

Lesson Plans for *The Seems: The Glitch in Sleep*

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The Seems is a wonderful book for literature circles, paired reading, or whole-class discussion, as it is an exciting, accessible, and thought-provoking book students can read together with their peers. The book falls within the fantasy genre and is fast-paced fun with a philosophical twist, perfect for young learners. The first in a series of three books, *The Seems* engages readers ranging from fourth through eighth grade, and while the text can entice those readers who wish to pursue the entire series, the novel also stands well on its own.

As you begin reading *The Seems* in your classroom, you might want to consider the benefits of conducting a read-aloud of Chapter 0 (the first chapter). Within the chapter, two settings are introduced and the larger framework and conflict of the novel is launched. Shifting points-of-view and location with ease, this chapter teaches its readers how to read the rest of the book. You, the teacher, can help students adapt to the stylistically rich text and ensure that they comprehend the basic events by reading it with them, then utilizing and answering the questions for Chapter 0 together. This accomplished, the remainder of the text works beautifully in literature circles, paired reading, or whole-class discussion.

Also, please note that at the end of the novel there is a very helpful glossary if you or your students want to check terms and descriptions, along with drawings of the tools described throughout the book.

These plans are organized in the following way:

- a. Reading methods**
- b. Guided Reading Questions, Larger Discussion Questions, and Activities for Chapter 0**
- c. Guided Reading Questions and Larger Discussion Questions per chapter**
- d. Extension Activities for the entire book**

A. Reading Methods:

- Literature Circles:** In groups of four or five, students will work together to read and discuss the book. To ensure full participation, students are given rotating roles which will be turned in to their teacher. These roles sheets are filled out and completed prior to the group's discussion. The focus is on the discussion of the book; the roles are there to guide them. Roles include: *Discussion Director* (who asks "fat" questions), *Illustrator* (chooses one scene from the chapter to draw), *Connector* (makes personal connections, such as text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world), *Literary Luminary* (important moments in the chapter or lovely language) and *Vocabulary Enricher* (choose two or three words per chapter and define it). It is beneficial to give students a sheet that tells them their procedures for literature circles, a schedule of their chapters due and the corresponding rotating role, a form to assess the discussion, and a time for you, the teacher, to meet with the group. It helps to be greatly organized in this matter, and to provide a great deal of class time for reading and filling out role sheets. **Ensure that each child is prepared for their literature circle meeting. Partake in their discussions. Students may check their knowledge of the chapter in their groups by using the guided reading questions below for each chapter. Also, Discussion Directors may use the larger questions per chapter to enhance conversation. These questions are at times a gift for a teacher when students seem to have trouble moving their conversation forward.**
- Bookmark Technique:** Instead of role sheets, each student keeps a bookmark, a folded sheet of paper that works as a note-taking device. "*The Seems* by John Hulme and Michael Wexler" would be written at the top in small print, as would the student's name. The first page is for characters, where character names are written and traits are detailed. This allows students to follow storyline more easily, keeping them from becoming stumped by a character that was previously mentioned but whom they had forgotten. The second page is for enumerating plot summary points by bullet point, allowing you as the teacher to quickly evaluate their comprehension. The third page can be for either vocabulary words or inferences, and the final page is for larger, more general, questions (you may find one per chapter to be a good amount). The categories can, of course, be altered, depending on what skills you are working on with your students. This is a marvelous tool for literature circles to ensure students can discuss the chapters without using the designated role sheets. **Also, students may check their plot summaries and knowledge of the chapter in their groups by using the guided reading questions for each chapter. The larger questions per chapter will work to enhance group conversations.**
- Paired Reading:** In pairs, students work together, at their own pace, to read *The Seems*. **Students utilize and answer the guided reading questions and the larger discussion questions.** As the teacher, you conference with these students and discuss their answers with them.

4. **Whole Class Read:** When using *The Seems* as a whole-class novel, **you can utilize the guided reading questions and larger questions per chapter to ensure comprehension skills and to enhance classroom discussion.** The bookmark technique can also be engaged in a whole class setting.

B. Guided Reading Questions, Larger Discussion Questions, and Activities for Chapter 0

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 0

1. Why was Becker late to his mission?
2. How old is the protagonist, Becker?
3. Explain Becker's status. Is he a Fixer or a Briefer when the novel begins? Explain what it means to be a Fixer and a Briefer.
4. What is the problem that Becker and Casey are brought in to fix?
5. Becker Drane encounters a Booby Trap when he unwraps the note from the cork. What has happened, as a result of the Booby Trap, to Becker, Casey, and the drain?
6. Explain the danger of the drain being cleared. Why is that dangerous? Wasn't that the purpose of the mission, to clear the blockage in the drain?
7. What contraption does Becker devise/come up with to control the water?
8. How is Becker feeling emotionally? Is he confident? Is he terrified? Provide textual evidence.
9. Who saves Becker?
10. What are the direct results of Becker's accomplishments on this mission?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 0

1. The chapter is entitled "High Pressure." How does the theme of pressure weave through the first chapter? Who is pressured and why?
2. Explain the structure of the first chapter. Why does the novel begin in Portugal and what are the authors suggesting about the force of weather throughout the world?
3. The Tide seems to be responsible for the booby trap that almost harms the protagonist, Becker Drane. What might be a possible motivation for such illegal action?
4. What do you think is the meaning of Becker's last name?
5. What did you learn about Becker's character in this chapter? Review his actions and define his character.
6. If you were in Becker's place, what other solutions might you have devised/come up with to solve the problem?

7. How do you think you would have personally reacted if you were in Becker's situation? Would you have been as willing to die?

Activities for Chapter 0

1. Draw a picture of how you imagine Becker Drane to look. Draw a picture of Casey.
2. **Draw** the scene of Becker and Casey pulling the cork from the pipe.
3. **Draw** Becker and Casey in their scene on half your paper, and in the other half of the paper draw the village in Portugal.
4. **Enact the scene:** you need four actors per group for these roles: The father and son from Portugal, Becker, and Casey.
5. **Character Hot Seat:** place a student in the middle of a circle and ask them to be Becker. They will answer all questions as Becker. Students may ask anything they like that relates to the book, such as "Becker, how did you come up with such a neat idea out of nowhere?" Or "Do you think you could have come up with another solution?" Then switch students and have someone enact Casey.

C. Guided Reading and Larger Discussion Questions Per Chapter

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 1

1. Describe Becker Drane's life before his position in The Seems.
2. Where does Becker first learn about The Seems?
3. What sort of questionnaire does Becker fill out?
4. How much time has passed between the time Becker filled out the application and his first meeting with an employee of The Seems?
5. What sort of invitation does Nick Dejanus give Becker?
6. Identify and describe the following characters: Nick Dejanus, Amy Lannin, Fixer Blaque, and Thibadeau Freck?
7. Characterize Becker in terms of the actions he takes in this chapter.

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 1

1. Are you the type of person who would have noticed the Seemsian Aptitude Test and filled it out? Why or why not?
2. How is Becker's jump similar to Alice's jump down the rabbit hole in *Alice in Wonderland*?
3. Why do most people in The World not know about The Seems?

4. Why do you think being from The World makes one qualified to become a Fixer, to fix the problems in The Seems?
5. If you could draw your perfect world, what would it look like? Do you think your vision of the world would entitle you to be chosen as a Fixer in the Seems?
6. Explain, in your own words, what the Seems is. How is the Seems different from the The World, The Fabric of Reality, and The In-Between?
7. If you had been in Becker Drane's place, would you have jumped down that hole? Would you have left your family without any confidence that you would be able to come back?
8. What would you have thought before you jumped, if you jumped? If you didn't jump, what would your thoughts have been?
9. Why do you think the youngest of the applicants to The Seems, Thibadeau and Becker, are the first to sign up to join?

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 2

1. Why is Becker distracted in class? What is he focused on instead?
2. Once again, Becker is described as a fairly average and typical boy. Give details that evidence this.
3. What is Becker's cover story to his mom about The Seems?
4. What are the senses as described in this chapter of *The Seems*?
5. Is Becker's experience in Dr. Kole's classroom similar to or different from your own classroom experience?
6. Describe Becker's relationship to his brother, Benjamin.
7. Becker is not allowed to speak about The Seems in The World. How does Becker bend that rule with his brother, Benjamin?
8. Becker notices an issue with sleep before he is called for his mission. Give details that prove that sleep has been disrupted in Becker's town.
10. What is Becker's first assignment as Fixer and how serious is it? In your response explain the difference between a glitch in The World versus a Glitch in The Seems.

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 2

1. This novel describes a world operated by a select group of people who keep their secrets of worldly operation from everyone else. What sort of higher power does this speak to? Who created The Seems? Where did this large factory that operates the world come from?
2. If the sun is shining, and there's a breeze in the air, according to this novel that effect does not come as a result of nature and the natural world. Everything is mechanized and operated by people. How would that make you feel? If The Seems truly existed as a reality, would you miss the idea of nature and the natural world?

3. Why do you think that The Seems is kept a secret from people, with the exception of Fixers who are needed in that other world? Why not tell all people about the world and its controls?
4. Do you ever wonder if you too, just like Becker, will one day discover that the world is not what you thought it was?
5. Why do they call the other side of the world, the operational world, The Seems? What does that name suggest?
6. If The World is human-controlled, why is there death in The World? This question is brought up by the death of Amy Lannin which we learn about in Chapter 2.
7. In Chapter 2 there is a reference to the Plan and how no one can see into the heart of it. Who do you think controls The Seems and what is their ultimate reason for doing so? Do you think the Plan is for good or bad?
8. Have you ever been distracted in class because you were worried or excited about something else that was happening in your life?
9. Have you ever felt that you were in over your head? That you had more responsibility than you could handle? How do you respond under pressure? How might Becker respond?

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 3

1. What is the Me-2 and how does Becker utilize it when he leaves for his mission?
2. What further evidence does Becker witness in his town that supports that there truly is a Glitch in Sleep?
3. What is the Skeleton Key proposal, and why does Becker wish it had passed as he heads off to report for duty?
4. Describe Simly Alomonous Frye, Becker's Briefer.
5. Explain how sleep is normally packaged by the Department of Sleep for individuals in The World.
6. Explain Slippage and Chain of Events in terms of the Glitch in Sleep. How is this mission complicated beyond the single problem of people not being able to sleep? If people can't sleep, then what might happen?
7. What prompts Becker to recall his days as a Fixer?
8. Who was Jayson and what were his famous words?
9. What is a Ripple Effect?
10. Whose story does Becker focus on in The World to motivate him, and what is her story?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 3

1. Do you think the Tide is behind this Glitch in Sleep? Is there any evidence in the text either way?
2. The idea of interconnectedness is a significant one. If one can't sleep, one might do something unplanned-for that would change the course of one's planned-for life. Do you believe that your own life has all these connections, that if you do one thing on Monday, it might affect your life

on Tuesday or your life in five years? This is also known as the Butterfly Effect—if you want to look it up for class, it could be a very fruitful discussion.

3. The idea of Chain of Events brings up a huge question. If the people in *The World's* events are being controlled by Chain of Events, then do people in *The World* have free will or are they merely controlled by the Plan and by Chain of Events?
4. Give a couple of details that demonstrate that Thibadeau Freck and Becker were friends.
5. There is a reference to Blaque's having to retire and thus not being able to receive the Torch. What do you think happened to force Blaque's retirement?
6. What is a flashback in literature, and what purpose does the flashback serve for Becker? What does he learn from it?
7. What do you think it means "to find the mission *inside* the mission" and how will that advice help Becker with his mission? Who specifically does Becker focus on to be his mission inside the mission, what is her problem, and how can Becker help her?

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 4

1. Describe the Department of Sleep.
2. What is the difference between a Glitch and a Foible, as described on page 84?
3. What are the key ingredients that make up Sleep?
4. The Snoozemaster and the Johnny Z both concoct Sleep for *The World*. Explain their jobs and how they help people sleep.
5. What problem does Becker reveal in the radio station?
6. Discuss the 7th sense and how Becker uses it to help him find the Glitch.

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 4

1. Who is Simly's grandfather, and how might that affect Simly's ambition?
2. What is Simly's aspiration and why is it difficult/nearly impossible for him to achieve it?
3. Do you think choosing a smaller focus within a larger task, rather than focusing on the enormity of the entire task at hand, can be a useful skill? How can this approach help you in life?
4. Do you think what you focus on in life will be the same as what your friend chooses to focus on?
5. When Becker says to Simly that he can fix for the man while he can fix for the girl, what does Becker mean?

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 5

1. What is the purpose of the flashback at the beginning of the chapter? What does it reveal about Thibadeau and Becker's relationship?
2. In the second flashback in this chapter, Becker is told of Thibadeau's death. Why did everyone think Thibadeau was dead when he was not?
3. What is Thibadeau's reason for joining *The Tide*?

4. In this chapter, despite their differences, Thibadeau gives Becker information. What is it?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 5

1. When Thibadeau questions the Plan and asks "...do you ever think that maybe they could have done a better job?" what does he mean? What is Thibadeau's implied critique of the Plan? Have you ever felt that way about the world?
2. Do you think Thibadeau is all bad, partly bad, or not bad at all?
3. When Thibadeau explains that The Tide doesn't want to destroy The World but want to save it, what does he mean?
4. Explore Becker's philosophy of The Seems versus Thibadeau's. How do each relate to the idea of the Plan?
5. Thibadeau seems to want to create a perfect world without suffering but is willing to inflict harm and suffering to accomplish that end. Would you consider such an approach acceptable if the end result was a perfect world? Do you believe that The Tide would be capable of making a perfect world? Is there such a thing as perfect?
6. Why do you think Thibadeau gives Becker the clue to locating the Glitch if they are now on opposite sides?

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 6

1. How does the Me-2 cover for Becker when he is in The Seems? How human does the Me-2 seem?
2. Discuss Anatoly from Russia, Dilara from Turkey, and Jennifer from Toronto. What do they all have in common and how do their situations connect to Becker Drane's?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 6

1. Of the three, whom do you most relate to and worry about: Anatoly, Dilara, or Jennifer? What is it about their situation that concerns you and why do you feel most connected to them?
2. How is the pressure mounting for Becker?

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 7

1. Why does Becker decide to go up to the Dreamatorium by himself, without Simly?
2. What is the importance of Dawn and Chain of Events in The Seems?
3. What does Becker view within the bubbles of the Dreamatorium?
4. Describe a couple of the dreams Becker views in the bubbles.
5. Why does Becker not call for backup once he loses radio reception?

6. Why does Becker pop the black Dream bubble housing the dream of Jennifer Kaley, and how is that against the rules?
7. Where does the explosion from the Dream bubble send Becker?
8. Describe the three Tireless Workers who design nightmares.
9. What does Simly attempt to do in order to help Becker, and why is his request for help denied?
10. How do the Bed Bugs torture Becker?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 7

1. Do you think Becker made the right decision to go leave Simly behind?
2. Did Simly make the correct decision not to ask for help, to deny the need for backup?

Note that Becker wants to “play it by the book” which means follow the rules precisely, which is why he does not override Simly’s lower status to bring him with him to the Dreamatorium. Simly also follows the rules closely, when he listens to the dispatcher deny him access to Becker after the blast from the burst bubble. Later this will become ironic; explain.

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 8

1. Explain Becker’s fears of the Ripple Effect and how they manifest in this chapter.
2. The bulk of the chapter is comprised of the Glitch winning. Does it really win, or is this simply a nightmare that the Bed Bugs gave to Becker?
3. Who rescues Becker from the Bed Bugs and what tool did he use to accomplish the rescue?
4. Wasn’t Simly denied permission to go into the Dreamatorium sphere? Thus, Simly broke the rules. Are there consequences to his action?
5. Explain the Snorchestra.
6. How do Becker and Simly disrupt the Snorchestra, and what are the consequences of their actions?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 8

1. What did you think of the structure of this chapter? Were you terrified that the Ripple Effect had indeed occurred? Were you relieved to learn it was only a nightmare? Did the structure of the chapter increase the tension of the story?
2. Did you agree with Simly’s breaking of the rules to rescue Becker? What might have happened to Becker, the Glitch, and The Ripple Effect, if Simly had not done so?
3. Do you consider Simly a hero of sorts?

4. When Becker is suspended from duty for a violation, is the violation primarily in response to Simly's actions, the disruption of the Snorchestra, or Becker having burst Jennifer's dream bubble? Or is it equally a combination of all of these?

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 9

1. Dominic Dozenski, the administrator of the Department of Sleep, explains that Becker broke the Rule of Thumb and that is why he has been suspended from duty. Explain the Rule of Thumb.
2. Who is called in to help Becker and Simly with the mission?
3. In Becker's flashback he remembers Fixer Blaque's story about a mission to the Middle of Nowhere. What does Fixer Blaque bring back from there and why does this story matter to Becker?
4. What is a Glimmer of Hope, who gave it to Becker, and how does it help Becker when he is most desperate?
5. Who stands up for Becker when Dominic tells him he's off the job?
6. How is a Glimmer of Hope activated by Becker?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 9

1. Dominic Dozenski explains that had Becker had enough faith in the Plan, he would not have burst Jennifer's dream, though it looked like a nightmare. Do you think that Becker is losing faith in the Plan? Do you agree with Dominic that Becker should have trusted the Plan?
2. Why do you think the Plan allows bad things like death, war, and sickness to happen?
3. When you watch the news and see a story about something terrible happening in the world, like an earthquake or a tsunami, what thoughts and feelings about the world do you have?

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 10

1. Where is the Glitch, and how did Becker learn of its location?
2. How is Simly finally successful in activating his 7th sense, and how does his 7th sense help the process of locating the Glitch?
3. Describe the scene Becker sees in the Sleep Control Center. What has happened to the workers?
4. What tools were utilized to access the Glitch?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 10

1. Characterize Becker's actions in this chapter. Is he brave, scared, angry, calm? Give evidence to support your claim.
2. How do you suppose that the Glitch got into such a high security area? Do you suspect that there are people who work for the Department of Sleep who are also part of The Tide?

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 11

1. Describe the Glitch, and state whether such a description surprised you. Did you expect the Glitch to be a computer problem rather than a personified being?
2. What was Clean Sweep and what is its connection to the Glitch?
3. What is the Glitch's goal? What does it wish to destroy, and why does it wish to destroy it?
4. How is the Glitch finally caught, by whom, and with what tool?
5. Once the Glitch is caught, Becker and his friends have only a short time to save The World. What is it they have to do, and do they do it?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 11

1. Do you think someone is controlling the Glitch? For what purpose? Do you think it is linked into the Tide or the Plan?
2. Who do you most give credit to for the Ripple Effect having been averted and the Glitch in Sleep being fixed? Could Becker have done it alone, and what would have happened to The World if Becker hadn't been a briefer?
3. Define Thibadeau's relationship to Becker and how he felt at his friend's success in his mission.
4. How is it that Thibadeau, Becker's old friend, will soon become his enemy?

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 12

1. What will they do with the Glitch now that he is caught?
2. What does Becker do to help Jennifer?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 12

1. In arguing with the Glitch, Casey states that the Plan allows for free will. Explain what she means.
2. What do you think lies at the heart of the Plan? Do you think whatever lies at the heart of the Plan is good like Becker and Fixer Blaque? Why or why not?

3. In this book there is a message that the world isn't what you think it is. What do you think of that message? Do you agree, that there is a lot beneath the surface, deep controls and ideas we don't yet understand, or do you believe that our world is very much as it appears to be? Explain your reasoning.

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 14³⁰

1. How did the Court of Public Opinion rule regarding the charges against Becker, and what, in the end, do they give him?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading Chapter 14³⁰

1. Explain the motto of the Fixers and Briefers. "Fix to Live. Live to Fix."
2. Simly references his grandfather aging. Does that mean that there is aging in The Seems? Is there death, too? Similar to the question of why there is death and pain in The World, why too would there be age, death, or pain in The Seems?
3. Does Jennifer end up remembering more of her dream of The Seems than she was supposed to? When she finds her necklace, which confirms in her mind the true existence of The Seems, does that open her up to a future in The Seems? Do you think she will return in another book in the series where she will truly enter The Seems, or will she always just hold with her this subtle understanding that there is more to the world than she understands?

Guided Reading Questions for the Epilogue

1. While the Glitch in Sleep was being handled, what was stolen?
2. What might happen as a result of the theft?
3. Who do you think stole it?

Larger Discussion Questions to be answered after reading the Epilogue

1. Do you expect that the theft will result in Becker's next mission?
2. How has Becker changed as a result of this first mission?
3. Do you fear that Becker's success in "The Glitch in Sleep" will make him overconfident in his next mission, or will it merely give him more confidence?
4. Do you think that Becker will see Jennifer again?
5. Discuss the definition of a hero. Is Becker a hero?

D. Extension Activities:

1. Drawing:

- A. Draw a map of how you envision the town of Highland Park. The café, Grant Avenue, the closed lighting factory, etc. Label important locations.
- B. Draw a building from your hometown that you could feature in a story you write. This building will house a portal from this world to another imaginary world.
- C. Draw your own map of The World, The Fabric of Reality, and The In-Between.
- D. Draw Becker going through the In Between on his way to report for service in The Seems. Be sure to include his goggles, and surround him with what he sees while being transported.
- E. Draw the Department of Sleep as described on page 84.
- F. Draw the dreamatorium and place inside of it your own dreams, or dreams you might like to have.
- G. It states that “the Drowsenheim was arrayed like a Russian Tea Doll...” to explain the structure of the Drowsenheim. Draw the structure as you picture it from the description in the text.
- H. Draw your favorite moment from the battle scene with the Glitch.
- I. Draw the scene of Becker taking Jennifer through The Seems.

2. **Enacting Scenes-** have students enact scenes they either love, or need further clarification on, for the class. If there’s a scene giving some students trouble, have those students who understand the scene already act in the scene.
3. **Character Hot Seat-** have students “be” the character (such as Becker) and have the class ask questions of that character. The student answers from the point of view of the character. This exercise will highlight the various motivations and facets of character in this book and is a deeply engaging way to teach point of view.
4. **Tool Creation**—design and create a new tool that could help Becker in The Seems. Draw it and explain its purpose. Try to write it like it might be written in the book, if it had been.
5. **Storyboard**—write your own mission for Becker. What has gone wrong? What does he have to do to fix it? Who will help him?
6. **Book jacket**—design your own book jacket with a description of a new mission of Becker’s which you have already storyboarded. Create a new motto for his new mission.
7. **Choose four locations in your hometown and create a story** that uses all four locations.
8. **Newspapers**—Create classroom newspapers; one from The Seems, one from the Plan’s point of view and one from the Tide’s point of view. Editorialize, or write, from the point of view of a tabloid newspaper in The World which has discovered The Seems. Remember, the humor is that no-one will really believe it; try to tease out that irony in your language.
9. **Debate**—Have half the class prepare to debate the benefits of the Plan and half the class prepare to debate the benefits of The Tide. Have a class come in that has not yet read the book and allow them to be the jury. Be organized and prepare the arguments in advance. Allow for witnesses, lawyers, a judge, and cross-examination.