

# YELLOW DOG BLUES



## ACTIVITY KIT

# ABOUT YELLOW DOG BLUES

One morning Bo Willie finds the doghouse empty and the gate wide open! Farmer Fred says Yellow Dog hit Highway 61 and started running. Aunt Jessie picks up Bo Willie in her pink Cadillac, and together they look for his missing puppy love. Their search leads them from juke joints to tamale stands to streets ringing with the music of B.B. King and Muddy Waters. Where, where did that Yellow Dog go?



Acclaimed creators Alice Faye Duncan and Chris Raschka present a boogie-woogie journey along the Mississippi Blues Trail. With swinging free verse and stunning hand-stitched art, *Yellow Dog Blues* is a soulful fable about what happens when the blues grabs you and holds on tight.

*Yellow Dog Blues* / Hardcover / ISBN: 9780802855534 / \$18.99 / 32 pages / Ages 4-8

## MEET THE CREATORS



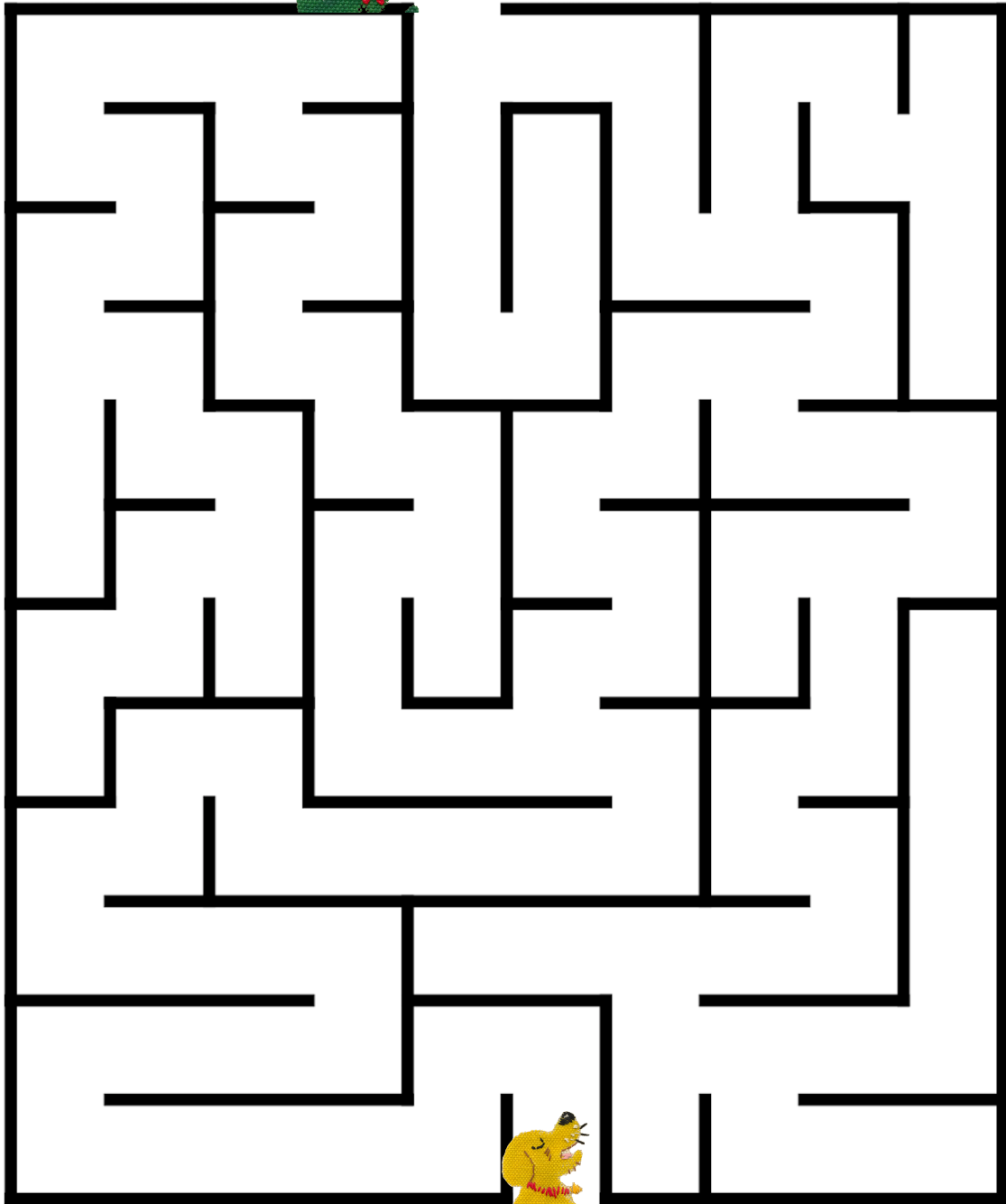
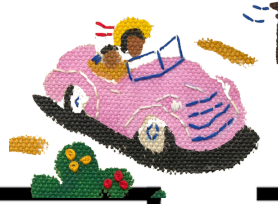
ALICE FAYE DUNCAN has written over a dozen books for children, including *Evicted!* (Calkins Creek), *A Song for Gwendolyn Brooks* (Sterling), and *Martin, Memphis, and the Mountaintop* (Calkins Creek). Her books have been nominated for two NAACP Image Awards and have been named to several best books of the year lists. Duncan lives in Memphis, where she often writes about her home state's people and history. Visit her at [www.alicefayeduncan.com](http://www.alicefayeduncan.com).

CHRIS RASCHKA received the Caldecott Medal for *The Hello, Goodbye Window* (Hyperion) and *A Ball for Daisy* (Schwartz & Wade). His other award-winning titles include *Paul Writes (a Letter)* (Eerdmans), *Saint Spotting* (Eerdmans), and the Caldecott Honor-winning *Yo! Yes?* (Scholastic). He lives with his family in New York City.



# HELP BO WILLIE AND AUNT JESSIE FIND YELLOW DOG

Yellow Dog is gone! Can you help Bo Willie and Aunt Jessie find his puppy love?



# ABOUT THE BLUES

The blues is a musical genre born in the Deep South of the United States, specifically Northwest Mississippi, in the Delta region in the late 1800s. The genre was created by Black Americans (many of whom were enslaved), and its roots are in work songs, spirituals, and ragtime. Many blues songs have soulful lyrics with themes of injustice, loneliness, loss, and suffering.

The blues spread from Mississippi to other places around the South, including Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Texas, and became popular in the early 1900s. The jazz musicians of New Orleans were especially influenced by the blues, and — because of the Great Migration from 1910–1940 — it eventually traveled to Northern and Midwestern cities like Chicago, Detroit, and New York.

The most famous blues musicians include Buddy Guy, John Lee Hooker, Robert Johnson, B.B. King, Koko Taylor, Big Mama Thornton, Muddy Waters, and Howlin' Wolf. But if you think you don't know blues music, think again! You hear it every day in the rock, soul, and jazz songs on the radio and popular streaming services — from performers like the Beatles, Eric Clapton, and Tina Turner to Beyonce, Lady Gaga, and Olivia Rodrigo.

For a more detailed history of the blues, check out <https://www.britannica.com/art/blues-music> or <https://www.allaboutbluesmusic.com/the-origins-of-blues-music/>.

## ALICE FAYE'S BLUES FAVORITES

Author Alice Faye Duncan grew up listening to the blues in her hometown of Memphis, mostly on WDIA-AM's legendary Saturday morning blues show. What are some of her favorite songs?

**John Lee Hooker**

[Boogie Chillen](#)

[Tupelo Blues \(Flood 1927\)](#)

**Furry Lewis**

[Kassie Jones](#)

[I'll Turn Your Money Green](#)

**Koko Taylor**

[Big Boss Man](#)

[Let the Good Times Roll](#)

**Sister Rosetta Tharpe**

[Didn't It Rain](#)

[This Train](#)



#SisterRosettaTharpe

Sister Rosetta Tharpe - This Train

4,477,406 views · Jan 6, 2012

👍 68K

👎 DISLIKE

➦ SHARE

≡+ SAVE

...

# WRITE YOUR OWN BLUES SONG

Blues music is all about expressing feelings, many times feelings of sadness. For you, that could mean having to do homework or getting grounded for not completing your chores to, yes, losing your beloved family dog. Keep in mind that blues music can talk about good times, too!

Let's get started.

1. Pick your theme — what is something that makes you sad, mad, or even glad?
2. What are 3-4 things about that problem or plight that really get you going?
3. Now, write! Here's an easy fill-in-the-blank song to get your blues writing skills in motion.

Title: The \_\_\_\_\_ Blues  
(THEME)

I woke up this morning. I felt really \_\_\_\_\_.  
(adjective)

My \_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_. And my  
(noun) (verb)

\_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_.  
(noun) (verb)

<CHORUS> I got the blues. I got the \_\_\_\_\_ blues.  
(TITLE)

My \_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_. Then my  
(noun) (verb)

\_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_. My heart  
(noun) (verb)

went \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Then it  
(verb) (verb)

turned \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
(adjective) (adjective)

<CHORUS> I got the blues. I got the \_\_\_\_\_ blues.  
(TITLE)

# COLORING SHEET

YELLOW DOG

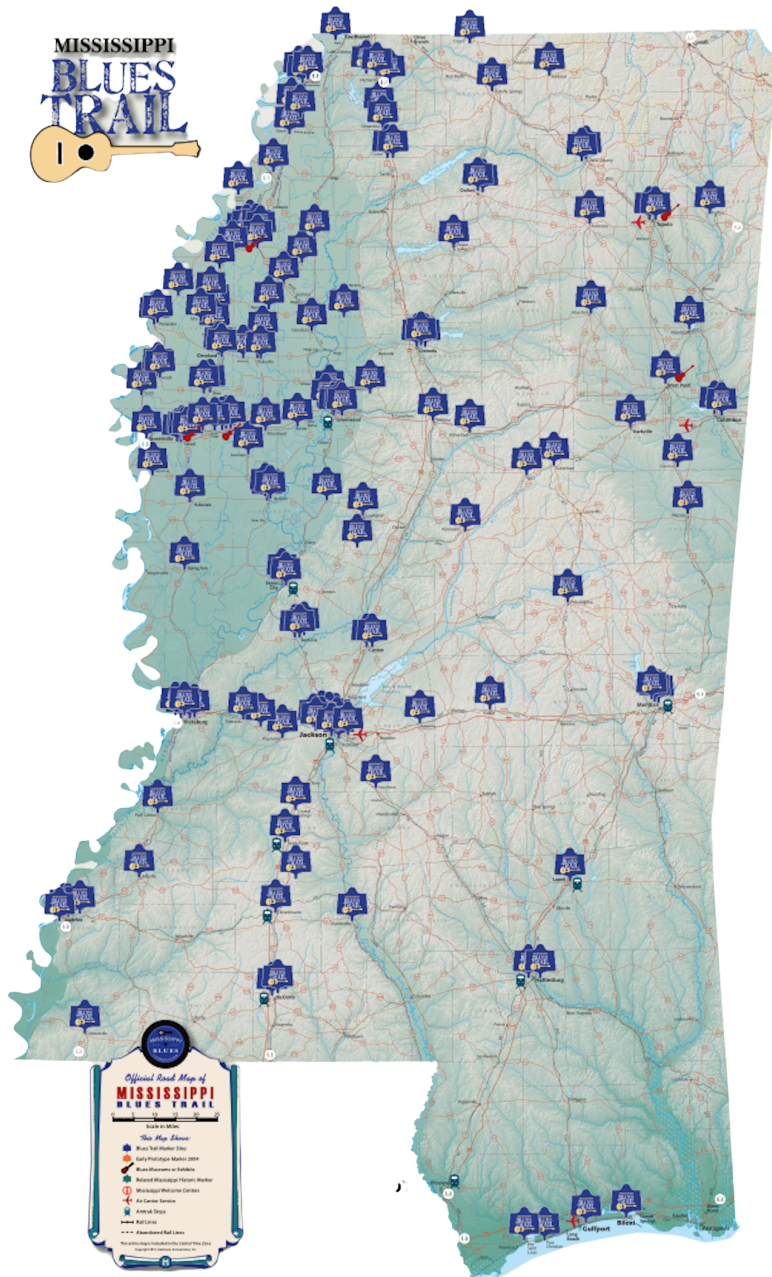
BLUES

ALICE  
FAYE  
DUNCAN

CHRIS  
RASCHKA



# THE MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL



## About the Mississippi Blues Trail

The Mississippi Blues Trail, created in 2006 by the Mississippi Blues Commission, is a series of markers related to the "birth, growth, and influence" of the blues throughout Mississippi and other key areas.

Markers include cities and rural areas — from the Hills region to the Pines, the Delta, the River/Capital, and the Coastal regions — plus out-of-state locations like Memphis. Birthplaces, juke joints, and clubs sit among cotton fields and cafes, lounges, hotels, radio stations, and more.

You'll also find birthplaces of blues legends like Bo Diddley, Buddy Guy, John Lee Hooker, Robert Johnson, B.B. King, Elvis Presley, Muddy Waters, and countless others.

## Take a Virtual Tour!

1. Visit the Mississippi Blues Trail website and locate the list of trail markers (<https://msbluestrail.org/blues-trail-markers>).
2. Choose a name or location and click on the map link.
3. Where is the marker located? Talk about the area and its surroundings.
  - a. Is it a small town or a large city?
  - b. What other landmarks are nearby?
4. Visit the website of the person or landmark.
5. Search for and play a song that represents the landmark or person.

# ABOUT CHRIS RASCHKA'S ART

Award-winning illustrator Chris Raschka is best known for his vivid, playful, often soulful watercolors. But for *Yellow Dog Blues*, he used a new, unique approach — paint, fabric, and embroidery!

Chris began by sourcing raw recycled canvas from [FabScrap](#), a 501(c)3 charitable organization that makes available materials that might have gone straight in the trash. He painted the artwork directly on the canvas, then layered embroidery on top.

This recent article from [A Fuse #8 Production](#) by children's librarian Betsy Bird offers more background on the book's creation and Chris's art process.



## SEWING ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS

Create your own embroidery magic just like Chris Raschka! Grab some material, needles, thread or yarn, a simple pattern — and maybe some paint. Here are some ideas:

*DIY Easy Stitch Cards for Children (Today's Creative Life)*

[https://todayscreativelife.com/easy-stitch-cards/?utm\\_content=buffer6c011&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=pinterest.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](https://todayscreativelife.com/easy-stitch-cards/?utm_content=buffer6c011&utm_medium=social&utm_source=pinterest.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

*Embroidery for Beginners (Education.com)*

<https://www.education.com/activity/article/practice-easy-embroidery/>

*Sewing Projects for Kids: Starting Out With Embroidery (Childhood 101)*

<https://childhood101.com/sewing-projects-for-kids/>

*Simple Stitching and Beading with Burlap (The Artful Parent)*

<https://artfulparent.com/embroidery-for-kids-simple-stitching-and-beading-with-burlap/>



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Blues music grew out of Black Americans' desire for joyful, soul-stirring music for times of both celebration and mourning. Why do you think people are drawn to sad songs? Can you think of any times that a sad song might comfort someone more than a happy song?
- Look up Clarksdale, Cleveland, Dockery, Memphis, and Merigold on a map of Mississippi. Draw a line from place to place to trace Bo Willie's trip. How many total miles was his trip? How long would it take to drive his route?
- Do you have a dog or other beloved pet? How would you feel if they ran away? What would you do to track them down?
- Do you think Yellow Dog will ever return to Bo Willie's house? Why or why not? How do you think Bo Willie would answer that question?
- Check out some of Alice Faye Duncan's and Chris Raschka's other books from the library and compare their plotlines, focuses, and illustrations to *Yellow Dog Blues*. How are they similar? How are they different?

# FURTHER READING AND LEARNING

Sites for blues music and Mississippi Blues Trail study:

- About Blues Music — <https://www.britannica.com/art/blues-music>
- Delta Blues Museum — <https://www.deltabluesmuseum.org/>
- Mississippi Blues Trail — <https://msbluestrail.org/>
- National Blues Museum — <https://nationalbluesmuseum.org/>
- Rock and Roll Hall of Fame — <https://www.rockhall.com/soul-and-blues>
- Visit Mississippi — <https://visitmississippi.org/things-to-do/blues-trail/>



Art copyright © 2022 Chris Raschka.

# FURTHER READING AND LEARNING

Recipes to make your own Mississippi Delta Hot Tamales:

- Explore Cook Eat — [https://explorecookeat.com/wprm\\_print/6346](https://explorecookeat.com/wprm_print/6346)
- Roadfood — <https://roadfood.com/recipe/hot-tamales-recipe-the-mississippi-delta/>
- Southern Foodways Alliance — <https://www.southernfoodways.org/interview/tamale-recipe/>
- Southern Kitchen — <https://www.southernkitchen.com/story/recipes/2021/07/22/mississippi-delta-tamales/8062151002/>

Other books for young readers about blues and Black American music:

- *Blues Journey* — written by Walter Dean Myers, illustrated by Christopher Myers (Holiday House, 2003)
- *Dark Was the Night: Blind Willie Johnson's Journey to the Stars* — written by Gary Golio, illustrated by E.B. Lewis (Nancy Paulsen Books, 2020)
- *Double Bass Blues* — written by Andrea J. Loney, illustrated by Rudy Gutierrez (Knopf, 2019)
- *Muddy: The Story of Blues Legend Muddy Waters* — written by Michael Mahin, illustrated by Evan Turk (Atheneum, 2017)
- *Roots and Blues: A Celebration* — written by Arnold Adoff, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie (Clarion, 2011)

