

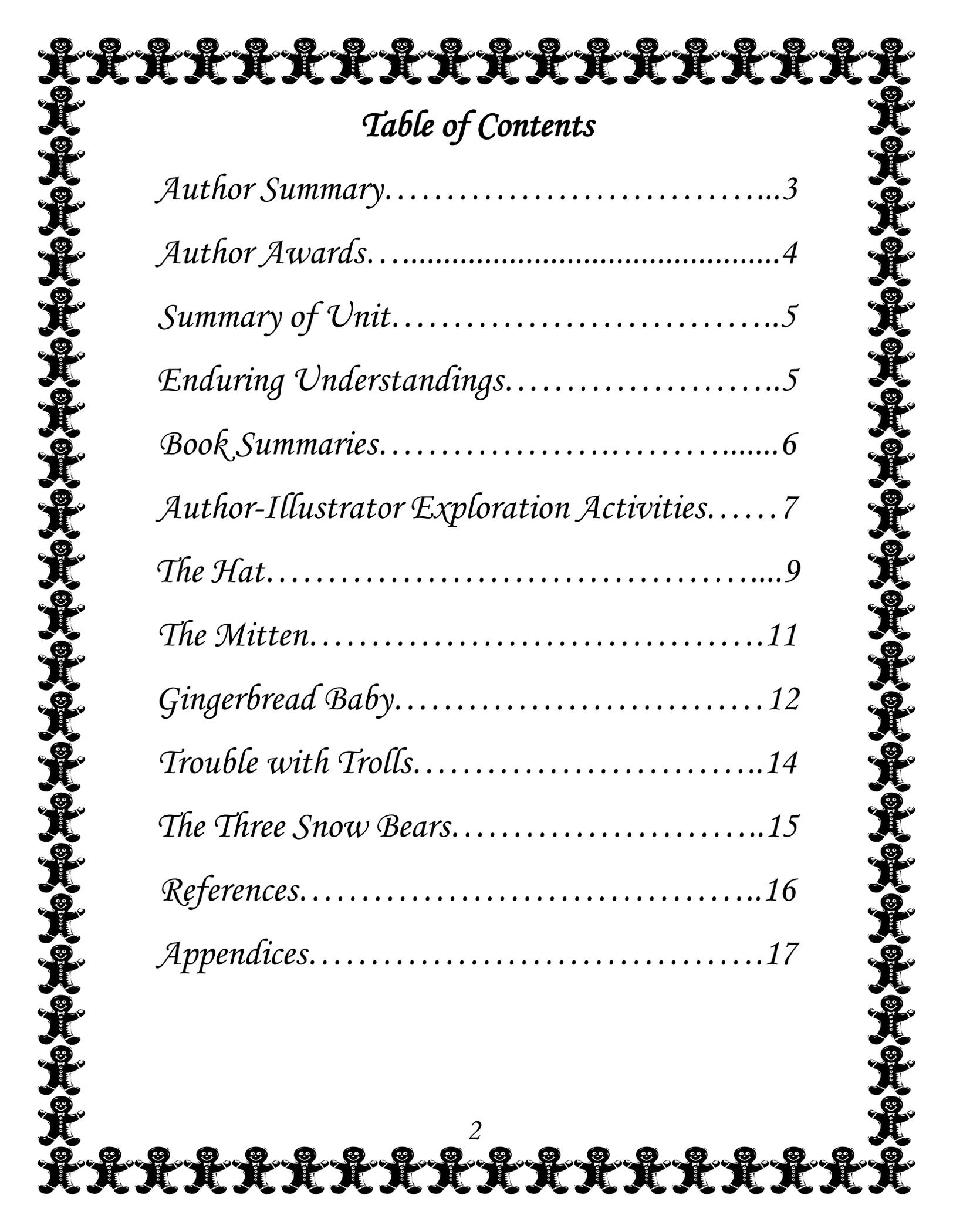
*An Author Study  
of Jan Brett*

*2nd Grade*

*Subject/Topic Areas: Interdisciplinary*

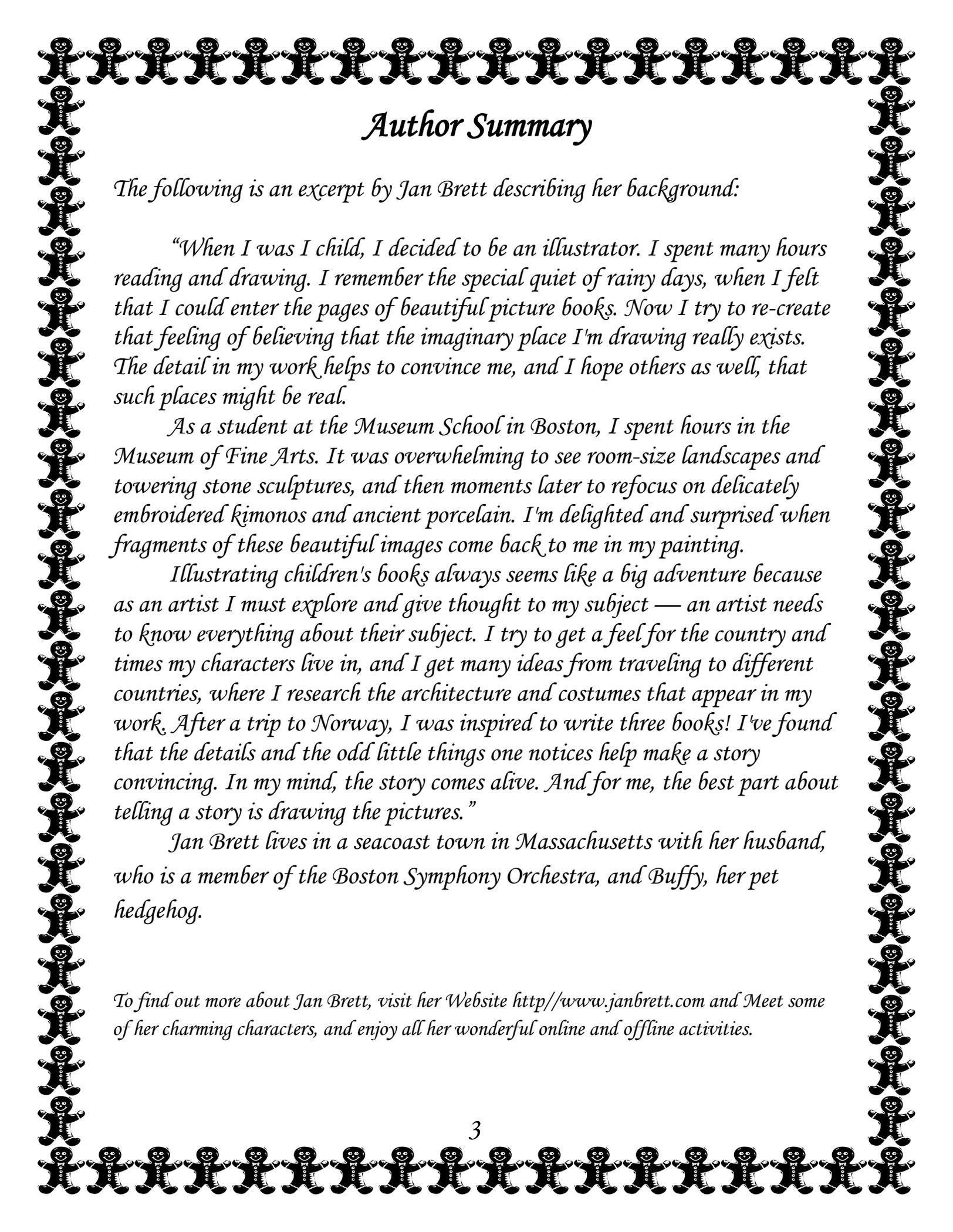
*Unit Designer: Miss Amy Cline*

*Time Frame: Month of December*



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## Author Summary

The following is an excerpt by Jan Brett describing her background:

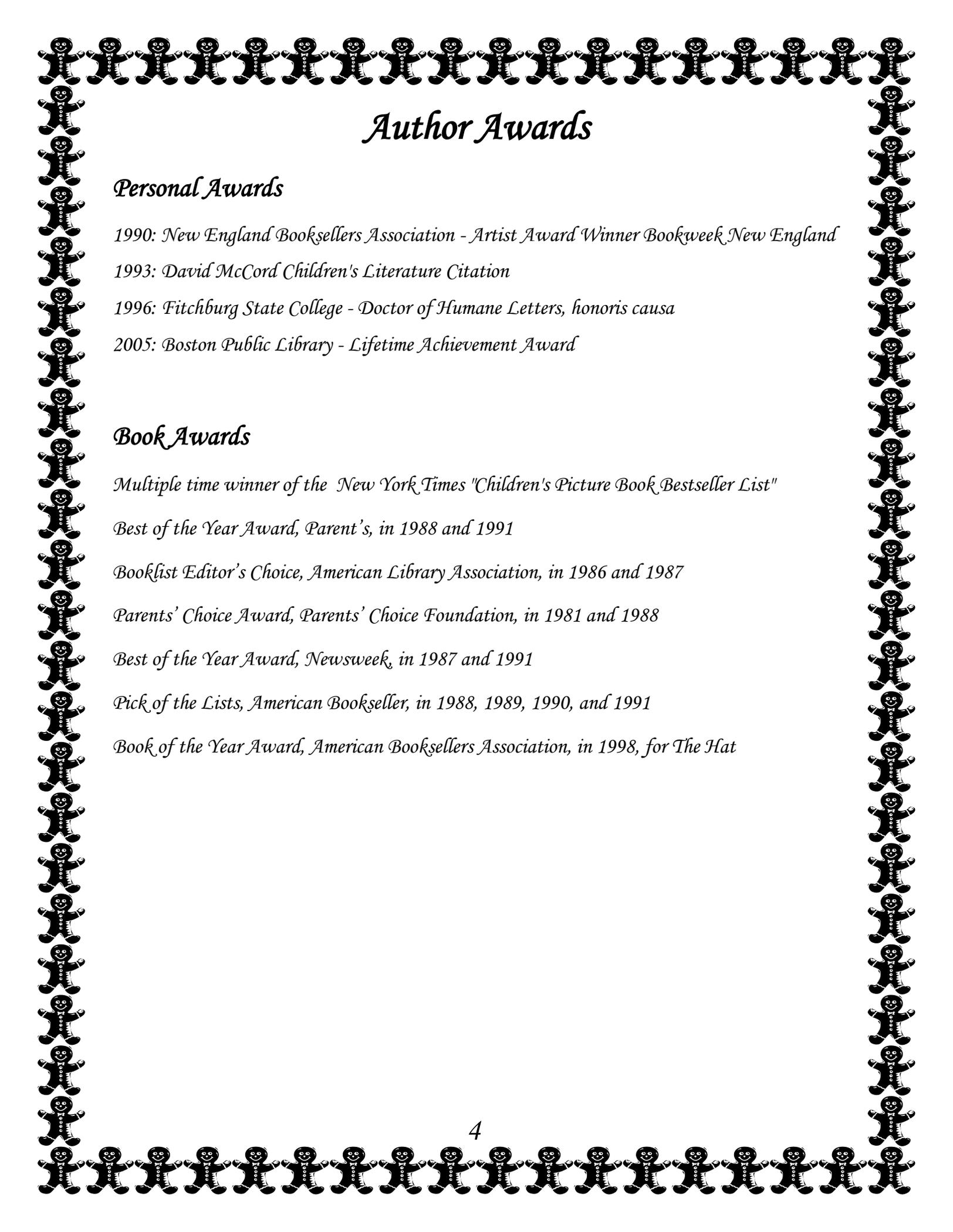
*“When I was I child, I decided to be an illustrator. I spent many hours reading and drawing. I remember the special quiet of rainy days, when I felt that I could enter the pages of beautiful picture books. Now I try to re-create that feeling of believing that the imaginary place I'm drawing really exists. The detail in my work helps to convince me, and I hope others as well, that such places might be real.*

*As a student at the Museum School in Boston, I spent hours in the Museum of Fine Arts. It was overwhelming to see room-size landscapes and towering stone sculptures, and then moments later to refocus on delicately embroidered kimonos and ancient porcelain. I'm delighted and surprised when fragments of these beautiful images come back to me in my painting.*

*Illustrating children's books always seems like a big adventure because as an artist I must explore and give thought to my subject — an artist needs to know everything about their subject. I try to get a feel for the country and times my characters live in, and I get many ideas from traveling to different countries, where I research the architecture and costumes that appear in my work. After a trip to Norway, I was inspired to write three books! I've found that the details and the odd little things one notices help make a story convincing. In my mind, the story comes alive. And for me, the best part about telling a story is drawing the pictures.”*

*Jan Brett lives in a seacoast town in Massachusetts with her husband, who is a member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and Buffy, her pet hedgehog.*

*To find out more about Jan Brett, visit her Website <http://www.janbrett.com> and Meet some of her charming characters, and enjoy all her wonderful online and offline activities.*



# *Author Awards*

## *Personal Awards*

*1990: New England Booksellers Association - Artist Award Winner Bookweek New England*

*1993: David McCord Children's Literature Citation*

*1996: Fitchburg State College - Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa*

*2005: Boston Public Library - Lifetime Achievement Award*

## *Book Awards*

*Multiple time winner of the New York Times "Children's Picture Book Bestseller List"*

*Best of the Year Award, Parent's, in 1988 and 1991*

*Booklist Editor's Choice, American Library Association, in 1986 and 1987*

*Parents' Choice Award, Parents' Choice Foundation, in 1981 and 1988*

*Best of the Year Award, Newsweek, in 1987 and 1991*

*Pick of the Lists, American Bookseller, in 1988, 1989, 1990, and 1991*

*Book of the Year Award, American Booksellers Association, in 1998, for The Hat*



## Summary of Unit

*The unit revolves around Jan Brett books that have a winter theme, including *The Hat*, *The Mitten*, *Trouble with Trolls*, *Gingerbread Baby*, and *The Three Snow Bears*. In the month of December, students will draw deeper connections by studying the author and illustrator processes as well as the overall author craft of Jan Brett's books. The interdisciplinary unit focuses on a variety of activities and strategies to enhance students' reading, writing, listening, and comprehension skills. Activities are also created to support specific content areas, such as math, science and social studies in the classroom.*

## Enduring Understanding

- ✓ *Students will learn about the author/illustrator craft and how Jan Brett's travel influences her writing.*
- ✓ *Students will apply reading strategies and analyze text structure to interpret and understand each of Jan Brett's books.*
- ✓ *Students will build their comprehension strategies, math skills, scientific inquiry, and creative thinking by participating in activities that align with Jan Brett books.*



## Summaries

### *The Hat*

*When Lisa's woolen stocking is blown off the clothesline, curious Hedgie discovers it and pokes his nose inside. It gets stuck on his prickles, and soon all the animals are laughing at his "stocking hat." To avoid embarrassment, he justifies the hat with comments such as "when it rains, my hat will keep me dry" and "my ears will be warm in a snowstorm." This gets the other animals thinking, and soon they all find "hats" of their own.*

### *The Mitten*

*At Nikki's request, Baba knits him a pair of white mittens. "If you drop one in the snow," she warns, "you'll never find it." As she predicts, Nikki loses a mitten while wandering through the wintry countryside. It's found by a series of woodland animals who, one by one, crawl inside the snug mitten. At the end of the story, a bear's big "achoo" send the animals soaring in all directions. Nikki eventually finds his mitten and is left wondering why it is stretched out and larger than its mate.*

### *Gingerbread Baby*

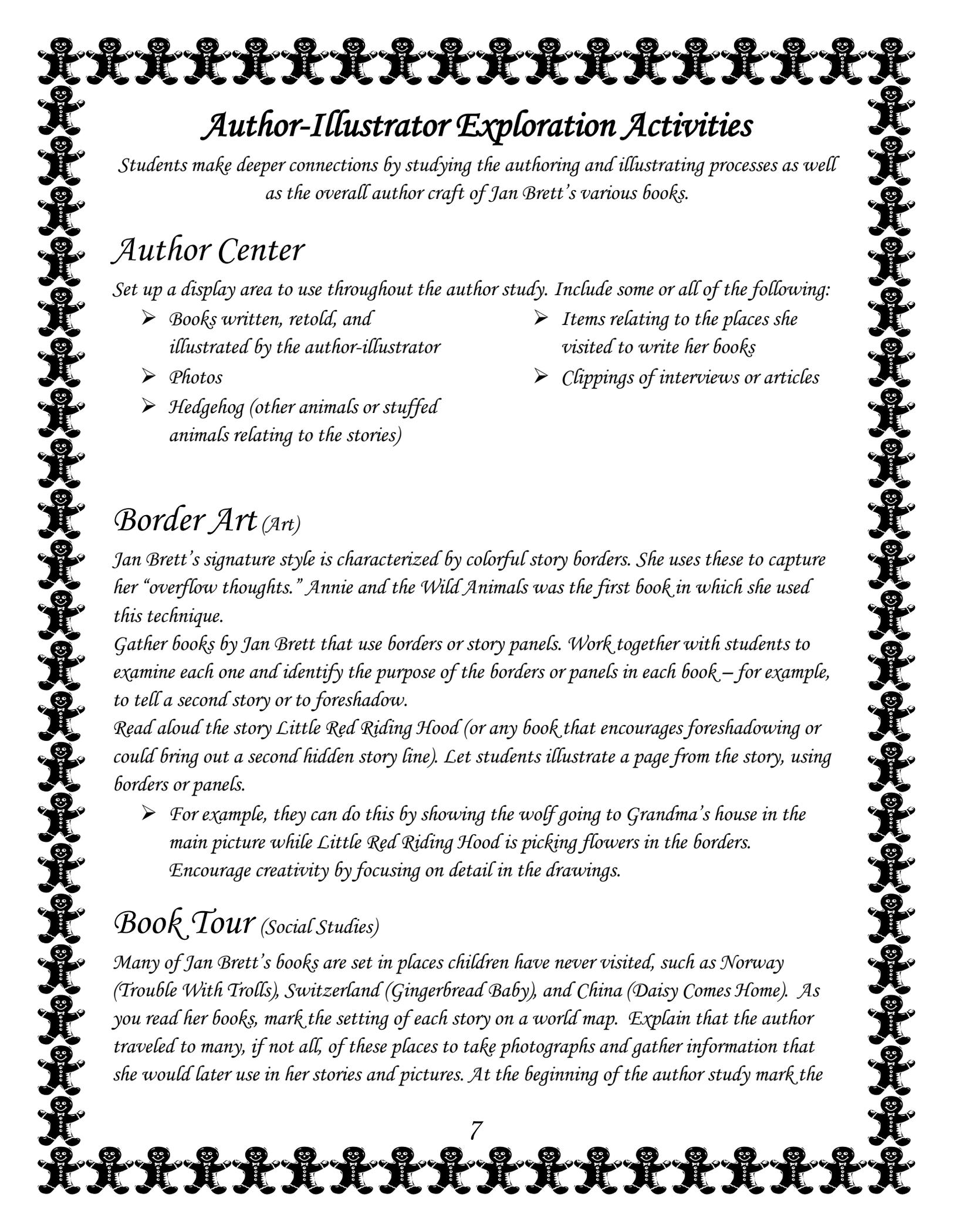
*Following a recipe found in an old cookbook, Matti and his mom make a gingerbread boy and place him in the oven. The directions say "Do not peek," but Matti finds it difficult to wait. Much to his surprise, when he opens the oven door, out jumps a gingerbread baby! Who will catch him? In the end it's Matti's clever plan that puts an end to the chase.*

### *Trouble With Trolls*

*Treva's troubles begin when she encounters five trolls at the top of Mount Baldy – each of whom tries to kidnap her dog, Tuffi, and keep him as a pet. But Treva is a quick thinker! She cleverly outsmarts each troll and skis to safety carrying Tuffi in her arms.*

### *The Three Snow Bears*

*The Goldilocks story takes a fine twist when an endearing snow bear family and a curious Inuit girl meet. When Aloo-ki loses her sled dogs, her search for them leads her to an igloo. She can't resist peeking inside... and then she can't resist the smell of something delicious. While Aloo-ki is making herself at home, Papa, Mama, and Baby Bear are out walking, waiting for their breakfast to cool off... and who do you think they find?*



## *Author-Illustrator Exploration Activities*

*Students make deeper connections by studying the authoring and illustrating processes as well as the overall author craft of Jan Brett's various books.*

### *Author Center*

*Set up a display area to use throughout the author study. Include some or all of the following:*

- *Books written, retold, and illustrated by the author-illustrator*
- *Photos*
- *Hedgehog (other animals or stuffed animals relating to the stories)*
- *Items relating to the places she visited to write her books*
- *Clippings of interviews or articles*

### *Border Art (Art)*

*Jan Brett's signature style is characterized by colorful story borders. She uses these to capture her "overflow thoughts." *Annie and the Wild Animals* was the first book in which she used this technique.*

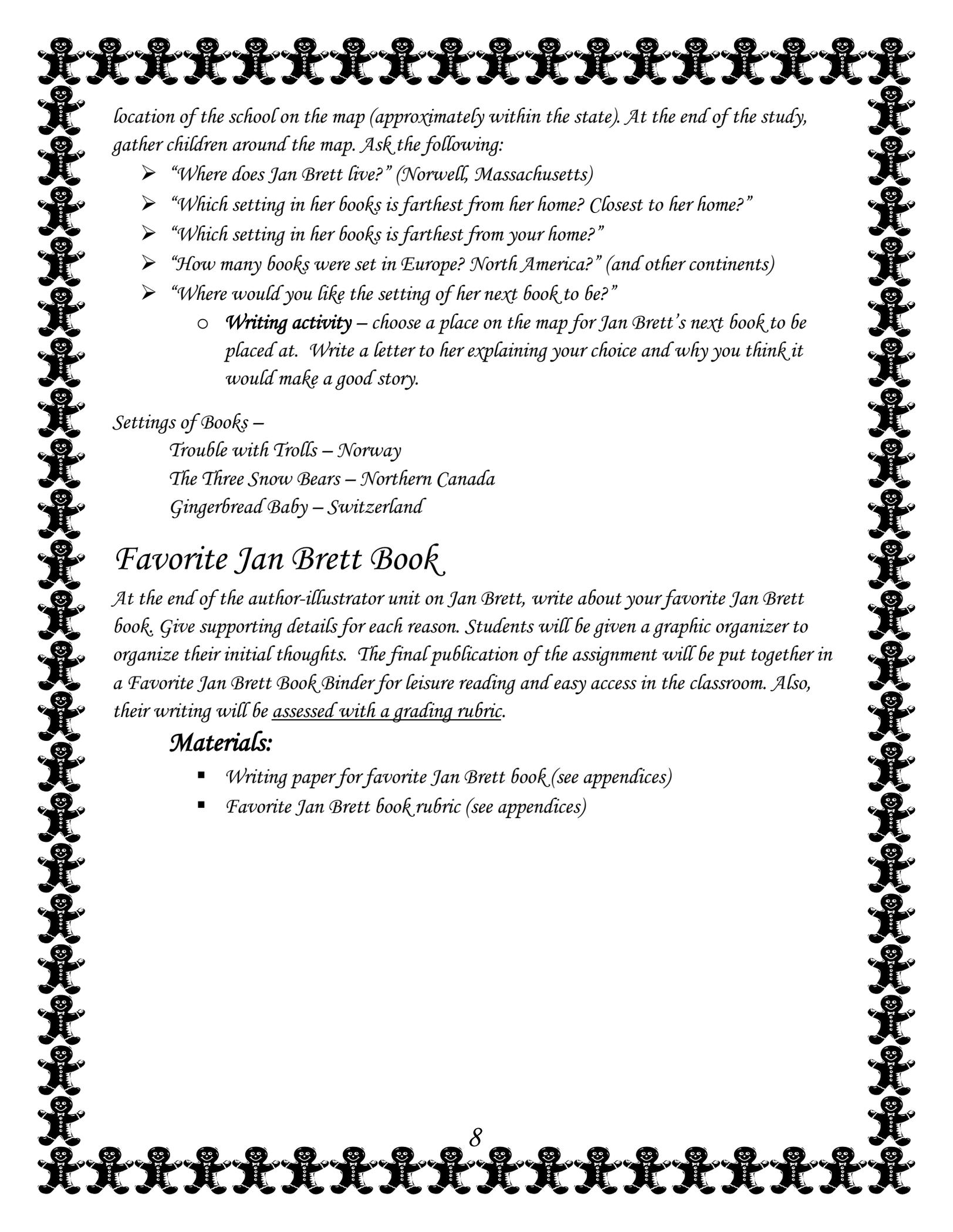
*Gather books by Jan Brett that use borders or story panels. Work together with students to examine each one and identify the purpose of the borders or panels in each book—for example, to tell a second story or to foreshadow.*

*Read aloud the story *Little Red Riding Hood* (or any book that encourages foreshadowing or could bring out a second hidden story line). Let students illustrate a page from the story, using borders or panels.*

- *For example, they can do this by showing the wolf going to Grandma's house in the main picture while *Little Red Riding Hood* is picking flowers in the borders. Encourage creativity by focusing on detail in the drawings.*

### *Book Tour (Social Studies)*

*Many of Jan Brett's books are set in places children have never visited, such as Norway (*Trouble With Trolls*), Switzerland (*Gingerbread Baby*), and China (*Daisy Comes Home*). As you read her books, mark the setting of each story on a world map. Explain that the author traveled to many, if not all, of these places to take photographs and gather information that she would later use in her stories and pictures. At the beginning of the author study mark the*



location of the school on the map (approximately within the state). At the end of the study, gather children around the map. Ask the following:

- “Where does Jan Brett live?” (Norwell, Massachusetts)
- “Which setting in her books is farthest from her home? Closest to her home?”
- “Which setting in her books is farthest from your home?”
- “How many books were set in Europe? North America?” (and other continents)
- “Where would you like the setting of her next book to be?”
  - **Writing activity** – choose a place on the map for Jan Brett’s next book to be placed at. Write a letter to her explaining your choice and why you think it would make a good story.

Settings of Books –

*Trouble with Trolls* – Norway

*The Three Snow Bears* – Northern Canada

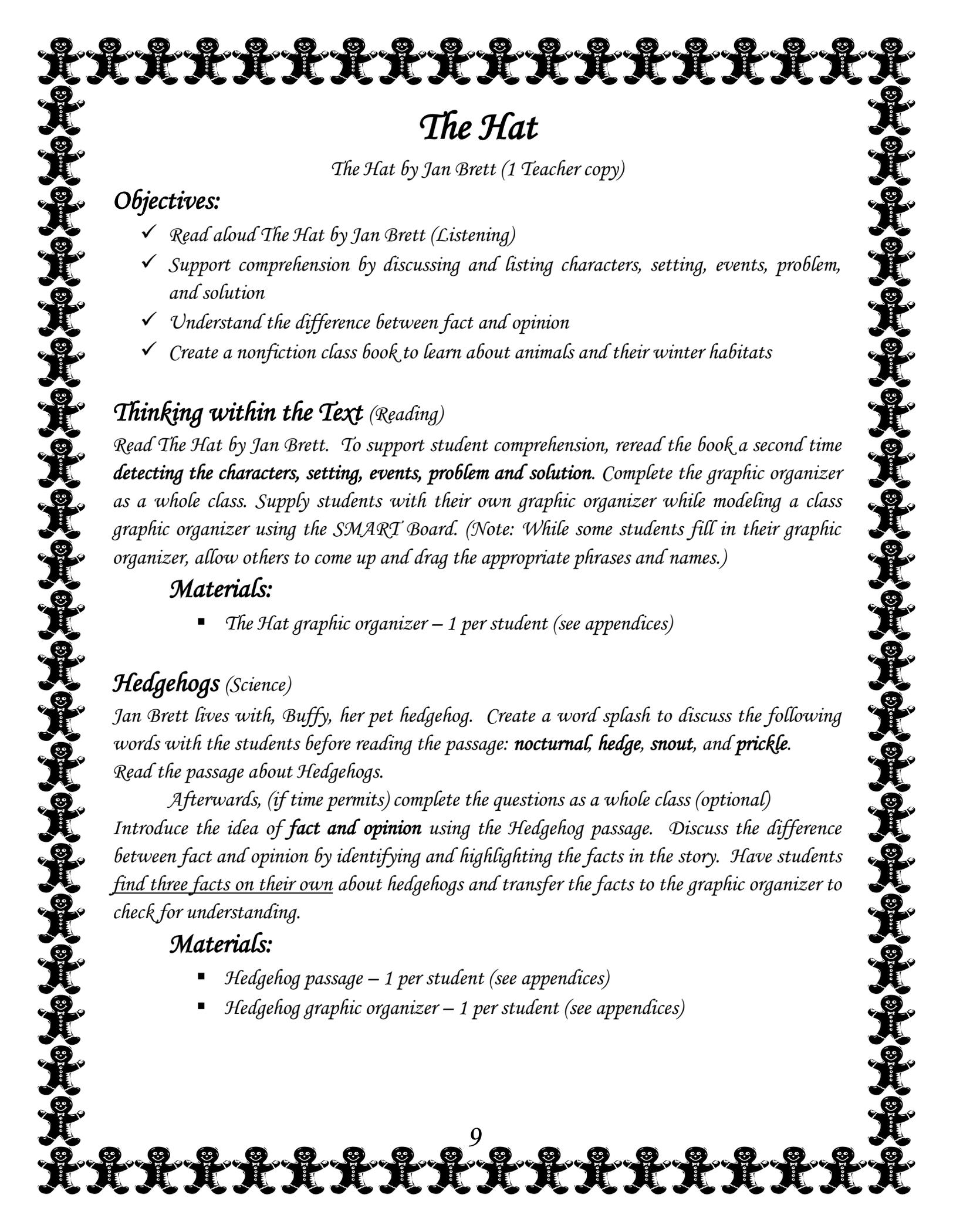
*Gingerbread Baby* – Switzerland

## *Favorite Jan Brett Book*

At the end of the author-illustrator unit on Jan Brett, write about your favorite Jan Brett book. Give supporting details for each reason. Students will be given a graphic organizer to organize their initial thoughts. The final publication of the assignment will be put together in a Favorite Jan Brett Book Binder for leisure reading and easy access in the classroom. Also, their writing will be assessed with a grading rubric.

### **Materials:**

- Writing paper for favorite Jan Brett book (see appendices)
- Favorite Jan Brett book rubric (see appendices)



# The Hat

*The Hat by Jan Brett (1 Teacher copy)*

## **Objectives:**

- ✓ *Read aloud The Hat by Jan Brett (Listening)*
- ✓ *Support comprehension by discussing and listing characters, setting, events, problem, and solution*
- ✓ *Understand the difference between fact and opinion*
- ✓ *Create a nonfiction class book to learn about animals and their winter habitats*

## **Thinking within the Text** (Reading)

*Read The Hat by Jan Brett. To support student comprehension, reread the book a second time detecting the characters, setting, events, problem and solution. Complete the graphic organizer as a whole class. Supply students with their own graphic organizer while modeling a class graphic organizer using the SMART Board. (Note: While some students fill in their graphic organizer, allow others to come up and drag the appropriate phrases and names.)*

### **Materials:**

- *The Hat graphic organizer – 1 per student (see appendices)*

## **Hedgehogs** (Science)

*Jan Brett lives with, Buffy, her pet hedgehog. Create a word splash to discuss the following words with the students before reading the passage: **nocturnal, hedge, snout, and prickly.***

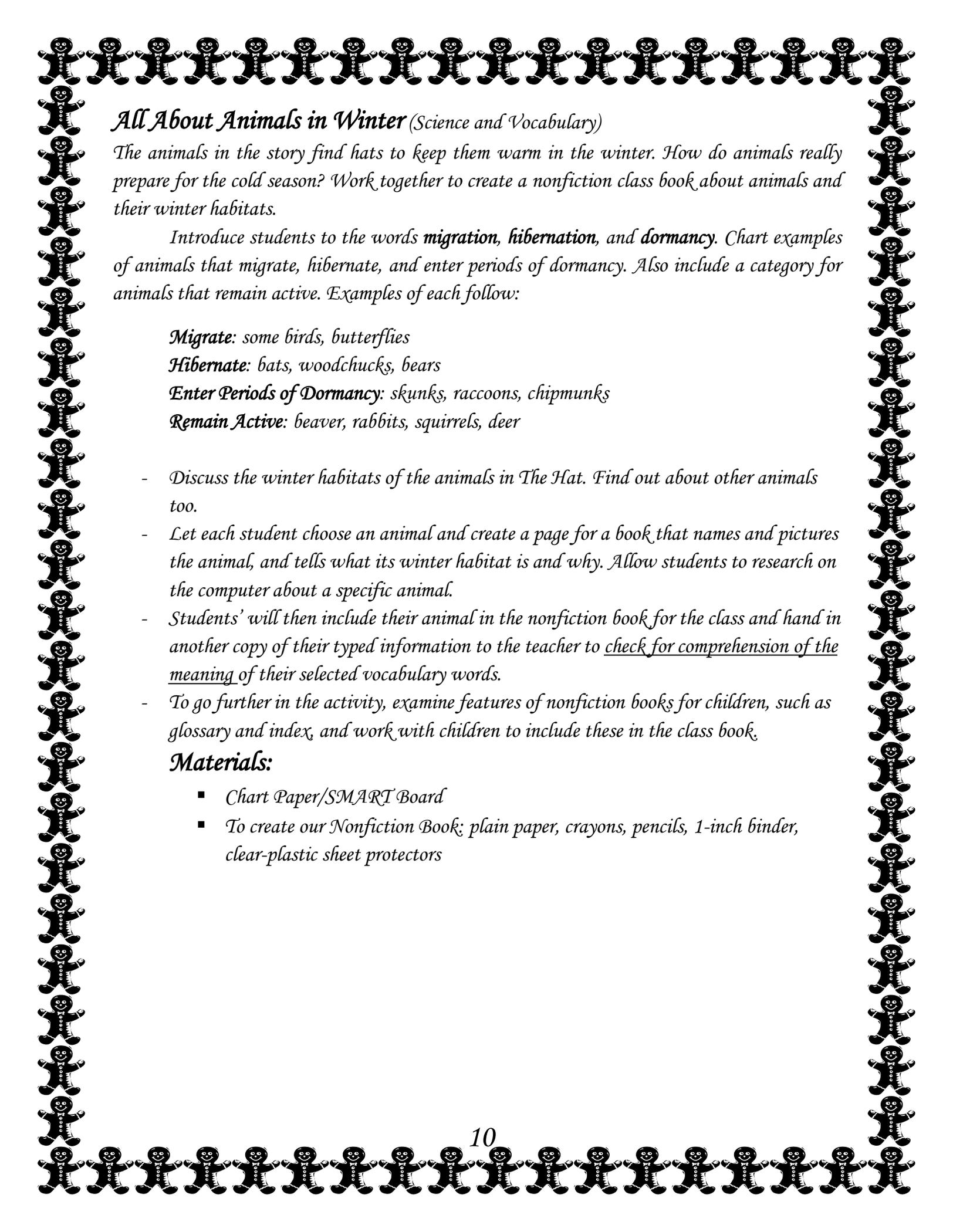
*Read the passage about Hedgehogs.*

*Afterwards, (if time permits) complete the questions as a whole class (optional)*

*Introduce the idea of **fact and opinion** using the Hedgehog passage. Discuss the difference between fact and opinion by identifying and highlighting the facts in the story. Have students find three facts on their own about hedgehogs and transfer the facts to the graphic organizer to check for understanding.*

### **Materials:**

- *Hedgehog passage – 1 per student (see appendices)*
- *Hedgehog graphic organizer – 1 per student (see appendices)*



## *All About Animals in Winter* (Science and Vocabulary)

The animals in the story find hats to keep them warm in the winter. How do animals really prepare for the cold season? Work together to create a nonfiction class book about animals and their winter habitats.

Introduce students to the words *migration*, *hibernation*, and *dormancy*. Chart examples of animals that migrate, hibernate, and enter periods of dormancy. Also include a category for animals that remain active. Examples of each follow:

**Migrate:** some birds, butterflies

**Hibernate:** bats, woodchucks, bears

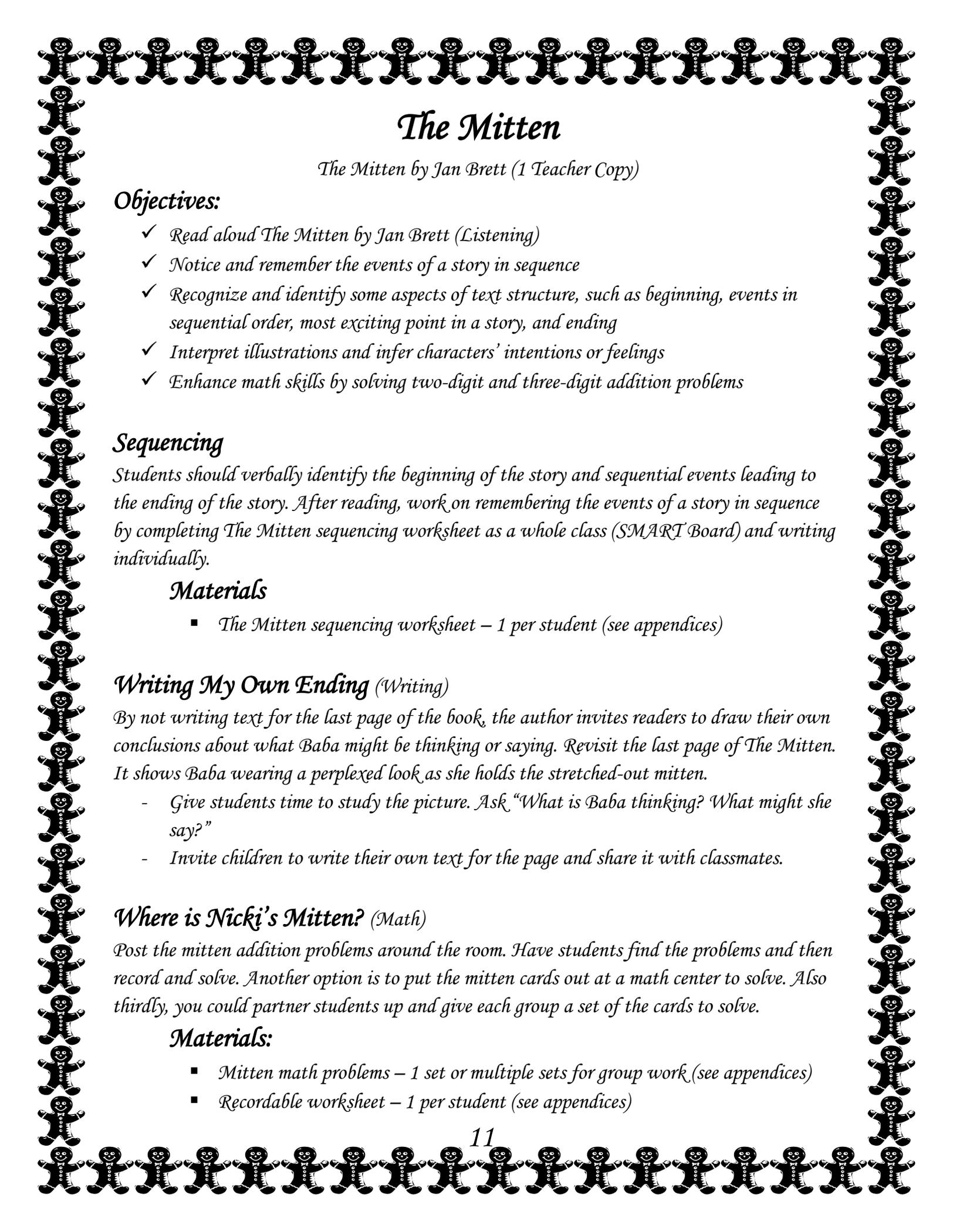
**Enter Periods of Dormancy:** skunks, raccoons, chipmunks

**Remain Active:** beaver, rabbits, squirrels, deer

- Discuss the winter habitats of the animals in *The Hat*. Find out about other animals too.
- Let each student choose an animal and create a page for a book that names and pictures the animal, and tells what its winter habitat is and why. Allow students to research on the computer about a specific animal.
- Students' will then include their animal in the nonfiction book for the class and hand in another copy of their typed information to the teacher to check for comprehension of the meaning of their selected vocabulary words.
- To go further in the activity, examine features of nonfiction books for children, such as glossary and index, and work with children to include these in the class book.

### **Materials:**

- Chart Paper/SMART Board
- To create our Nonfiction Book: plain paper, crayons, pencils, 1-inch binder, clear-plastic sheet protectors



# The Mitten

*The Mitten by Jan Brett (1 Teacher Copy)*

## **Objectives:**

- ✓ *Read aloud *The Mitten* by Jan Brett (Listening)*
- ✓ *Notice and remember the events of a story in sequence*
- ✓ *Recognize and identify some aspects of text structure, such as beginning, events in sequential order, most exciting point in a story, and ending*
- ✓ *Interpret illustrations and infer characters' intentions or feelings*
- ✓ *Enhance math skills by solving two-digit and three-digit addition problems*

## **Sequencing**

*Students should verbally identify the beginning of the story and sequential events leading to the ending of the story. After reading, work on remembering the events of a story in sequence by completing *The Mitten* sequencing worksheet as a whole class (SMART Board) and writing individually.*

### **Materials**

- *The Mitten sequencing worksheet – 1 per student (see appendices)*

## **Writing My Own Ending** (Writing)

*By not writing text for the last page of the book, the author invites readers to draw their own conclusions about what Baba might be thinking or saying. Revisit the last page of *The Mitten*. It shows Baba wearing a perplexed look as she holds the stretched-out mitten.*

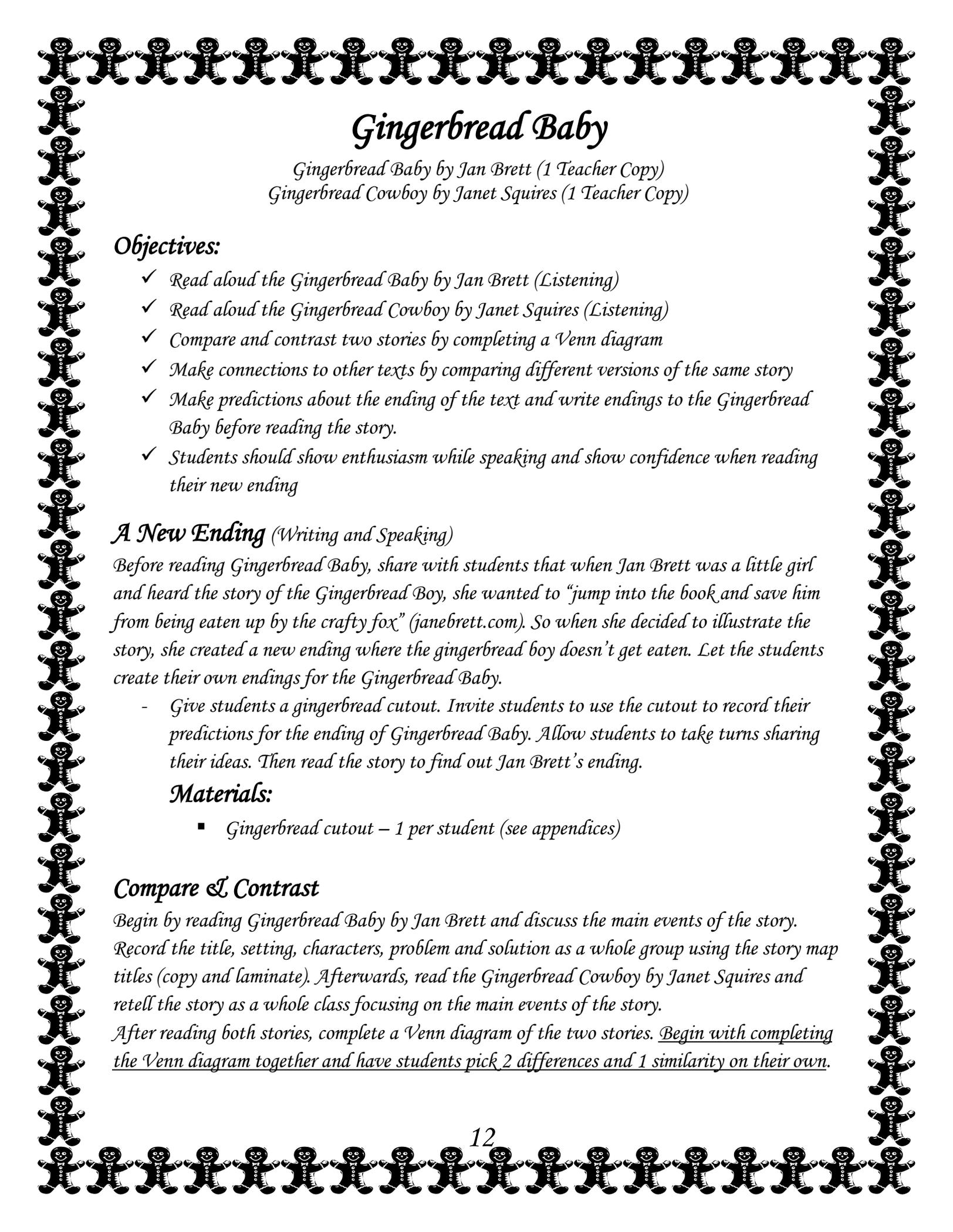
- *Give students time to study the picture. Ask, "What is Baba thinking? What might she say?"*
- *Invite children to write their own text for the page and share it with classmates.*

## **Where is Nicki's Mitten?** (Math)

*Post the mitten addition problems around the room. Have students find the problems and then record and solve. Another option is to put the mitten cards out at a math center to solve. Also thirdly, you could partner students up and give each group a set of the cards to solve.*

### **Materials:**

- *Mitten math problems – 1 set or multiple sets for group work (see appendices)*
- *Recordable worksheet – 1 per student (see appendices)*



# Gingerbread Baby

*Gingerbread Baby by Jan Brett (1 Teacher Copy)*  
*Gingerbread Cowboy by Janet Squires (1 Teacher Copy)*

## **Objectives:**

- ✓ *Read aloud the Gingerbread Baby by Jan Brett (Listening)*
- ✓ *Read aloud the Gingerbread Cowboy by Janet Squires (Listening)*
- ✓ *Compare and contrast two stories by completing a Venn diagram*
- ✓ *Make connections to other texts by comparing different versions of the same story*
- ✓ *Make predictions about the ending of the text and write endings to the Gingerbread Baby before reading the story.*
- ✓ *Students should show enthusiasm while speaking and show confidence when reading their new ending*

## **A New Ending** *(Writing and Speaking)*

*Before reading Gingerbread Baby, share with students that when Jan Brett was a little girl and heard the story of the Gingerbread Boy, she wanted to “jump into the book and save him from being eaten up by the crafty fox” (janebrett.com). So when she decided to illustrate the story, she created a new ending where the gingerbread boy doesn’t get eaten. Let the students create their own endings for the Gingerbread Baby.*

- *Give students a gingerbread cutout. Invite students to use the cutout to record their predictions for the ending of Gingerbread Baby. Allow students to take turns sharing their ideas. Then read the story to find out Jan Brett’s ending.*

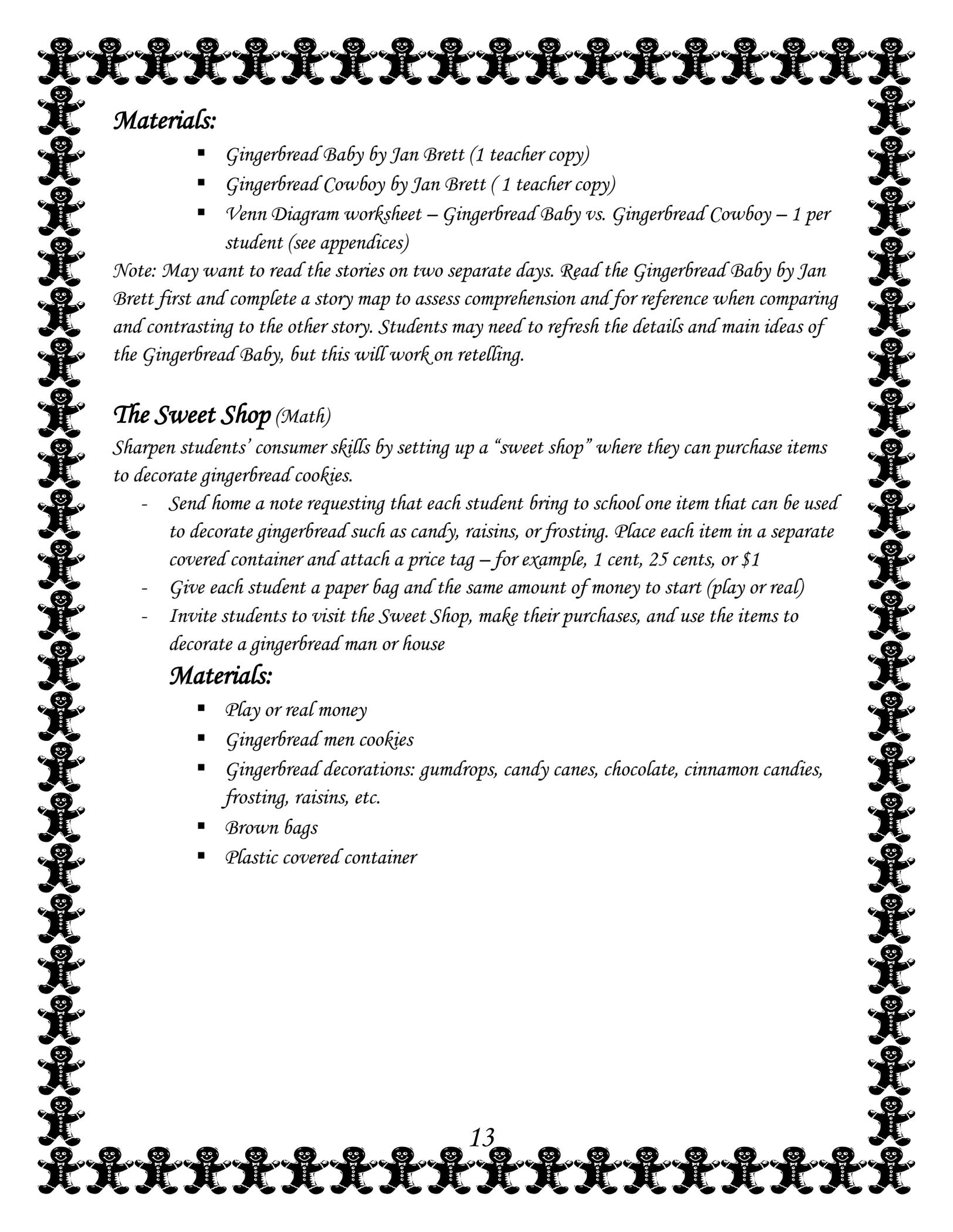
## **Materials:**

- *Gingerbread cutout – 1 per student (see appendices)*

## **Compare & Contrast**

*Begin by reading Gingerbread Baby by Jan Brett and discuss the main events of the story. Record the title, setting, characters, problem and solution as a whole group using the story map titles (copy and laminate). Afterwards, read the Gingerbread Cowboy by Janet Squires and retell the story as a whole class focusing on the main events of the story.*

*After reading both stories, complete a Venn diagram of the two stories. Begin with completing the Venn diagram together and have students pick 2 differences and 1 similarity on their own.*



### *Materials:*

- *Gingerbread Baby by Jan Brett (1 teacher copy)*
- *Gingerbread Cowboy by Jan Brett (1 teacher copy)*
- *Venn Diagram worksheet – Gingerbread Baby vs. Gingerbread Cowboy – 1 per student (see appendices)*

*Note: May want to read the stories on two separate days. Read the Gingerbread Baby by Jan Brett first and complete a story map to assess comprehension and for reference when comparing and contrasting to the other story. Students may need to refresh the details and main ideas of the Gingerbread Baby, but this will work on retelling.*

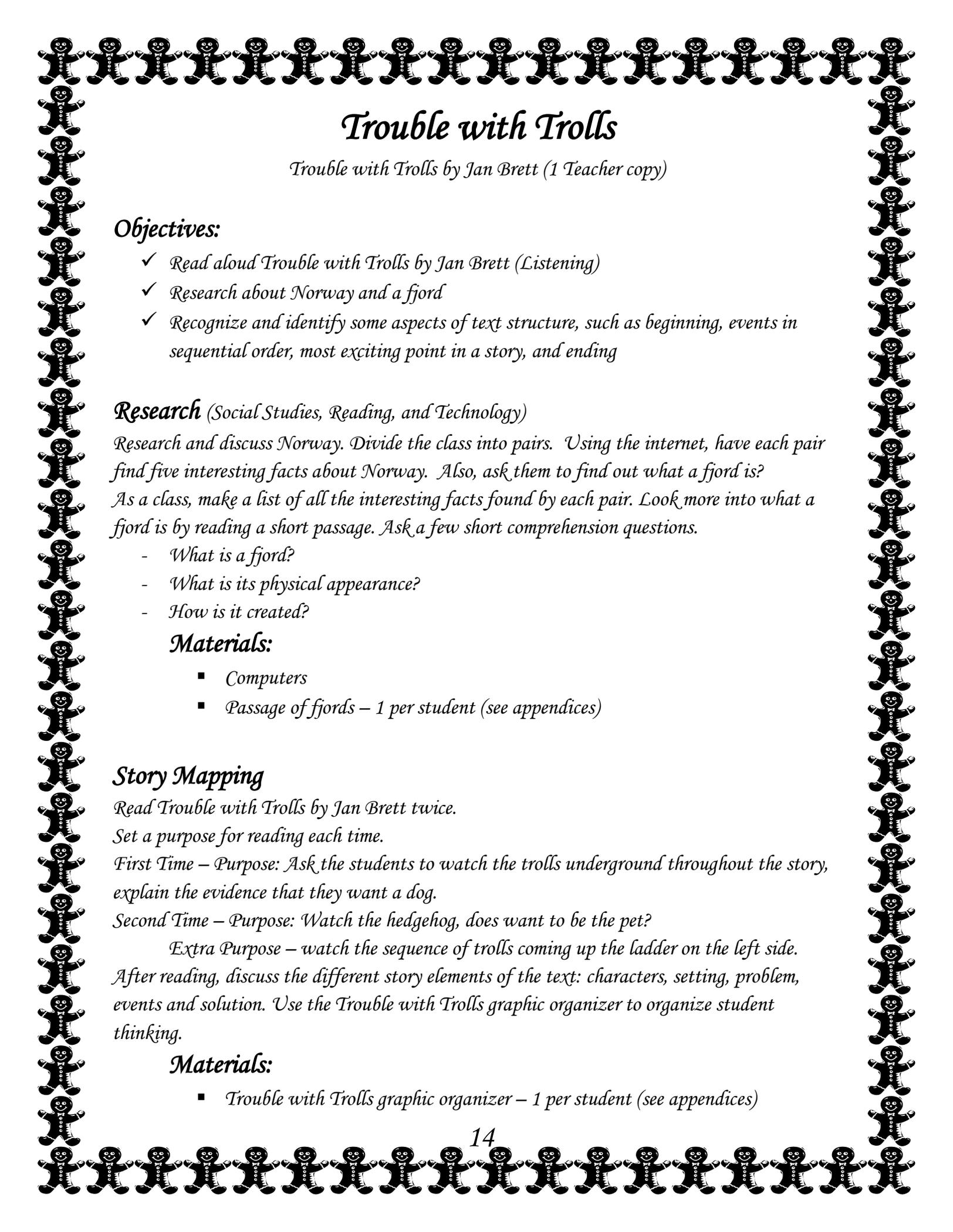
### *The Sweet Shop (Math)*

*Sharpen students' consumer skills by setting up a "sweet shop" where they can purchase items to decorate gingerbread cookies.*

- *Send home a note requesting that each student bring to school one item that can be used to decorate gingerbread such as candy, raisins, or frosting. Place each item in a separate covered container and attach a price tag – for example, 1 cent, 25 cents, or \$1*
- *Give each student a paper bag and the same amount of money to start (play or real)*
- *Invite students to visit the Sweet Shop, make their purchases, and use the items to decorate a gingerbread man or house*

### *Materials:*

- *Play or real money*
- *Gingerbread men cookies*
- *Gingerbread decorations: gumdrops, candy canes, chocolate, cinnamon candies, frosting, raisins, etc.*
- *Brown bags*
- *Plastic covered container*



# Trouble with Trolls

*Trouble with Trolls by Jan Brett (1 Teacher copy)*

## **Objectives:**

- ✓ *Read aloud Trouble with Trolls by Jan Brett (Listening)*
- ✓ *Research about Norway and a fjord*
- ✓ *Recognize and identify some aspects of text structure, such as beginning, events in sequential order, most exciting point in a story, and ending*

## **Research** (Social Studies, Reading, and Technology)

*Research and discuss Norway. Divide the class into pairs. Using the internet, have each pair find five interesting facts about Norway. Also, ask them to find out what a fjord is?*

*As a class, make a list of all the interesting facts found by each pair. Look more into what a fjord is by reading a short passage. Ask a few short comprehension questions.*

- *What is a fjord?*
- *What is its physical appearance?*
- *How is it created?*

## **Materials:**

- *Computers*
- *Passage of fjords – 1 per student (see appendices)*

## **Story Mapping**

*Read Trouble with Trolls by Jan Brett twice.*

*Set a purpose for reading each time.*

*First Time – Purpose: Ask the students to watch the trolls underground throughout the story, explain the evidence that they want a dog.*

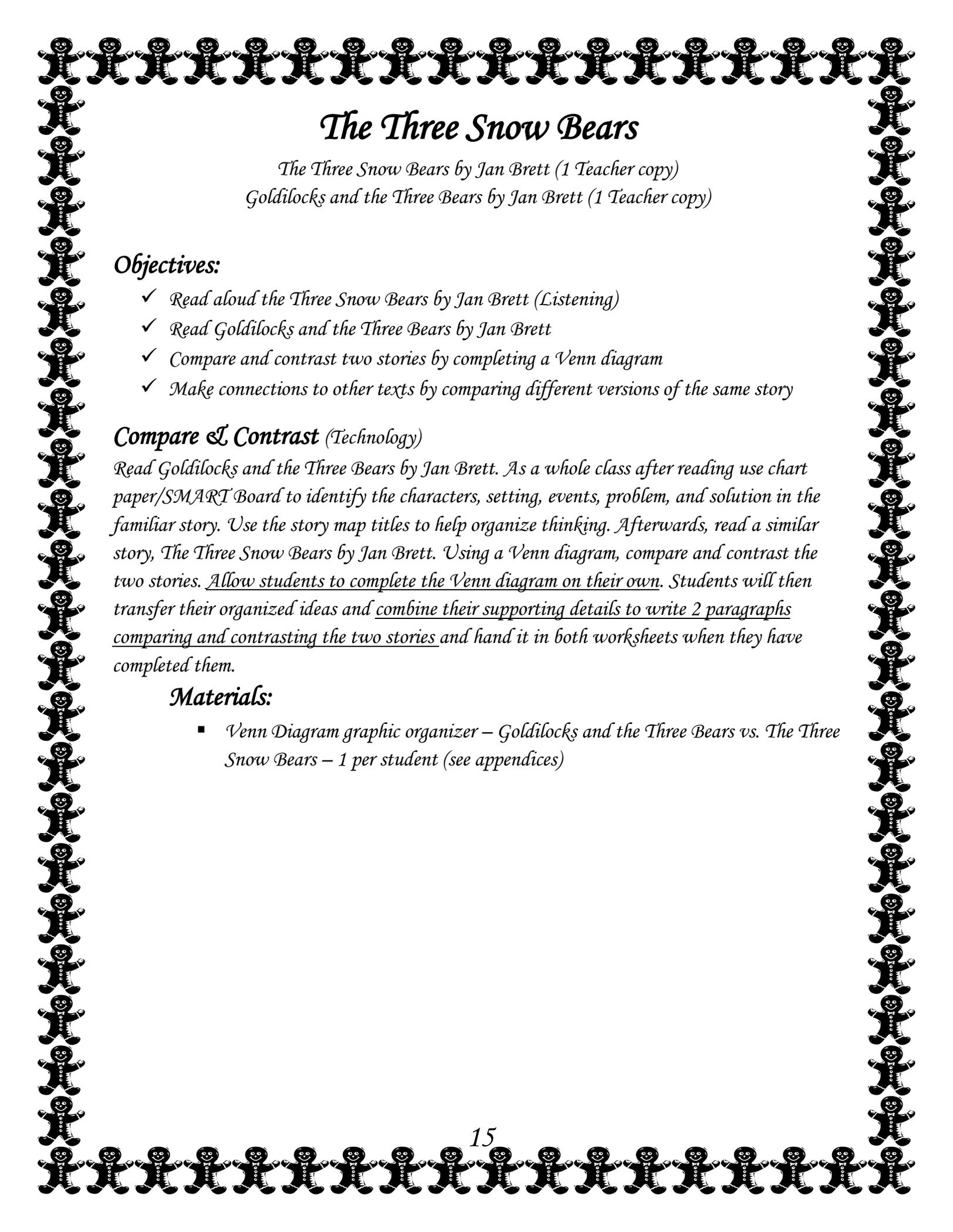
*Second Time – Purpose: Watch the hedgehog, does want to be the pet?*

*Extra Purpose – watch the sequence of trolls coming up the ladder on the left side.*

*After reading, discuss the different story elements of the text: characters, setting, problem, events and solution. Use the Trouble with Trolls graphic organizer to organize student thinking.*

## **Materials:**

- *Trouble with Trolls graphic organizer – 1 per student (see appendices)*



# *The Three Snow Bears*

*The Three Snow Bears by Jan Brett (1 Teacher copy)*  
*Goldilocks and the Three Bears by Jan Brett (1 Teacher copy)*

## **Objectives:**

- ✓ *Read aloud the Three Snow Bears by Jan Brett (Listening)*
- ✓ *Read Goldilocks and the Three Bears by Jan Brett*
- ✓ *Compare and contrast two stories by completing a Venn diagram*
- ✓ *Make connections to other texts by comparing different versions of the same story*

## **Compare & Contrast (Technology)**

*Read Goldilocks and the Three Bears by Jan Brett. As a whole class after reading use chart paper/SMART Board to identify the characters, setting, events, problem, and solution in the familiar story. Use the story map titles to help organize thinking. Afterwards, read a similar story, The Three Snow Bears by Jan Brett. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast the two stories. Allow students to complete the Venn diagram on their own. Students will then transfer their organized ideas and combine their supporting details to write 2 paragraphs comparing and contrasting the two stories and hand it in both worksheets when they have completed them.*

## **Materials:**

- *Venn Diagram graphic organizer – Goldilocks and the Three Bears vs. The Three Snow Bears – 1 per student (see appendices)*

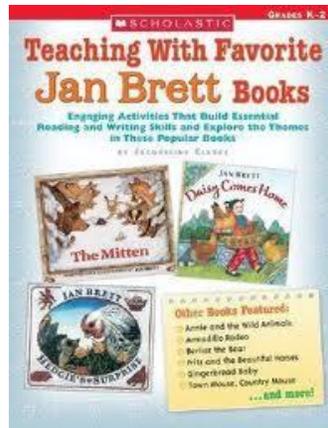
# References

*The Official Jan Brett Web Site*

[www.janbrett.com](http://www.janbrett.com)



*Teaching with Favorite Jan Brett Books: Engaging Activities That Build Essential Reading and Writing Skills and Explore the Themes in These Popular Books*  
by Jacqueline Clarke



*Scholastic*

[www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)



*Appendices*

