



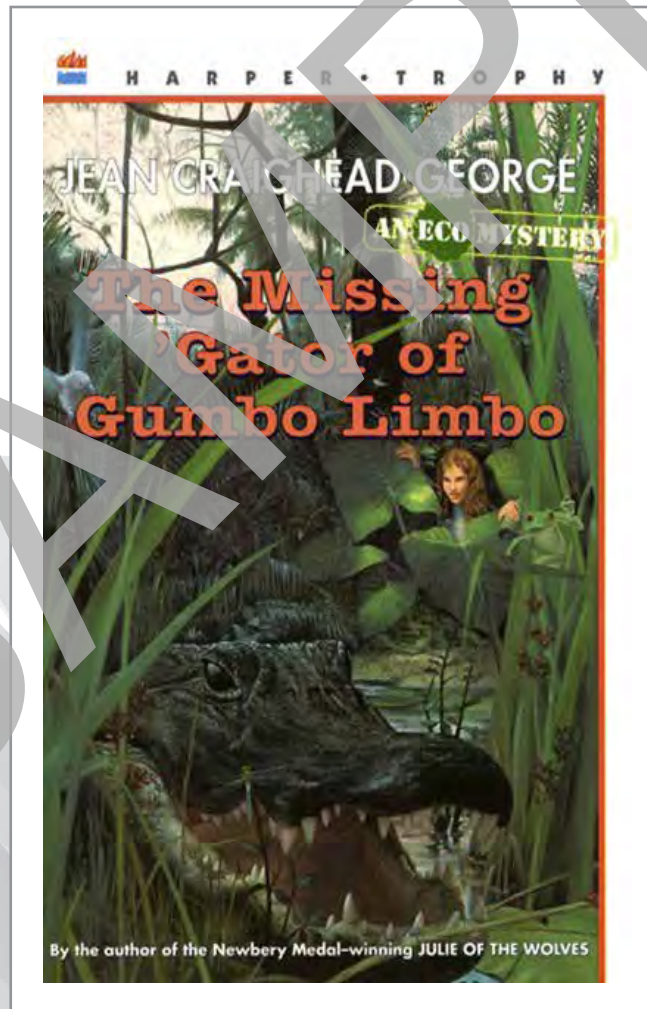
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Missing 'Gator of Gumbo Limbo

Jean Craighead George



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Missing 'Gator of Gumbo Limbo

Jean Craighead George

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

ISBN 978-1-50204-003-9

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, classifying,
research, visualization,
evaluation

Writing

Poetry, expressive

Vocabulary

Antonyms/synonyms,
analogies, word mapping

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, role play

Comprehension

Predicting, comparison/
contrast

Literary Elements

Characterization, similes,
personification

Summary of The Missing 'Gator of Gumbo Limbo, An Ecological Mystery:

Liza K. and her mother live in a secret Hammock in the Everglades, along with three other "woods people." Their peaceful ecosystem is about to be destroyed by a hired alligator killer who is looking for Dajun, the protective dragon of Gumbo Limbo. However, Dajun is missing! Liza K. tries to think like a nature detective as she unravels clues to the whereabouts of the alligator. As she searches, Liza K. finds dead fish, polluted water, the dreaded blue-green algae and other indications that all is not well in the environment. Will Dajun and the ecosystem be destroyed? Amass the clues with Liza K. and discover the answer.

About the Author:

Jean Craighead George is an American children's author. She won the 1973 Newbery Medal for her novel *Julie of the Wolves*. George was born in Washington, D.C. in 1919. Her best-known books are about nature subjects.

George attended Pennsylvania State University, BA, 1941; Louisiana State University, 1941-42; and the University of Michigan. Her interests include painting, field trips to universities and laboratories of natural science, modern dance, and white-water canoeing.

Since 1948, George has given young readers many fascinating glimpses of nature. Her books are distinguished by authentic detail and a blend of scientific curiosity, wonder, and concern for the natural environment, all expressed in a manner critics have described as both unsentimental and lyrical. Action, vividly drawn settings, and believable characters invigorate her stories. She has described her abilities as, "that spark in the far right-hand corner (of the brain) that makes each of us different from everyone else."

Note:

Please be selective and use discretion when choosing the activities that you will do with the unit. It is not intended that everything be done, but that the discretionary choices that are made are the most appropriate for your use and group of students. A wide range has been provided, so that individuals as well as groups may benefit from these selections.

Initiating Activity:

Before starting this unit, please go to the library and take out books to use in the classroom in the areas on which you will concentrate during the time of this unit, such as those authored by Jean Craighead George, those concerning ecology and environmental issues, those pertaining to the Everglades National Park, and those pertaining to homelessness and to child abuse.

Make some banners to put on display in the room that pertain to the novel, such as:

ECOSYSTEM ALERT!

THE EVERGLADES AND YOU

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS DAJUN?

Nature's Clues to *Disaster!*

Have a map on display so that the Everglades in Florida may be located and discussed. (The free map from the Everglades National Park is excellent. See Resource Information for address.)

Make a large chart, similar to the one that follows, to put on display. This chart will be filled in as the items on it are discussed by the members of the group during the prereading discussion that follows.

NATURE DETECTIVE

<p><u>Definition:</u></p> <p><u>Qualifications:</u></p> <p><u>Job Description:</u></p> <p><u>Environmental Clues/Descriptions:</u></p>
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When ready to start the unit, have the books, banners, chart, map, etc. on display. Ask for volunteers to predict the topic to be studied, and discuss the reasons for the predictions. Go on to Previewing the Book.

Chapter 7, “The Red Feather”—Pages 96-110

Vocabulary:

condescending 102 phenomenon 103 sedately 105

Vocabulary Activity:

Define the vocabulary words and then use all of them in the same comprehensive sentence. For example:

Condescending: acting with an air of superiority

Phenomenon: a marvel

Sedately: calmly

He *sedately* viewed the *phenomenon* of the hammock, and spoke of it in a *condescending* manner.

Discussion Questions:

1. Liza K. thinks of Priscilla after James James says that he had figured wrong about her. “If I had learned nothing else from nature, I had learned that once the butterfly steps into the light, it can’t go back into the cocoon.” (page 101) How do you relate Liza K.’s thought to Priscilla? What has happened that allows the others to know more about Priscilla? Discuss the ways in which people “hide” their true selves.
2. The chapter ends on page 110 with Liza K. talking to the parrot. She tells it, “Gugh-night? Sir bird, you’ve just solved the mystery of the missing alligator. I am going to name you Sherlock Holmes.” You and Liza K. have the same clues. Review them, and discuss the clues with others. Do you know where Dajun is hiding? Make a prediction.

Postreading Activities:

1. As the sun comes up, Liza K. looks out on the beach for Dajun. He is not there, so she calls out, “Where are you?” (page 104) Use personification, and imagine that Dajun answers Liza K. Write out a dialogue between the two friends.
(*PERSONIFICATION:* When a writer attributes human characteristics to those things which are clearly not human, [such as objects, things, ideas and animals], the technique is called *personification*.)
2. Liza K. realizes, (page 105), that the armadillo does not go into the hammock because it is not part of its niche. “You come from the southwest, where your ancestors fed on scorpions, fire ants, roaches, and tarantulas—in the pines and chaparral—never in a rich, moist hammock.”