

Gone Crazy in Alabama



By

Rita Williams-Garcia

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on four chapters of *Gone Crazy in Alabama* and is comprised of five activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include family and friendship, personal growth, sibling rivalry, accepting responsibilities, learning to accept life's difficulties, self-awareness and coming of age.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

The Coretta Scott King Award–winning ***Gone Crazy in Alabama*** by Newbery Honor and *New York Times* bestselling author Rita Williams-Garcia tells the story of the Gaither sisters as they travel from the streets of Brooklyn to the rural South for the summer of a lifetime.

Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern are off to Alabama to visit their grandmother Big Ma and her mother, Ma Charles. Across the way lives Ma Charles’s half sister, Miss Trotter. The two half sisters haven’t spoken in years. As Delphine hears about her family history, she uncovers the surprising truth that’s been keeping the sisters apart. But when tragedy strikes, Delphine discovers that the bonds of family run deeper than she ever knew possible.

Powerful and humorous, this companion to the award-winning ***One Crazy Summer*** and ***P.S. Be Eleven*** will be enjoyed by fans of the first two books, as well as by readers meeting these memorable sisters for the first time. (Courtesy of the publisher)

Author Biography

Rita Williams-Garcia

In addition to ***Gone Crazy in Alabama***, Rita Williams-Garcia is the author of several distinguished novels for young adults. She is the winner of a number of awards for her writing including a *Coretta Scott King Honor Book*, *Newbery Honor Book* and the *Scott O'Dell Award* for Historical Fiction. Rita was born in Queens, New York in 1957. She now lives in Jamaica, New York and teaches at Vermont College of Fine Arts.



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Name:

Gone Crazy in Alabama

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It Takes a Licking – Everything is Everything



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *Gone Crazy in Alabama* is Delphine, an enterprising twelve-year-old girl who travels with her sisters to live in Alabama for the summer. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an interesting **protagonist**? (One that is difficult to forget.)



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

sashay	impression	capable	destination
nauseous	oppressor	ogre	recognition

1. I really didn't think that Fern was _____ of being quiet for so long.
2. “A bully is an _____ of the people,” the governor exclaimed.
3. We were only on the bus for a few minutes when I began to feel _____.
4. Do you think that Charlie gets the _____ he deserves?
5. Julianne began to _____ around the dance floor as if she was the queen of the ball.
6. The astronaut made quite an _____ on the students at assembly.
7. Do you suppose she had any idea of what her final _____ might be?
8. Kelvin is such a little terror that sometimes I feel he may be an _____ in disguise.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One?

2. How do we know that there were bullies in Vonetta's third-grade class?

3. As the story begins, why were the girls so excited?

4. When Fern sings, “take a licking but keep on ticking”, she is referring to _____.

5. Put the following expressions into your own words so that their meanings are clear. (You may have to check the context of each sentence.)

1.	Candy was enough to send Vonetta and Fern over the moon.
2.	If you don't cough it up.
3.	Our voices either followed or lay on top of one another's

6. As Chapter One comes to a close, what do we learn that haunts Delphine's dreams?

7. Match each character from these chapters with the most accurate description.

a	Vonetta		1	Big Ma's mother.
b	Cecile		2	Louis.
c	Uncle Darnell		3	The girls' mother.
d	Fern		4	Mrs.
e	Pa		5	The closest thing to a grandpa the girls would ever have.
f	Delphine		6	Eight years old.
g	Marva Hendrix		7	Delphine's grandma.
h	Ma Charles		8	Vietnam vet.
i	Mr. Lucas		9	Lost her watch to another girl.
j	Big Ma		10	The novel's narrator.

8. Why did Delphine think it was a good idea for her to ride the bus as a 12 year old?

9. What specific advice did Pa give to Delphine about how to behave in Alabama, and why did he consider this advice to be critical?

10. What did Delphine want to retrieve from her suitcase which was nixed by the driver?

11. What did Uncle Darnell do which hurt the girls. Why did he do this?

Language Activities



A. Alabama

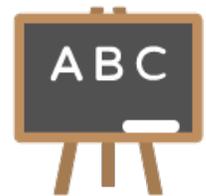
Alabama has been nicknamed the *Yellowhammer State*, after the state bird. It is also called “the heart of Dixie” and the “Cotton State”. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three additional intriguing facts about this beautiful state and record them below to share with your colleagues.



1.	
2.	
3.	

B. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first chapter of *Gone Crazy in Alabama*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
sisters		Turns down.
shared		A runner.
drawer		Prize.
frost		Places of safety.
period		Less bright.
table		Sound of a sheep.
minute		A slow ballroom dance.

C. An Alabama Quatrain Poem.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain is actually the first verse of the famed folk song, *Oh, Susanna*, written by Stephen Foster.

*I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee,
I'm going to Louisiana, my true love for to see.
It rained all night the day I left, the weather it was dry
The sun so hot I froze to death, Susanna, don't you cry.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - A - B - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBA, and AAAB.

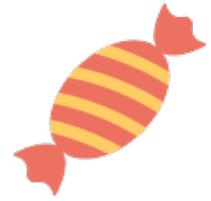
Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the first four chapters of our novel.

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____

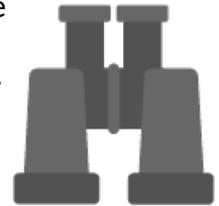
D. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's one such example: from Chapter One: ***B*azooka *b*ubble gum**



Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

Alabama	
A bus ride	
Your choice.	

E. Chapter Two might just contain an example of an important literary device called **foreshadowing**. Foreshadowing is defined as *a warning or indication of a future event*. In Chapter 2 Delphine's dad warns her, “None of that black power stuff in Alabama. Once you cross the line from North to South all of that black power stuff is over.” Considering Delphine's outspoken personality, we wonder if she will be able to control her tongue, and if she can't whether she'll get herself into a lot of trouble as a result.



1. Why did the author include these statements from Pa?
2. See if you can find another example of foreshadowing in these chapters.

Check out the author's exciting webpage:
<https://rita-williamsgarcia.squarespace.com>

F. 5 Ws and an H.

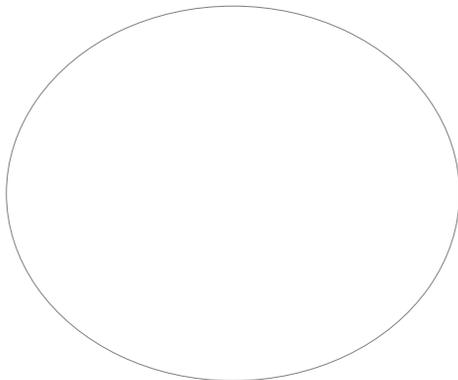
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



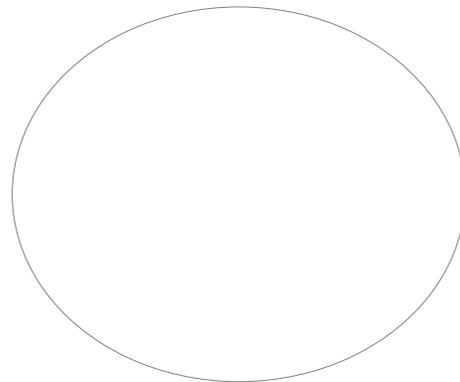
WHO?



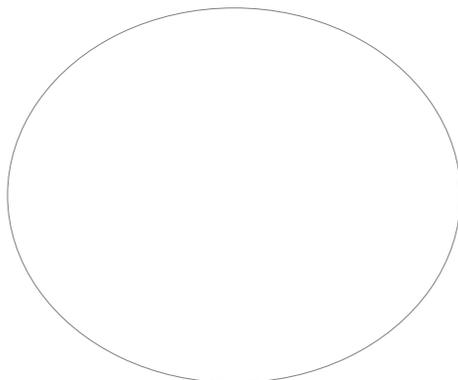
WHAT?



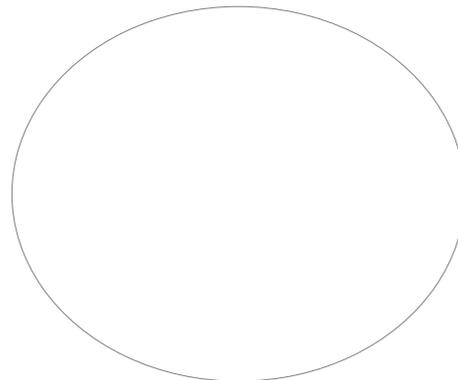
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A story-board can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel. Complete the story-board below illustrating the events described in the first four chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6