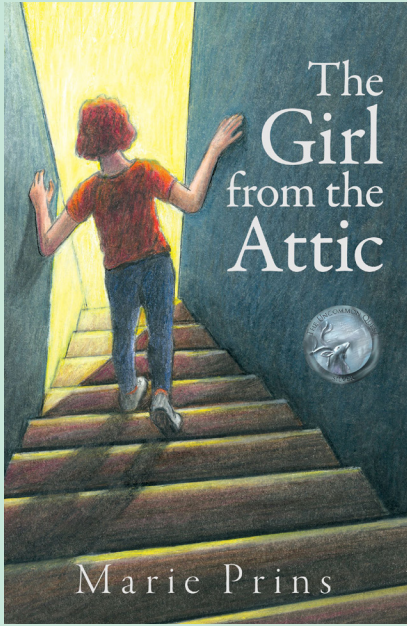


The Girl from the Attic

By Marie Prins

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Grades 3-7

About the Author

For Marie Prins, her life has always been, in one way or another, about books. As a child, she devoured them, at university, she studied them with a BA in English Literature, as an adult, she sold them at The Toronto Women's Bookstore and Parentbooks. Now she teaches children how to read them.

Book Summary

Maddy Rose lives in two worlds. A hundred years apart. In the same strange house built as an octagon. When a mysterious black cat leads her into its unknown attic, she meets Clare and his very sick sister Eva. Together Maddy and Clare jump into a money-making scheme in his uncle's dangerous soap factory to buy a cure for Eva. But an unexpected tragedy befalls them. And then Maddy is pulled back into her own time to confront the premature birth of her own sister. Will Maddy be able to deal with hardships of two lives? Will the skills she learned in the past help her solve the problems of the present? Can the strange shape of the house make a difference? As the Girl from the Attic, Maddy must rise to the challenges of both worlds in order to find her own place in the life of the octagon.

How To Use this Teaching Guide

This is an informative teacher's guide for the novel, *The Girl from the Attic*. There are 30 chapters total in the book. Each lesson covers different parts of the book, usually two to five chapters. This guide is designed for Grade 4 but can also work for grades 5 and 6. The curriculum expectations follow the Grade 4 Ontario Curriculum.

In each lesson, you will find:

- A summary of the chapters
- The aim, or “Learning Goals” of the lesson
- Grade 4 Ontario Curriculum Expectations (according to subject).
- Three activities
 - Before Reading (activity to get set-up to read, or an activity to get students thinking about what they covered during the last lesson)
 - During Reading (activity that focuses on analyzing the text, and looking for evidence)
 - After Reading (the main activity that will connect what the students have read about)
- Extensions to or modifications of the activities (if applicable)
- Chapter discussion questions

Book Themes:

- Curiosity
- Loss
- Coming-of-age
- Family Dynamics
- Disease

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LESSON 1

Chapters 1–2

Aim of This Lesson

The aim of this lesson is to introduce the reading strategy “making predictions” to help students understand the text. Students will practice making their own connections from the title and cover page.

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Construct predictions about the different chapters.
- Use a different colour to highlight specific information from the text (e.g., adjectives, character names).
- Use adjectives to describe people (personality and physical appearance).

Ontario Curriculum Expectations (Language)

OC 1.5 Use stated and implied information and ideas in oral texts to make simple inferences and reasonable predictions, and support the inferences with evidence from the text

R 1.1 Read a variety of texts from diverse cultures, including literary texts

R 1.3 Identify a variety of reading comprehension strategies and use them appropriately before, during, and after reading to understand texts

R 1.5 Make inferences about texts using stated and implied ideas from the texts as evidence

R 2.4 Identify some simple elements of style, including voice, word choice, and different types of sentences, and explain how they help readers understand texts

Before Reading: Making Predictions (10-15 Minutes)

Ask students “what is a prediction?” List ideas on the board or on chart paper. Next, have students predict what they think the story will be about. Remind students that predictions do not have to be correct. Remind students that predictions should use clues gathered from the book without reading it such as pictures or titles. Ask students what text evidence they have to support their prediction.

For instance, ask the students to look at the cover illustration. Then ask this guiding question, “How do you think Maddy feels as she walks down the stairs for the first time?” Listen carefully to their response.

(E.g., “I think the book is going to be about a girl who travels to space in a rocket ship and meets some alien friends but must figure out a way to get home because her rocket ship broke down.”)

Give feedback on their responses, keeping in mind that more text evidence may be needed.

During Reading: Character Search

Tell students that they are going to be introduced to many new characters in the first chapters. Tell students that it is important to have a good understanding of what the characters look like and how they act. Ask students to bring out another colour (such as a highlighter or a marker) and have them underline any information that will help them determine what the character looks like, or words that describe their personality. Sticky notes may be used if students cannot mark the books. Use a chart to help sort out the information.

After Reading: Discussion/Character Pages

Have students think-pair-share with another student to see what they have described as the same and what they have described differently. Afterwards, engage in a class discussion about character descriptions.

Extension Activity

Students can draw their own “Character Pages” using a blank piece of paper. Students can write words to describe the characters’ personalities and physical appearances. These can be displayed around class, so the students remember how the characters look.

Discussion Questions

- Look at the cover illustration. How do you think Maddy feels as she walks down the stairs for the first time?



LESSON 2

Chapter 3–4

Aim of This Lesson

Students will identify different adjectives and their purpose. Students will understand the function of adjectives and accurately represent an image using specific adjectives mentioned in the text.

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Review adjectives and their functions and usefulness.
- Practice associating adjectives with the characters they have already read about.

Ontario Curriculum Expectations (Language)

OC 1.3 Identify several listening comprehension strategies and use them before, during, and after listening to understand and clarify the meaning of oral texts.

R 1.1 Read different literary texts.

R 1.7 Identify the main idea and additional elements of texts.

R 2.4 Identify simple elements of style, including voice, word choice, and different types of sentences, and explain how they help readers understand texts.

Ontario Curriculum Expectations (Visual Arts)

VA D1.3 Use elements of design in art works to communicate ideas, messages, and understandings.

VA D1.4 Use a variety of materials, tools, and techniques to determine solutions to design challenges.

Before Reading: Awesome Adjectives!

Review the characters read about in the last chapter and review what adjectives are and why they are useful. Give each student a paper with the different characters read about already on it. Tell students to cut out their “character cards.” Have a list of adjectives prepared. Put one adjective up on the board. Have the students think about which character is best described by the adjective. Tell students to raise

the character card for the character they pick. Observation notes can be made based on the students' level of comprehension.

Other Ways To Perform This Activity:

- Have a Kahoot! prepared where students must guess the best adjective for the character.
- Have students organized into groups of four to five, and take turns flipping up an adjective card. Students can show their group members which character they pick and explain why.
- Write a selection of adjectives on the board. Split the class into two teams and have a player from each team come up to the board. Give each player a fly swatter. Shout out the name of a character, and the first team to swat an adjective that describes that character gets a point for their team. The first team to reach ten points wins.

During Reading: House Comparison Description

Have students take out another colour highlighter, pencil crayon, or sticky note. Tell them today they will focus on identifying what the house looks like, and how it compares to the house in the past. Any adjectives or descriptive words to describe the house can be marked. At the end of the reading, ask students to describe what words or expressions they have marked.

After Reading: House Comparison Art

Thus far, students should have an idea as to what the house looks like in the story's present and what it looked like in the past. Have students think-pair-share with a partner to discuss what they highlighted in the text, and to help them visualize what the house looks like. Have students create their own labelled diagram of the octagon house in 1901 and in 2001. Talk about what a diagram is, how to label a diagram, and the kinds of labels that need to be on this diagram.

Extension Activity

If time allows, have students build their diagrams out of recycled materials. At the end, students can present their diagrams in front of the class for an art and media mark!

Discussion Questions

- What would be your reaction if you unexpectedly found yourself transported back in time?
- Is there a particular time or place in the past you would like to visit? Why?
- What might you see or experience there?

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LESSON 3

Chapter 5–8

Aim of This Lesson

The aim of this lesson is for students to write a letter identifying the emotions that Maddy is feeling. Students will generate ideas that they want to write about and produce a rough and final draft of their letter.

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Learn and understand new vocabulary from the text.
- Underline the new words discussed as a class.
- Understand the purpose of writing a letter.
- Write their own letters using evidence from the text.

Ontario Curriculum Expectations (Language)

R 1.1 Read different literary texts.

R 3.2 Predict the meaning of and quickly solve unfamiliar words using different types of cues.

W 1.1 Identify the topic, purpose, audience, and form for writing.

W 1.2 Generate ideas about a potential topic, using a variety of strategies and resources.

W 2.7 Make revisions to improve the content, clarity, and interest of their written work, using several types of strategies.

W 2.8 Produce revised, draft pieces of writing to meet identified criteria based on the expectations related to content, organization, style, and use of conventions.

W 3.4 Use punctuation appropriately to help communicate their intended meaning, with a focus on the use of: the apostrophe to indicate possession, and quotation marks to indicate direct speech.

W 3.6 Proofread and correct their writing using guidelines developed with peers and the teacher.

Before Reading: Vocabulary

Show students a list of vocabulary terms that might be new. These words might include “consumption,” “cathedral,” “tuberculosis,” “antibiotics,” “asthma,” “obstetrician,” “daft,” and “cod liver oil.” Use a blank

piece of paper to write these new words. Get students to cut out the words and sort them into three piles: “words I know,” “words I might know,” and “words I do not know.” As a class, go through each word and make some predictions as to what the words mean before you read them.

During Reading: Highlighting Emotions

When the students come across one of the words they looked at in the “before reading” activity, have them highlight it. During reading, have students highlight or underline any emotions that Maddy may be feeling throughout these chapters. Pay special attention to the conversation she has with her mother about her real father after she visits the doctor.

After Reading: Writing Letters

In these chapters, the students learned that Maddy’s father left her when she was young. Tell the students they are going to pretend to be Maddy and they are going to write a mock letter to their father (Maddy’s dad). Give students a brainstorming page with the five Ws to help plan their thoughts. They should ask themselves questions that follow these five Ws such as “who am I writing to” and “what am I going to write about.” Remind students that the purpose of this letter is to write about the emotions that Maddy has been feeling and what is going on in her life. Give students this list of prompts to consider while writing:

- Describe how Maddy feels about her move to the new house.
- Mention some of Maddy’s favourite hobbies.

This exercise can also be paired with a lesson on how to write a letter. In this lesson you could discuss:

- How to address an envelope.
- How to start a letter.
- How to structure a letter.
- How to finish a letter.

This can also be paired with a discussion on why letter writing isn’t as common anymore. Discuss how technology has given people a faster means of communication, and how letters are becoming obsolete. However, brainstorm as a class some instances where letters may still be used over electronic communication.

Once the students have finished their letters, they can exchange with a partner and partake in the revising and editing process, looking for errors in their writing such as sentence structure, grammar, capitals, etc.

Discussion Questions

- Why doesn't Maddy want to go to the cottage anymore when her mom suggests that Dan could drive her?
- What are your first impressions of Clare? Do you think he will be an important character in the story? Why or why not?
- Tuberculosis was a very serious disease until antibiotics began to cure it in the mid-1900s. It sickened many people and often killed them, both old and young alike. Do you know anyone who struggles with a health issue today? How is their fight for health similar to or different than Eva's?
- In the 1800s people did not know how germs created diseases nor how to cure them. Many people died from pneumonia, influenza, and childhood diseases like measles and whooping cough. Some people believed that if a house was built like a circle or octagon, air could flow through it more freely. In other words, bad air or germs would not get stuck inside and make people sick. What do people believe today about the importance of fresh air in promoting health?



LESSON 4

Chapter 9–15

Aim of This Lesson

The aim of this lesson is to introduce synonyms and their purposes. Students will explore different ways to expand their vocabulary and avoid using the same words over and over.

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Identify what synonyms are.
- Explore different synonyms using physical and online thesauruses.
- Create a synonym burger displaying their synonyms for a word they choose.

Ontario Curriculum Expectations (Language)

R 2.1 Identify and describe the characteristics of a few simple text forms, with a focus on literary texts such as a fairy tale (e.g., plot, characters, setting), graphic texts such as a primary dictionary (e.g., words listed in alphabetical order, simple definitions accompanied by picture clues or diagrams), and informational texts such as a “how to” book.

W 3.3 Confirm spellings and word meanings or word choice using different types of resources appropriate for the purpose.

Ontario Curriculum Expectations (Visual Arts)

VA D1.3 Use elements of design in art works to communicate ideas, messages, and understandings.

VA D1.4 Use a variety of materials, tools, and techniques to determine solutions to design challenges.

Before Reading: Synonym Introduction

Tell students they will do a creative art activity. On the board, write commonly used words such as “walk,” “cold,” “then,” and “tasty.” Ask students if there are other word choices for these commonly used words. Create a class list on the board. Introduce thesauruses and teach students how to search for different meanings. Introduce online websites that can be used to look up some similar words.

Extensions Activity

Students can participate in a think-pair-share, or the class can have a competition to see how many different words each group can think of.

During Reading: Looking for Synonyms

While reading, ask students to make a list of words that they have heard in these chapters more than a couple of times or words that could be replaced by a different word (such as “ran”) Have students write down, underline, or highlight these words for the “after reading” activity.

After Reading: Synonym BBQ!

After students have finished reading, ask them to look at the words they have marked, underlined, or highlighted. Have a quick discussion as a class about the different words that the students highlighted. Ask the students to pick one of the words to create a “synonym burger.” After each student has chosen their word, they can either research online or look in a thesaurus to find four or five other words to use instead. Once they have a list, they will create a synonym burger to show different synonyms for their word. (please see below for synonym burger example).

For their burgers, students will start with the top bun. On the bun, the students will put “My juicy word is _____” and then fill in the blank with the chosen word. The students will then cut different coloured construction paper to make different burger toppings. On each burger topping, one of the



words that they researched will go on the topping. Students may add some details to the burger to make them more realistic, such as sesame seeds. At the end, they will have a juicy synonym burger to remind them the different ways to say a word!

Discussion Questions

- What was Maddy's first impression was when she walked into the soap mill?
- Why do Clare and Uncle Ray make soap if its so dangerous?

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LESSON 5

Chapter 16–20

Aim of This Lesson

The aim of this lesson is to help students think about what they have read and relate it to the story using one of the three types of connections. This will help them better comprehend what the text is about.

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Understand the three types of connections (text-text, text-self, text-world)
- Highlight key words or phrases that will help them form a connection
- Share a connection with small groups, and as a whole group

Ontario Curriculum Expectations

OC 1.3 Identify several listening comprehension strategies and use them before, during, and after listening to understand and clarify the meaning of oral texts.

R 1.1 Read different literary texts.

R 1.6 Extend understanding of texts by connecting story concepts to their own knowledge and experience, to other familiar texts, and to the world around them.

Before Reading: Connecting To Pictures

Show students different images. For example, a nature scene, a group gathered around the campfire, a soccer team who has lost the championship, etc. Ask students what these pictures remind them of. This could be a personal experience, something that they have read in a book, or seen in a movie, something that reminds them of what is currently happening in our society, etc.

Discuss these memories. This discussion will lead into a “making connections” activity at the end of the lesson.

During Reading: Highlighting Memories

Ask students to highlight a word or phrase that reminds them of a personal experience, a book or movie, or an event. At the end of the chapters, hand students a sticky note and ask them to write their word or phrase. When they are finished, students can attach their sticky notes to the board.

Modification: This activity can be done on a computer as well. Create a “Jamboard” for students to add their thoughts by using sticky notes. Review some of these ideas afterwards. Jamboard is an online Google platform.

After Reading: Creating Connections

After reading, review the three types of connections with students (text-text, text-self, text-world). Briefly explain each of these connections and give an example. Next, discuss as a class some connections they can make to the events that happened in the chapters. For prompting ideas, remind students that they can connect to events, emotions, conflicts, characters, settings, or the main ideas within a text. Once students have thought of a connection, have them take it further by representing their connection as a visual on a piece of paper. Once these are finished, hang them up in front of the class.

Extension Activity

Students can go on a gallery walk and see the different connections that the other students have made. Students can even try to guess what the picture represents.

Discussion Questions

- The soap we use to wash our bodies or clothes is safe to touch, but the process of making it can involve harsh chemicals like sodium hydroxide, lye, or soda ash. Uncle Ray and Clare are very careful when working in the soap factory so they don’t get hurt. Do you think Maddy is brave to enter the mill or cautious enough when working there? Explain your answer.
- How can we tell that Clare and Maddy are becoming good friends? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
- What does Maddy start noticing about her mother? Can you make a prediction as to what these symptoms may be?

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LESSON 6

Chapter 21–25

Aim of This Lesson

The aim of this lesson is to have students think collaboratively of each other's ideas and use evidence from the text to create a tableau on a given scene. Students will be encouraged to use multiple ideas and try different tableaux.

By the end of this lesson, students will...

- Work together in groups to create a tableau to represent a scene from the chapters.
- Highlight important key emotions within the chapters.
- Understand the important parts of a tableau.

Ontario Curriculum Expectations (Language)

R 1.1 Read different literary texts.

Ontario Curriculum Expectations (Drama)

D 1.1 Engage actively in drama exploration and role play, with a focus on exploring drama structures, key ideas, and pivotal moments in their own stories and stories from diverse communities, times, and places.

D 2.3 Identify and give examples of their strengths, interests, and areas for growth as drama participants and audience members.

Before Reading: Kahoot!

Have students partake in a short Kahoot! to make sure they comprehend what they have read so far. The Kahoot! can be created and personalized to include the information students should have learned.

If you do not have access to Kahoot! an alternative is a simple trivia game in which the first team to slap a buzzer or put their hands over their desk will get to answer the questions first.

During Reading: Highlighting Emotions

While reading, have students underline or highlight any emotions they see within these chapters. At the end, brainstorm a list of emotions. This list will be important for the drama tableaux activity they will do after reading.

After Reading: Terrific Tableaux!

As a class, students will create tableaux that represent scenes in these chapters (ex. Maddy apologizing to Clare or Maddy touching her new sister)

First, provide students with some examples of what to include in a tableau. Remind students that a tableau is a still scene in which students need to remain “in character.” They need to represent the scenes using different emotions, gestures, facial expressions, body gestures, and levels. An effective tableau uses all three levels (close to the group, in the middle, up high). Next, divide the class into groups of four or five. Give them five to ten minutes to create a tableau for the given scene. After everyone has had time to brainstorm, ask each group to present their tableau at the front of the class. The audience can give “two stars and a wish” (two things they did well, one thing they could improve or work on).

Discussion Questions

- A diversion is a distraction from a serious occupation, something that entertains or amuses someone. What diversion does Maddy use in the past to distract her from her life in the present? How does this change for Maddy? Do you have diversions in your life? What purpose do they serve?
- Have you ever had to apologize to someone? How did apologizing make them feel? How did it make you feel?



LESSON 6

Chapter 26–30

Aim of This Lesson

The aim of this lesson is to explore the soap-making process and highlight evidence from the text that explains it. Students will create their own step-by-step instructions for an experiment they will participate in.

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Highlight evidence that shows how soap was once made.
- Make a recipe for making soap (step-by-step instructions).
- Participate in a soap-making experiment.

Ontario Curriculum Expectations (Language)

OC 1.3 Identify several listening comprehension strategies and use them before, during, and after listening to understand and clarify the meaning of oral texts.

R 1.1 Read different literary texts.

R 2.2 Recognize simple organizational patterns in texts of different types, and explain, initially with support and direction, how the patterns help readers understand the texts.

Before Reading: Sharing Recipes

As a class, look at different recipes. Ask students to pick a recipe they have made at home or have seen their parents make. Go through the recipe together and see if the students can make a “shopping list” of ingredients they would need to buy at the store.

To take this further, provide different prices for the ingredients, and ask students to find the total cost of the ingredients for the recipe. Having a good understanding of recipes and what they look like will facilitate the “after reading” activity.

During Reading: Soap-Making Instructions

Tell students that they will do a fun activity together later, but to do so, they need to look for directions, or information in the text on how to make soap. This will give them clues to highlight any information they find while reading that tells us how to make soap. These notes will be used for the “after reading” activity.

After Reading: Soap-Making Experiment!

In these chapters, Maddy makes her own soap using a new melt-and-pour recipe. Have a discussion with the class that talks about how this process is different than the lye method that Clare and Uncle Ray use, highlighting how making melt-and-pour soap is a safer alternative. Teachers can create a flow chart to express the similarities and differences between the different soap processes. A key idea should focus on lye, which is present in Uncle Ray’s soap but not in Maddy’s. Other differences could focus on time. We saw that Clare and Uncle Ray’s method took a couple of days, whereas, Maddy had her soap ready in a couple of hours.

After the flow chart is finished, ask students to share some of the information they highlighted from the text on the steps for making soap. Explain the importance of putting these into “chronological order.” You could show an example of switching two steps and talking about how the whole process changes because we didn’t do the steps in the correct order. Go through a different example together, such as baking cookies, and come up with a list of steps for baking cookies on a piece of chart paper, or the white board. When finished, allow the students to practice putting the dangerous soap-making process in procedural format.

When these activities are complete, class will participate in a soap-making experiment. This method is like Maddy’s, as it does not use lye and relies on soap flakes, but it can be done without a double boiler.

When you finish, you can go through this safe, in-class experiment on how to make soap!

Materials needed:

- Large bowl
- 3 Cups of Soap Flakes (Ivory Snow for example, can be found at most department stores, or on Amazon)

- 1 to 1-1/2 cups of water
- Food colouring
- Vegetable oil
- A few drops of essential oil (such as lavender)

Steps:

1. Mix the soap flakes with the water in a large bowl. Add the water slowly so that the mixture is the consistency of play dough
2. Add a few drops of food colouring.
3. Add a few drops of lavender oil.
4. Coat each child's hands with a small amount of vegetable oil and allow them to manipulate the mixture with their hands into fun shapes or into molds.
5. Allow the soap shapes to dry overnight.

After the soap is made, have students create step-by-step directions for creating soap. They can take part in the procedural writing process and they will have a fun recipe to make soap at home.

If you cannot do the experiment, view a video on YouTube on how to make soap with the classroom. Students can write a procedural writing draft based on the information they watched in the video.

Discussion Questions

- Maddy struggles with many things—her mother's marriage to Dan, her missing father, her sick mother, her own health, her sister's premature birth. Can you relate to anything in Maddy's predicament? How? Clare also struggles with issues in his time, particularly his sister's illness and his need to work. How does he handle them differently than Maddy? Explain.
- At the end of the story, the past meets the present when Maddy visits her neighbour Cora in her house across the street from the octagon. Do you think Maddy will find another portal into another time? If so, what will she discover there?
- What are your overall thoughts of the novel? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not?
- What is an alternative ending you could make for the novel?