GATOR GUMBO: A SPICY – HOT TALE

Louisiana Young Readers’ Choice Award Nominee 2007 Grades 3-5

Submitted by Lise’ A. Taylor, Branch Manager at Cedar Grove/ Line Ave. Public Library and Graduate Student at School of Library and Information Science, LSU (Professor: Dr. Margie Thomas); and Jada Monceaux, Student at University of Louisiana at Lafayette (Instructor: Dorothy Grimsley)


Summary
Mr. Gator is getting old and catching dinner is not as easy as it once was, but he has an idea—he'll make gumbo just like Maman used to make and with the “help” of those critters that torment him. It’s going to be one GoooD gumbo. Monsieur Otter, Madame Skunk, and Mademoiselle Possum are not willing to help Monsieur Gator cook, so Monsieur Gator pushes them into the steaming pot of gumbo. Lively humorous illustrations of the swamp-dwelling creatures enhance this Cajun version of “The Little Red Hen.”

Awards
The Reading Teacher Children’s Choices for 2005

Author’s Biography
Candace Fleming received her B.A. in History from Eastern Illinois University. Fleming combined her love of children’s books with her love of history to produce such books as A Big Cheese for the White House, A Hatmaker’s Sign, Westward Ho, Carlotta! and many more, both historical and fiction. Candace lives in Illinois with her husband, Scott and her sons, Scott and Michael.
http://www.candacefleming.com/

Other Titles by Candace Fleming
Benjamin Franklin’s Almanac
A Big Cheese for the White House
Boxes for Katje
Gabriella’s Song
Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!
Smile, Lilly!
Sunny Boy! The Life and Times of a Tortoise
This is the Baby
When Agnes Caws
Who Invited You?

Illustrator’s Biography
Sally Anne Lambert lives in London and she obtained her B.A. honours degree from Lanchester University, Coventry in Graphic Design. While in her final year at university, Lambert illustrated her first book, The Gingerbread Man by David Wood. She is currently preparing books for Ladybird, Frances Lincoln, Templar, Macdonald and Bantam Presses. Sally Anne Lambert lives and works in a farmhouse in Cumbria.
http://www.netcomuk.co.uk/~jol/sal_cv.html
Related Titles

**Louisiana Tales**
*Alligator Sue* by Sharon Arms Doucet.
*Grandma’s Gumbo* by Deborah Kadair.
*Petite Rouge* by Mike Artell.
*Why Alligator Hates Dog* by J.J. Reneaux.

**Louisiana Alligators Non-Fiction**
*The Alligator* by C.C. Lockwood.

**Folktales**
*Armadillo Chili* by Helen Ketteman.
*Little Red Hen* retold by Barry Downard.
*Guji Guji* by Chih-Yuan Chen.

**Alligator and Crocodile Stories**
*Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* by Bernard Waber.
*The Enormous Crocodile* by Roald Dahl.
*Stone Soup* retold by Heather Forest.

Classroom Connections

**Science: Alligators and other Swamp Animals**
- Students can research alligators and crocodiles to determine their characteristics. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast their characteristics.
- Have the students find the native habitat of alligators on a map. Each student can do a report on the different areas of alligator habitation.
- Students can research the diets and eating habits of the American alligator and the Nile crocodile.
- Students can research possums, otters, and skunks. Students can draw pictures of animals and name some characteristics.
- After drawing pictures students may list a few facts of animals and write a poem using the facts.

**Language Arts**
- Discuss the meaning of trickster tales with the class and give additional examples. Have students research other trickster tales and additional information to have them write a list.
- Compare this tale with story of “The Little Red Hen.” What are the similarities? What are the differences?
- Let the students discuss alternate endings.

**French Language**
- This is a great book for an introduction to the French language. Read the book and explain the meanings of the words to the children. Help the children pronounce the words. Students can use the computer to pronounce the alphabet and beginner words. See the web site About.com: French Language
Students may research how to say other words from the book in French (ex. otter, alligator, possum, skunk). Each student takes a different word to present to the class.

**Louisiana: Cajun Culture**
- This book could be an icebreaker to introduce Louisiana’s Cajun Culture. Students may research on Cajun Culture and write significant facts.
- Students can give presentations on facts, heritage, food, people, and culture (may dress the part).
- Make gumbo and/or other Cajun dishes.
- Let the students research the origin of gumbo. How did it come to America? What are the most common ingredients?
- Have the students write out the recipe for their favorite gumbo or soup

**Drama/Art/Music**
- Create puppets of each of the characters and have the children act out the roles. Incorporate the alternate ending constructed by the students.
- Listen to Zydeco music while reading the story.

**Web Links**

**Author, Illustrator, Book**

**Children’s Literature: Meet the Authors and Illustrators**
http://www.childrenslit.com/f_flemingcandace.html
Site gives details about Candace Fleming and reviews about her books.

**Nancy Keane’s Booktalks**
http://www.nancykeane.com/booktalks/fleming_gator.htm
A “quick and simple” booktalk of *Gator Gumbo* is included on this excellent children’s literature site. Nancy Keane's site is a real gold mine of helpful information.

**Netcomuk: Sally Anne Lambert**
http://www.netcomuk.co.uk/~jol/sal_cv.html
Biographical information about Lambert.

**RIF Reading Planet: Meet the Authors and Illustrators**
http://www.rif.org/readingplanet/bookzone/content/fleming.mspx
The Reading is Fundamental site contains an interview with Fleming about *Benjamin Franklin's Almanac* and has links to activities for children.

**Louisiana**

**C. C. Lockwood**
http://www.cclockwood.com/index.htm
This site includes photographs of Louisiana and the swamps. It also lists Lockwood’s books for children, *The Alligator* and *C. C. Lockwood's Louisiana Nature Guide.*
Center for Cultural and Eco-Tourism at ULL
http://ccet.louisiana.edu/Cajun_and_Creole_Hour/Cajun_and_Creole_Links.html
University of Louisiana at Lafayette site that gives links to sites about Cajun and Creole culture. Topics include definitions, history and music.

Encyclopedia of Cajun Culture
www.cajunculture.com
This site has facts about the Cajun culture, including a section on the Atchafalaya Swamp and the origin of its name.

Louisiana Fine Foods: Great Tastes of the World
http://www.louisianafoods.com/recipes/index.html
This website provides Cajun recipes, including one for “Spicy Gumbo.”

Louisiana Secretary of State
http://www.sec.state.la.us/around/all.htm
This site includes fact about Louisiana and includes a students’ page with links to information about Louisiana and a coloring book.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge
www.fws.gov/atchafalaya
This site describes the Atchafalaya Swamp.

Alligators and Crocodiles

Everglades National Park: Alligators
http://www.nps.gov/ever/eco/gator.htm
This site gives information on alligators. Topics include habitat, size, age, lifecycle, diet, and the differences between alligators and crocodiles.

National Geographic: Lesson Plans (Alligators and Crocodiles)
Lesson plans introduce students to habitats, geographic distribution, and characteristic of three crocodilian species.

French Language

About.com: French Alphabet
http://french.about.com/library/begin/bl_alphabet.htm
Contains links to beginner French sounds for the alphabet to give students the correct pronunciations. This page also contains games and lessons that are fun for learning French.