

Louisiana's Way Home



By

Kate DiCamillo

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 2 or 3 chapters of *Louisiana's Way Home* and is comprised of the following different activities:

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

A portfolio cover (page 7) as well as a Checklist (page 6) are included so that students may keep 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 the struggle for identity, importance of family and a sense of belonging, courage and compassion, friendship, personal growth, acceptance of others.

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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 about personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Solution to a Problem Chart

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

When Louisiana Elefante's granny wakes her up in the middle of the night to tell her that the day of reckoning has arrived and they have to leave home immediately, Louisiana isn't overly worried. After all, Granny has many middle-of-the-night ideas. But this time, things are different. This time, Granny intends for them never to return. Separated from her best friends, Raymie and Beverly, Louisiana struggles to oppose the winds of fate (and Granny) and find a way home. But as Louisiana's life becomes entwined with the lives of the people of a small Georgia town – including a surly motel owner, a walrus-like minister, and a mysterious boy with a crow on his shoulder - she starts to worry that she is destined only for good-byes. (Which could be due to the curse on Louisiana's and Granny's heads.) [Courtesy of the publisher]

Author Biography

Kate DiCamillo

Katrina Elizabeth "Kate" DiCamillo (born March 25, 1964) Born in Philadelphia, DiCamillo suffered from chronic pneumonia. At age five, she moved to Clermont, Florida for her health (warmer climate) with her mother and her older brother Curt DiCamillo, who would become a noted architectural historian. Her mother was a teacher. Her father remained in Pennsylvania to sell his orthodontic practice and never rejoined the family in Florida. DiCamillo earned her college degree in English at the University of Florida in 1987 and worked in Florida after graduation. At age 30 she moved to Minneapolis and began working at a book warehouse. That job inspired her to write for children and allowed her to meet a sales representative for Candlewick Press, resulting in submission of a draft that would become *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Her 2003 novel *The Tale of Despereaux* was inspired by a friend's son, Luke Bailey, who asked her to write about an unlikely hero with "exceptionally large ears". (Courtesy of Wikipedia)



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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

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Name:

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Chapters 1-2



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *Louisiana's Way Home* is, of course, twelve-year-old Louisiana, who is not really your typical protagonist (as you will soon find out). Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. Who would you say is your *most favorite* character ever? What made you select this character?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

destiny	provisions	confronted	devastation
irrevocable	inopportune	miscalculated	exasperated

1. Bob _____ his fears by climbing to the top of the CN Tower.
2. I always felt that my _____ included a trip to the moon.
3. Charlene felt so _____ that she slammed her book down on the desk.
4. “The contract is _____,” the lawyer warned them.
5. The town faced _____ when the tornado touched down.
6. Be sure to stock up on _____. It's going to be a long winter.
7. I'm afraid I _____, and the trip will take longer than I expected.
8. “She always calls at the most _____ time,” my mother complained.

Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One.

2. What seemed to be hanging over Granny and Louisiana as the novel begins?

3. What seemed to be Granny's primary goal in this late night adventure?

4. Circle **True** or **False** or fill in the blanks.

- a) They left Louisiana's cat, Archie, behind in Florida. True or False
- b) When Louisiana woke up they had just crossed the Louisiana state line. True or False
- c) The only reason Granny finally stopped was because they ran out of gas. True or False
- d) The names of Louisiana's best friends were _____ and _____.

5. Describe your impression of Granny at this point in the story.

6. Why did Granny tell Louisiana that she should *choose smiling*?

7. Louisiana lists three things that she and Granny did to get by. What were they?

1		2		3	
---	--	---	--	---	--

8. When Louisiana tells Vic that she had been made to leave home against her will, Vic responds, "That right there is the story of the world." What do you think he meant?

9. According to Louisiana, what was the only good thing that had happened to her since she had left Florida? How did she take advantage of this good thing?

Language Activities



A. Georgia

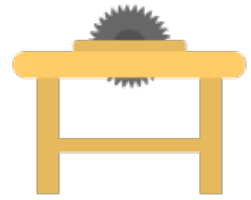
Louisiana and Granny end up leaving Florida and arrive in the neighboring state of Georgia. How much do you know about this beautiful state? Did you know, for instance, that the state was named after King George II of Great Britain? Did you know that Georgia has more soil types than any other state? Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three additional interesting facts about this state and record them below.



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 two chapters of *Louisiana's Way Home*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
destiny		The degree of compactness of a substance.
shape		Stage; period.
asleep		Used in polite requests.
stars		Former Russian kings.
ideas		Out of the way.
heart		Dirt.
stains		Oh when the _____, come marching in.

Now find two additional words from the first two chapters which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.

Word	Anagram	Clue

C. Next to each pair of words indicate whether each is an example of a Synonym (S), Antonym (A), or Homophone (H).

1	tragic - comic		6	devastation - havoc	
2	bright - dazzling		7	knot - not	
3	never - often		8	miscalculate - understand	
4	heart - hart		9	proven - confirmed	
5	serious - grave		10	despair - joy	

D. A Quatrain Poem Celebrates Robots.

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 the first four lines of the famous poem, **Going on a Trip**, written by the renowned poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*Tomorrow we're going
On a trip to the fair,
It takes a couple of days
So pack some underwear.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A – B – C – 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 two chapters of our novel (like **trips, grandmothers or Georgia**).

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: _____

E. Cliffhanger

Chapter Two contains an important literary device called a **cliffhanger**. A cliffhanger usually occurs at the end of a chapter when the author leaves the reader in suspense. Why would Chapter Two qualify as cliffhanger? Or would it? Why do you think writers often end their chapters in this way?



F. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. The following is an example taken from Chapter Two: *The chair made a squeaky exasperated noise at it rolled toward me.*



Describe how the chair is personified in this example.

Create your own example of personification.

As you continue to read through the novel be on the lookout for other examples of this literary device. If you should find one, come back to this question and enter it below.

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 two chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6