

Hoot

Carl Hiaasen

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

On the first day of school, class bully Dana Matherson smashes Roy Eberhardt's head on the window of the school bus. During the smashing, Roy sees a strange boy running down the street, barefooted. That same morning, police officer David Delinko is sent to the vacant lot where a Mother Paula's All-American Pancake House is scheduled to be built. Delinko is met by Leroy Branitt, the bald foreman, who calls himself "Curly." Curly is cranky because someone has pulled out all the survey sticks and filled in the holes. This will delay the project because the work will have to be redone. Meanwhile, Roy is trying to adjust to life in Florida. He and his family have just moved there from Montana, a place Roy really liked. The family moves often because of his father's job with the Department of Justice. Roy's father is very good at his work and gets frequent promotions. Later that day, Roy is joined at lunch by Garrett, a poor student who is popular because he can make phony farts at will. Garrett does not know the identity of the mysterious barefooted boy.

Chapter 2

The next morning on the school bus, Roy punches Dana when the bully starts abusing him again. Roy sees the mysterious boy again and jumps off the school bus to chase him. Tearing down the golf course, he gets hit on the head by a golf ball and passes out. Later, Roy and Dana are called to the office of Viola Hennepin, the assistant principal. Ms. Hennepin takes Dana's side in the situation until she sees the marks on Roy's neck where Dana tried

to strangle him. Then she orders Roy to write Dana an apology letter and the matter will be forgiven. Later, a huge athletic girl pushes Roy and orders him to stay away from the running boy.

Chapter 3

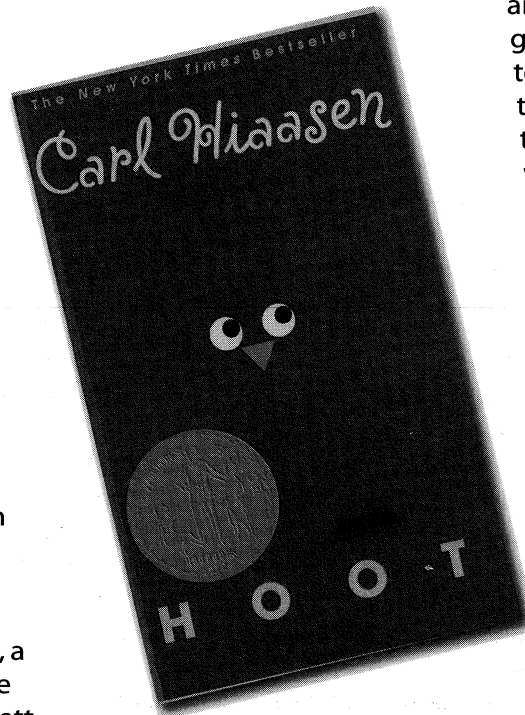
The vandal has returned to the construction site and again removed every survey marker and filled in all the holes. The person has also slashed the tires on the flatbed truck. Officer Delinko, an eager beaver, looks in the porta-potties and finds the vandal has put alligators in the tanks. Later, Roy tells his father about his adventures on the school bus and in the vice-principal's office. Roy writes the apology letter to Dana, arguing that he will say that he is sorry if Dana leaves him alone on the bus.

Chapter 4

Everyone in school is talking about how Roy punched Dana. Roy finds out that the girl who threatened him is Beatrice Leep, nicknamed "Beatrice the Bear" for her size and ferocity. Officer Delinko stakes out the construction site. When he dozes off, someone spray paints the windows on his police cruiser black. Meanwhile, the survey stakes have been dug up again. Roy and his mother deliver the apology letter to Dana's home and discover that Dana's mother is also a large, stupid bully.

Chapter 5

Roy investigates the woods and finds the mysterious boy's campsite. The boy releases some poisonous cottonmouth moccasin snakes. The snakes have had glitter applied to their tails. The boy jumps out, blindfolds Roy, and reveals that he is called "Mullet Fingers." Mullet finally releases Roy. Roy is excited rather than frightened by the



encounter. He is determined to get to the bottom of the mystery and discover who Mullet really is and why he is living in the woods.

Chapter 6

The next morning at breakfast, the Eberhardts read about Officer Delinko's embarrassing incident at the construction site. Later, Officer Delinko is put on desk duty as punishment for falling asleep on the job. Meanwhile, the vice-principal has barred Roy from the bus for two weeks, to his delight. Later, Roy returns to Mullet's camp with a pair of sneakers for Mullet but finds that Mullet has dismantled the camp and vanished. Roy finds Beatrice sitting on his bicycle.

Chapter 7

They go inside an old-ice cream truck on the construction site. Beatrice reveals that Mullet is her step-brother! Beatrice swears Roy to secrecy. Beatrice then bites a hole in Roy's bike tire to give him an explanation for his lateness. Officer Delinko sees Roy walking home and picks him up. He asks Roy to write a letter praising him to his sergeant. Roy returns home and his parents are relieved.

Chapter 8

Roy's clever father sees the bite marks on the tire but does not force the issue. Chuck Muckle, a vice-president at Mother Paula's, threatens Curly with dismissal if he doesn't get to the bottom of the vandalism. Curly is worried but also delighted that Kimberly Lou Dixon, a runner-up in a Miss America contest at least a decade ago, is the speaker for the pancake commercials. She is disguised as an old lady, illogical for a sexpot B-movie actress. Curly hires a German man named Kalo to bring his fierce Rottweilers to guard the site. Dana again threatens Roy on the bus. Roy mouths off to him. Beatrice sits next to Roy on the bus so Dana stops beating him up.

Chapter 9

The next day in school, Garrett tells Roy that Dana is planning to grab him and beat him up before he can get on the bus. Back at the construction site, Kalo is livid because the vandal left poisonous snakes with glitter on their tails. Because of the threat the snakes pose to the dogs, Kalo quits in a fury. Curly calls a reptile wrangler to remove the snakes, but when they return to the site, the snakes are gone. At school, Dana grabs Roy and pulls him

into a gym closet. They fight until Roy is rescued by Beatrice.

Chapter 10

Beatrice leaves Dana stripped down to his under-pants and trussed to the school's flagpole. Beatrice then steals a bicycle and takes Roy to his house. There, she smoothly lies to Roy's mother to obtain ground beef and bandages. We learn Beatrice's history. She lives with her father Leon, a divorced former professional basketball player. He had impregnated a woman named Lonna and married her. At the wedding, Beatrice met her step-brother Mullet. He keeps running away because of Lonna's abuse and she is just as glad to have him gone. Beatrice and Mullet have become very close. Beatrice takes Roy to Mullet, who was bitten by the Rottweilers while releasing the snakes at the site. Mullet reveals that he had taped the snakes' mouths shut, so they were simply for shock value. Roy sees that Mullet has been vandalizing the site to save the tiny burrowing owls that live there. Mullet feeds the ground beef to the owls.

Chapter 11

Delinko finds some fabric from Mullet's green shirt at the site. Mullet is becoming dangerously ill from the dog bites so Beatrice and Roy check him into the hospital, under Roy's name.

Chapter 12

Dr. Gonzalez is not fooled, but she treats him anyway. Beatrice leaves and Roy is left with Mullet. Roy's parents rush to the hospital in response to the doctor's call. They are relieved that he is fine. Mullet has vanished.

Chapter 13

Roy tells his father everything that has transpired, just keeping Mullet's name a secret. Roy's parents feel very sorry for Mullet. They are sympathetic to his desire to save the owls, too.

Chapter 14

Roy bikes to Beatrice's house and meets Lonna. She is as dreadful as he has suspected. Like Cinderella, Beatrice does nearly all the cooking and cleaning. Then Roy goes to Dana's house and tries to talk some sense into Dana. He realizes that it is useless because Dana is just too stupid. Roy brings water to Mullet, who is staying in the old ice-cream truck. Mullet reveals that he first tried legal means to

stop the building and save the owls, but got nowhere. Mullet takes Roy to the *Molly Bell*, a wrecked ship in a creek. There, he catches a mullet (fish) with his bare hands.

Chapter 15

Roy goes to Dana's house again, this time leading him on a chase to the construction site. Later, Curly catches Dana at the site and thinks Dana is the vandal. Dana gives his name as Roy.

Chapter 16

Garrett comes to Roy's house to tell Roy that Dana has been taken into custody. Dana already has a record. Roy appreciates his mature and loving parents, especially in contrast to the dreadful parenting he sees in the Leep and Matherson households. Beatrice stays overnight in Roy's room because of an incident at her own house.

Chapter 17

Curly tells Chuck Muckle about the arrest. We learn that Beatrice ran away for the night because she bit off her step-mother's toe ring. The police realize that Dana does not fit the profile of the vandal so Delinko stakes out the site again. Roy tries to find the construction permits, but they have been removed from the county office.

Chapter 18

Office Delinko sees one of the owls and feels great sympathy for it. Roy decides to help Mullet save the owls. To that end, he brings his mother's camera to Mullet so Mullet can photograph the owls. He also reports on the owls in class and calls on everyone to join a protest at the groundbreaking ceremony.

Chapter 19

Kimberly shows up for the groundbreaking.

Chapter 20

Many kids show up at the groundbreaking. Roy interrupts the speeches with the truth and the kids display posters. Roy's plan collapses when the pictures Mullet took are not clear so the Mother Paula officials can deny that the owls exist. Mullet has hidden himself in an owl burrow, only his head sticking out. If they bury the birds, they have to bury him as well. He has brought along a bucket of snakes, but they are all rubber. Delinko and Kimberly join the kids in their protest. An owl proves its existence by landing on Mullet's head.

Chapter 21

Mullet's real name, Napoleon Bridger, is revealed. Mr. Eberhardt copied the file, which he has Roy give to the newspapers. It reveals that Mother Paula's did not have the permits to destroy the owls' nesting site.

Epilogue

The file proved the undoing of Mother Paula's project and the owls are safe. Mullet is jailed briefly, and while there, he frames Dana. Mullet vanishes again. Roy goes to the Molly Bell and tries to catch a mullet, but he cannot. Later, he finds a mullet in his sneakers, placed there by Mullet himself.

Timeline of Florida History

- 1497-1514** Europeans visit Florida for the first time.
- 1513** Ponce de Leon sights land on March 27. In the vicinity of present day St. Augustine, he names the land "Pascua Florida" because of its discovery "during the time of the Feast of Easter."
- 1516-1561** Spaniards explore Florida.
- 1559** De Luna establishes a colony on Pensacola Bay.
- 1564** Fort built on St. John's River.
- 1565** Pedro Menendez de Aviles of Spain enters a harbor which he calls San Augustin, later called St. Augustine.
- 1566** Jesuit priests work to convert Native Americans. The mission system in Florida begins.
- 1575** Franciscan friars begin their missionary work in Florida.
- 1586** Sir Francis Drake conquers and burns St. Augustine.
- 1600** Spanish colonization spreads in Florida.
- 1698** Pensacola is permanently resettled.
- 1702-1704** British raid Spanish settlements. Within a few years, the mission era of Florida ends.
- 1719** French capture Pensacola; however, it is soon returned to the Spanish.

1740	British General James Oglethorpe invades Florida from Georgia, seizing outlying forts.	1860	Florida Railroad links Fernandina on the East Coast with Cedar Key on the West.
1781	Spanish capture Pensacola from the British.	1861	Florida withdraws from the Union.
1783	British return Florida to Spain.	1861-1865	Florida furnishes salt beef and bacon to Confederacy.
1785-1821	Numerous Spanish-American border disputes.	1864	The Confederates defeat the Union army at Olustee and save the interior supply lines from Florida.
1813	Andrew Jackson captures Pensacola, which the British have used as a base of Gulf operations against the Americans.	1865	The war ends with Tallahassee as the only Confederate state capital east of Mississippi to escape capture.
1817-1819	Gregor MacGregor captures Fernandina.	1868	A new Constitution grants equal suffrage to all races.
1818	During the first Seminole War, Andrew Jackson campaigns against the Indians and outlaws blacks from Pensacola to the Suwannee.	1876	Democrats regain control of state offices and put an end to the carpetbag rule as Federal troops are withdrawn in 1877.
1819	American Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and Spanish Minister Luis de Onis reach an agreement by which Spain gives the United States title to East and West Florida.	1881	Hamilton Disston buys four million acres of the Everglades at 25 cents an acre, opening the way for development of much of Florida.
1821	Andrew Jackson receives the Floridas from Spanish.	1885	State Board of Education is created and the authorize the establishment of normal schools.
1822	The unified government of Florida is established.	1886	Henry M. Flagler buys the first transportation link in the chain of railroad and hotel properties he builds down the East Coast to Key West.
1824	Tallahassee becomes the seat of the new territory.	1889	Yellow fever epidemic results in the creation of the State Board of Health.
1834-1837	Florida's first railroads begin operation.	1894-1899	Frosts kill much citrus and sends the industry southward.
1835-1837	Second Seminole War	1898	The Spanish-American War creates embarkation camps at Tampa, Miami, and Jacksonville. Thousands of soldiers and others who visit the state return after as tourists or residents.
1842	Second Seminole War ends with 3,824 Indians and blacks relocated to Arkansas.	1905	The Buckman Act consolidates state institutions of higher learning into The University of Florida at Gainesville, Florida State College for Women at Tallahassee, and the
1845	Florida granted statehood.		
1851	Dr. John Gorrie of Apalachicola patents the process of making ice artificially, a process he had developed in 1845 to cool the rooms of his feverish patients.		
1855	The General Assembly passes the first Internal Improvement Act.		
1855-1858	The Third Seminole War		

	Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes at Tallahassee.		
1911	Lincoln Beachey makes the first night flight. It is over Tampa.	1950	Frozen concentrate of citrus juices becomes a major industry. State population: 2,771,305
1913	First Corrupt Practices Law.	1953	Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes becomes Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.
1914	The world's first scheduled airline service begins service from St. Petersburg to Tampa.	1955	Legislature authorizes a state-long turnpike.
1917-1918	WW I soldiers trained in Florida as weather permits year-round activity.	1958	The National Aeronautics and Space Administration begins operations at Cape Canaveral.
1922	U.S. Department of Commerce licenses WDAE Tampa.	1960	Florida ranks 10th in the nation with a population of 4,951,560.
1924-1925	Huge land boom.	1961	Successful launch of astronauts from Cape Canaveral: (Alan Shepard on May 5 and Virgil Grissom on July 21) for suborbital flights down the Atlantic Missile Range.
1926	Hurricane devastates the Miami area. Nearly 200 dead.	1963	Cape Canaveral becomes Cape Kennedy.
1927	The State Board of Public Welfare is created.	1964	First classes at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, and the University of West Florida.
1929	First commercial airline flights between Key West and Havana become forerunners of Latin-American operations of Pan American World Airways from Miami.	1965	First U.S. launch of two-man spacecraft with Edward H. White and James McDivitt aboard orbits the earth 62 times.
1933	In an attempt to assassinate President-elect Roosevelt in Miami, Guiseppe Zangara fatally wounds Mayor Anton Cermak of Chicago.	1966	The \$700 million Walt Disney World project announced.
1935	A storm sweeps a mid-section of the Florida Keys and kills nearly 400.	1971	<i>Apollo 14</i> touches down on the moon 108 hours after blast-off from the Kennedy Space Center. Alan B. Shepard commands. <i>Apollo 15</i> astronauts explore the Moon for three days.
1937	Poll Tax is abolished as a prerequisite to voting.		Walt Disney World opens October 1st. Estimated cost of the facility is between \$500 and \$600 million.
1941-1945	Florida's population expands as it becomes a training ground for thousands of soldiers.	1973	Florida has a record number of visitors; 25.5 million people. After seven and one-half years and nearly 260,000 refugees, the "freedom flights" from Cuba end. The airlifts, bringing refugees into Miami at the rate of 48,000 a year, help transform the ethnic makeup of Dade
1945	A cigarette and beer tax finances improvement program at state institutions and schools.		
1947	Florida State College for Women becomes co-educational Florida State University. University of Florida is opened to female students.		

- County by adding at least 100,000 Cubans to the 150,000 already there.
- 1977** Severe cold devastates citrus and vegetable plants.
- 1979** In Miami Beach, taxes received from hotel rooms, food, and beverages reach a record high of \$3,727,380.
- 1980** Miami Seaquarium celebrates its 25th anniversary.
Tampa opens \$6.2 million water theme park, Adventure Island.
- 1981** The first manned space shuttle launches made from Kennedy Space Center.
- 1982** The \$800 million EPCOT Center opens at Walt Disney World.
- 1983** The space shuttle *Challenger* launches its first crew and the first American woman, Sally Ride, into space from Kennedy Space Center.
- 1984** Donald Duck's "50th Anniversary Celebration" held in June at Walt Disney World.
Busch Gardens celebrates its 25th anniversary.
- 1985** Florida's state park system marks its 50th anniversary.
Kennedy Space Center's Visitor Center is renamed Spaceport USA.
- 1986** Space shuttle *Challenger* explodes after takeoff. All seven astronauts aboard are killed.
The TV series *Miami Vice* continues to capture the nation's imagination, revitalizing interest and tourism for South Florida.
Walt Disney World breaks ground for a major movie and television production studio in Orlando.
- 1987** Bob Martinez is the first person of Spanish ancestry to become governor of Florida.

Florida is fourth most populous state in the nation.

- 1988** Regular space shuttle flights resume in October for the first time since the *Challenger* disaster.
- 1990** Panama's governor Manuel Noriega is brought to Miami in January for trial on drug charges.
- 1991** Florida's population is 12,937,926, a 34 percent increase from 1980.
- 1992** Hurricane Andrew devastates Homestead and adjacent South Florida. The hurricane destroyed 25,000 homes and damaged 10,000 others. Twenty-two thousand Federal troops were deployed. Shelters housed 80,000 persons.
- 1993** Janet Reno, State Attorney for Dade County (Miami) for 15 years, named Attorney General, the first woman to so serve in U.S. history.

Author Sketch

Carl Hiaasen (pronounced "hiya-sun") was born in 1953 in Plantation, Florida, a suburb of Fort Lauderdale. His father was a lawyer. Some of Hiaasen's childhood experiences parallel those in *Hoot*: for example, he stole survey markers for new developments in his community. When not busy with acts of petty vandalism, young Hiaasen taught himself to read at age four, using *Miami Herald* sports stories and Florida maps as primers. After receiving his first typewriter in 1960, he taught himself to type and ultimately produced a neighborhood sports page. He began to form his satirical voice while attending Plantation High School, publishing an underground newsletter called *More Trash* that mocked the culture of his high school.



Hiaasen enrolled in Atlanta's Emory University in 1970. There, he began his freelance career, married his high school sweetheart, and became a father before he was a college junior. He then transferred to the University of Florida, graduating with a degree in journalism two years later. Moving to the *Miami Herald* in 1976, he found fame as an investigative reporter and became a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1980 and 1981.

Hiaasen wrote his first novels with his colleague William D. Montalbano. Hiaasen published *Tourist Season*, his first solo novel, in 1986. This novel chronicles the efforts of an inept group of activists who terrorize Florida tourists and developers in an effort to improve the state. *Double Whammy*, published a year later, is a mystery combining intrigue in bass-fishing tournaments and the over-development of the Florida landscape. *Strip Tease*, published in 1993, was Hiaasen's first novel to make the best-seller list. In 1996, the novel was made into a movie with Demi Moore, Burt Reynolds, Armand Assante, and Ving Rhames.

Next came *Stormy Weather* (1995), which intertwines the stories of different opportunists who seek to capitalize on the aftermath of a destructive hurricane. Hiaasen's subsequent novel, *Lucky You*, addresses the issue of lottery winnings and the greed among multiple winners who must split the jackpot. Hiaasen continued in his experimental phase with a brief turn from fiction in 1998 when he published *Team Rodent: How Disney Devours the World*. The book is a fierce attack on Disney. Other equally well-received books have followed. Carl Hiaasen currently lives in Florida with his wife, Fenia, whom he married in 1999, and their son, Quinn. With the positive reception of his work and his ongoing output in the *Miami Herald*, Hiaasen's place in the canon of contemporary American authors seems assured.

Critic's Corner

The reviews of *Hoot*, Hiaasen's first book for young adults, were generally favorable. For example, *Publishers Weekly* praised Hiaasen's "characteristically quirky characters and comic twists" that overcome the "intermittently protracted focus on several adults." The reviewer noted that "several suspenseful scenes build to the denouement involving the sitcom-like unraveling of a muckity-muck at the pancake house; these, along with dollops of humor, help make the novel quite a hoot indeed." *Kirkus Reviews* admired Roy, calling him "surprisingly engaging . . . his kind of determined innocence that sees through the corruption and compromises of the adult world to understand what must be done to make things right." *Hoot* was named a Newbery Honor Book and a Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book.

Hiaasen has won many other prestigious awards as well. These include the National Headliners Award, distinguished service medallion from Sigma Delta Chi, public service first-place award from Florida Society of Newspaper Editors, Clarion Award, Women in Communications, Heywood Broun Award, Newspaper Guild, all 1980, all for newspaper series about dangerous doctors. He won the Green Eyeshade Award from Sigma Delta Chi, first-place award for in-depth reporting, Florida Society of Newspaper Editors, grand prize for investigative reporting, Investigative Reporters and Editors, all in 1981, and all for newspaper series on drug-smuggling industry in Key West.

Other Books by Carl Hiaasen

Powder Burn (1981)
Trap Line (1982)
A Death in China (1984)
Tourist Season (1986)
Double Whammy (1987)
Skin Tight (1989)
Native Tongue (1991)
Strip Tease (1993)
Stormy Weather (1995)
Naked Came the Manatee (1996)
Lucky You (1997)
Team Rodent: How Disney Devours the World (1998)
Kick Ass: Selected Columns of Carl Hiaasen (1999)
Sick Puppy (2000).
Paradise Screwed: Selected Columns of Carl Hiaasen (2001)
Basket Case (2002)
Skinny Dip (2004)

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Globe and Mail (Toronto, Ontario, Canada), April 26, 1986.

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- People*, May 15, 2000, Christina Chekalos, "Hurricane Hiaasen," p. 139.
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- Times Literary Supplement*, November 5, 1993, p. 12; March 29, 1996, p. 14.
- Tribune Books* (Chicago, IL), September 1, 1991; July 10, 1994, p. 8; August 13, 1995, p. 5.
- Vanity Fair*, August, 1993.
- Washington Post Book World*, May 6, 1984; April 6, 1986.
- Writer*, June, 2003, "Carl Hiaasen (How I Write)," p. 66.

General Objectives

1. To understand a satire
2. To probe the novel's title
3. To analyze the symbolism of owls
4. To recognize the novel's theme
5. To describe the novel's plot
6. To sympathize with Mullet's family situation
7. To find examples of compassion
8. To explore the ways that kindness can be shown
9. To relish the author's use of humor
10. To appreciate the clever plot twists

Specific Objectives

1. To probe Roy's relationship with his parents
2. To analyze why Dana beats Roy up
3. To explore why Beatrice defends Roy
4. To understand why Mullet commits acts of vandalism at the construction site
5. To think about why Roy decides to help Mullet
6. To explore why the kids want to save the owls
7. To appreciate the importance of the environment
8. To appreciate the novel's humor
9. To trace how the kids succeed in saving the owls
10. To understand the novel's ending

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Carl Hiaasen's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

humor parts of a story that are funny. Humor can be created through sarcasm, exaggeration, imagery, and irony. *Hoot* is a very funny novel because Hiaasen employs several of these literary techniques with great success. For example, he uses satire on page 20 when the vice-principal directs Roy to write a letter of apology to Dana. "Okay," Roy replies, "but who's going to help him read it?" Hiaasen uses exaggeration with sarcasm on page 242 when the same vice-principal tells Roy that she knows when she smells a rat. Thinking about the single black hair sprouting from her upper lip, Roy thinks, "Yeah, that's because you're growing one on your lip." Hiaasen uses imagery when he describes the alligators that Mullet has placed in the porta-potties at the construction site. Curly asks if they are big alligators. Officer Delinko replies, "I imagine all of 'em look big when they're swimming under your butt."

irony when something happens that is different from what was expected. In verbal irony, there is a contrast between what is stated and what is suggested. In dramatic irony, there is a contrast between what a character believes and what the audience knows is true. In irony of situation, an event reverses what the readers or characters expected. Hiaasen uses irony of situation because

readers do not expect Dana to get framed for the vandalism, Kimberly and Officer Delinko to be sympathetic to the plight of the owls, and Roy's father to have procured the permit files.

Satire writing that ridicules or criticizes individuals, ideas, institutions, social conventions, or other works of art or literature. The satirist may use a mild and tolerant tone or an angry, bitter one. In *Hoot*, Hiaasen uses a relatively gentle tone to satirize public and corporate officials, all of whom are corrupt, foolish, and self-aggrandizing. This is especially obvious in Chuck Muckle, the ruthless corporate vice-president of Mother Paula's.

The Importance of Setting

The setting, a mythical Florida town called "Coconut Cove," is a crucial element in *Hoot*. That is because the novel captures Hiaasen's sentiments about educating children and teenagers about nature and its fragility. He plainly believes that such education is critical because it may lead to a heightened environmental consciousness in later generations, which he sees as one way of preserving the environment. Hiaasen extends this concern with setting in his newspaper columns as well, which have occasionally raised the ire of regional developers and bureaucrats, who blame him for discouraging tourism. Hiaasen welcomes these charges and openly discusses his activism and his dedication to preserving Florida's ecology. In a 1990 essay, Peter Jordan addresses Hiaasen's ecological concerns.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Novels

Avi, *The Secret School*
 Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*
 Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator*
 Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Giant Peach*
 Julie Dannenberg, *First Day Jitters*
 Kate DiCamillo, *Because of Winn-Dixie*
 Patricia Reilly Giff, *Pictures of Hollis Wood*
 Ben Mikaleson, *Touching Spirit Bear*
 Stephanie Tolan, *Surviving the Applewhites*
 Jerry Spinelli, *Loser*



Audio

Hoot, read by Chad Lowe

DVDs and Videos

Blazing Saddles (1974)
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (2004)
High Anxiety (1977)
History of the World (1981)
Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004)
The Producers (1968)

Nonfiction

Kevin Becker, *Bird Underground*
 Alice Hopf, *Whose House Is It?*
 Hope Irvin-Marsten, *My Little Book of Burrowing Owls*
 Berniece Preschet, *The Owl and the Prairie Dog*

Internet

Carl Hiaasen's official website
<http://www.carlhiaasen.com>
BookPage, Jay Lee MacDonald, "Carl Hiaasen Takes a Bite out of Crimes against the Environment."
<http://www.bookpage.com>
The Miami Herald
http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/columnists/carl_hiaasen/
 Random House
<http://www.randomhouse.com/index.pperl>
 The Lavin Agency
<http://www.thelavinagency.com/college/carlhiaasen.html>

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Carl Hiaasen's *Hoot* should include these aspects:

Themes

- authority figures
- bullies
- determination
- family life
- generosity
- owls
- humor
- kindness
- satire
- vandalism

Motifs

- dealing with incompetent and self-serving authority figures
- coping with abandonment
- trying to save the environment
- dealing with bullies and stupidity
- experiencing kindness
- being intelligent and resourceful
- living in dysfunctional families
- benefiting from role-models
- helping others in need
- using humor to defuse difficult situations

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. So Roy was extremely good at not moving, especially when he was scared. He was plenty scared now, with nine venomous snakes crawling around his feet. (Chap. 5, p. 54)
(Mullet has ambushed Roy in the woods, releasing poisonous snakes next to him. Roy is not aware that the snakes' mouths are taped shut. This scene shows Mullet's familiarity with wildlife and his respect for it, one of the key themes in the book.)
2. "Yeah, I know him," she said. "He's my brother." (Chap. 7, p. 76)
(Beatrice chooses to identify Mullet as her brother when he is really her stepbrother. This reveals their close ties and her desire to protect and help him.)
3. Kalo was right: It was seriously poisonous. And its tail was sparkly. (Chap. 9, p. 105)
(The snakes' glittery tails, glitter that Mullet applied to mark them, is a strong clue that Mullet is the one vandalizing the construction site, which proves to be true.)
4. There, standing by the hole and peering curiously at one of the meatballs, was the smallest owl that he had ever seen. (Chap. 10, p. 124)
(When he sees the tiny burrowing owl, Roy understands why Mullet has been vandalizing
- the site: it is home to the owls. Building the pancake house will destroy their burrows and wipe them out. Hiaasen has been decrying Florida's overbuilding for many years, and this theme in Hoot shows his concerns for saving the environment.)*
5. Roy's father gave him a wink. "But I'll tell you what I am going to do: I'm going to spend some time thinking seriously about all of this." (Chap. 13, p. 158)
(Roy's father is an intelligent, compassionate, and involved father. He does more than think about saving the owls; he finds the file on the land surveys, the evidence that brings the project to a grinding halt.)
6. The boy was holding a bright blunt-headed fish that sparkled like liquid chrome. How he had snatched such a slippery little ghost from the water with only his bare hands, Roy didn't know. (Chap. 14, p. 178)
(Mullet Fingers gets his nickname from his ability to catch these tiny, slippery fish. It is such a difficult skill that even an osprey would be impressed, Roy thinks. This shows how skilled Mullet is at surviving in Florida's wilderness.)
7. "Then I guess we've gotta join him." (Chap. 16, p. 210)
(Roy decides to help Mullet save the owls. Clearly, Hiaasen supports Roy's decision to protect Florida from over-development and the concurrent destruction of wildlife.)
8. "Kid's for real. If I were you, I'd negotiate," said Officer Delinko. (Chap. 20, p. 270)
(Officer Delinko, up to this point portrayed as a hapless eager beaver, redeems himself by lying about the snakes to save Mullet and the owls. He realizes that the snakes in the bucket are rubber, but he wants to terrify Chuck Muckle into backing down.)
9. "Environmental Impact Statement." (Chap. 21, p. 281)
(Roy's father, a high-level government law enforcement officer, finds that the Mother Paula corporation either did not conduct an Environmental Impact Statement for the site of the pancake house or deliberately removed it when it did not support their position that the

owls were gone. In either event, its lack proves that the corporation cannot build on the site until the issue is resolved—if ever.)

10. There he spied a mullet no larger than a man's index finger, flipping and splashing to protest its captivity. (Epilogue, p. 292)
(Mullet has caught a mullet and placed it in Roy's shoe. This proves that Mullet is alive and well, giving the book an even happier happy ending by resolving the last loose plot thread.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

- Why have Roy and his family moved to Coconut Cove, Florida, from Montana?
(Roy's father got a promotion, necessitating the move.)
- Why does Dana beat Roy up?
(Dana is a bully and Roy is the new boy in school.)
- Who is the running boy that Roy sees from the school bus window?
(He is Mullet Fingers, Beatrice Leep's step-brother.)
- Who is vandalizing the Mother Paula's construction site and why?
(Mullet is vandalizing the site to prevent the building. He wants to preserve the site because it is home to a colony of burrowing owls.)
- How do the children get the construction of the pancake house halted?
(They stage a protest. Mullet buried himself up to his neck in one of the burrows and the children link arms around him to prevent the groundbreaking. The media gets involved and Roy gives the file lacking the Environmental Impact Statement to the newspaper. This reveals that the corporation cannot build on the site legally.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

- What do owls in the story represent? How are they linked to Mullet and why does he care about them so much?
(The owls symbolize all the helpless creatures in the world who are demolished in the name of "progress." Mullet is one of these creatures in some ways. Like a wild owl, he is able to take care of himself in nature, but he still needs help from his own kind to survive.)
- Why does Dana keep attacking Roy?
(Dana is too stupid to realize that he cannot win; he is abusing Roy as he himself has been abused at home.)
- Beatrice asks Roy why he wants to help Mullet. Roy can't put his answer into clear words. Explain why Roy is concerned with Mullet.
(Roy is a kind and compassionate young man who feels drawn to the troubled Mullet. He is curious but he also feels that he can help Mullet—and he does.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

- What parts of the novel did you find humorous? In what ways?
(Kimberly is a very humorous character because the corporation disguises her only asset, her appearance, to use her as a speaker. She is also humorous because her career is at such a low level that she is reduced to jobs such as this one.)
- Was Roy justified in framing Dana for the vandalism? Why or why not?
(Readers who agree with Roy's decision to frame Dana may say that the bully had it coming to him for abusing Roy. Those who see Dana as a victim are likely not to agree.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

- Describe how you would save the owls and prevent Mother Paula's from building on the site.
- Working with a small group of classmates, role-play a dialogue between Roy and Mullet in which they discuss other ways to help save Florida's ecosystem.

Across the Curriculum

Art/Music

1. Make a travel brochure for the mythical town of Coconut Cove, Florida. Entice people to visit the city.
2. Design a new mascot for Mother Paula's Pancake House.
3. Create the rodeo poster Roy has hanging over his bed.
4. Draw or paint a new cover for the novel.
5. Using scenes from the novel, create a mural that shows its main events.

Language Arts

1. Come up with at least three more names for Napoleon. Explain which ones fit him the best and why.
2. "Urban legends" are tall tales with little or no basis in fact. One of the most well-known "urban legends" concerns alligators in the Florida sewer system. Read a book of urban legends and share the most outrageous ones with your classmates.
3. Writing as Beatrice, explain ways that you cope with your evil stepmother Lonna.
4. In an essay, describe at least three things that you learned about Florida from *Hoot*. Based on your examples, conclude with specific reasons why or why not you would like to visit Florida.
5. Compose a dialogue between Roy's parents in which they explain why they are proud of their son.

History/Social Studies

1. Report on the War of 1812, a topic Roy is tested on in his social studies class.
2. Find a place in Florida that could have been the model for Coconut Cove. Trace the similarities.

3. Call or write to your local police station to find out the punishments for vandalism similar to the acts Mullet commits.
4. The police captain thinks, "Delinko is no Sherlock Holmes." Who is Sherlock Holmes? Share your findings in a written report. Be sure to explain how the allusion does or does not fit Delinko.
5. Make a map of all the places that Roy has lived.

Speech/Debate

1. Debate which name fits Napoleon better: his given name (Napoleon Bridger) or the name he assumes, Mullet Fingers.
2. With a team of classmates, debate whether small pockets of wildlife are really worth saving.
3. In a roundtable discussion, explore ways to deal with bullies such as Dana.
4. Working with some classmates, perform the "groundbreaking" scene for the class.
5. Debate whether or not Mullet should have gotten in the way of the building project and committed acts of vandalism.

Science/Math

1. A mullet is a slipper, free-jumping baitfish that travels in large schools. Find out more about these fish and share your findings in a poster.
2. Roy deals with a potential bear attack by standing stock-still for over two hours. Research whether or not bears do attack people, and if so, how people should react to avoid injury.
3. Make a map showing the snakes native to your region. Highlight any that are poisonous.
4. Make a pamphlet with treatments for snake bite and dog bites.
5. Create a chart showing the differences between alligators and crocodiles.

6. Roy is hit with a golf ball. Construct a display showing the relative scale of at least six different balls, including golf balls, hard balls, soft-balls, soccer balls, basketballs, and beach balls.
7. Roy's mother suspects that he has suffered a concussion. How are concussions diagnosed and treated? How serious are they?

Alternate Assessment

1. Write a character sketch for Roy.
2. Create a "*Hoot*" board game, based on events in the novel. Include playing pieces, a board, and cards.
3. Read another novel by Carl Hiaasen and compare and contrast it to *Hoot*.

Vocabulary

Match each word to its meaning. Write the letter of your choice in the space provided.

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ___ 1. bogus | A. argument |
| ___ 2. rebuke | B. easy, merciful |
| ___ 3. truancy | C. toilet |
| ___ 4. discrete | D. false, fake |
| ___ 5. lustrous | E. nasty |
| ___ 6. impromptu | F. moody, sulky |
| ___ 7. commode | G. shining |
| ___ 8. surmise | H. docile, humble |
| ___ 9. travesty | I. evade capture |
| ___ 10. elude | J. unexplained absences from school |
| ___ 11. sullen | K. guess |
| ___ 12. thug | L. scared |
| ___ 13. inedible | M. spontaneous, unprepared |
| ___ 14. snide | N. cannot be eaten |
| ___ 15. intimidated | O. particular; able to keep a secret |
| ___ 16. lenient | P. destroy someone else's property |
| ___ 17. culprit | Q. parody, spoof |
| ___ 18. vandalize | R. hoodlum |
| ___ 19. altercation | S. guilty person |
| ___ 20. meek | T. disapproval |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match each description with a name from the list. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Roy Eberhardt | F. David Delinko |
| B. Dana Matherson | G. Curly |
| C. Beatrice Leep | H. Mullet Fingers |
| D. Chuck Muckle | I. Viola Hennepin |
| E. Mr. Ryan | J. Kimberly Lou Dixon |

- ____ 1. Mullet Finger's step-sister
- ____ 2. Napoleon Bridger
- ____ 3. The B-movie actress who works as a speaker for the pancake house
- ____ 4. The police officer determined to solve the mystery of the vandalism
- ____ 5. The corporate vice president of public relations for Mother Paula's
- ____ 6. the main character, a witty and compassionate teenager
- ____ 7. The vice-principal of Trace Middle School
- ____ 8. Roy's history teacher
- ____ 9. The foreman on the construction site
- ____ 10. The school bully who gets framed for the vandalism

Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Circle the term that best completes each of the following statements.

- Class bully Dana Matherson smashes Roy Eberhardt's head on the window of the **(classroom, school bus)**.
- Roy's family moves very often because of his father's job with the **(Department of Justice, Internal Revenue Service)**.
- Roy brings Mullet a pair of **(pants, sneakers)**.
- Beatrice bites Roy's **(baseball mitt, bicycle tire)**.
- Beatrice is nicknamed "Beatrice the **(Bear, Bruiser)**" for her strength and aggression.
- Mullet has put **(glitter, ribbons)** on the snake's tails.
- Curly hires a German man named Kalo to bring his fierce **(Rottweilers, former prisoners)** to guard the construction site.
- Beatrice smoothly lies to Roy's mother to obtain **(money, ground beef)** and bandages for Mullet.
- Mullet takes Roy to the **(Florida Princess, Molly Bell)**, a wrecked ship in a creek.
- At the protest, Mullet brings along a bucket of rubber **(chickens, snakes)**.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if a part is false.

- ___ 1. Someone has pulled out all the survey sticks and filled in the holes on the construction site for a new Mother Paula's pancake house.
- ___ 2. Roy's classmate Leroy Branitt is a poor student who is nonetheless popular because he can make phony farts at will.
- ___ 3. Ms. Hennepin order Dana to write an apology note to Roy for strangling him.
- ___ 4. Officer Delinko finds the vandal has put alligators in the tanks of the porta-potties at the construction site.
- ___ 5. Roy is very careful not to tell his parents anything about Mullet, Beatrice, or the owls.
- ___ 6. Kimberly's next movie will be *Mutant Invaders from Jupiter Seven*.
- ___ 7. Officer Delinko is put on desk duty as a result of falling asleep on the job.
- ___ 8. The vice-principal asks Roy to write a letter praising her to the principal.
- ___ 9. Roy discovers that Mullet has been vandalizing the site to save the tiny burrowing owls that live there
- ___ 10. At the end of the story, the owls are saved and their habitat remains undisturbed.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Based on what you read in *Hoot*, why is it important to save the environment and protect the ecosystem?
- 2. Summarize the plot (story line) of *Hoot*.
- 3. Describe what you learned about Florida from this novel.
- 4. Compare and contrast the three mothers described in the novel: Lonna Leep, Mrs. Matherson, and Mrs. Eberhardt. How are they the same and different?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Motivation (20 points)

Write a reason or motivation to complete each sentence.

1. Dana Matherson smashes Roy Eberhardt's head on the window of the school bus because
2. The second day of school, Roy suddenly jumps out of the school bus because
3. Viola Hennepin, the assistant principal, calls Roy and Dana to her office because
4. Officer Delinko is put on desk duty because
5. Beatrice bites a hole in Roy's bike tire to
6. Chuck Muckle, a vice-president at Mother Paula's, threatens Curly with dismissal because
7. Curly hires a German man named Kalo to bring his fierce Rottweilers to the construction site to
8. Beatrice sits next to Roy on the bus because
9. Mullet needs ground beef because
10. Roy tricks Dana into going to the construction site because

Part II: Identification (20 points)

Briefly describe each person, place, or thing and explain why it is important in the story.

1. the green shirt
2. owls
3. snakes
4. pancakes
5. sneakers

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left. Use each name only once.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. Pookie Face | A. Mullet's mother |
| ___ 2. Roy Eberhardt | B. Curly, the bald foreman |
| ___ 3. David Delinko | C. the school bully |
| ___ 4. Leroy Branitt | D. a former basketball player |
| ___ 5. Viola Hennepin | E. Mother Paula's spokeswoman |
| ___ 6. Mullet Fingers | F. the novel's main character; a smart and kind kid |
| ___ 7. Leroy Leep | G. one of the fierce Rotweiller dogs |
| ___ 8. Lonna Leep | H. the well-meaning but inept police officer |
| ___ 9. Kimberly Lou Dixon | I. the vice-principal of Trace Middle School |
| ___ 10. Dana Matherson | J. Lonna's son |

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe the novel's main conflict.
2. Explain the meaning of Mullet Finger's name. Why did he chose it? How does it reflect his personality or abilities?
3. Analyze how the story would be different if told from a different point of view.
4. Explain what function Kimberly Lou Dixon fulfills in the novel.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. M | 11. F | 16. B |
| 2. T | 7. C | 12. R | 17. S |
| 3. J | 8. K | 13. N | 18. P |
| 4. O | 9. Q | 14. E | 19. A |
| 5. G | 10. I | 15. L | 20. H |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. A |
| 2. H | 7. I |
| 3. J | 8. E |
| 4. F | 9. G |
| 5. D | 10. B |

Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1. school bus | 6. glitter |
| 2. Department of Justice | 7. Rottweilers |
| 3. sneakers | 8. ground beef |
| 4. bicycle tire | 9. Molly Bell |
| 5. Bear | 10. snakes |

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T |
| 2. F | 7. T |
| 3. F | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part IV. Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Motivation (20 points)

- Dana is a bully who enjoys torturing the new kid in class.
- he sees the barefoot boy running by and wants to find out who he is and why he is barefoot.
- they were fighting.
- he fell asleep while on a stakeout on the construction site and the vandal painted the windows of his police cruiser black.
- give him an explanation for his lateness.
- the vandal has put the project behind schedule.
- to guard the site.
- her presence stops Dana from beating Roy up.
- he needs to feed the owls with it.
- he wants to frame him for the vandalism and get Mullet off the hook.

Part II: Identification (20 points)

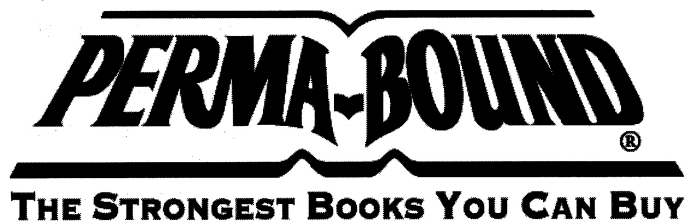
- Office Delinko finds a scrap of the green shirt that Mullet was wearing when he vandalized the construction site. It is a concrete clue to the identity of the vandal.
- Owls live in the construction site. They will die if their habitat is destroyed. Hiaasen used them as a symbol for the importance of preserving Florida's ecosystem and halting rampant development.
- Mullet uses snakes—both real and rubber—to terrorize people. Although the snakes are poisonous, they are harmless because Mullet has taped their mouths shut. This shows people's irrational fear of snakes.
- Pancakes are the product Mother Paula sells. It is both humorous and ironic that such a common and inexpensive product sets off such a furor.
- Roy brings a pair of his sneakers to Mullet, who has no shoes. This shows Roy's compassion and practicality.

Part III: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. J |
| 2. F | 7. D |
| 3. H | 8. A |
| 4. B | 9. E |
| 5. I | 10. C |

Part IV. Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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