

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

BY NORTON JUSTER

Objectives

1. *Comprehension*—Students will demonstrate understanding of the novel through written and verbal responses to sectional comprehension questions and whole-book activities which fit all learning styles.
2. *Vocabulary*—Using vocabulary from the novel, students will define familiar and unfamiliar words based on context. They will use a dictionary and a thesaurus as reference tools. Students will also complete various activities which require higher-level thinking and application skills.
3. *Extended Activities*—Students will extrapolate and apply information from the novel to activities in the following areas: creative writing, reading, mathematics, and social studies.

Summary of Novel

Milo is a bored young boy who never knows what to do with himself. It seems to him that *everything* is a waste of time. The Phantom Tollbooth mysteriously appears in Milo's bedroom one day and, lacking anything else to do, Milo drives through the tollbooth. He discovers a magical world of words, numbers, friends, and demons.

Milo befriends a watchdog named Tock and the Humbug. Together, they seek Rhyme and Reason, princesses locked in the Castle in the Air, and they work to reunite the kingdoms of Dictionopolis and Digitopolis. As his adventures continue, Milo finds that life is far from being dull; it is incredibly exciting. He needs only to take a closer look at the world.

EMBARKING ON A JOURNEY

Objective: Students will interact with concepts and vocabulary from the novel in order to obtain a basic understanding of these before they begin reading.

Directions for Playing “Rattle On!”

1. Group students in pairs. Combine two pairs together to form groups of four students. Designate pairs as Team A or Team B. The pairs will compete against each other in “Rattle On!” a game similar to “Outburst™.”
2. Distribute a copy of “Rattle On!” (page 3) to each pair of students. The page is labelled Team A and Team B, and you will need to cut the page in half. Be sure to give each team only the appropriate part of the page.
3. Team A begins by naming the topic of one category for Team B. Team B then has 90 seconds to identify as many of the items for the topic as possible. In the second round, Team B names the topic. Team A guesses the items. Continue until each team has named three topics.
4. Team A keeps score for Team B, and Team B keeps score for Team A. A team scores one point for each correct answer identified. If a team correctly identifies all ten items within the time limit, it receives an extra five points.
5. The team that chooses the topic may give clues to the other team; however, there is no rule requiring the team to do so. One team in a group may give clues, while the other team chooses not to give clues.

After the game, discuss the categories with the class.

Which items were easy to identify?

Which items surprised you? Why?

Were there any items you did not understand?

What do you know about the novel from this activity?

RATTLE ON!

TEAM A

Things You Might Take on a Trip or Adventure

suitcase	car/bike
money	map
food	clothes
supplies	friends
travel guides	games

Homophones

their—there—they're	to—two—too
morning—mourning	sense—cents
by—bye—buy	cell—sell
wait—weight	dear—deer
principal—principle	horse—hoarse

Cut here. _____

RATTLE ON!

TEAM B

Fantasy Lands and Characters

Land of Oz	witch/wizard/magician/fairy
Narnia	enchanted forest
Candyland	force of evil
knight	king/queen
prince/princess	hero/heroine

Things Related to Reading and Research

dictionary	thesaurus
words	vocabulary
books	literary devices
encyclopedias	information
comprehension	imagination

STORYTELLING

Objective: Students will take turns adding to a “circle story” which begins with the premise of the novel.

Directions

1. Students and teacher(s) should form a circle.
2. Explain to the students that you will tell a story together. After you read the first few lines of the story, go around the circle, with each person adding a sentence or passage to it. Each addition to the story must fit the existing story. In other words, a student cannot suddenly change a character, details, or the direction of the story without tying the addition to the story as it has already been told. Also, additions should relate directly to the plot as it develops.
3. Read the first few lines of the story below, or make up your own story starter.

Once there was a young boy named Milo who was very bored with his life. He never appreciated the things his parents gave him or did for him. He didn't like school because he felt learning was a waste of time. One day, he went to his room and found a mysterious box. After opening the box, he found it contained a special tollbooth which could take him to a land filled with adventures. The directions said that all he needed to do was drive through the tollbooth, depositing his special coin as he passed through, and proceed to The Lands Beyond. Milo got into his toy car, dropped in his special coin, and drove through the tollbooth in search of excitement.

4. The last student and/or teacher should give the story closure.
5. Discuss the story.

What did you like about the story we just told?

Do you think things like that could really happen? Why or why not?

How would you feel if you were on that adventure?

What would you change if you had had your turn whenever you wanted?

How do you think the story we told is similar to the novel we are about to read?