



Gregor the Overlander

Suzanne Collins

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

Eleven-year-old Gregor is bored: his father vanished and since his mother has to work to support the family, Gregor must spend the summer at home baby-sitting his two-year-old sister Margaret (always called "Boots") and his senile grandmother. Gregor is gracious about the sacrifice, even refusing the offer his seven-year-old sister Lizzie makes to stay home as well. Gregor insists that she attend camp to escape from the small, crowded, and stifling New York City apartment. Everyone in the family is sad that Gregor's father has left. His disappearance two years ago is mysterious and inexplicable because he was a devoted husband and father, and an enthusiastic science teacher. After his mother leaves one day, Mrs. Cormaci, a neighbor, comes to sit with Gregor's grandmother for a few hours. This allows Gregor to go to the laundry room and get the washing done. While he is busy sorting the clothing, Boots wanders to an old air duct. As Gregor lunges for Boots, they both fall down the shaft under the grate.

Chapter 2

The kids fall and fall, as if caught in a horrible dream. Finally they land on solid ground. Human-size roaches approach, horrifying Gregor but enchanting Boots. The roaches are delighted by the smell of Boot's full diaper and decide that she is a queen. The group travels to where people live, Boots riding on a roach's back as Gregor trots alongside. They arrive at a giant stadium, where a dozen huge bats and their riders are spiraling

through the air. A girl riding on a bat swoops down to them.

Chapter 3

The girl is very pale with silver hair and light purple eyes. They learn that the assertive and cool teenager is Queen Luxa. When Gregor asks how they can return home, she explains that they would be three times dead before they even reach the Waterway. She is astonished they are alive as it is. Luxa and an elderly man named Vikus trade with the roaches to get Gregor and Boots.

Chapter 4

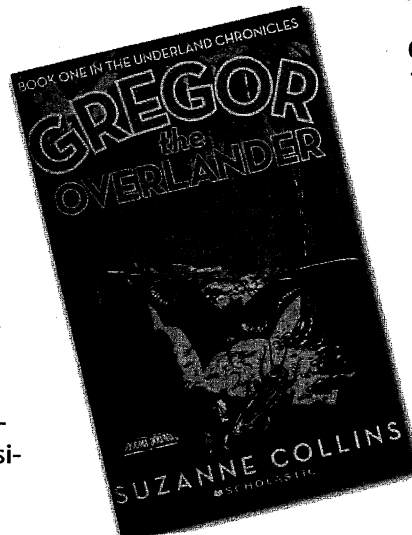
The people living underground call themselves Underlanders; they call the people from Earth's surface Overlanders. Vikus explains that visits from Overlanders are very rare; despite his advanced age, Vikus has met only a handful over the years. As far as he knows, all the Overlanders have died because of the harsh conditions and lack of sunlight. Vikus explains that Gregor and Boots are their guests and under their protection.

Chapter 5

The group enters the magnificent city of Regalia, populated by humans only. Vikus explains that there are five gateways from the Overland to the Underland. Vikus also explains that the arrival of two living Overlanders at the same time is extremely rare. To prevent enemies from entering, the residences do not have doors. Vikus and the children are flown up to the windows via bats. Everyone falls in love with sociable Boots, who is given over to the gentle Dulcet for bathing. Gregor also meets Mareth and Perdita. Gregor takes his own bath and decides that the luxurious bathing portal may be the way to escape and return to New York City.

Chapter 6

The children's clothing is destroyed, replaced by fine soft garments woven by "spinners," spiders. Dulcet also gives Gregor a handy gift: a backpack for carrying Boots. They have a beautiful dinner



with special baby food for Boots. Gregor meets Henry, another teenager about his own age who strikes him as arrogant as Luxa. Gregor learns that bats and people bond to each other in a special ceremony, vowing to keep each other alive. The bats can talk. Gregor learns the history of Regalia, settled in the 1600s by Bartholomew of Sandwich, a stonemason from England.

Chapter 7

After everyone has fallen asleep, Gregor straps Boots on his back and escapes to the river. He lowers a boat into the fierce current, sails down the river, and comes face-to-face with two huge rats!

Chapter 8

The rats, Fangor and Shed, discuss who will eat Gregor and who will eat Boots. Gregor figures out that the Underlanders bathed them and destroyed their clothing to mask their smell, which would have attracted the rats instantly. Henry, Mareth, and Perdita come to Gregor and Boots' rescue. Gregor thrusts his torch into Fangor's face, allowing Henry to impale Fangor on his sword.

Chapter 9

The rescue party brings Gregor and Boots back to Regalia and ties Gregor's hands. Furious that he endangered her people, Luxa smacks Gregor across the face. Vikus steps in and cools everyone down by explaining that no one had told Gregor about the rats and so he did not know the danger he faced. Gregor believed he was being held prisoner, when in fact he was being protected from death. Vikus shows Gregor a key ring. It is the key ring that Gregor had made for his father, which proves that his father, too, passed through the air shaft into the Underland. He did not desert his family, as Gregor had feared.

Chapter 10

Vikus explains that Gregor's father, like Gregor himself, was desperate to return home. They persuaded him to stay a few weeks, but he managed to slip away. The rats got him, but Vikus suspects that he may still be alive because he can be of service to the rats: he is a scientist. Then Vikus shows Gregor the sacred prophecies of Bartholomew of Sandwich. He focuses on "The Prophecy of Gray," the key one. They believe that Gregor is the warrior named in the prophecy who will save the Underlanders from the rats.

Chapter 11

Gregor assures Vikus that he is an eleven-year-old boy and not especially fond of confrontation. The council meets and decides that Gregor is the warrior. They authorize a party to set off immediately to try to save the Underlanders from the rats. Gregor agrees because he wants to rescue his father. He decides that he must bring Boots along because he cannot bear to leave her behind.

Chapter 12

Before the party can set off, the rats attack. Gregor packs some necessities, choosing wisely: batteries, a hard hat with a light, and diapers for Boots. Vikus' wife Solovet leads the fighters on their bats. Soon, they meet Queen Athena, an impressive bat.

Chapter 13

As they fly, Gregor learns that rats killed Luxa's parents and Henry's parents. Henry became as hard as stone and his sister Nerissa, as frail as glass.

Chapter 14

The roaches approach. Astonishingly, Boots recognizes the same two roaches she met at their arrival, to the roaches' utter delight. The two roaches are Temp and Tick and they become Boots' gentle but fiercely protective guardians. These are the only two roaches to join the warriors, as foreseen in the prophecy.

Chapter 15

The war party flies on the bats over the river. When the rats attack, everyone pushes Gregor ahead because it is vital that he not be killed.

Chapter 16

Gregor is trapped in a spider's web. Everyone catches up with him and they too become prisoners of the spiders' leader, Queen Wevox.

Chapter 17

The spiders kindly send down food and water. They weave fresh diapers for Boots, too. Gregor learns that the spiders make all the Underlanders' garments and linen. Boots throws a temper tantrum, which the warriors use to distract the spiders as they escape. Luxa sails on her bat and cuts all the spiders' webs in a daring move.

Chapter 18

Luxa is about to be eaten by Queen Wevox when Gregor saves her life by splashing the huge spider with root beer. Everyone tastes the remaining root beer, which Boots insists on sharing with the roaches and bats as well. Vikus has arranged a guide for them, the rat Vikus had earlier knocked into the river!

Chapter 19

To everyone's fear and horror, Vikus leaves them with the rat, Ripred, and he leaves. Ripred plans to overthrow King Gorger, head of the rats, and needs their help. The rat is part of the prophecy, too.

Chapter 20

The kids rest and prepare some food. When food is short, the roaches refuse their portion and give it to Boots. Ripred then takes them through a foul tunnel to disguise their human smell.

Chapter 21

Two spiders join the party, as foretold by the prophecy. The spiders bring news that the rats attacked the webs and many spiders have been killed.

Chapter 22

The spider named Treflex dies and the other one, Gox, eats her remains. The roaches again generously go hungry so that Boots can have extra food.

Chapter 23

Henry attacks Ripred, but Gregor warns the rat and he quickly counterattacks. Neither is badly hurt. Boots is ill with a fever. The rats ambush the kids. At the last moment, Temp speeds across a bridge and Tick sacrifices himself so everyone else will be spared.

Chapter 24

Tremendously touched by the roach's selflessness and bravery, Gregor breaks down in tears for the first time thus far. They reach Gregor's father...what is left of him.

Chapter 25

Gregor's father is alive, but barely. He is very thin and delirious with the same fever that Boots has. Henry reveals that he has betrayed them all by allying himself with King Gorger and the rats, whom he believes are the stronger creatures.

Ripred stays loyal to the children. They rats surround them. Gregor sets the battle into motion when he attacks King Gorger. Cornered, Gregor jumps off a cliff, despite his fear of heights.

Chapter 26

The rats follow him off the cliff to their death, but Gregor is saved when Henry's bat Ares swoops him up. Gregor assesses the damage, sews up the bat's wing, and plots their escape. They must fly, but in what direction? Gregor's father saves the day when he recovers enough to build a simple compass, locate north, and navigate them out of the tunnel and back to Regalia. The council votes to put Ares to death for treason, but Gregor realizes that the bat did not know of Henry's treachery. Gregor bonds to Ares, saving the bat's life.

Chapter 27

Everyone has recovered. The bats fly Gregor, his father, and Boots up the air shaft to their home.

Timeline of Technology Impacting Science Fiction

- 1970 liquid crystal watches go on the market
- 1971 CAT scan
- 1972 pocket calculator
- 1973 car airbags
- 1974 barcodes on supermarket products
- 1975 home computers
- 1976 VHS and Betamax
- 1977 first complete genetic structure of an organism found (Great Britain)
first flight of the Space Shuttle
first commercial flight of supersonic *Concorde* between New York, Paris, London
USA admits testing neutron bomb
Trans-Alaska Pipeline starts oil flowing
Prudhoe Bay to Valdez
- 1978 Louise Brown born, first in-vitro fertilization
- 1979 graphical user interface developed

Gregor the Overlander Suzanne Collins

- 1980 Sony Walkman introduced
- 1981 compact disks hit the market
- 1982 video keyhole surgery
- 1983 synthetic human insulin approved for sale
- 1984 DNA fingerprinting
- 1985 first dotcom registered
- 1986 laptop computer marketed
- 1987 Prozac hits the market
- 1988 first Internet virus; 10% of online computers disabled
- 1989 toaster becomes first appliance controlled over the Internet
- 1990 first gene therapy (4-year-old girl with an immune disorder)
- 1991 Internet browser developed (spawns World Wide Web)
- 1992 text messaging proliferates
- 1993 Global Positioning Satellite
- 1994 genetically modified tomatoes
- 1995 *Toy Story*, the first entirely computer-generated feature film
- 1996 Deep Field photographs of universe at 10,000,000,000 BC
- 1997 Dolly the sheep: first mammal cloned from an adult cell
- 1998 first segment of the International Space Station launched
- 1999 electronic reusable paper invented
- 2001 implanted microchips give sight to three blind men
- 2002 iris (eye) scanners first used for airport security

Author Sketch

Suzanne Collins began her writing career in children's television, where she enjoyed great success. Collins worked on the staffs of several Nickelodeon shows, including the Emmy-nominated hit *Clarissa Explains it All* and *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo*. Collins also wrote for Maurice Sendak's *Little Bear* and *Oswald the Octopus*, both on Nick Jr. Collins was nominated by the Writer's Guild of America for co-writing the critically acclaimed animated Christmas special, *Santa, Baby!*



Most recently, Collins worked as the head writer for the PBS show *Clifford's Puppy Days*. Building on her success, Collins decided to write a children's book. She got the idea for *Gregor the Overlander* from Lewis Carroll's book *Alice in Wonderland*. Thinking about the British classic, Collins was struck by how pastoral the setting must seem to kids who, like her own, lived in cities. Thus was the book *Gregor the Overlander* born. It has since developed into a series.

Suzanne Collins lives in Connecticut with her family.

Critic's Corner

Gregor the Overlander is the first in a proposed five-part fantasy series entitled *The Underland Chronicles*. It was a *Kirkus Reviews* Editors' Choice and was listed as one of the New York Public Library's 100 Books for Reading and Sharing. Foreign rights have been sold in five countries. As you would expect, reviews for the book were strong. *Booklist*, for instance, gave the novel a starred review and said: "What if Alice fell down an air vent in a New York City apartment building instead of down a rabbit hole? Collins considers a similar possibility in her exceptional debut novel, a well-written, fast-moving, action-packed fantasy. ...Collins creates a fascinating, vivid, highly original world and a superb story to go along with it, and Gregor is endearing as a caring, responsible big brother who rises triumphantly to every challenge. This is sure to be a solid hit with young fantasy fans."

Writing in *School Library Journal*, Steven Engelfried said: "Plot threads unwind smoothly, and the pace of the book is just right. Exciting scenes and cliff-hanger chapters are balanced by decisions and interactions that drive the action. Gregor is not the most compelling figure at first, but as the story progresses he becomes more interesting, maturing through the challenges he faces. Supporting characters are generally engaging, particularly the enigmatic warrior rat that claims to support the protagonist's mission. This is an engrossing adventure for fantasy fans and for those new to the genre."

Other Books by Suzanne Collins

Gregor the Overlander and the Prophecy of Bane (2004)

Gregor and the Curse of the Warmbloods (2005)

Charlie Bone and the Castle of Mirrors (2005)

When Charlie McButton Lost Power (2005)

Bibliography

The Horn Book Magazine. Kitty Flynn. Review of *Gregor the Overlander*. September 2003.

Gregor the Overlander Synopsis

www.state.lib.la.us/empowerlibrary/2006%206-8%20Gregor%20the%20overlander.pdf

Scholastic.com

<http://books.scholastic.com/teachers/authorsandbooks/teachingwithbooks/producthome.jsp?productID=13816&collateralID=12933&displayName=Discussion+Guide&displayName=Discussion%252520Guide>

General Objectives

1. To analyze life in the author's imaginary future world
2. To assess each character's personality
3. To trace the sequence of events
4. To appreciate the novel's suspense
5. To enjoy the author's use of humor
6. To find examples of cruelty
7. To find examples of compassion
8. To evaluate the novel's ending
9. To recognize the significance of setting
10. To describe the author's theme or message

Specific Objectives

1. To see how Gregor's life has changed since his father vanished
2. To explore the relationship between Gregor and Boots
3. To analyze how Gregor and Boots end up in the Underworld
4. To understand why Vikus and the others think that Gregor is the warrior who will save their world
5. To analyze the Prophecy of Gray
6. To understand why Luxa and Gregor have suppressed all hope and later regain it
7. To appreciate the roaches' bravery and loyalty
8. To understand the bonds between the bats and their riders
9. To analyze why Henry becomes a traitor
10. To appreciate the importance of family unity and love

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Suzanne Collins' style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

Humor the parts of a story that are funny. Humor can be created through word play, irony, sarcasm, and exaggeration. *Gregor the Overlander* contains gentle touches of humor, often created by Boots. For instance, the roaches are initially entranced with Boots because they perceive her diaper to smell "so good." This is humorous because we rarely expect a two-year-old's diaper to be fragrant. It is also humorous when Boots pokes Luxa in the eye deliberately because the Underland Queen had been cruel to the baby: "Boots looked up at the girl, registered something, and poked her right in the eye" (p. 29). Readers know that Luxa deserves her comeuppance, but do not expect her to receive it in such an appropriate way.

Fantasy and science fiction writing that incorporates elements of magic, illusion, and unrealistic events. Often, science fiction will include science or technology. Often, these novels are set in the future, on distant planets, or among alien races. *Gregor the Overlander* is set in the present in an underground world called "Underland." It is unrealistic that bats, rats, spiders, and roaches could talk. It is also highly unrealistic that roaches would grow to six feet in height and be loyal to humans.

Gregor the Overlander Suzanne Collins

Dialect the way people speak in a certain region or area. In a dialect, certain words are spelled and pronounced differently. Writers use dialects to describe their characters and setting more fully. Collins uses dialect extensively to evoke the Underworld. She creates her own syntax. For instance, Luxa says, "My parents met him and spoke him well" (p. 105). We would write this as "...and spoke well of him." The characters wish each other good luck by saying "Fly you high." We would write this as "Fly high."

The Importance of Setting

The setting of *Gregor the Overlander* is the Earth in the present day, deep underground. It is a fascinating, vivid, and highly original world called Underland. In this subterranean world, the people are translucent-skinned and violet-eyed. They ride on giant bats to which they have bonded.

Cockroaches, bats, spiders, and rats can all talk and many have grown to tremendous size. The roaches are shown to be not very intelligent but courageous and loyal. The spiders are useful for their spinning abilities but unwilling to ally with the humans as they stand on the brink of war against the fierce and vicious rats. The setting is crucial to the novel as Gregor struggles to save his father and return to his life in New York City, part of what the Underlanders call the "Overland."

Cross-Curricular Sources

Novels

M.T. Anderson, *Feed*
Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*
Nancy Farmer, *The House of the Scorpion*
Ann Halam, *Taylor Five*
Marilyn Kaye, *Like Father, Like Son*
Charlotte Kerner, *Blueprint*
Steven Layne, *This Side of Paradise*
Kathryn Lasky, *Star Split*
Lois Lowry, *The Giver*
George Orwell, *1984*
L.J. Singleton, *Regeneration: The Search*
Gloria Skurzynski, *The Clones: The Virtual War Chronologs*

DVDs and Videos

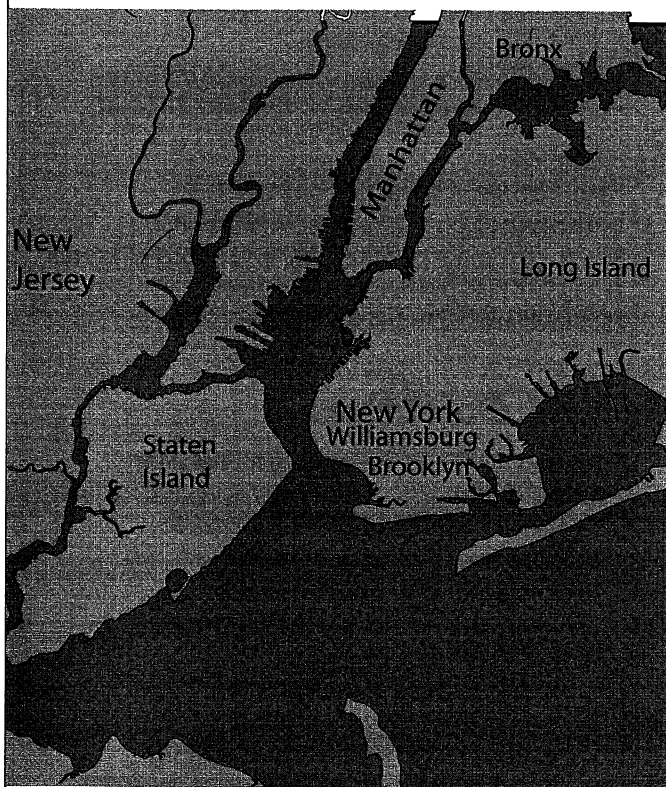
The Alien Series
Blade Runner
Biotechnology on Earth
League of Extraordinary Gentlemen
The Matrix Series
The Mighty
Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow
War of the Worlds
Waterworld

Audio

Gregor and the Overlanders (read by Paul Boehmer)
Gregor and the Curse of the Warmbloods
Gregor the Overlander and the Prophecy of Bane (read by Paul Boehmer)

Internet

Horn Book Magazine
www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_go2451/is_200309/ai_n9293239
Suzanne Collins
www.goldcreek.act.edu.au/yara/pages/reviews/overseas_new/r_gregor_the_overlander.htm



Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Suzanne Collins' *Gregor the Overlander* should include these aspects:

Themes

- prophecy
- war
- coping skills
- courage
- family love and loyalty
- violence
- kindness
- science
- rats
- determination

Motifs

- assuming the mantle of leadership to help others
- interpreting a mysterious prophecy
- being willing to take risks
- sacrificing your own fun to help your family
- learning about science
- adapting to alien conditions
- overcoming your revulsion at roaches
- being willing to change ingrained prejudices
- seeing hope and possibility in the world once again
- understanding the importance of fathers

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the book. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. Without thinking, Gregor thrust his head and shoulders into the hole. (Chapter 1, p. 13)
(Gregor and sister Boots plunge into the Underworld through one of its five portals, this one an air duct in a New York City apartment laundry room. The novel thus begins very similarly to Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, as Gregor and Boots enter Underland.)
2. It was a metal ring. (Chapter 9, p. 98)
(Vikus shows Gregor a key ring that he had recovered from another unwilling visitor to the

Underland—Gregor's father. Once Gregor sees the key ring, which contains a braided loop that Gregor made for his father, he understands that his father did not desert the family intentionally. Rather, like Gregor and Boots, he accidentally fell through the portal to the Underworld. This is crucial because it reaffirms Gregor's conviction that his father is a good man and sets him on his quest to rescue his father.)

3. "The rats reached him before we did."
(Chapter 10, p. 102)
(Gregor's elation vanishes when he realizes that his father might be dead. Vikus is telling Gregor the truth but also setting him up to be the savior of the Underworld. As he saves the Underworld's residents from the rats, Gregor will also be rescuing his father.)
4. "But there is one that hangs most heavily over our heads. It is called 'The Prophecy of Gray,' for we know not whether it be fair or foul." (Chapter 10, p. 108)
(This prophecy says that someone from the Overworld will come to the Underworld to save them from the rats. The Underlanders believe that Gregor is the savior. The prophecy gives the book even greater suspense, as readers try to figure out what each part of it means.)
5. "Fly you high, Vikus!" he yelled. (Chapter 19, p. 214)
(Gregor and the other children are terrified when Vikus leaves them alone with Ripred the rat as their guide. Vikus must do this because it is part of the prophecy. By saluting Vikus here with the traditional Underlander salutation, Gregor shows his maturity and acceptance of his role as the savior of the Underland.)
6. From now on, he felt an allegiance to the roaches that he knew would never fade.
(Chapter 23, p. 249)
(Tick, one of the giant roaches loyal to Boots, gives her life to save the two-year-old. As a result, Gregor vows eternal gratitude to the roaches. In this clever bit, Collins reverses reader perception about common creatures, making the loathsome into the admirable.)

Gregor the Overlander Suzanne Collins

7. The man squinting up at them from the pit was so thin and weak, his attempt to stand failed. (Chapter 24, p. 257)
(Gregor's father has been much weakened by his ordeal underground. Gregor had not even imagined that his father would be anything but his usual self: strong, tall, and vibrant. Thus, Gregor cannot rely on his father to take charge. Gregor must still retain the mantle of warrior leader.)
8. "Sorry, cousin," said Henry urgently to Luxa. "But I had no choice." (Chapter 24, p. 260)
(To the kids' astonishment, Henry is a traitor, allying himself to the rats. The kids had been counting on him for support. This betrayal increases the novel's suspense as it builds to its climax.)
9. "Ares the flier, I bond with you." (Chapter 26, p. 292)
(Ares was Henry's bat. When Henry turns traitor, the council figures that Ares is a traitor as well. By bonding with Ares, Gregor saves the bat's life and affirms his loyalty to the community.)
10. Even if times got bad, he would never again deny himself the possibility that the future might be happy even if the present was painful. (Chapter 27, p. 298)
(Gregor's experiences help him rekindle hope. He regains the ability to dream of better times. Since Gregor lost his ability to hope when his father left, this scene shows the importance of fathers and strong families.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. Where does the story take place?
(The story is set in the Underland, a land beneath New York City. It is populated by humans with purple eyes and nearly-translucent skin, and giant roaches, bats, and rats that can talk.)

2. How do Gregor and Boots end up in the Underworld?
(They accidentally fall through one of the five portals. This portal is a grate located in the laundry room of their apartment building. Gregor follows Boots when she falls through.)
3. Why do the Underlanders insist on bathing Gregor and Boots and replacing their clothing immediately?
(The Underlanders are trying to eliminate their smell, to protect them from the rats. If the rats catch their scent, they will attack and kill the two children.)
4. What is the Prophecy of Gray? How does it affect Gregor?
(The Prophecy is the most sacred vision of Bartholomew of Sandwich. It tells of a dark time when the future of the Underlanders is undecided. It calls for a journey of humans and many creatures, which may lead to either salvation or ruin. The journey will be led by an Overlander. Vikus believes that Gregor is that leader, the warrior who will save the Underlanders.)
5. Why does Gregor bond with the bat Ares?
(Gregor bonds with Ares to save the bat's life. When Gregor shows that he believes Ares was not a traitor as his rider Henry was, the council spares the bat's life.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. What is ironic about the roaches Temp and Tick?
(We usually think of roaches as mindless, loathsome creatures, but ironically, these roaches are brave, selfless, and loyal. Alone of all the roaches, Temp and Tick join the Underlanders' quest. Tick gives up her life to save Boots and the rest of the party.)
7. Why do you think Vikus does not reveal to Gregor that he is Luxa's grandfather?
(Perhaps he wants Gregor to judge Luxa on her own merit, not on the basis of her family connections.)

8. How does Gregor change as a result of his experiences?
(He regains his ability to hope and dream of the future; even if times get bad, he will never again deny himself the possibility that the future will be better.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Did you find it realistic that Henry would become a traitor? Why or why not?
(Yes, Henry's perfidy seems logical because he is arrogant and would prefer to be on the winner's side; No, because the rats killed Henry's parents so they would be the last creatures with whom he would form an alliance.)
10. Which parts of the story did you find especially realistic?
(The love between Gregor and his father and between Gregor and Boots seemed very realistic. So did Gregor's initial unwillingness to ride a bat, jump into the air, and be responsible for saving the Underworld.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. *Gregor the Overlander* is the first book in a series of five. Plot another book in the series, explaining what happens to Gregor, Boots, Luxa, and some of the other major characters.
12. Working with some classmates, act out the scene in which Henry reveals that he is a traitor.

Across the Curriculum

Art/Music

1. When the novel opens, Gregor thinks about what life was like in the Ice Age. Make a diorama of a typical Ice Age scene.
2. Divide a piece of paper in half vertically. On the left, draw Gregor's apartment. On the right, draw a similar shelter in the Underland.
3. Write a ballad about the freeing of Gregor's father and the warriors' victory over the rats.
4. Several critics commented that *Gregor the Overlander* is very much like a movie. Make some storyboards for a movie version of the novel.

5. Draw some of the cherubs and gargoyles that Gregor sees.
6. Make a model of the city of Regalia, the capital of the Underland.

Language Arts

1. The fall through the air shaft in Chapter 2 that brings Boots and Gregor to the Underland is very similar to the opening of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Read the first two chapters of that novel and compare and contrast them to the first two chapters of *Gregor the Overlander*.
2. Gregor has a horrible dream about walking around and having the ground collapse under him. Explain the symbolism of this dream. Consider the situation with his father in your analysis.
3. Write another prophecy, telling what the future holds for Gregor. Use the same rhyming format as the Prophecy of Gray.
4. Gregor has only a few minutes to pack when the rats attack. He takes batteries and other objects. Decide what you would take, if you were in Gregor's place.
5. Gregor is not an eager hero, but with common sense, quick thinking, and determination he grows into the role. Predict what you think Gregor's life will be like ten years in the future.

History/Social Studies

1. Luxa is a queen. List at least three countries that have queens currently on thrones. Describe their duties.
2. Gregor once performed in Carnegie Hall. Explain what Carnegie Hall is and why it is famous.
3. The Prophecies of Bartholomew are important to the Underlanders. Gregor's grandmother believes in the prophecies of Nostradamus. Learn more about the prophecies of Nostradamus. Choose two and evaluate whether or not you believe they are accurate.

4. Vikus is convinced that the rats want Gregor's father so he will make them a thumb. Analyze the role that the thumb has played in human progress.
5. Visit the web site for the Museum of Natural History in New York, one of Gregor's favorite places. Create a floor map or booklet of its primary exhibits.

Speech/Debate

1. What qualities does Gregor possess that make it plain that he is indeed the savior described in the Prophecy of Gray? Analyze Gregor's character in a roundtable discussion.
2. Enact the scene in which the council debates Ares' fate.
3. Debate whether or not older kids should be responsible for baby-sitting their younger siblings if their parents work.
4. Imagine that you are Vikus. Give Gregor some advice for surviving in the Underworld.
5. Working with two other classmates, create a scene in which Gregor and his father explain to his mother where they have been.

Science/Math

1. Explain to a classmate how batteries work. Make a diagram to illustrate your explanation.
2. Gregor counts off the seconds by saying "One Mississippi, two Mississippi," etc. Explain other reliable ways to count time.
3. Are bats helpful or harmful creatures? Make a visual display to teach your classmates about bats.
4. Gregor tells Vikus that roaches have been around for 350 million years. Is this true? Make a list of Fun Facts about roaches to share with a partner.
5. The rats in the novel are both intelligent and loathsome. Find out whether or not Collins has characterized rats correctly. Then find out what a person should do when faced with a

rat.

6. Make a compass as Gregor's father does. Follow the directions in the novel.
7. Explain how fish could exist without eyes.
8. Describe how bats navigate by echolocation.

Alternate Assessment

1. Write a character sketch for Luxa.
2. Imagine you fell down the shaft into the Underland. Deliver a speech to the first people who greet you, explaining who you are and why you have come.
3. Read another novel by Suzanne Collins and compare and contrast it to *Gregor the Overlander*.
4. Make a poster showing the relative size of any three creatures in the novel, such as roaches, bats, rats, and humans.

Vocabulary

Complete the crossword puzzle with the following words from *Gregor the Overlander*.

Word Bank

arrogant
clique

tidbit
pudgy

plausible
venom

prey
ascent

reek
translucent

Across

- 2. possible; believable
- 5. victim
- 6. poison
- 7. climb up
- 9. see-through; transparent

Down

- 1. group
- 2. a bit overweight
- 3. conceited
- 4. small morsel
- 8. smell foul

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match each description with a name from the list. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| A. Lizzie | F. Gregor |
| B. Margaret | G. Queen Luxa |
| C. Vikus | H. Henry |
| D. Dulcet | I. Solovet |
| E. Ripred | J. King Gorger |

- ___ 1. Luxa's grandfather
- ___ 2. The traitorous Underlander teenager
- ___ 3. Boots' real name
- ___ 4. The eleven-year-old warrior who saves Underland
- ___ 5. The kindly Underlander who bathes and feeds Boots
- ___ 6. Gregor's four-year-old sister
- ___ 7. Vikus' wife, the chief military strategist
- ___ 8. The rat who guides the children
- ___ 9. The girl with purple eyes who proves to be a fierce and skilled warrior
- ___ 10. The rat who wants to kill all the humans and rule the Underland

Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Circle the term that best completes each of the following statements.

- 1. Gregor's father disappeared about **(two, ten)** years ago.
- 2. The passage to the Underland is located in the **(bathroom, laundry room)**.
- 3. The roaches believe that Boots is really a **(roach, queen)**.
- 4. In the beginning, Gregor and Boots are **(prisoners, guests)** in the Underland.
- 5. The Underland humans live a magnificent city called **(Regalia, Realia)**.
- 6. To prevent enemies from entering the homes, they do not have **(windows, doors)**.
- 7. Dulcet gives Gregor a handy gift: a **(book, backpack)** for Boots.
- 8. Gregor learns that **(roaches, bats)** and people bond to each other in a special ceremony, vowing to keep each other alive.
- 9. The Underland was settled in the **(1600s, 1900s)** by Bartholomew of Sandwich, a stonemason from England.
- 10. Vikus shows Gregor a **(key ring, wallet)**, which Gregor had made for his father. It proves that his father, too, passed through the air shaft into the Underland.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if a part is false.

- ___ 1. Gregor tries to escape from Underland at night, taking a boat and riding down the river.
- ___ 2. He comes face-to-face with two rats named Temp and Tick.
- ___ 3. Furious that he endangered her people, Dulcet smacks Gregor across the face.
- ___ 4. Vikus suspects that Gregor's father may still be alive because he can be of service to the rats: he is a scientist.
- ___ 5. Many Underlanders believe that Gregor is the warrior in "The Prophecy of Gray" who will save the Underlanders from the rats.
- ___ 6. Gregor decides to leave Boots behind while he fights, so she will be safe.
- ___ 7. Queen Wevox, leader of the bats, gives Gregor a medal for bravery.
- ___ 8. The spider named Treflex dies and the other one, Gox, eats her remains.
- ___ 9. Gregor's father is in excellent shape, despite his captivity, and is able to lead the children in battle.
- ___ 10. Gregor bonds to Ares the bat, thus saving the bat's life.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Which character in the book did you admire the most? Why?
- 2. Summarize the events in *Gregor the Overlander*.
- 3. Compare and contrast the Underland to the Overland.
- 4. Write a new prophecy, making Boots the savior.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Quote Analysis (20 points)

Explain the significance of each of the following quotes in the novel.

1. The next thing he knew, he was falling down, down, down into empty space.
2. Several keys dangled from it. But it was the roughly braided loop of red, black, and blue leather that made Gregor's heart stop.
3. BEWARE, UNDERLANDERS, TIME HANGS BY A THREAD. THE HUNTERS ARE HUNTED, WHITE WATER RUNS RED. THE GNAWERS WILL STRIKE TO EXTINGUISH THE REST. THE HOPE OF THE HOPELESS RESIDES IN A QUEST.
4. "Fly you high, Vikus!" he yelled.
5. The man squinting up at them from the pit was so thin and weak, his attempt to stand failed.

Part II: Identification (20 points)

Briefly describe each person, place, or thing and explain why it is important in the story.

1. root beer
2. bats
3. batteries
4. the key ring
5. the Prophecy of Gray

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left. Use each name only once.

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| ___ 1. The rats who want to eat Gregor | A. Vikus |
| ___ 2. The roaches who worship Boots | B. Boots |
| ___ 3. Luxa's grandfather | C. Gregor |
| ___ 4. The evil leader of the rats | D. Temp and Tick |
| ___ 5. The Underlander traitor | E. Fangor and Shed |
| ___ 6. The 11-year-old boy who saves the Underland | F. Henry |
| ___ 7. The person Gregor's grandmother calls for | G. Queen Luxa |
| ___ 8. Vikus's wife; the chief military strategist | H. Solovet |
| ___ 9. The two-year-old girl who charms everyone | I. Simon |
| ___ 10. The silver-haired girl who is a brave and fierce warrior | J. King Gorger |

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain what function Boots serves in the novel.
2. Compare and contrast Queen Luxa and Gregor.
3. Summarize the events in *Gregor the Overlander*.
4. Write a review of the novel for the school newspaper, explaining why you would or would not recommend it for other people your age.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| Across | Down |
| 2. plausible | 1. clique |
| 5. prey | 2. pudgy |
| 6. venom | 3. arrogant |
| 7. ascent | 4. tidbit |
| 9. translucent | 8. reek |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. A |
| 2. H | 7. I |
| 3. B | 8. E |
| 4. F | 9. G |
| 5. D | 10. J |

Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. two | 6. doors |
| 2. laundry room | 7. backpack |
| 3. queen | 8. bats |
| 4. guests | 9. 1600s |
| 5. Regalia | 10. key ring |

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F |
| 2. F | 7. F |
| 3. F | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. T | 10. T |

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Quote Analysis (20 points)

1. Gregor and sister Boots plunge into the Underworld through one of its five portals, this one an air duct in a New York City apartment laundry room. The novel thus begins very similarly to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, as Gregor and Boots enter "Underland."
2. Vikus shows Gregor a key ring that he had recovered from another unwilling visitor to the Underland—Gregor's father. Once he sees the key ring, which contains a braided loop that Gregor made for his father, he understands that his father did not desert the family intentionally. Rather, like Gregor and Boots, he accidentally fell through the portal to the Underworld. This is crucial because it reaffirms Gregor's conviction that his father is a good man and sets him on his quest to rescue his father.
3. The Prophecy of Gray implies that someone from the Overworld will come to the Underworld to save them from the rats. That someone is Gregor. The prophecy gives the book even greater suspense, as readers try to figure out what each part means.
4. Gregor and the other children are terrified when Vikus leaves them alone with Ripred the rat as their guide. Vikus must do this because it is part of the prophecy. By saluting Vikus here with the traditional Underlander salutation, Gregor shows his maturity and acceptance of his role as the savior of the Underland.
5. Gregor had assumed that his father would be unchanged and capable of taking over the reigns of leadership. Just the opposite is the case: his father is ill with fever, greatly weakened, and totally unable to lead.

Part II: Identification (20 points)

1. In the beginning of the novel, Gregor tries to bring his grandmother a cold root beer, but a neighbor coming to sit with the elderly lady assumes it is for her and takes it. Later, in the Underland, Gregor impulsively brings along a can of root beer left by an Overlander who perished in the Underland. Gregor uses this to save Luxa's life when she is about to be consumed by the Queen of the Spiders by pouring it in the Queen's eye.
2. Like horses, bats serve as a means of transportation. But they are much more: they bond with their human rides, swearing to die to save their riders.
3. Gregor takes some batteries with him on the quest. On a literal level, the batteries provide light. On a symbolic level, they show the power of science to improve the world.
4. Vikus shows Gregor his father's key ring. Since Gregor made this key ring for his father, it proves that his father did not desert the family deliberately; rather, he also fell through the shaft into the Underland.
5. The Prophecy of Gray predicts that a great Overland warrior who will save the Underlanders. Vikus, and eventually a majority of the Council members, believe that Gregor is that savior. Thus his quest is launched.

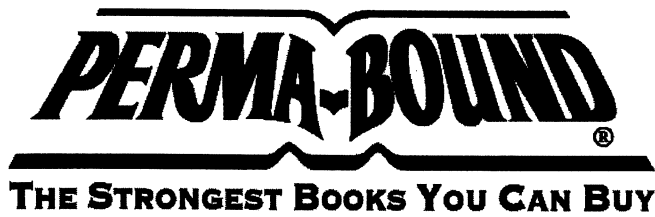
Part III: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. C |
| 2. D | 7. I |
| 3. A | 8. H |
| 4. J | 9. B |
| 5. F | 10. G |

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

Teacher's Notes



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