

The Secret World Under the Floorboards: Exploring *The Borrowers*

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, learners will dive into Chapter 1 of Mary Norton's classic, *The Borrowers*. We will explore the perspective of the tiny people living among us, analyze how the author builds a "miniature" atmosphere through sensory details, and use our creativity to design tools for a Borrower's survival.

Learning Objectives

- **Analyze Perspective:** Explain how the world looks different when you are only six inches tall.
- **Identify Sensory Details:** Locate specific words in Chapter 1 that describe the sights, sounds, and smells of the Borrowers' environment.
- **Creative Engineering:** Design a "borrowed" invention that repurposes a common household object for a tiny person's use.

Materials Needed

- *The Borrowers* by Mary Norton (Chapter 1)
- A "Mystery Bag" containing 3-5 small household items (e.g., a safety pin, a postage stamp, a button, a matchbox, a paperclip)
- Sketchbook or plain paper
- Drawing materials (pencils, markers, or colored pencils)
- Optional: Recycled materials for 3D modeling (cardboard, string, tape)

1. Introduction: The Mystery of the Missing Sock (The Hook)

The Hook: Ask the learner: "Have you ever put two socks in the laundry and only one came out? Or left a hair tie on the table, only for it to vanish five minutes later? Where do those things go?"

Discussion: Introduce the concept of "The Borrowers." In this book, things don't just "get lost." They are "borrowed" by tiny people who live behind the walls and under the floorboards. Today, we are going to look at the world through their eyes.

Success Criteria: "By the end of this lesson, you'll be able to describe the Borrowers' world and show me how you would survive if you were only six inches tall."

2. Instruction: Building a Miniature World (I Do)

Concept Modeling: Explain that Mary Norton uses a technique called "Scale Shift." To a human, a thimble is a small sewing tool. To a Borrower, it is a sturdy cooking pot. To a human, a blade of grass is just yard waste; to a Borrower, it is a jungle vine.

The "Mystery Bag" Activity:

1. Pull one item out of the bag (e.g., a safety pin).
2. Demonstrate how to "rethink" it. "If I am Arrietty (the main character), this isn't a pin. It's a shiny silver rapier for defending myself against a cricket, or a sturdy gate-latch for my front door."
3. Explain that in Chapter 1, we meet Mrs. May and Kate, who introduce us to the *legend* of the Borrowers through the story of a missing gold breakfast-set.

3. Guided Exploration: Reading Chapter 1 (We Do)

Read Chapter 1 together (or listen to the first few pages).

Think-Pair-Share (or Guided Discussion): Stop at key moments to discuss:

- **Setting the Scene:** Mrs. May describes the old house. How does she describe the atmosphere? (Focus on words like "quiet," "dust," and "shadows.")
- **The Reveal:** When Mrs. May mentions "The Borrowers," what is Kate's reaction? Why do you think adults are less likely to see Borrowers than children?
- **Evidence Hunting:** Look at the description of the "dollhouse" furniture. How does Mary Norton make us feel the "smallness" of the items?

4. Creative Application: The Borrower's Blueprint (You Do)

The Challenge: Choose one item from the "Mystery Bag" or find one small object in the room. Your task is to "Borrow" it and turn it into something useful for the Clock family (Pod, Homily, and Arrietty).

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. **Identify:** What is the object in the "human" world?
2. **Repurpose:** What will it become in the "Borrower" world? (e.g., A spool of thread becomes a table; a postage stamp becomes a framed painting).
3. **Design:** Draw a detailed "Blueprint" of your invention. Label the parts.
 - *Example:* If you chose a paperclip, show how it's bent into a hook for climbing up curtains.
4. **Describe:** Write 2-3 sentences using sensory details. What does the object feel like to a Borrower? Is it heavy? Cold? Rough?

5. Conclusion: Show and Tell (Recap)

Summary: Review the key takeaways. The Borrowers aren't "stealing"; they are surviving. They use their environment in clever ways that humans never notice.

Reflection: Ask the learner: "If you were a Borrower living in this very room, where would your secret door be? What would be the most dangerous thing in this room for you?"

Preview: "Next time, we'll go under the floorboards to meet Pod and Homily and see their house in action!"

Assessment & Feedback

- **Formative Assessment:** Check-in during the "Evidence Hunting" part of the reading to see if the learner can identify sensory words.
 - **Summative Assessment:** Evaluate the "Borrower's Blueprint."
 - *Success Benchmark:* Does the design show a clear change in scale? Does the description include at least two sensory details?
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Differentiation Options

- **For the Reluctant Writer:** Instead of writing the description, have them give a "Sales Pitch" for their invention, explaining orally how it works.
- **For the Advanced Learner:** Have them write a short "Field Guide" entry from the perspective of a Borrower, describing a common household pet (like a cat or a goldfish) as if it were a massive, terrifying monster.
- **Kinesthetic Option:** Instead of drawing the blueprint, use actual craft scraps (string, bottle caps, tape) to build a prototype of the tool.