
Anna, Analyst Study Guide

Prepared by Anne Hodgson, B.A. English, Dip. Ed.

Introduction

This study guide for Patti Edgar’s novel *Anna, Analyst (Yellow Dog/Great Plains)* is intended as a resource for teachers, librarians, homeschool students, and parents. Suggested use is for in-depth study for individual readers, novel study groups, and whole class read aloud novel study. The questions and activities are suitable for students from grades three to six. Through rich discussion questions, writing activities, and projects, the guide will engage students in their reading and inspire critical thinking; making inferences, predictions, comparisons, and connections. The study guide provides curriculum links and different entry points making the novel accessible for a variety of learners and learning styles. Questions and activities can be chosen to meet the needs of the students and teacher.

The Study Guide is divided into four parts:

- A. **Getting Started** – pre reading questions and activities
- B. **Chapter Questions** – for discussion and writing; developing comprehension
- C. **Post Reading Questions** – reflections on the novel
- D. **Related Activities**
 - Student self-directed for homeschool students
 - Group Activities
 - Extending ideas through projects

This study guide was supported by Calgary Arts Development and Calgary Arts Foundation through an anonymous donation to Edmonton Community Foundation.



A. Getting Started

1. Show the book cover and ask students to predict what the book will be about. Read and discuss the synopsis on the back, asking students for further predictions and what they think they might learn.

2. Examine the title, '*Anna, Analyst.*' Ask students what they think analyst means. Who is an analyst? What does it mean to analyze? What does the title tell you?

3. Ask students what they think graphology means. Offer a hint: *grapho* means 'to write.' *Logos* means 'a theory.' A pre-reading activity may include briefly researching graphology and trying out some cursive writing.

B. Chapter Questions

Chapter One – A History of Graphology

1. Anna's mother slipped a note into her backpack. What did it say? How does it relate to, "Like my tortoiseshells, Nachos and Salsa, I preferred the comforts of a familiar shell"? (Page 7) How is Anna's statement supported by the conversations she has with Lana and Evan?

2. Why do you think Lana wearing mascara bothered Anna? What did it represent?

3. According to "*The Guide to Graphology*," Ms. Kozak's wide loop of her 'C' indicates wastefulness. How does the author demonstrate this might be true in Anna's eyes.

4. What did you learn about Anna, Lana, and Evan in the chapter?

Chapter Two – Changing Elements in Handwriting

1. What does it mean to be ‘over the top’? (Page 17) How does this apply to the principal?
2. Find examples of description that show how the author infused humour into this chapter.
3. How is Anna feeling about herself?
4. Lana said, “Change can be good.” (Page 15) Do you agree or disagree?

Chapter Three – The Basic Tendencies

1. What did you learn about Anna’s tortoises in this chapter? What do you think their ‘old lady’ names might have been?
2. How did Anna compare her father to the tortoises? Do you think people look like their pets or like animals?
3. Why do you think Anna wants to analyze Lana’s handwriting?
4. Predict what her ‘sneaky way to get a sample’ might be.

Chapter Four – Acquiring a Specimen

1. “The next day spit summer rain...” (Page 23) This is an example of what kind of figurative language? How does it add to the mood at the beginning of the chapter?
2. What new traits do we learn about Anna and Lana’s personalities in this chapter?

3. What do you think Anna's 'personal touches' are in the contract? How do they add humour? How would you react if you were the dog owner?

Chapter Five – Working Out an Analysis

1. "My parents had always kept their spotlight shining hot on me." (Page 28) What does Anna mean?

2. What emotions did you feel as you read this chapter?

3. How did Anna's written analysis of Lana's handwriting relate to their phone call?

4. Why did Anna have "a little ball of guilt" forming in her chest?

Chapter Six – Signs, Symbols, and Gestures

1. Why do you think Lana says, "Nachos could sure use a break from Salsa"? (Page 38) How does it relate to the title of this chapter? Find words and phrases that show tension between Anna and Lana.

2. What are Anna's fears about middle school? (If readers are soon to move from elementary to middle school or junior high, they could share their personal fears, thoughts, and feelings.)

3. Anna compares and relates things to her tortoises. How have we seen this so far in the novel? Find examples in this chapter.

4. Why do you think Anna so desperately wants Lana to hold one of the tortoises?

Chapter Seven – The Graphologist’s Approach

1. How did Anna apply the information she learned from the graphology book to list making?
2. Why do you think Maddison is at the top of Anna’s list of people to analyze?
3. “Maybe I could buy the shimmery blue shirt.....maybe something else that would keep Lana close.” (Page 44) If you could talk to Anna right now, what would you say to her?

Chapter Eight – Common Challenges Encountered

1. How does the reader know Charlie the dog gets car sick before it is actually stated? Why is this a good example of ‘showing not telling’?
2. How does the author explain the word ‘eviscerates’ to the reader? (Page 47)
3. “But I didn’t feel sorry for Lana at all.” (Page 48) Why doesn’t Anna feel sorry for her?
4. If you were Anna, how would you feel at the end of the phone call?
5. Do you think Lana meant to hurt Anna? Why or why not?

Chapter Nine – Simplifications and Complications

1. “I knew it! What a waste of time learning cursive in school.” (Page 51) Do you agree? What is your opinion of cursive writing?
2. Use a dictionary to find the meaning of ‘pangram.’ Why was Evan not impressed by Anna?

-
3. Evan tells Anna, “You’re not that insightful.” (Page 55) What do you think he means by this?
 4. Why was the handwriting analysis business not going well?
 5. What did Charlie do at the end of the chapter? How do you think Anna will handle it?

Chapter Ten – The Writer’s Degree of Attention

1. “It was like an audition for a starring role in the play.” (Page 59) What do you think Anna means by this? Why do you think the author describes cleaning up after Charlie in such detail?
2. What do we know about Mrs. DeJong from this chapter? Find two things she says or does that give you a sense of her character.
3. If you were Anna, would you have forgiven Lana? What do you predict will happen at the pool?
4. Anna’s dad says, “You’re just a kid and you can’t be expected to look after them properly. Your mom and I need to make an adult decision on your behalf.” (Page 61) Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think Anna agreed to meet her father’s old roommate?

Chapter Eleven – Common Misconceptions Facing the Graphologist

1. What is ‘brown gold’? (Page 64) Why is it described this way?

2. How does the description of Anna and Lana at the pool show their differences and how things have changed? Give examples.

3. Why does Anna feel ignored and annoyed? What simile does she use to describe seeing Lana with Harlow? If you were in Anna's position, how would you feel? How would you handle the situation?

4. What does Anna mean, "I'd wanted her to feel hurt, but I hadn't expected it to hurt me too"? (Page 71)

5. What is Anna's plan? Do you think it will work?

Chapter Twelve – Deviations and Peculiarities

1. Hyperbole is a figure of speech meaning exaggeration. Find examples in the chapter where Anna uses hyperbole? What does this do to the narration and the description of the farm?

2. Anna's father calls her melodramatic. What does that mean? Do you agree with him? Support your opinion with examples from the chapter.

3. How was Lana trying to reason with Anna? What feelings do you think the girls have at that moment?

Chapter Thirteen – Crossing T's and Dotting I's

1. What does Anna mean when she says, "I felt really stupid, like I'd picked at a scab myself"? (Page 81)

2. What does the idiom, 'get back on the horse' mean? What is Anna telling Evan he has to do?

3. Why do you think Anna doesn't always follow through with her promises? Will she help Evan fix his bike?

4. What is the meaning of 'crossing T's and dotting I's'? Why is it a good title for this chapter?

Chapter 14 – Individual Variations

1. If you analyzed Anna's handwriting right now, what would you say?

2. "I expected carnage." (Page 87) What did Anna think she might see? Was she right?

3. What does Anna mean by, "Charlie was an all-access backstage pass to freedom" (page 88)? This is an example of what kind of figurative language? Find other examples of description and language that adds to the humour in this chapter.

4. Why did she feel torn and didn't know what to do about the note?

Chapter Fifteen – Form and Degree of Connection

1. What did Anna and Maddison discover about the letter? Do you have any predictions about who might have written it?

2. Why do you think Maddison reacts differently towards Anna than the other characters in the book?

3. What does 'capricious' mean? Find the definition in a dictionary. How did Anna try to disguise the meaning? Why would she do this?

Chapter Sixteen – The Natural Basis of Personality

1. What is the irony in Anna thinking Lana is an irresponsible pet owner?
2. What made Anna's heart sink?

Chapter Seventeen – Gifts and Inclinations

1. Anna watches a few videos and is able to put on the bicycle tire. Do you think you would be able to do that? How does it make Anna feel about herself?
2. What simile does Anna use to describe how she feels as she tests out the bike trailer?
3. What changes do we see in Anna in this chapter? Give specific examples of what she does, thinks, and says that show why and how she is changing?
4. How can you tell Anna's mom is a caring, empathetic person?
5. What is the mystery?

Chapter Eighteen – Signs of Forgery

1. How did Anna discover who wrote the note? Were you surprised?
2. Place yourself in the story. How would you react? What would you do?

Chapter Nineteen – Mastery of Analysis

1. Anna confronts Lana. Describe how the dialogue between them builds. What ends up happening?

2. Examine the author's style when she describes Anna's search for Nachos. How does she create tension?

3. How do you think Anna's parents will react when they find out what's been going on and that she has not always been truthful?

Chapter Twenty – Graphological Exercises

1. Do you think the analysis Anna did of her own writing was accurate? Give examples from the story to support your opinion.

2. Why did Anna's father give her a new tortoise idiom, "Travel at your own pace, you'll always arrive"? (Page 124) What does this mean to you?

3. What finally made Anna realize she has made mistakes and has to be more responsible?

4. Anna's mother says, "People are complex. We need to try our best every day. We're all still learning." (Page 127) Do you think this is good advice for Anna? Explain why.

Chapter Twenty-One – Practical Applications of Graphology

1. Anna says, "I felt I had to say sorry too, but it was hard." (Page 131) Have you ever felt this way?

2. Why did the person write the note about the lost dog? What were they trying to tell Anna?

3. What does Anna realize in this chapter?

C. Post Reading Questions

1. What do you think will happen to Anna, Lana, Evan, and Maddison when they go to middle school? What are your hopes for them?
2. Conflict makes a story interesting. It arises from how a character responds to a situation. Conflict for the protagonist, the main character, can arise from a) another character b) conflict within him/herself c) conflict from an outside source such as society or nature. Think of examples of conflict in *Anna, Analyst*.
3. The author chose to write *Anna, Analyst* in first person point of view. In what ways did this strengthen the story? Give examples.
4. A 'character arc' is when a character goes through changes as the story progresses. It brings complexity to the characters and makes them more interesting. How did Anna's experiences and other characters in the novel help create her character arc?
5. In the end, Anna discovers her graphology book gives two sides of a personality. Do you think people have two sides? Explain your ideas.
6. What messages do you think the author wants us to take away from the book?

D. Related Activities

STUDENT SELF DIRECTED

IDEAGRAM

Create a visual display that represents a theme in the novel. Include a collection of quotes, personal responses, words, phrases, pictures, and drawings. You may find materials in magazines, create them by hand or digitally. Your ideagram may take the form of a collage or creative poster. *English Language Arts, Art, Health and Life Skills*

A PERSUASIVE LETTER

Choose a character from the story. Write a letter from that character to someone you know – a friend, someone in your family, a teacher, convincing that person they should read the novel. Include persuasive reasons why. Have your character share about themselves and their life. *English Language Arts, Creative Writing*

THE SETTING IN ART

Pick one setting from the story. Reread descriptions of it in the novel. Create a detailed drawing of the setting using watercolours, pencil crayons, markers, and/or pastels. Write two well-organized paragraphs to accompany your art piece: 1. Describing the setting in detail. 2. Telling how and why this setting was important in the story. *English Language Arts, Art*

WRITTEN BOOK REPORT

Write a formal book report. Include the following:

- a. Introduction – title, author, genre, background information
- b. Plot synopsis – What was the book about? What were the main events?
- c. Setting – What were the main settings and how were they important to the story?
- d. Main characters – Give detailed descriptions. How did they change over the course of the novel? What were their character arcs?
- e. Secondary Characters – Tell who they are and why they were necessary in the story
- f. Your opinion/review of the novel

English Language Arts

DIAMANTE POETRY

Compare characters or topics related to the novel in a diamante poem: Lana / Anna, tortoises / dogs, friendship / enemies, etc.

Line 1 – name of the character, object or concept

Line 2 – two adjectives describing it

Line 3 – 3 participles for the subject

Line 4 – 4 nouns: 2 describing the subject, 2 describing the opposite

Line 5 – 3 participles describing the opposite

Line 6 – 2 adjectives describing the opposite

Line 7 – one noun, the opposite

English Language Arts

CREATE A BOOKMARK

Make a personal bookmark related to the novel. On one side, write the title and author. Your bookmark can include characters, settings, important objects in the story, themes, or an illustration of a particular scene in the story. On the reverse side write a short synopsis of the story or make a collage of interesting words and phrases taken from the novel. Pay close attention to spacing, font selection, and background. *English Language Arts, Art*

WRITE A FORMAL ESSAY

The author said in an interview, “Change while it can be difficult, can also make life richer.” Do you agree or disagree? Cite examples from the novel and your own life to support your opinion. Include an opening thesis statement, middle paragraphs with examples, and a closing summary paragraph. *English Language Arts*

RESEARCH HERMANN’S TORTOISES

Organize your notes into categories – habitat, food, appearance, offspring, enemies, habits, fun facts. Present your information in a research paper written by a renown scientist. Include a detailed diagram of a Hermann’s tortoise. You may write a short paragraph giving information about the ‘scientist.’ *English Language Arts, Science*

DEAR ABBY

You are an advice columnist. One of the characters from the novel has written to you for help. Write a letter from the character explaining the problem. Then write a response giving advice. *English Language Arts, Health and Life Skills*

CREATE A COMIC STRIP

Choose a scene from the story that you particularly enjoyed. Create a comic strip depicting the scene. Divide a sheet of paper into squares to create individual frames. Draw what happened, in sequence, including the characters, speech bubbles, and a short sentence at the bottom of the frame to explain what is happening. *English Language Arts, Art*

BE A STAR!

You are an academy award winning actor. *Anna, Analyst* is being made into a movie. You are given the choice to play any character. Which character would you choose to be and why? Write a letter or record a monologue to the director explaining what you know about the character and why you would be perfect for this role. *English Language Arts, Creative Writing, Drama*

CONNECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Reflect and write short paragraphs answering the following questions:

- a) What did you think the book was going to be about before reading it?
- b) 'Text to me.' - What event in your own life does the book remind you of?
- c) 'Text to text' - Did the story or characters remind you of any other novel you have read? How were they similar?
- d) 'Text to the world.' - Does the book make you think of anything that is happening or has happened around you?
- e) Was your original prediction of what the book was going to be about correct? In what ways?

English Language Arts

GROUP ACTIVITIES

TALK SHOW

In groups of two to four, have students pick characters from the novel. Explore questions to ask the characters and what responses they might give. Students record the questions and answers, and write a script they will present as a ‘Talk Show’ to the class. One student will act as the talk show host while the others take the role of characters. During the presentation questions may also be posed by the ‘audience.’ *English Language Arts, Drama*

DEBATE TIME!

Conduct a formal debate. Divide the class into teams to debate the following topics:

- a) Students should learn handwriting.
- b) Graphology is a valid science.
- c) Children should be given responsibilities.
- d) Parents should not make adult decisions on their children’s behalf.
- e) Change makes life richer.

English Language Arts, Health and Life Skills, Science, Drama

MEET A CHARACTER

Have students choose a character from the novel and write a monologue from that character’s point of view. Include an introduction of who they are, their background, likes and dislikes, their experiences, and hopes and dreams. They should relate events that happened to the character in the novel. Students will perform their monologue to the class and take questions from classmates. They may dress up as their character if they wish. *English Language Arts, Creative Writing, Drama*

A STUDY OF FRIENDSHIPS

Have students work in pairs to study the friendship and relationship between two of the following four characters; Anna, Lana, Evan, and Maddison. Students present their findings in journal entries from the point of view of the characters or as an exchange of letters. *English Language Arts, Creative writing, Health and Life Skills*

HANGING IN THE BALANCE

With a partner or in a group of three, students make a mobile that exemplifies the novel. They should include themes, characters, symbols, objects, and representations. *English Language Arts, Art, Health and Life Skills*

DRAMATIZE A SCENE

Ask students to dramatize a scene from the novel they think is particularly interesting, moving, important, or memorable. This could be presented as a Reader's Theatre or short play, live or digitally recorded. Students present their scene and share why they chose it.

Alternative: Divide students into groups. Give each group a segment of the story to dramatize. Allow rehearsal time. Have students act out their segment in the correct sequence. *English Language Arts, Drama*

ROUND ROBIN

Divide the class into groups of four to six students. Give each group a large paper divided into sections. Each section has a heading. *Suggested headings:*

- most humorous moment
- 3 adjectives describing Anna
- a new word I learned
- best sentence in the novel
- what I learned about friendship.
- 3 adjectives describing Lana

Each student in the group starts with a different section and fills out the category. When everyone is finished filling out their category, they rotate the paper, read what their classmate wrote, and write a new entry.

Continue rotating until each student has had a chance to write in every section. Students should have a copy of the novel they can skim.

As a whole class, students can share and compare. *English Language Arts, Health and Life Skills*

EXPLORE THE AUTHOR'S STYLE

Divide the class into small groups. Each group has a different area of focus. For example: humour, interesting vocabulary, similes and metaphors, dialogue, strong verbs, effective description. Each group finds examples in the novel and discusses how they made *Anna, Analyst* effective and enjoyable. Students may present their findings to the class for larger discussion. *English Language Arts*

TALENT SHOW

With a partner or in a group, students create and perform a song or rap about one of the following as it relates to the novel:

- Friends
- Change
- Pet ownership
- Responsibility

English Language Arts, Music, Health and Life Skills

20 QUESTIONS

Divide the class into teams. Each team chooses a set number of vocabulary words from *Anna, Analyst*. Alternatively, the vocabulary can be chosen by the teacher. The teacher or team gives a card to a member of the opposite team. Students on the member's team must guess the word. They can ask up to 20 questions that require only a yes or no answer. Pictionary can also be played using phrases, idioms, or figurative language from the novel. *English Language Arts*

EXTENDING IDEAS/PROJECT WORK

A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

Discuss how the book is written in first person point of view and told from Anna's perspective. Explore looking at the story through a different person's lens. Have students choose a scene from the novel and rewrite it in first person point of view from the perspective of a different character. *English Language Arts*

EXPLORING HUMOUR

Discuss with students the benefits of infusing humour in a novel. Ask students to look for examples in *Anna, Analyst*. How did the author create humour? Consider dialogue, thoughts of the character, and description. Students can choose a humorous scene from the novel and create a cartoon version. *English Language Arts, Art*

RELATED RESEARCH

Have students choose a topic to research. Suggested topics:

- The History of Graphology
- Graphology Used as Forensic Evidence
- Hermann's Tortoises
- Anime Films

After researching their topic from a variety of sources and taking notes, students will compile their information. They may present their findings in a documentary, written report, visual presentation on a trifold, or as a renown professor or professional forensic detective giving a lecture to the class. *English Language Arts, Science, Art, Drama*

THEME MUSEUM

Students create a 'museum' related to the novel and the theme of friendship. Discuss what 'artefacts' they would put in the museum. After planning out what their museum will look like, students may create a map on paper, put together a museum guidebook, or organize an actual display. *English Language Art, Art, Health and Life Skills*

BUILD THE SETTING

Have students choose a setting from the novel. Reread the author's descriptions. Using any materials they wish (plasticine, clay, found objects) students will build a model of the setting. This may be done in a shoebox or on a board. Students will write three short paragraphs to accompany their model. a) Describe the setting in your own words. b) What happens in this setting in relation to the story? c) Tell why the setting you have chosen is important in the novel. *English Language Arts, Art*

CREATE AN ANNA, ANALYST GAMEBOARD

Students may work individually, with a partner, or in a group to create a gameboard based on the novel, *Anna, Analyst*. Ask students to trace the character's journey from the beginning of the book to the end. Attention should be paid to ensure they know the object, the rules, how to win, when and how the game is over. Students can think of creative and fun ways to incorporate events that happened in the story, characters, and themes. They should include a game board, game pieces, cards, spinner or dice. *English Language Arts, Health and Life Skills, Art*

CHAPTER ART

Assign a chapter to each student or pair of students, depending on the class size. After rereading the chapter, students will draw a picture or scene that captures the most important idea or theme in that specific chapter. A variety of art mediums can be used, such as watercolour, pencil crayons, or plasticine in the style of Barbara Reid. *English Language Arts, Art*

BECOME A GRAPHOLOGIST

Students research graphology and handwriting analysis. Ask them to record writing styles and related personality traits. The next step is to collect writing samples. Teachers or family members make good subjects! After taking notes, and close observation, students will write up an analysis of their subject's handwriting and personality according to graphology. *English Language Arts, Science, Creative Writing*

THE PERFECT PET!

The author said in an interview, “Tortoises are perfect for Anna because, like her, they prefer the cozy shell and may take a little while longer to arrive at their destination.” Have students write reflections using the following questions:

- a) Give examples of times or ways Anna preferred the “comforts of her cozy shell.”
- b) What was Anna’s destination in the book? Why did it take her longer to get there?
- c) Write what animal would be perfect for you and why? Remember to think metaphorically as well as literally.
- d) You are a pet store owner. Write advertisements for a variety of animals telling why they would be perfect for different types of pet owners. Think of the characteristics and traits of the animal and how they could relate to an owner’s traits or personality.

English Language Arts, Creative Writing

WRITE THE SEQUEL

Have students summarize the ending of the story in their own words. Discuss what they think might happen next. Brainstorm ideas. Ask students to write a story sequel. They might want to create a new problem that Anna has to deal with. *English Language Arts, Creative Writing*

YOU’RE IN THE STORY!

Have students write a scene adding themselves to the story. Before they begin, have them think about the following; Who would they be friends with? How do they fit into the story? What do they do? What difference do they make to the story? *English Language Arts, Creative Writing*

BECOME A MOVIE CRITIC

As a class, students watch a Japanese anime movie. After viewing, students will write two, one page critiques of the film – one through Anna’s eyes and one through Lana or Harlow’s eyes. *English Language Arts*

ANALYZE A CHARACTER

Students will complete a 'character analysis' of one of the characters in the novel. Have students put their analysis in writing using clear paragraphs. Prompt them with the following questions: What did the character do in the story? What do you like about this character? What do you dislike about them? How does the character react to others? What is unique about this character? Does the character change throughout the story? How? Can you think of a character from another novel, or a movie, who they are like? Do you know anyone in your own life who reminds you of this character? How are they similar? *English Language Arts*

VOCABULARY EXPLORED THROUGH POETRY

Students write a poem using words and phrases from the *Anna, Analyst*. Brainstorm ideas for themes. Have students skim the novel and select vocabulary and phrases that relate to their chosen theme. Encourage students to arrange the vocabulary in a way that creates a rhythm and flow. *English Language Arts, Poetry*

A NOVEL STUDY BOOKLET (to be used while reading the novel)

Students make their booklet prior to beginning the novel. This can be done simply, using 6 to 8 pieces of blank legal sized paper, folded and stapled. Students are given a written guideline for completing the booklet when they begin reading and independently fill in the pages as they read. This allows for students to work through the novel and questions at their own pace. Suggested section categories – A title page, the beginning, the genre, settings, figurative language, vocabulary, characters, themes, extra explorations. The sections do not need to be filled out in order. There is the opportunity to add information and ideas to sections as the students read the novel and make discoveries. *English Language Arts, Art, Health and Life Skills*

Credits

Anne Hodgson is a teacher, writer, playwright and artist. She was a teacher with the Calgary Board of Education for 39 years. Anne has taught all grades but worked mainly with middle grade students, specializing in Language Arts, Social Studies, Art, and Drama. She has been part of the mentorship program for new teachers and given workshops with the Board, and at the Calgary Teacher's Convention. Currently she tutors students in Language Arts and teaches a Creative Writing class for children through the Alexandra Writers Centre Society in Calgary, Alberta.