

**CYRM Resource Book  
Middle School/  
Junior High Nominees  
(Grades 6-8)  
2009-2010**

***Alabama Moon***

by Watt Key

Straus & Giroux, 2006

***Blood on the River: James Town 1607***

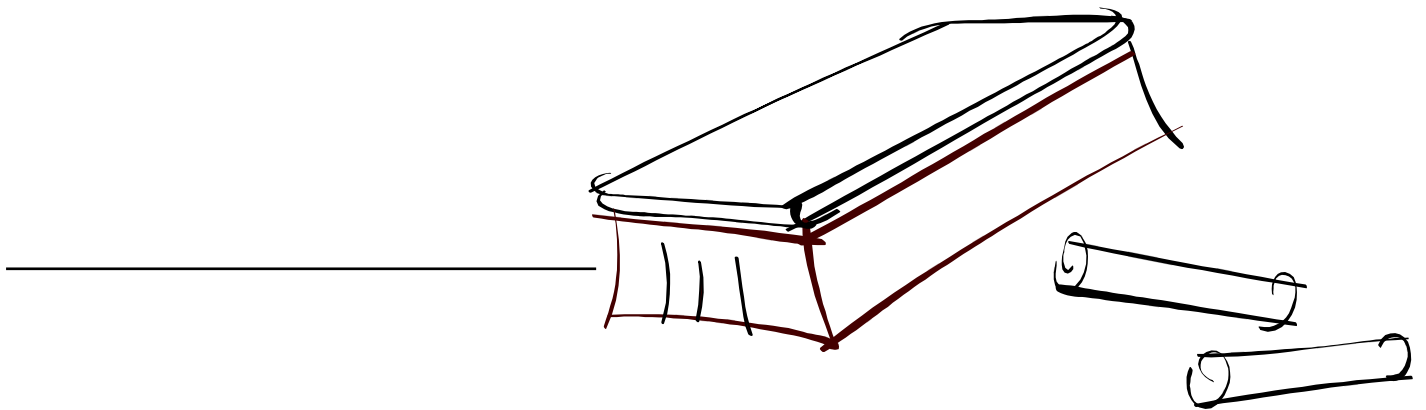
by Elisa Carbone

Viking, 2006

***The Wednesday Wars***

by Gary D. Schmidt

Clarion Books, 2007



California Young Reader Medal  
**Middle School/Junior High**  
**Ballot**  
**2009-2010**

\_\_\_\_\_ *Alabama Moon*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Blood on the River:  
James Town 1607*

\_\_\_\_\_ *The Wednesday Wars*

California Young Reader Medal  
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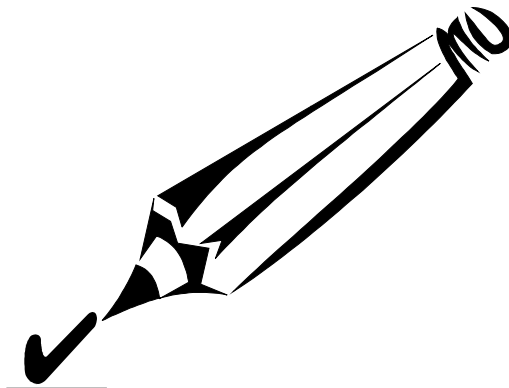
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# ***Alabama Moon***

by Watt Key



## **Synopsis**

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Ten-year-old Moon Blake knows only two people: his dad, Pap, a Vietnam veteran who hates the government; and Mr. Abroscotto, a storekeeper who buys their vegetables in exchange for provisions. Moon's parents were survivalists, people who don't trust the government and live without any government services – no electricity, no phone, no public school, no cars. But Moon's father has just died at the beginning of the book. He died because he wouldn't seek medical treatment for a broken leg. Before dying, his father tells Moon to go to Alaska because "no one would find him" and "people could still make a living off trapping." Moon is soon discovered, and the government that his dad so hated, gets involved.

Having no place else to put him until foster care is set up, Moon is placed in a juvenile detention center populated by juvenile delinquents. In an exciting escape and chase, Moon makes both friends and enemies and begins to question the way of life his father wanted him to have.



## **Hooks**

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- Survivalists cut themselves off as much as possible from society and live in the woods with no electrical or phone connections. What would you need to know in order to live like this?
- Why don't some people trust the government? What are they afraid the government might do?
- What happens when teenagers break the law and get caught?
- What kinds of teenage mistakes do you think deserve going to jail?
- Do rich kids end up in jail when they break the law?
- Are any beliefs worth dying for? What would they be?
- What might happen to a child nowadays who is an orphan and has no known relatives?

### **Meet the Author—Watt Key**

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Watt Key was born in 1970 and grew up in southern Alabama. He spent his childhood hunting, fishing, and enjoying the forests of his home state, like his protagonist, Moon. He earned a bachelor's degree at Birmingham-Southern College, and continues to live in Alabama with his wife and family.

*Alabama Moon* is Key's debut novel. It has been praised by reviewers, won the 2007 E.B. White Read-Aloud Award, and is an American Library Association 2008 Best Book for Young Adults.

Watt Key has written the screenplay for the movie, *Alabama Moon*, which is in production and should be out in 2009. The movie is being directed by Tim McCanlies and will star Jimmy Bennett as Moon.

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For more information, see:

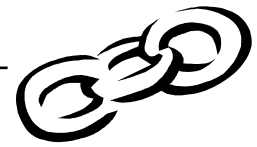
<http://www.wattkey.com/>

*Contemporary Authors*, Volume 257 (Gale, 2007).

*Literature Resource Center* database (Gale, 2009).

## **Connections for *Alabama Moon***

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View the Study Guide from the author's site:

<http://www.wattkey.com/lessons.htm>

### **Survival**

George, Jean Craighead. *Julie of the Wolves*. Harper & Row, 1972.

Mikaelson, Ben. *Touching Spirit Bear*. Harper Collins, 2001.

Paulsen, Gary. *Hatchet*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1987.

### **Wilderness Survival**

This has an article to read and a quiz to take:

<http://www.wilderness-survival.net/>

### **Stories of Wilderness Survival**

[http://outside.away.com/outside/features/200409/top\\_survival\\_stories\\_1.html](http://outside.away.com/outside/features/200409/top_survival_stories_1.html)

### **Foster Care/Juvenile Detention**

Byars, Betsy Cromer. *The Pinballs*. Harper and Row, 1977.

Paterson, Katherine. *The Great Gilly Hopkins*. HarperCollins, 1978.

Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.

### **Information on Juvenile Detention Facilities**

<http://www.scservice.org/juvdel/detention.htm>

### **Children's Aid Society**

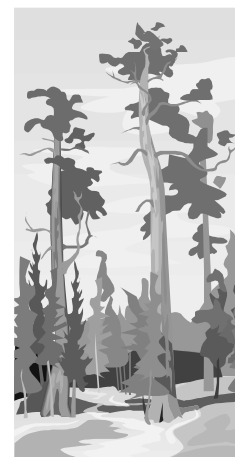
<http://www.childaid.org/>

## Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions for *Alabama Moon*

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- How does Pap fail in his responsibility to Moon when he refuses medical help for his broken leg?
- How does Constable Sanders confirm Pap's view of the law?
- Discuss the importance of father-son relationships by discussing the relationship of Moon and Pap, Hal and his daddy, and Kit and his lack of a father. Why are fathers so important?
- While in jail, Obregon tells Moon that Sanders does not have any friends. Why do you think this is so?
- How does Kit's health tie him to civilization?
- Moon's father taught him wilderness survival skills and how to be independent. What did Moon lack in his education?
- Is Hal a good guy or a bad guy? What clues does the author give to the reader to convey that Hal is actually not such a bad guy? Use examples from the book to explain.
- After defending his father for so long, what was the final realization or event that caused Moon to question Pap's beliefs?
- What other wilderness survival novels have you read? How are they like *Alabama Moon*, and how are they different?
- By the end of the book, do you think Moon is ready to with a family in a community? Why or why not?



# ***Blood on the River: James Town 1607***

by Elisa Lynn Carbone



## **Synopsis**

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Twelve-year-old Samuel Collier is taken from an orphanage to serve Captain John Smith on his voyage to the New World. Independence and self-preservation, skills he learned on the streets of London and in the orphanage, have proven successful to this point in his life. But as his adventure unfolds, Samuel learns from his new master that independence is less valuable than the ability to get along with others. As he learns to work with and trust others, he is also able to accomplish difficult tasks, and survive in an unforgiving New World. Samuel slowly grows into a new humanity as he survives the stormy journey and his first contacts with the native people. These experiences have both peaceful and violent elements. This story is written using extensive research and primary sources. This story is based on characters who once lived in James Town.

## **Hooks**

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- Long ago, orphaned children lived on the streets of London. What happens to orphaned children now? How do you think orphans survived the streets of London in the 17th century? How do you think they got food?
- Can you picture coming to a completely undeveloped new land?
- What needs to be done to build a lasting settlement in the wilderness?
- England saw Spain becoming rich from all the gold the Spanish took from Native Americans. Did the English find gold in North America?
- Who were John Smith and Pocahontas?
- Native Americans didn't want more Europeans to come and take over their land. What did they do? Would anything stop the Europeans from coming?

## ***Blood on the River: James Town 1607***

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### **Meet the Author— Elisa Carbone**

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Elisa Carbone ("ay-LEE-za car-BONE") was born on January 2, 1954 in Washington D.C. Though she wrote her first book when she was four years old, she did not write another book until adulthood. She married young and earned her college degrees, a bachelor's degree and two master's degrees, while her children were growing up. She has been a teacher in music and dance, an educational consultant, a college instructor, and is now a full-time writer of contemporary and historical fiction for young people.

For all of her education, Ms. Carbone is no desk-bound academic. For recreation, she enjoys rock climbing, windsurfing, cross-country skiing, and white water rafting. These athletic pursuits, she says, teach her focus and concentration that aid in her writing. She also likes to enact scenes from her books, such as "trudging along the North Carolina beach during gale force winds" (<http://www.elisacarbone.com/bio.html>) to understand and describe the conditions her characters experience.

Ms. Carbone's books are frequently mentioned with consideration by many award-giving bodies. *Blood on the River: James Town 1607* (2006) is a Notable Social Studies Trade Book for 2007; *Stealing Freedom* (1999) is an ALA Best Books for Young Adults for 2000; and *Storm Warriors* (2001) is an ALA Notable Book for Children for 2002.

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<http://www.elisacarbone.com/>

*Authors and Artists for Young Adults*, Volume 67 (Gale, 2006).

*Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series*, Volume 116 (Gale, 2003).

*Literature Resource Center* database (Gale, 2009).

*Something About the Author*, Volume 81 (Gale, 1995).

*Something About the Author*, Volume 137 (Gale, 2003).

*Something About the Author*, Volume 173 (Gale, 2007).



## **Connections for *Blood on the River:* *James Town 1607***

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### **Additional Reading**

Karwoski, Gail Langer. *Surviving Jamestown: The Adventures of Young Sam Collier*. Illustrated by Paul Casale, Peachtree Publishers, 2001.

Lange, Karen E., *1607: A New Look at Jamestown*. National Geographic Society, 2007.

Schanzer, Rosalyn. *John Smith Escapes Again!* National Geographic Society, 2006.

Sakurai, Gail. *The Jamestown Colony*. Children's Press, 1997.

### **Study guide from author's website**

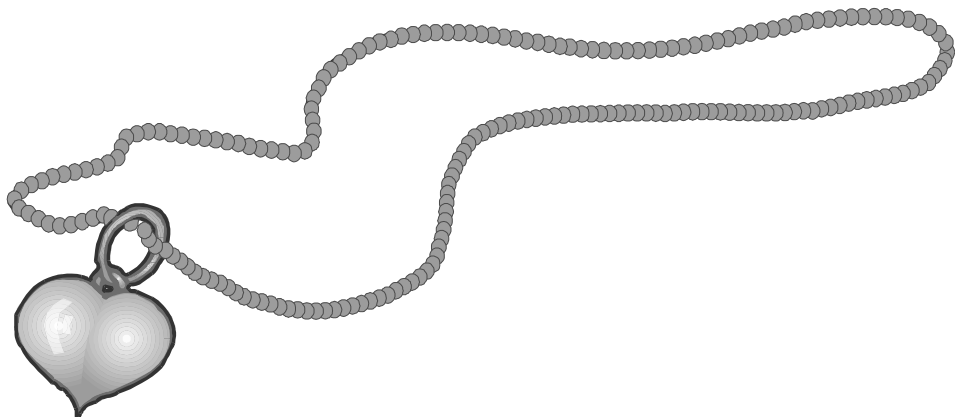
<http://www.elisacarbone.com/educators/BloodRiverStudyGuide.html>

### **Learn more about Jamestown at:**

<http://www.historyisfun.org/Jamestown-Chrono.htm>

Virtual Jamestown has many primary sources as well as the complete writings of John Smith:

<http://www.virtualjamestown.org/firsthand.html>



## **Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions for *Blood on the River: James Town 1607***

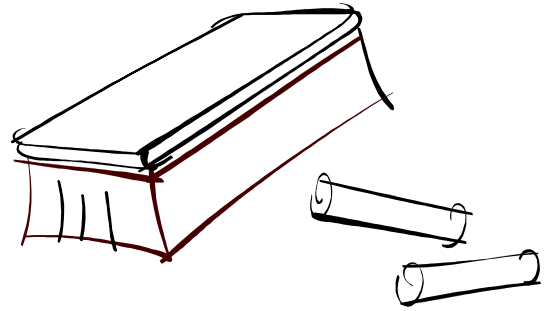
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- Why does Captain John Smith complain that the investors of the Virginia Company chose too many gentlemen and not enough commoners for the colony at Jamestown?
- Describe how Samuel grows from not trusting anyone to becoming a young man who realizes that the colony must stand on many legs to survive. What events pushed him to change?
- Namontack says “What happens to one of us happens to all of us.” How does this attitude compare to the attitude of the gentleman colonists? Do you agree or disagree with Namontack? Explain your thinking.
- Compare the leadership style of Master Wingfield and that of Captain John Smith.
- Why do the males of the Warraskoyack village shave the right side of their heads? Why do they smear their bodies with bear grease and red puccoon dye? Do these practices make them a savage society? Why or why not?
- What valuable life lessons does Reverend Hunt teach Samuel?
- What are the goals of the Virginia Company for the Jamestown colony? What is the goal of the Jamestown settlers? Are the goals realistic? How do these goals conflict and agree?
- Each chapter opens with a quotation from a primary source. What are primary sources, and why are they important to the study of history? What weakness do primary sources have?
- When Namontack returns to Virginia from England, Reverend Hunt unsuccessfully attempts to convert him to Christianity. How is this novel a clash of cultural values? Give specific examples of differences between Powhatan and English cultures.

# ***Wednesday Wars***

by Gary D. Schmidt



## **Synopsis**

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As if a name like Holling Hoodhood wasn't tough enough to carry into Junior High, Holling also has to spend time each week, alone with his teacher who hates him. Why does he think his teacher, Mrs. Baker, hates him? She keeps giving him the evil eye, calls him Mr. Hoodhood, which he hates, and assigns him Shakespeare plays to read. Of course, the class bully can't help but threaten a kid with such an odd name. He keeps threatening to do Number 167 (and you don't even want to know what Number 167 is). But things start changing subtly as Holling discovers Shakespeare with curses from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Holling's family tries to appear Perfect, but is far from it with a rebellious, but peace loving older sister, and his father, who was named Town Businessman of 1967, and plans to earn it in 1968 as well. Set in the turmoil of 1968, this "school story" is anything but typical.

## **Hooks**

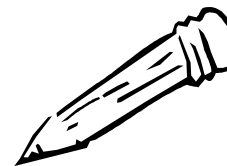
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- Have you ever felt like your teacher didn't like you?
- How do you know if a teacher likes you or not? What are the signs?
- Do you think you would enjoy reading Shakespeare's plays? What do you know about any of his plays?
- Why is cursing against the rules?
- When do people curse (or want to curse)?
- Would you like to learn some old curse words?
- What are some words that are fun to say?



### **Meet the Author—Gary D. Schmidt**

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Gary D. Schmidt was born in Hicksville, New York. He did not plan to be either a teacher or a writer, but a series of excellent English instructors in college swayed him into his current vocation. In addition to writing books, Mr. Schmidt is also a professor of English and children's literature at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He and his wife, Anne, have six children.

Mr. Schmidt has written seventeen books for young people, including the Newbery Honor books, *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy* (2004) and *The Wednesday Wars* (2007). Other notable titles include *Mara's Stories* (2001) and *The Sin Eater* (1996). He has written fifteen books for adults, articles, essays, reviews, and more.

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For more information, see:

*Authors and Artists for Young Adults*, Volume 73 (Gale, 2007).

*Contemporary Authors*, Volume 158 (Gale, 1998).

*Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series*, Volume 113 (Gale, 2003).

DeVries, Myrna. "Opening the Book that is Gary Schmidt." *Spark Online* spring 2006.

<http://www.calvin.edu/publications/spark/>.

*Literature Resource Center* database (Gale, 2009).

*Something About the Author*, Volume 93 (Gale, 1997).

*Something About the Author*, Volume 135 (Gale, 2003).



### Interview with the author, Gary D. Schmidt

<http://www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6438766.html>

### Major Events of 1967 – 1968

An overview of important events in the year, 1968:

<http://www.history.com/states.do?parentId=1968>

Kaufman, Michael T. *1968*. New York, Flash Point, 2009.

King, Christine Farris. *March On!: The Day My Brother Martin Changed the World*. Illustrated by London Ladd, New York, Scholastic Press, 2008.

Knauer, Kelly, editor. *1968: The Year That Changed the World*. New York, Time Books, 2008.

### Important Speeches

Lyndon Johnson's speech about Vietnam and declaring he will not run for reelection:

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/lbjvietman.htm>

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s last speech:

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm>

When Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 there were riots in many large cities where African Americans lived. However, there was no rioting in the city of Indianapolis, Indiana. Many attribute this to the speech made by Robert F. Kennedy, who was scheduled to campaign in Indianapolis that day. Kennedy's advisors told him it wouldn't be safe to speak there that night. He didn't listen to them. Please listen to his speech:

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/rfkonmlkdeath.html>

### Biographical Information

For Martin Luther King, Jr.:

<http://www.factmonster.com/spot/mlkbiospot.html>

For Robert Francis Kennedy (Bobby Kennedy):

<http://www.factmonster.com/biography/var/robertfkennedy.html>

## Connections for *The Wednesday Wars*

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*Continued*

### **Vietnam War**

Bunting, Eve. *The Wall*. Illustrated by Ronald Himler. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1992.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Cracker!: The Best Dog in Vietnam*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2007.

Sherlock, Patti. *Letters from Wolfie*. Penguin Group, 2004.

White, Ellen Emerson. *The Journal of Patrick Seamus Flaherty, United States Marine Corps*. Scholastic, Inc. 2002.

Online Information:

<http://kids.yahoo.com/reference/encyclopedia/entry?id=VietnamW>

### **Mickey Mantle**

<http://www.baseballhalloffame.org/hofers/detail.jsp?playerId=118258>

Marlin, John. *Mickey Mantle*. Minneapolis, MN : LernerSports, 2005.

### **Shakespeare**

Shakespeare play summaries:

<http://www.nosweatshakespeare.com/play-summary.htm>

*The Tempest*: Modern English Version Side-by-Side with Full Original Text (Barron's Shakespeare Made Easy) by William Shakespeare, Alan Durband (Editor) Barron's Educational Series, Incorporated, 1985.

*The Merchant of Venice*: Modern Version Side-by-Side with Full Original Text (Barron's Shakespeare Made Easy) by William Shakespeare, Alan Durband (Editor), Barron's Educational Series, Incorporated, 1985.

*Hamlet : Prince of Denmark* (Barron's Shakespeare Made Easy) by William Shakespeare, Alan Durband (Editor), Barron's Educational Series, Incorporated, February 1986.

## Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions for *The Wednesday Wars*

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- What elements of *The Wednesday Wars* establish it as an historical novel? Transpose the novel from 1967-1968 to 2008-2009. What social and political markers would you substitute for those in *The Wednesday Wars* to bring it into the present?
- Is *The Wednesday Wars* a serious or comic novel? Can it be both? Why or why not?
- Compare Mrs. Baker with other awesome teachers in novels you have read. What qualities do they have that make them awesome?
- Holling's parents, particularly his father, fail him repeatedly. How does his father neglect him, and what other adults step in to support him?
- *The Wednesday Wars* is filled with funny one-liners such as "he could cuss the yellow off a school bus." Choose four one-liners from the novel and discuss why they make you laugh.
- Why did Holling refer to his home as the "perfect house," and how does this relate to Holling's father?
- Why do you think the author never tells the reader the name of Doug Swieteck's older brother? Why do you think Holling refers to Doug Swieteck's older brother and his friends as the Penitentiary crowd?
- Danny Hupfer hurls a Shakespearean insult at Mickey Mantle in defense of his friend Holling. Why do you think is it safer to insult an adult in Shakespearean language than in modern English?
- Why is Danny Hupfer protective of Mai Thi? What do Danny and Mai Thi have in common?
- After reading *The Tempest*, Mrs. Baker tells Holling that defeats help us grow. What defeats does Holling suffer in the seventh grade, and how do they help him mature? Tell about any defeats you have encountered that added to your maturity.