




## A LEARNING GUIDE FOR

Aligned with the Common Core Standards

# Time of the Fireflies

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By Kimberley Griffiths Little



## Fantastic Reviews!

“Little’s strengths lie in building a strong sense of the history of a place, its inhabitants, and how one can greatly affect the other. A satisfyingly creepy mystery, wrapped up in the bonds of family.”  
—Publisher’s Weekly

“Haunting, well-constructed tale . . . A plot filled with suspense, adventure, and mystery. Perfect choice for lovers of ghost stories, historical fiction, or just a good yarn.”  
—School Library Journal

“Suspense builds quickly and doesn’t falter . . . Larissa’s first-person narration is fresh and engaging, and the richly evoked south Louisiana setting serves to ground this ethereal tale in a real time and place while contributing to the mysterious mood it requires.”  
—Kirkus Reviews

## Synopsis

When Larisa Renaud starts receiving eerie phone calls on a disconnected old phone in her family’s antique shop, she just knows she’s in for a strange summer. A series of clues leads her to the muddy riverbank, where clouds of fireflies dance among the cypress knees and cattails each evening at twilight. The fireflies are beautiful and mysterious, and they take Larissa on a magical journey through time, where she learns the secrets of her family’s tragic past—deadly, curse-ridden secrets that could endanger the future of her family as she knows it. And when her mother suddenly disappears, it becomes clear that it is up to Larissa to prevent history from repeating itself, and a fatal tragedy from striking the people she loves.

## Pre-Reading/Prediction Questions

- ◆ Where is the girl on the front cover? Does it look magical or scary to you? Why?
- ◆ What can you tell about the girl whose picture is on the cover? How old do you think she is? Why do you think there are fireflies all around her?
- ◆ In this story, the main character lives in an antique shop. Have you ever been to an antique shop before? What kinds of things do they have at an antique shop?
- ◆ Because this book has a lot of fireflies in it, start a KWL chart about fireflies (What Do I **K**now; What Do I **W**ant to Know; What Did I **L**earn). Fill in the K and W columns with the students. Add any important details not mentioned such as: Fireflies are winged beetles. They are called fireflies or lightning bugs because they emit light in either yellow, green, or a pale red color from their abdomen to attract a mate. The light is produced through a chemical reaction called bioluminescence. Most live in wet, wooded, and warmer climates all over the world. As you read the book and/or at the conclusion, fill in the L column with anything the students learned about fireflies.



# Group Discussion/Journal Questions

## Chapter 1 (CCR.R.1)

Make a prediction—who do you think is on the other end of the phone that’s not hooked up to an outside line? What does the voice tell her to do?

## Chapter 2 (CCR.R.1)

Draw a sketch of Larissa and write a paragraph to describe her. Cite at least four things that you know about her.

What is the routine that Larissa and her father do before they close the antique store for the night?

## Chapter 3 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.6)

What details does Larissa give about her scar accident that others who were there would not know? Do you think Larissa has all of her facts correct? Why or why not?

What is the item in the antique store that is not for sale and why not?

## Chapter 4 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.6)

From Larissa’s mother’s point of view, what should have happened after the accident and why does she feel that way?

What do Larissa’s parents fight about at dinner? What are the problems they are facing?

Who is Gwen and what happened to her?

## Chapter 5 (CCR.R.1)

Who owns the house on the island across the Bayou Teche? Who used to live there?

What strange occurrences happened to Larissa at the pier with the fireflies?

## Chapter 6 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.6)

What is Larissa’s point of view about Alyson? Do you think she is correct? Why or why not?

## Chapter 7 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.4)

What does it mean to be optimistic and pessimistic? (see pg. 66). Which parent is optimistic and which is pessimistic? What are some indications from the clues in the text?

What are the strange things that happen every time Larissa looks at or passes by the doll in the cupboard? What do you think is going on?

Who leads Larissa across the bridge and what miraculously happens so that she can cross it over to the island? What do you think is happening?

## Chapter 8 (CCR.R.1)

What was different about the house that Larissa sees? Why does it look different?

Several new characters from 1912 are identified in this chapter. Write down their names in your journal and their relation to each other.

What is Anna asking Mister Lance to do with his shovel? What is she looking for?

## Chapter 9 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.4)

Use the context clues to determine the meaning of “tenuous” (bottom of page 94).

As Larissa looks through the family Bible, there is a genealogy chart at the back. Write the names from the chart in your journal and any known relations to each other. What does Larissa discover about who Anna Normand is?

How does Larissa feel about Anna Normands’ life in the mansion? How do you know? Why do you think she feels that way?

## Chapter 10 (CCR.R.1)

What happens when Larissa runs into Alyson Granger?

Where did Uncle Edgar just return from and what two gifts did he bring for Anna? And what did he give Dulcie, the house servant’s daughter? Why does Larissa recognize the doll?

### Teaching Tip (CCR.SL.1)

*Have students talk to a partner before writing their responses to the questions or sharing them orally.*

## Chapter 11 (CCR.R.1)

Using the clues from the text, what kind of person is Anna? How do you know?

## Chapter 12 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3)

When Alyson rescues Larissa with the boat, what does Larissa learn about Alyson that surprises her? Do you think Larissa’s feelings about Alyson will change because of it?

## Chapter 13 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3)

Larissa’ mother thinks that there is a curse on her family, or the town of Bayou Bridge. Why does she think that? What are some of the tragic events that have occurred over the years? Why do you think they keep happening? What may the doll have to do with it?

The girl on the phone knows a lot about Larissa. Who do you think she is?

## Chapter 14 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3)

What connection does Larissa feel with Dulcie and why?

## Chapter 15 and 16 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3)

What does Larissa witness about her family in the past—what other tragedies occurred?

## Chapter 17 (CCR.R.1)

What does Larissa learn about Alyson when she relives her accident at the bridge?

## Chapter 18 and 19 (CCR.R.1)

Where do you think Larissa’s mother went? Why do you think that?

## Chapter 20 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3)

What are some clues to how the relationship between Larissa and Alyson is changing?

Larissa realizes that the doll is present at every single tragic family event. What could be the connection between the doll and the tragedies?

## Chapter 21 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3, CCR.R.6, CCR.R.7)

Larissa’s grandmother, Kat, shares the story of their family that Larissa experienced. What new information does Kat give the story from her point of view? What does she say about all of the family tragedies that have occurred? What do Kat and Larissa have in common other than their family history?

Where do you think Larissa is going to look for her mother? Why do you think that?

With the information from the book, fill in as many family members as you can on a pedigree chart, starting with Larissa at the bottom of the chart.

## Chapter 22 and 23 (CCR.R.1)

What does Larissa learn about the doll?

## Chapter 24 (CCR.R.1)

What happens at the cemetery and what do you think Larissa needs to do with the doll to break the curse?

## Chapter 25 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.4)

What does Larissa lose?

Alyson and Larissa are going to Miz Mirage’s house with the doll. She called Miz Mirage a *traiteur*. Using the context, what is a *traiteur*? What do you think she can do to help break the curse?

## Chapter 26 (CCR.R.1)

What does Larissa realize about herself as she helps remove the spirit from the doll?

## Chapter 27 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.4)

What do Larissa and Sophie exchange?

When leaving Sophie’s house, Larissa describes her feelings as “my heart so full I thought it would bust.” What does that mean and why do you think she feels that way?

## Chapter 28 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3, CCR.R.4)

Grandma Kat says, “Not until all is lost does something wonderful rise out of the ashes!” How does this apply to what happens in this chapter?

## Epilogue (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2, CCR.R.3, CCR.R.5)

Go back to your prediction you made after Chapter 1 and Chapter 13 as to who was calling on the phone. Now that you know who the girl on the telephone was, can you go back and find any clues the author gives as to her identity?

How has Larissa changed through her experiences? What can you also learn from them?



# Curriculum Connections

## Teaching Tip

Students can feel a new connection to *Time of the Fireflies* by doing a project that correlates with the setting, plot or characters in the book. Have the students pick one or more of the projects below to do either while they are reading the book or as a culminating project after finishing the novel. The idea is to have them choose something that interests them and have fun! These can be completed at school or at home. When the projects are finished, have the students share it with the class. They could also be shared at a parents' night or Open House.

## HISTORY

(CCR.R.1, CCR.W.2, CCR.W.7)

Larissa travels back in time to the year 1912. Research race relations between whites and blacks during the early 1900's in the southern states. How is this history reflected in Larissa's ancestors that she visits? How does it compare and contrast to race relations today? Write a one page report of your findings citing evidence you find in the text.

## GENEALOGY

(CCR.W.7, CCR.SL.4)

Larissa witnesses and learns about her family's history going back several generations. Research the genealogy of your family and fill out a pedigree chart up to 4 generations. (Go to <http://www.genealogysearch.org/free/forms.html> for a blank pedigree chart.) Pick one ancestor on your chart to research. Write down some of their history, then share it with your class.

## LANGUAGE ARTS

(CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2, CCR.W.9, CCR.R.10, CCR.W.2, CCR.W.3)

Kimberley Griffiths Little has written several other books with a similar setting to *Time of the Fireflies* (see the last page of this guide). Read either *The Healing Spell*, *Circle of Secrets*, or *When the Butterflies Came*, and write an essay that compares and contrasts the setting, characters, and themes of one of those books to *Time of the Fireflies*.

## ART

(CCR.R.1, CCR.R.7)

Make a Firefly Jar that Glows! Measure enough light blue paper to cover a large canning jar (up to, but not covering the lid).. Lay the paper flat. Dip your index finger in bright yellow paint, and then making firefly bodies by pressing your fingerprint all over your bug jar. Let the prints dry and then brush on glow-in-the-dark paint with a Q-tip. Add wings with a white pencil or crayon. Glue the blue paper to the jar and you'll have "lightning in a jar!" (Adapted from [www.TeachWithMe.com](http://www.TeachWithMe.com))

## WRITING

(CCR.W.4, CCR.W.10, CCR.SL.6)

In the book, Larissa's mother keeps a Bible with names written in it as a way of keeping records. Many people today keep a journal to write down their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Keep a journal of your own for one month. What is important to you? What are some experiences that you have? After a month, reread your journal and reflect on what you have written. Write a one paragraph reflection of what you experienced or noticed by writing in a journal and share it with the class.

## BIOLOGY

(CCR.W.7, CCR.SL.2, CCR.SL.4, CCR.SL.5)

Fireflies are a type of Lampyridae, or beetle. There are many other types of beetles in the world. Research 6 different types of beetles, including the firefly. Make a scientific journal or PowerPoint presentation with labeled diagrams of each type of beetle, and facts about each one including where they live, what they eat, and either a special characteristic to them, or something special that they can do. Present your findings to your classmates.



**Teaching Tip**  
 Have your firefly activity at night and invite parents. Under the moonlight, light strings, lanterns, or a campfire, students or parents can read books about fireflies, and everyone can do a firefly art activity while enjoying “firefly food”. (Although a campfire would make it special, be sure to check with your school administrator before having a real campfire.)

## Celebrate! A Night with the Fireflies!

### Read About Fireflies! (CCR.R.10)

- Fireflies* by Julie Brinckloe, Fiction
- Fireflies* by Margaret Hall, Non-Fiction
- The Fireflies Book: Fun Facts About Fireflies You Loved as a Kid*, by Brett Ortler, Non-Fiction
- It's a Firefly Night*, by Dianne Ochiltree, Non-Fiction
- Next Time You See a Firefly*, by Emily Morgan, Non-Fiction
- When the Fireflies Come*, by Jonathan London, Fiction
- Living Lights: Fireflies in Your Backyard*, by Nancy Loewen, Non-Fiction

### Make Firefly Art!

Materials Needed for One Firefly:

- A plastic Easter Egg (preferably red, green, or yellow to mimic a firefly)
- Two yellow pipe cleaners
- Two plastic googly eyes
- Mini glue dots to attach the eyes and wings
- Yellow or white tissue paper for the wings

Directions:

- Pre-cut the holes in the Easter egg for the 6 legs and 2 antennae
- Cut the pipe cleaners into 6 shorter pieces for the legs and 2 longer pieces for the antennae
- Cut the tissue paper into two wings
- Put the flameless candle inside the egg (turn it on first)
- Poke the pipe cleaners through the holes.

### Eat with the Fireflies!

(The foods listed below will glow when exposed to *black light*, so to get the full effect of “firefly food”, have your eats under a *black light*.)

1. Make yellow-colored Jello (i.e., lemon, pineapple, etc.) made with tonic water (the tonic water will make it glow). You could cut the Jello into the shape of a firefly for even more fun!
2. Serve bananas. The more ripe the banana, the more it will glow under a black light.
3. Marshmallows will also glow under a black light, so of course, you need to serve S’mores! The ultimate food to eat under a campfire! If you cannot have lit charcoal or a campfire, then a hot plate could be used to roast the marshmallows. Add a chocolate candy bar and graham crackers and you have the perfect treat!

## About the Author

Kimberley Griffiths Little is the author of *When the Butterflies Came*, *Circle of Secrets*, *The Healing Spell* and the critically acclaimed novels *Breakaway*, *Enchanted Runner*, and *The Last Snake Runner*. She is the winner of the Southwest Book Award, the Whitney Award, and has been starred on the Bank Street College Best Books of the Year for 2011 and 2014.

She grew up reading a book a day and scribbling stories, while dreaming of one day seeing her name in the library card catalog.

Kimberley lives in a solar adobe house near the banks of the Rio Grande in New Mexico with her husband and their three sons.

Visit her at [www.kimberleygriffithslittle.com](http://www.kimberleygriffithslittle.com) to view fantastic book trailers filmed on location, as well as direct links to PDF’s of Learning Guides and Book Clubs Guides for all of her titles.

## Books by KIMBERLEY GRIFFITHS LITTLE

### Middle Grade Novels

- When the Butterflies Came*, Scholastic Press
- Circle of Secrets*, Scholastic Press
- The Healing Spell*, Scholastic Press
- The Last Snake Runner*, Random House
- Enchanted Runner*, Avon Books
- Breakaway*, Avon Books

### Young Adult Novels

- Forbidden*, HarperCollins