think he is not home?  |  |
| **Evaluate**  | While eating dinner, each Devine family member shared a different perspective as to why the laws have been changed. What is each person’s reasoning? Do they agree or disagree with the new laws? Why?  |  |
| **Create**  | Why do you think the author made Penelope, the family dog, human-like? At this point in time, does her perspective provide valuable information?  |  |

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| Reflection |
| After reading the prologue and the first two chapters, what predictions do you have? What clues does the prologue give about what might happen in this book? |

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| Chapters 3&4  |

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| Quick Write-  |
| Think about the following: *“If you throw a frog into boiling water, it will hop right out. But, if you put a frog in cold water, then slowly increase the temperature, it will stay in. He will allow himself to be boiled alive without ever putting up a fight.”*In the world, who do you think the frogs represent? Who do you think is in charge of the boiling water? Can you give any examples from your own life?   |

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| Bloom’s  | Question | Page # (or #’s)  |
| **Remember**  | Who is Raelyn’s best friend?  |  |
| **Understand** | Where does Jackson live?  |  |
| **Apply** | A flashback is when the author goes back in time. At what point in chapter three is Bloom using a flashback? What information are we, the reader, being provided through this flashback?  |  |
| **Evaluate**  | How are Jackson and Rae similar? How are they different?  |  |
| **Create**  | Do you think the laws about dogs are reasonable? Explain.  |  |

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| Reflection |
| While Rae is discussing the new laws, the text states, “They considered everything she said or did a tantrum because she was the youngest” (35). Has there ever been a time in your life where you believed your opinion, ideas, or perspective to be dismissed or undervalued because of your age? Explain  |

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| Chapters 5&6 |

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| Quick Write-  |
| Have you ever had to follow rules that you thought were silly? Have you ever been made to follow rules that you thought were harmful? How did you handle the situation?   |

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| Bloom’s  | Question | Page # (or #’s)  |
| **Remember**  | Who is Mr. Pumpkin Head?  |  |
| **Understand** | Why was Mr. Pumpkin Head against dogs?  |  |
| **Apply** | How have the attitudes of neighbors changed from the beginning of the book? For example, Ms. Davis? Have the Devine family members’ attitudes changed? If so, how? |  |
| **Evaluate**  | What trait(s) of Mr. Pumpkin Head helped him become the leader of Daffy County? Would you consider him to be a good/positive leader? Why or why not? What form of government does he seem to favor: democratic or dictatorship? What is your proof?  |  |
| **Create**  | Focus on the headlines (pages 48 to 50). What do you notice? How does propaganda impact how the public thinks or reacts? What is your proof?  |  |

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| Reflection |
| Do you think a person in power (such as a political leader) should also control the media? Explain why or why not. |

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| Chapters 7&8 |

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| Quick Write-  |
| Have you ever been a victim of discrimination as a result of something outside your control? Have you ever been victimized as a result of your beliefs? Or as a result of something you enjoyed? How did it make you feel? How did you handle the situation? |

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| Bloom’s  | Question | Page # (or #’s)  |
| **Remember**  | Who is Doc Goodman?  |  |
| **Understand** | Why would some people be against Doc Goodman? How did people cause him harm?  |  |
| **Apply** | The mood is changing in the book. How do we know that people who like and care about dogs have become a part of the minority? *Consider who they are and what is happening to them.* |  |
| **Evaluate**  | People are starting to not know whom to trust. Cops are writing citations to those who have experienced vandalism and students are turning against each other. Whom is Rae growing distrustful of? Whom does Rae still appear to trust?  |  |
| **Create**  | Create a flier for Rae’s Pet Lovers Club. The goal is to get people to show up, so be creative about how your present you mission (and ensure your signs don’t get torn down!)  |  |

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| Reflection |
| What event has shocked you the most so far? If you were Rae, how would you handle these situations?  |

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| Chapters 9&10 |

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| Quick Write-  |
| Do you believe that people should always follow the law? Explain why or why not. Provide an example (if you can).  |

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| Bloom’s  | Question | Page # (or #’s)  |
| **Remember**  | What does it mean to register your dog?  |  |
| **Understand** | What happened to Penny?  |  |
| **Apply** | Why would Doc Goodman suggest that the Devine family not register Penny if it is the law?  |  |
| **Evaluate**  | Why are some people choosing to hide dogs? What can you conclude is happening to the dogs that get discovered?  |  |
| **Create**  | Do you think the card that was sent by “Penelope” is stating facts? Why or why not? |  |

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| Reflection |
| Whose side would you be on: Rae’s or her parents? Would you want to fight the government and go against the laws (Rae), or would you hope that it will all be over soon and follow the laws until that time (her parents)? Explain  |

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| Chapters 11&12 |

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| Quick Write-  |
| Have you ever had a hunch about something that was later confirmed (good or bad)? What did you do with that information?  |

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| Bloom’s  | Question | Page # (or #’s)  |
| **Remember**  | Who has inside information about the Compound?  |  |
| **Understand** | How has Rae’s relationship with Angie changed over the course of the story? How has her relationship with Gil changed? Do you think trust, or distrust, plays a role? |  |
| **Apply** | The reader learns what happened to Gil’s dog, Prince in Ch. 12. So far, what are the various ways people are trying to protect their dogs? If dogs are not protected, what happens to them?  |  |
| **Evaluate**  | Why would the author, Bloom, choose to end Ch. 11 with Penny’s perspective? How does this perspective help the reader?  |  |
| **Create**  | Consider this famous quote by German pastor Martin Niemöller in 1946:*First they came for the socialists,**And I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.**Then they came for the trade unionists,* *And I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.**Then they came for the Jews,**And I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.**Then they came for me,**-- And there was no one left to speak for me.*What do you think this poem means? Is it still relevant today?Re-write this poem by replacing “socialists” and “trade unionists” with groups who have been targeted in current times that you may have heard about. Add as many verses as you can think of. |  |

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| Reflection |
| Each chapter begins with a dream Rae had when she was younger, which foreshadows the upcoming events in the chapter. How do you think the dreams in Ch. 11 & 12 relate to what happens in those chapters?  |

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| Chapters 13&14 |

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| Quick Write-  |
| Do you think humans are capable of ignoring the suffering of others? Explain.  |

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| Bloom’s  | Question | Page # (or #’s)  |
| **Remember**  | What evidence does Rae get from the Compound to prove what is happening?  |  |
| **Understand** | Why is the Welfare Society able to give the Compound an A+ rating?  |  |
| **Apply** | What were the main parts of the plan created by Angie and Rae? |  |
| **Evaluate**  |  Did Angie and Rae assume (take on) the same risk when executing the plan? Explain.  |  |
| **Create**  | Create either 1) a piece of evidence gathered by Rae that would have been distributed to the Welfare Agency or 2) A half page newspaper article detailing what the agency found after their inspection.  |  |

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| Reflection |
| The Compound is going a long way to deceive the people of Blundertown. Why must they conceal the truth about what is happening to the dogs? If the truth got out, how do you think people would react? |

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| Chapters 15&16 |

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| Quick Write-  |
| In life, dreams help to propel us forward and give us goals to strive for every day. What is a dream you are working towards making a reality in your own life?  |

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| Bloom’s  | Question | Page # (or #’s)  |
| **Remember**  | Name the people involved in the rescue mission.  |  |
| **Understand** | Why couldn’t the rescue mission wait until the next night? |  |
| **Apply** | Why is it beneficial for some of the Compound experience in Ch. 15 to be narrated from Penny’s perspective and others from the people who live nearby? |  |
| **Evaluate**  | How do you think Vigil feels about his daughter? Look at pages 168 &169 for evidence to support your opinion. |  |
| **Create**  | It is clear that each member of the Devine family is handling the progression of these laws differently. How is this impacting the family dynamic? Has it changed since the beginning of the book? If so, how?  |  |

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| Reflectio**n** |
| The last page of chapter 15 discusses the new, bad smell that is wafting through the residential area on the edge of Blundertown. Bloom writes, “You simply don’t know, you tell yourself. It’s not your business, but you wish it weren’t so close to home” (162). 1) What do you think the “bad smell” is? 2) Why is it dangerous when everyone chooses to ignore a problem?  |

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| Ch. 17 |

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| Quick Write-  |
| Have you ever been so paralyzed by fear that you couldn’t do anything? If so, explain how the fear consumed you (speaking, moving, etc.). Were you able to overcome your fear? If so, how? |

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| Bloom’s  | Question | Page # (or #’s)  |
| **Remember**  |  How did Rae escape the Compound? Who rescued here? How? |  |
| **Understand** |  Where was Penelope? What happened to her? Did she survive? |  |
| **Apply** |  How does Rae handle the rescue mission compared to Gil? Explain. |  |
| **Evaluate**  |  Why do you believe some of the dogs lingered when Rae and Gil began clearing out the Barracks? What does this reveal to you about how they were treated?  |  |
| **Create**  | If you were a part of the rescue mission, what might you have done differently? |  |

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| Reflection |
| In addition to the dogs in the Barracks, what other parts of the Compound stood out to you? How did you feel while reading this chapter? Explain.  |

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| Ch. 18 & Epilogue  |

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| Quick Write-  |
| Do you think some things are unforgivable? Explain your reasoning. What is gained or lost through the process of forgiveness?  |

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| Bloom’s  | Question | Page # (or #’s)  |
| **Remember**  | What happened to the Canine Laws? |  |
| **Understand** | We finally get all of the clues to Jackson treasure hunt. What word does it spell? |  |
| **Apply** | In chapter 18 Rae states, “My Glitter came back!” What do you think the Glitter is? How did this experience affect her “Glitter”? |  |
| **Evaluate**  | The story ends by saying, “...That ordeal remains an integral part of them, and is never far away...the stories and histories are passed down from one generation to the next. This, to ensure: *Never again*!” (205). Do you think it is important for significant events, especially traumatic events that impact a large group of people, to be remembered? Why or why not? |  |
| **Create**  | In the epilogue, Rae addresses what each main character did or didn’t do in response to the “Horror” (referred to in the prologue). What do you think she means by the statement, “No matter the constraints, there is always something you can do.”?Which character do you most relate to in terms of the level of action he or she was willing, or able, to take? |  |

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| Reflection |
| Think about the title of the book. What do you think the “thing” is alluding to? Can the “thing” represent multiple aspects of the human experience? (Review, for example, pages 160-162). Explain.  |

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| Character Analysis  |

**Overview:** Each character in this story is complex. They have the outer shell the world sees, but beneath the surface their thoughts, feelings, and passions help shape their motives and drive their actions.

**Objective:** Select ONE character from the story to unmask. On ONE half of their face, illustrate their OUTER appearance (how they look). On the SECOND half of their face, illustrate their motives. This can include their thoughts, feelings, passions, etc.

**Character Options (pick 1):**

Rae Angie Doc Goodman Gil Joan Robin Devine Vigil Devine



**Explain your artistic choices below.**

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| Inner: |
| Outer:  |

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| Write On - Narrative  |

Overview: The author provides the reader with multiple perspectives throughout the book: Rae, Penny, Rae’s dad (Vigil) on pages 165-169, and even unknown people who live near the Compound (pp.160-162). Other parts of the story are told as if being reported by an outside observer (pp.153-154). The multiple perspectives allow the reader to gain a deeper understanding of what is happening around Blundertown.

Objective: Select one character from the list below and keep a journal from his or her perspective. Include at least three entries to highlight the character’s changing thoughts throughout this experience (REMEMBER...you are taking on the PERSPECTIVE of your CHARACTER. You and your character might NOT share the same perspective, and that’s okay!)

*Why a journal? Remember all digital communication (social media, cell phones, e-mail, etc.) during this time is being monitored, so sharing your personal thoughts on these platforms would be dangerous. The only way to keep your thoughts safe is through a secretly stashed journal.*

Character Options

* Gil Richmond
* Doc Goodman
* Jackson Devine
* Joan Robin Devine (mom)
* Ms. Kelly Davis
* Angie Quinn

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| Teacher Resource-Expository & Research |

Primary Theme: Holocaust

This book serves as an allegory for the Holocaust. The author has created a free resource on her website, www.janembloom.com: “*A Word from the Author*” briefly summarizes the story’s parallels to the Holocaust and is designed for the reader after he or she has read the book; “*For Educators*” identifies select parallels on a chapter by chapter basis and provides sources of reference.

Secondary Themes

This novel serves as a touchstone for exploring more generalized topics, as well, and thus may be useful in a variety of classrooms. Suggested research topics may include, but are not limited to:

* Equality and diversity
* Bullying
* Immigration
* Hate crimes
* Types of government and leadership
* United States government: “*A Republic, if you can keep it”* (*Benjamin Franklin, 1787*)
* Media and the First Amendment

While the expository writing curriculum provided here is geared towards the Holocaust, the note sheets, activities, and pacing can be adapted to fit other research topics.

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| Write On - Expository  |

**Overview: *The Thing at the Edge of Blundertown* is an allegory, which means it can be read at two levels: the surface story itself, and another, more complex story hidden underneath. Peeling back the surface story of this novel reveals the more difficult, and incomprehensible, horrors of the Holocaust.**

**Objective: Research one topic that relates to the Holocaust and explain how this topic is represented in the book.**

WWII Connections

* Nuremberg Laws
* Adolf Hitler
* Kristallnacht
* Resistance
* Hiding
* Deportation
* Hoax at *Theresienstadt* for the Danish Red Cross
* Auschwitz Concentration Camp
* Nuremberg Trials

Note Taking Sheet

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| Topic: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

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| Chapter: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Research  |
| Notes | Notes |

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| **Source Information**  |
| Title:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Author:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Publisher:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_URL: |

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| Option 1 → Short Processed Piece  |

**Product: Student-generated Gallery Walk**

**Length: 5-6 days. 1-2 sources. 1 paragraph (topic sentence, research & concluding statement)**

**Day 1**

* Introduce and explore project options.
* Select Project

**Day 2**

* Research: 1-2 sources (technology or library books needed)
* Note Taking

**Day 3**

* Make connections back to the book

**Day 4**

* Write 1 paragraph (draft)

**Day 5**

* Finalize
* Complete visual (1 image, title and paragraph)

**Day 6**

* Gallery Walk
	+ Half of the students have their images around the room while the other half rotates and learns about the topics.
	+ Half way through class, switch. Students can provide written feedback on each other’s work

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| Option 2 → Extended Write  |

**Product: Student Blog**

 \*A blog format requires more technology access.

**Length: 2-3 weeks. 3-5 sources. Multiple paragraphs (that can be submitted in chunks)**

Week 1: Research

**Day 1**

* Introduce and explore project options.
* Select Project

**Day 2-4**

* Research: 1-2 sources.
* Note Taking

**Day 5**

* Make connections back to the book

Week 2: Outline & Draft

**Day 6**

* Outline each component of blog
	+ 1-2 articles
	+ 1-2 images with captions

**Day 7**

* Begin working on first article of blog

**Day 8**

* Revise draft

**Day 9**

* Work on embedding photos and captions

**Day 10**

* Finalize

Week 3: Finalize & Present

**Day 11**

* Submit and present
	+ For more time, you can do whole-class presentations (up to 4 days). To save time, you can do small group presentations (typically 1 day).