



Read and Respond

Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens

Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens is a novel included as part of the Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2027 and 2028. It may be used as part of the Comparative Study at Ordinary Level or Higher Level.

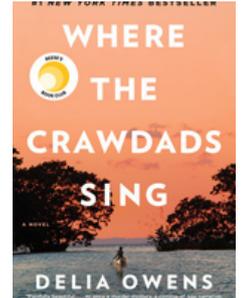


Image courtesy of
Penguin Books USA

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *Where the Crawdads Sing* covers themes which could be considered sensitive and controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



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Guide for this Text](#)

Before you read... (Teacher Guidance)

1. Explore the Title

Ask pupils to consider the title. They could think about what images, ideas, or feelings it suggests. Pupils could then make a quick sketch or word cloud of what they imagine the setting, mood, or story might be.

2. Consider the Setting

Explain to pupils that the novel is deeply rooted in the marshlands of North Carolina. Direct pupils to images and have them discuss the following: what atmosphere do these places create? Would you find them comforting, lonely, mysterious? Why?



3. Survival Mind Map

Ask pupils to think about the challenges of living away from cities and towns. Pupils then mind map five ways this would impact them. They should share and compare with a partner or debate as a class.

4. First Lines Exercise

Before reading Chapter 1, ask pupils to imagine the first line of a story set in a marshland. Instruct pupils to write one sentence that they think could open such a story. Tell pupils to share their sentences with a partner. After reading Owens' actual opening to Chapter 1, guide pupils to compare their imagined openings with the text, discussing similarities and differences.



Extract from
Where the Crawdads Sing
Background to the novel:

This extract is from chapter one of the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*. It is set in North Carolina and focuses on Kya who is six at the time and is living in the isolation of the marshes.

1952

The morning burned so August-hot, the marsh's moist breath hung the oaks and pines with fog. The palmetto patches stood unusually quiet except for the low, slow flap of the heron's wings lifting from the lagoon. And then, Kya, only six at the time, heard the screen door slap. Standing on the stool, she stopped scrubbing grits from the pot and lowered it into the basin of worn-out suds. No sounds now but her own breathing. Who had left the shack? Not Ma. She never let the door slam.

But when Kya ran to the porch, she saw her mother in a long brown skirt, kick pleats nipping at her ankles, as she walked down the sandy lane in high heels. The stubby-nosed shoes were fake alligator skin. Her only going-out pair. Kya wanted to holler out but knew not to rouse Pa, so opened the door and stood on the brick-'n'-board steps. From there she saw the blue train case Ma carried. Usually, with the confidence of a pup, Kya knew her mother would return with meat wrapped in greasy brown paper or with a chicken, head dangling down. But she never wore the gator heels, never took a case.

Ma always looked back where the foot lane met the road, one arm held high, white palm waving, as she turned onto the track, which wove through bog forests, cattail lagoons, and maybe-if the tide obliged-eventually into town. But today she walked on, unsteady in the ruts. Her tall figure emerged now and then through the holes of the forest until only swatches of white scarf flashed between the leaves. Kya sprinted to the spot she knew would bare the road; surely Ma would wave from there, but she arrived only in time to glimpse the blue case-the color so wrong for the woods-as it disappeared. A heaviness, thick as black-cotton mud, pushed her chest as she returned to the steps to wait.

(Delia Owens, Where the Crawdads Sing, 2018, p. 5).

Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the novel. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. Descriptive and Sensory Language

Ask pupils, in pairs, to identify two examples of imagery that help them picture or experience the marsh. Direct them to discuss how these words or phrases make the setting feel alive or atmospheric. Encourage them to record their examples with brief explanations.

2. Building Suspense and Mood

Point out that the author contrasts Kya's everyday actions with the unusual way her mother leaves. Instruct pupils to write an analytical response explaining how suspense is created in this moment. Tell pupils to consider the techniques Owens uses and explain their effects.

3. Kya's perspective

Ask pupils to imagine themselves as Kya. Instruct them to explore this moment from Kya's perspective, choosing one of the following: Create an "interview" where Kya explains her feelings and thoughts or to produce a detailed mind map showing Kya's emotions, thoughts, and possible justifications.



Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the novel. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. Reconstruct the Scene.

In groups, assign roles (director, actor, narrator, designer, etc.).

Instruct groups to choose to either:

- Dramatise the extract,
- Reimagine from another viewpoint, or
- Extend the scene.

Ask groups to perform/narrate in 2–3 minutes.

Afterwards, discuss with pupils: What details stood out? How did it change your sense of the scene?



[Click to watch the trailer for the film version of this novel courtesy of Youtube](#)

2. Visual Mapping

In groups, ask pupils to create a visual map of the scene (setting, symbols, characters, emotions). Direct pupils to add captions, quotes, or thought bubbles.

Pupils should display maps and circulate, leaving a sticky note to comment or question on others' work. Discuss: What details stood out across interpretations?

3. Writing Responses

• Personal Essay

“Moments of change in childhood often shape who we become.” Ask students to write a **personal essay** reflecting on a moment in their own life when something changed suddenly, and explore how it affected their outlook or sense of self.

• Descriptive Essay

Direct pupils to write a **descriptive essay** capturing the atmosphere of a natural place (real or imagined) that feels alive or almost like a character itself. They should use imagery and sensory detail to bring it to life.

• Discursive essay

“Explore how literature can evoke empathy and understanding through the depiction of pivotal moments.” Ask pupils to write a **discursive essay** exploring this statement, drawing on their response to the extract, the novel as a whole or other texts they have read or studied.