



**MARGARET MITCHELL:
A LINK TO ATLANTA AND THE WORLD**

A Teacher's Guide to the Author of *Gone With the Wind*

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A Teacher's Guide to the Author of *Gone With the Wind*

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Margaret Mitchell House
and
The Atlanta History Center



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WELCOME TO THE MARGARET MITCHELL HOUSE CURRICULUM GUIDE

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Dear Educator: The Atlanta History Center and the Margaret Mitchell House hope you will enjoy and use this guide to the working life of Margaret Mitchell and the residence in which she lived while writing the 1936 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Gone With the Wind*. This guide is intended to excite students about reading and writing and to expose them to the challenges of creating a major literary work. Please use and enjoy this resource, and share it with your fellow educators.



Margaret Mitchell House, ca. 2006.

THE MARGARET MITCHELL HOUSE AS A LEARNING DESTINATION

Margaret Munnerlyn Mitchell, who was born on November 8, 1900, in Atlanta, Georgia, wrote the sweeping Civil War novel *Gone With the Wind*, one of the top-selling books of all time. The Margaret Mitchell House, located in the heart of Midtown Atlanta, can offer an interdisciplinary learning experience for your students and improve their language arts skills. Here are some of the concepts that are emphasized:

- Margaret Mitchell overcame the stereotypes of her time to become a successful journalist and author.
- Reading and writing were important to Margaret Mitchell from an early age.
- Storytelling was key to Margaret Mitchell, as a journalist and author.
- Margaret Mitchell had a great respect for and interest in history.

Education Objectives:

Students using the activities in this guide will:

- **Improve their reading comprehension and knowledge of literary skills and devices.**
- **Learn about Margaret Mitchell's life as a child, journalist, and author.**
- **Learn about the history and architecture of the apartment house where Margaret Mitchell wrote *Gone With the Wind*.**



10th Street School, ca.1912. Courtesy of the Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center.

PART I: MARGARET MITCHELL: HER EARLY YEARS

Education Objectives:

- Students learn about Margaret Mitchell's childhood.
- Students gain insight into the importance of history to authors.
- Students learn about writing and creating stories on paper.
- Students come to understand the concept of plagiarism and learn the distinction between creating their own story and copying a story.

Activity: Ask students to read the material below about Margaret Mitchell's early life and education, then have them answer the questions about the reading exercise.

Activity: Have students create a timeline based on Mitchell's early life, then have them create a timeline based on their own lives. What big events have happened to them?

Activity: "Creating on Paper"

Activity: "Now Try This" – understanding what is and is not plagiarism.

Activity: Students write their own version of a favorite childhood story.

READING ACTIVITY: MARGARET MITCHELL'S LIFE – THE EARLY YEARS:

Margaret Munnerlyn Mitchell was born on November 8, 1900, in Atlanta, Georgia. She was born in a six-room house on Cain Street, between North Boulevard and East Jackson Street, in the Old Fourth Ward's Jackson Hill section. This neighborhood is east of downtown Atlanta. Margaret's parents were Eugene Muse Mitchell and Maybelle Stephens Mitchell, both natives of Atlanta. Because she was born in 1900, it was always easy for Margaret to remember how old she was. She could think back to when she was a certain age, and she would at once know the year.

Margaret's best friend was her brother Stephens, who was five years older than she. Margaret often played with Stephens and his friends. Playing with boys was easier for young Margaret than for most other girls in Atlanta because Margaret wore pants. Because of an accident that happened when Margaret was a toddler, the girl's mother made sure her daughter wore trousers when at play.

When Margaret was three, a fire broke out in the basement of the Mitchell home. Unaware of the fire below, Margaret had been standing over the grate in the floor to warm her body against the cold Atlanta night. Her many layers of petticoats and her full skirt caught fire and young Margaret's legs were burned as a result. After a hospital stay, good care from her parents, just the right amount of activity, and the encouragement of her brother, Margaret's legs slowly healed. Still, Mrs. Mitchell vowed that Margaret would not have such flammable clothing again. She purchased pants for Margaret to wear most of the time.

GETTING AN EDUCATION

Margaret loved history. Even before she turned eight, she reportedly could recite all the battles of the Civil War (1861-1865). Margaret grew up hearing family friends and relatives tell their personal accounts of the war. While her big brother was in school, Margaret would sometimes go horseback riding with a Civil War veteran. She would listen to him, as well as to others, talk about their war experiences. It was common for these men to talk about the war. Sometimes they would argue about which battle was the most important and why certain battles had been won or lost. Margaret also learned about the Civil War from people in her own neighborhood.

Margaret and her parents often visited older people who had no one else to call on them; these people also talked about the war. Their parents often took Stephens and Margaret around the Atlanta area; as they traveled, brother and sister learned the history of each section of the city. A favorite local trip for Margaret was to view "The Battle of Atlanta," the largest circular painting in the world (today known as the Atlanta Cyclorama). From an early age, Margaret could examine the huge painting and identify such images as the Union's bald eagle mascot "Old Abe," General William T. Sherman, and General John "Blackjack" Logan.

After her first day of school, Margaret told her mother, "I don't like arithmetic, and I am not going back to school." Mrs. Mitchell hooked up the buggy and drove her seven-year-old daughter south of the city to Jonesboro.

"The difference, Margaret, is one word: gumption. You must work with your hands, but you must use your mind also. To take care of yourself, you must have gumption. Use your hands and head." One day Margaret's great novel would have two types of people: those with gumption and those without it.

Questions Based on the Reading:

Directions: Answer the questions below. Use the story and other books to help you if you have problems.

1. What year was Margaret Mitchell born? _____
2. If Margaret started school in the fall of 1907, she was _____ years old.
3. Who was Margaret's best friend? _____ Was this unusual? _____

Explain your answer. _____

4. What was Margaret Mitchell's favorite subject? _____

Why? _____

5. Define the word "gumption." Use a dictionary. _____

a. Can you name someone who has this quality? _____

b. How do they show it? _____

c. Use the word "gumption" in a sentence: _____

6. As a girl, Margaret Mitchell visited older people to help them know they were not forgotten.

Is there anyone you help? If so, please explain how you do so. Or: Who might you like to help?

How might you help this person? _____

7. Name a book or story you know with two different characters—one with gumption and one without. _____

Explain your answer. _____

8. Margaret wrote about something she knew: the Civil War. What are you interested in learning more about and writing about, and why? (Imagine yourself as an author. What subject matter can you see yourself writing about?) _____

Learning to Create on Paper

Education Objectives:

- Students learn how Margaret Mitchell began to write.
- Students learn how Margaret Mitchell learned about plagiarism.
- Students get ideas for their own writing activities.

Activity: Have the students read the selection below about Margaret Mitchell's early writings and plagiarism. Have them answer the questions.

Activity: Ask students to make a list of things they could write about in a creative writing activity.

Activity: Have the students research these types of writing and storytelling forms and write definitions:

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| a. Fairy Tale | c. Fable | e. Myth |
| b. Parable | d. Folktale | f. Legend |

Activity: Read the students a version of "The Golden Arm" folktale that was an early favorite of Margaret Mitchell's. Discuss the story as a group. Why was it her favorite? What did your students like about the story? Why? What didn't they like? Why?

READING ACTIVITY: LEARNING TO CREATE ON PAPER

Before she began school, Margaret Mitchell loved to both hear and tell stories. One of her favorite stories to re-tell was "I Want My Golden Arm." As soon as his sister could write, Stephens recalled, she wrote down her stories. At first she created homemade covers for her stories and fastened them into booklets. But she soon gave up that time-consuming task and bought composition books at the dime store for her writings. Young Margaret would fill these pages with stories as well as ideas and notes for future writings. Keeping a journal became a daily girlhood activity for the future famous novelist. Letter-writing was also a favorite pastime. Margaret took her letter-writing very seriously. Later in life, when she received thousands of pieces of fan mail following the publication of *Gone With the Wind*, she felt a strong sense of obligation to reply to everyone who had written to her.

Margaret's girlhood writings were well developed, with clear beginnings, middles, and endings. Her subject matter varied. Early on, she wrote about her pets, then she began to make up fairy tales. Next, she wrote stories about friends and family members. After that, she created adventure tales. Margaret's early writings also included morality tales, stories about the Civil War, tales set in foreign lands, and even short plays (or skits). Before long, Margaret had filled so many composition books that her mother began purchasing white enamel breadboxes in which to store them. Margaret even invented a name for her "press": the Urchin Publishing Company.

Before she finished high school at Washington Seminary, a private finishing school, Margaret had completed a 400-page book titled *The Big Four* and another shorter book, *Lost Laysen*. Her high school yearbooks carried two of her stories.

READING ACTIVITY: PLAGIARISM

When Margaret was fifteen she wrote a play based on a book called *The Traitor* by Thomas Dixon. She charged parents to see their children perform the play. Margaret's father Eugene attended one of the performances. After the show was over, she eagerly asked him what he thought about her work.

"I did not like it," he said. "You used someone else's work, and you did not have his permission. You did not even tell your audience where you got your idea. You broke a copyright law. You *plagiarized*, or stole, from the writer Thomas Dixon."

Eugene Muse Mitchell was an attorney; he knew that it was illegal (against the law) to copy someone else's work. His words frightened young Margaret. She feared that Thomas Dixon might come to her home and punish her for illegally using his works.

That was an important lesson for Margaret Mitchell. By age eleven, Margaret began marking her writings as "copyrighted." After publication of *Gone With the Wind*, she contacted the popular cartoonist Al Capp, creator of the cartoon strip "Li'l Abner." Capp had used two of the main characters from *Gone With the Wind* (Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler) without permission.

STORYTELLING ON PAPER

Margaret Mitchell loved to listen to and tell stories, such as "I Want My Golden Arm." Then as soon as she was able to write, she began to write them down. **Take a sheet of paper and write a story you heard and loved when you were younger. Try your best to include some details and description.**

Now Try This: What is Plagiarism?

Directions: Listed below are examples of some things that people do. Some of these actions are examples of plagiarism and some are not. See if you can correctly decide which ones are dishonest and which are not. Place a **P** in front of the examples of **plagiarism** and an **N** in front of the ones that are **not**.

- _____ 1. For a report on ducks, a fifth-grader copies a paragraph from an encyclopedia.
- _____ 2. A fifth-grader copies a paragraph from an encyclopedia for her report on ducks. She uses quotation marks around the words she copies, and she writes at the bottom of the page the name of the encyclopedia where she got the words.
- _____ 3. A third-grader is having a backyard play. At the library, he finds the words and music to a song he likes. Instead of buying copies at the store, he makes eight copies on the photocopier and gives one copy to each actor to sing.
- _____ 4. A boy burns a copy of a music CD so that his friend will not have to buy the CD.
- _____ 5. The teacher assigns each student to write a one-page story for the school newspaper. A girl copies a short story from a magazine and turns it in as her own work.

FYI: Proof that a book (or other written material) has been copyrighted is usually found on one of the first pages within that publication. If a book was published in 2004, for example, its copyright will look like this: © 2004.

Activity: Choose a book from your classroom or library shelves and another one from your own desk or backpack. Can you find proof of copyright in each of these?

Activity: Discuss the importance of giving credit to other writers for their work. Why is it important to copyright, in any kind of writing, or even in tasks such as developing your own website?

Answer the questions below:

1. What are the three parts of a story that Margaret always included? _____

2. What types of stories did Margaret write? _____
3. At what age did Margaret write her first novel? _____
4. What was its title? _____
5. What does the word “copyright” mean? _____
6. Where can you find proof of copyright in a book? _____



*Margaret Mitchell age 20, with cat.
Courtesy of the Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center.*



Margaret Mitchell and friend at Lake Burton, ca. 1920.
Courtesy of the Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center.

PART II: MARGARET MITCHELL: JOURNALISM CAREER

Education Objectives:

- Review Margaret Mitchell’s life in college and as a young wife.
- Learn how Margaret Mitchell became a journalist.
- Learn about what it was like to be a woman journalist in the 1920s.
- Gain insight into writing like a reporter.
- Explore newspaper layout.

Activity: Ask students to read the page “Margaret Mitchell: Young Reporter.” Answer the questions about her life.

Activity: Have students read through a daily edition of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. What types of stories appear in the paper? Which types of stories do students think Margaret Mitchell might have written in today’s newspaper?

Activity: Ask the students to complete the “Now Try This” activity and learn how to navigate their way through a daily paper.

Activity: Have the students write their own news story in the newspaper activity listed below.

Activity: Have the students write a news paragraph using the inverted pyramid style described below.

MARGARET MITCHELL: YOUNG REPORTER

In 1918 Margaret's mother proudly accompanied her daughter to Northampton, Massachusetts. Margaret—now being called Peggy—enrolled in Smith College, a prestigious New England women's college. It is hardly surprising that her strongest subjects there were history and English. But Margaret would only spend one year at Smith. Sadly, her mother died of influenza ("flu") in January 1919. After her freshman year at Smith, Peggy Mitchell returned to Atlanta to help her father. She would never resume her college career.

In her spare time, Margaret enjoyed the Atlanta social scene. Soon, her friends began to speculate as to whom she would marry. Her choice, however, proved less than ideal. She wed the outgoing Red Upshaw on September 2, 1922. The marriage lasted less than a year. (Interestingly, Margaret Mitchell's second husband John Marsh was in the Upshaw-Mitchell wedding party, looking not so happy in one photograph!)

In December 1922, Peggy Upshaw landed a job that excited her. She was hired as a feature writer for the *Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine*. This job not only gave her a small income but also gave her self-respect and confidence. Peggy also felt that she was contributing to society.

"What we are looking for," announced the magazine's editor Angus Perkerson as he hired the future author, "is straightforward writing without self-conscious tricks and it's surprising how few people can do it. You either can or you can't. I'll try you out and we'll see if you're one of the people who can." Being a reporter proved to be hard work, but Peggy Upshaw was both enthusiastic and capable. In those days, reporter-writers worked at least eight to ten hours a day, six days a week. That added up to forty-eight to sixty hours a week. Every other week a reporter had to stay late to help get out the Sunday paper. In addition, reporters often had to "catch" two night assignments per week. Most reporters, including Peggy Upshaw (whose byline changed from Peggy Upshaw to Peggy Mitchell following her divorce), often worked more than sixty hours. As a young reporter, Peggy made just \$25 week. She was one of the first female reporters for the *Atlanta Journal* to cover "hard" news, or "breaking" or serious news.

Due to Peggy's petite size (4-feet, 11 inches), she had to strain to climb onto her stool and reach her desk at the *Journal*. When seated, her feet would not even touch the floor. After noticing the problem, a carpenter for the newspaper sawed off the legs of both her stool and desk.

Margaret researched and wrote some articles on a subject she knew a lot about: Confederate generals. She took note of the fact that most writings on the Civil War were from the male point of view and she was determined to see a woman's viewpoint. In the spring of 1923, Peggy produced a series of articles on women for the *Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine*. She said she was trying to "restore women to their proper role in history."

Peggy earned a reputation for being a gutsy reporter. After interviewing the inventor of a new safety strap, she allowed its designer to lower her down the side of a 200-foot building using the new belt. An *Atlanta Journal* photographer took her picture on the building. Another time, Peggy went behind the scenes at the circus. After the newspaper's representative muttered something to the animal trainer, suddenly an elephant picked up Peggy and placed her on its head. The photograph was a hit in the next edition. Peggy also won over the photographer in showing such courage.

Peggy enjoyed everything about her work. She got along well with her co-workers and proved that she could work with her hands and her mind. Because city editor Harlee Branch liked her skills and determination, he decided to use the new female writer for some "straight" news reporting.

Toward the end of her career at the *Atlanta Journal Magazine*, Peggy was on crutches with a sprained ankle. She also suffered from back problems and pain associated with previously broken bones, and she had a touch of arthritis. She tried to write a chatty column titled "Elizabeth Bennet's Gossip" for the newspaper, but her ailments did not allow her to keep that up. (She also said she was tired of meeting deadlines). Peggy received her last *Journal* paycheck on May 3, 1926. After less than four years on the job, she had turned out 128 signed feature stories (bearing her name, or byline) and more than forty "hard" news stories. By the time she left the newspaper, she had been married to John Marsh for about ten months.

Answer the Questions Below:

1. Why did Margaret Mitchell become a journalist? _____

2. Based on the reading, what kinds of stories did Margaret Mitchell write for the paper? _____

3. What are the differences between hard and soft news? _____

4. Margaret Mitchell experienced several events that influenced her life and career, such as her mother's death, her divorce, and several illnesses. Select a person you admire and try to determine specific events that changed the course of his or her life. _____

5. What was the life of a reporter like back in the 1920s? How many hours a week did they work? _____

6. What might the working life have been like for a female reporter in the 1920s? _____

You Can Be a Young Reporter

Margaret Mitchell worked for the *Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine*. Now it is your turn to work for the *Atlanta Journal* by using your imagination. Write an article about something you care about and/or find exciting.

(Be sure to give your story a headline. Tip: Headlines are usually written after the story is written. Your headline needs to include the main idea or chief news in your story.)

Headline

Have the students read their news stories to one another and act as editors. Are there any “holes” in the story? (Are any key facts missing? Is the reader left with too many questions?) Does this story belong on the front page or in another section of the paper? Why?

Now try this! Geography of a Newspaper

Directions: Margaret “Peggy” Mitchell worked in several different capacities at the *Atlanta Journal*. The *Journal*, like most newspapers, had many different sections. Some of those sections are listed in the Word Bank. Try to match the name of the section with its description below. (HINT: If you have difficulty, use a real newspaper to help you.)

- _____ 1. To find out what the temperature will be tomorrow, you consult this section of the paper.
- _____ 2. You want to buy a used sofa, so look first in a part of the paper called the _____.
- _____ 3. These give you the most important news for the day.
- _____ 4. Some think that this feature in the newspaper will tell their future.
- _____ 5. If you want a laugh, you might read these in the newspaper.
- _____ 6. To learn who has died, or find out the time of the funeral, you turn to this section.
- _____ 7. To find out what time a movie begins, you check the _____.
- _____ 8. To complain about a news article you read, you can write a letter to the newspaper. Your letter may appear in the _____.

WORD BANK

Classified Advertisements

Comics

Editorials

Entertainment Section

Headlines

Horoscope

Obituaries

Sports Page

Weather Forecast

You are the Reporter: Inverted Pyramid Style

Newspaper writers use the “inverted pyramid” style to organize a news story.

- The first paragraph contains the overall summary and most important news of the story.
- The second and third paragraphs are for supporting information.
- The lesser details and background information belong in subsequent paragraphs.

Exercise A: Arrange the following sentences in inverted pyramid style by placing a 1 before the first item. Place a 2 before the information that should come second; it is less important than the first paragraph. Place a 3 before the least important item(s) you would include in inverted pyramid style.

_____ The traffic stopped for three hours.

_____ Three people were killed in a Pine Street traffic accident on Monday. A city bus, a police car, and a fire engine were involved at the peak of the 5:00 PM rush hour.

_____ Workers removed fourteen people from the bus and loaded them into an ambulance.

Exercise B: Now write your own news story using the inverted pyramid style.

Headline



Courtesy of the Kenneth G. Rogers Collection, Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center, ca. 1936.

III: WRITING THE NOVEL *GONE WITH THE WIND*

Education Objectives:

- Students learn how the novel *Gone With the Wind* was written and published.
- Students gain insight into how much work is involved in creating a novel.
- Students compare writing a novel in 1920s with novel-writing today.

Activity: Ask students to read the following selection and answer the questions at the end.

Activity: Ask students to make a timeline that tracks how long it took to get *Gone With the Wind* written and then published. Have them create a national timeline of events. Begin the timeline in 1926, when Mitchell first started writing *GWTW*, and continue to the book's publication in June 1936. (Chart other events going on in the world and nation, such as the Great Depression).

Activity: Compare and contrast writing and publishing a book in 1936 with 2006. For example, Margaret Mitchell wrote all 1,037 pages on a typewriter and not a computer—if she made a mistake or decided to change the story, she would retype the entire page.

Bonus information: Mitchell's manuscript was 1,037 pages long, and she actually wrote "backwards," meaning she wrote the last chapter first and the second to last chapter after that, and so on. She did not write the first chapter, which happens to be loaded with details, until after submitting the novel for publication.

You try it: Can you write a story backwards, or last chapter first? Try writing an ending, then the middle, then write your beginning last!

READING ACTIVITY: WRITING *GONE WITH THE WIND*

Margaret sprained her ankle shortly after her marriage to John Marsh on July 4, 1925. She wore a cast for a long time and spent several weeks in bed with traction on the injured limb. When arthritis set in, she found herself unable to walk. In April 1926 the doctors removed her tonsils. They believed the infection kept her ankle from healing. She had to use crutches for a very long time. She finally gave up her job and would never work for a salary outside of her home again.

To fill her lonely days, her husband John supplied her with library books. In a letter to Mrs. Julia Harris of the *Chattanooga Times*, Margaret said that John “finally brought home a pound or so of copy paper and said, ‘Write a book. I can’t find anything at the Carnegie [Library] that you haven’t read, except books on the exact sciences.’”

Margaret’s work began the very next morning. She sat down at her small Remington typewriter. She wore a visor with a green, transparent bill while she worked. Just as the editors at a newspaper donned their visors for reading and writing, Margaret put hers on before going to the typewriter.

Some days Peggy typed all day. Each night John rushed home from work. He read any pages she had written that day and they talked about her work. Sometimes Peggy and he would work until midnight. John and Peggy kept her “project” secret. Peggy would lay a towel over the typewriter when visitors came. They kept the pages in large manila envelopes that they labeled with the chapter numbers. They would hide these tattered envelopes under the bed, under the sofa, behind the refrigerator, or anywhere that visitors would not notice them.

In apartment #1 at what is now 979 Crescent Street, Margaret wrote most of *Gone With the Wind*. *Gone With the Wind* is a historical novel. A historical novel is fiction set sixty or more years ago. Margaret made certain that nothing in the book had happened more recently than that and she double-checked all her facts. Margaret’s sweeping Civil War saga is 500,000 words and 1,037 pages long.

THE ROAD TO PUBLICATION OF *GONE WITH THE WIND*

In early 1935, the directors at Macmillan Publishing Company in New York decided to travel across the nation in search of new writers. In April of that year, vice president and editor-in-chief Harold Latham made his first visit to Atlanta. Although editors rarely travel the country in search of authors today, in the 1930s this was a fairly common practice.

Margaret’s friend Lois Cole, who worked for Macmillan, asked Margaret and John to entertain Latham. Margaret took him to a luncheon, to Stone Mountain outside Atlanta, and set up some meetings with Atlanta writers. Margaret did not, however, give him her own manuscript at this time.

Margaret did eventually turn her work over to Latham—in an angry huff. She was driving a group of women back home after they met with Latham when someone in the back seat suggested that Margaret did not have the discipline to write a book.

Margaret rushed home and grabbed the envelopes from behind the refrigerator, from under the bed, and from beneath the legs of the table. She hurried with them to the Georgian Terrace Hotel where Latham was staying. She phoned his room and asked him to come to the lobby.

Latham later described the scene: “She was seated on a sofa in the hotel lobby with a pile of envelopes that reached to her shoulders.”

Margaret greeted him and said, “Here! Take this thing before I change my mind.”

Latham had no room for the huge pile of envelopes. He bought an extra suitcase, stuffed her countless manila envelopes in it, and boarded a train to New Orleans.

On the train he began to read the untitled work. Latham said the manuscript was in the worst shape of any book he had ever seen. The envelopes were out of order and Margaret had typed some of the chapters years earlier, so the yellow pages were faded and sometimes brittle. Some pages were missing and there was no first chapter. In addition, Margaret and John had marked up and corrected many pages. There were even several different versions of the same chapters among the stacks Margaret thrust upon Latham. Still, Latham always claimed that he knew immediately that he had found a manuscript of importance.

After handing over her many years of work to Latham, Margaret returned home. It felt empty without the pages that had taken up so much space for so many years. This is when Margaret realized that she had not given Latham the first chapter—because she had never written a first chapter. She and John sent a telegram to Latham.

The next day, Latham found the telegram waiting for him at the hotel in New Orleans. The message read: PLEASE SEND THE MANUSCRIPT BACK I'VE CHANGED MY MIND. Latham wired her back, saying that she surely would not want him to return the manuscript to her until he found out how it ended. When he next wrote to Margaret, he told her that he was “greatly impressed.” Ultimately, Margaret Mitchell allowed Macmillan to publish her book and it arrived in print as *Gone With the Wind* in June 1936. It was an immediate sensation.

Answer these Questions:

- 1) Why did Margaret Mitchell start writing *Gone With the Wind*? Based on the reading, how long did it take her to write the whole novel?
- 2) Why would she keep her work a secret?
- 3) Was Mitchell's work over when she gave the manuscripts to Latham?
- 4) What is historical fiction? How would Margaret Mitchell make sure all the facts in her novel about the Civil War were correct?

Eye-Opening Facts about the novel *Gone With the Wind*

- Margaret started writing her book in 1926. She turned it over to Latham in 1935, about nine years later.
- She signed the publishing contract in August 1935 after she submitted it in April 1935.
- Margaret's work was not over when she gave it to Latham; she had to edit the 1,037 pages.
- The formal release date for *Gone With the Wind* was June 30, 1936.
- On that day, booksellers had already sold 50,000 copies and were ordering more.
- By July 1—the day after its release—the book had earned Margaret \$10,500 after one day of sales. There were more than 100,000 books in print, including a book club edition.
- On December 15, 1936, Macmillan mailed to Margaret the one-millionth copy of her novel.
- On May 3, 1937, Margaret received the Pulitzer Prize.
- Margaret tried to answer every letter and to sign every book mailed to her home. She even unwrapped the books, signed them, rewrapped, and mailed them—often at her own expense. At last, John said this was taking up too much of her time. First, she had to stop autographing and paying the postage to mail books back to her many fans. John instructed the post office and Macmillan not to send any more books to their apartment. He notified the publisher that Margaret would not sign any more books.
- As of 2005, *Gone With the Wind* had sold 28 million copies and was printed in thirty-nine languages.

STYLISTIC DEVICES

Activity: Have students read the brief description of the plot of *Gone With the Wind*. Margaret Mitchell used stylistic devices to make her writing more effective. Below are the definitions of some stylistic devices; underneath these are some quotations from *Gone With the Wind*.

- Choose the example from *Gone With the Wind* that best illustrates the devices below.
- Place the letter in the blank beside the quote that indicates the device illustrated.

Devices

- _____ 1. A hyperbole is an exaggeration; for example, “It was the worst shirt she had ever seen.”
- _____ 2. A simile uses the words like or as; for example, “as big as a house.”
- _____ 3. Diction is the language of people from a certain region. For example, in the South people say “y’all” instead of “you.”
- _____ 4. Connotation is a reference to something else; something that might be hidden. For example, “a smell resembling burning toast” refers to burning bread and “a smell that reminded her of her mother’s kitchen” refers to smells in the kitchen of her house.
- _____ 5. Onomatopoeia is a word that sounds like the noise; examples are zip, pop, splat, and drip.
- _____ 6. A metaphor occurs when an author calls a thing by a different name; for example, “a blanket of snow.”
- _____ 7. The repetition of sounds is alliteration. For example, “Peter Piper picked. . . .”
- _____ 8. Imagery is a vivid description, a complete picture. For example, “A red bird sitting on a weathered brown post. . . .”
- _____ 9. Personification is a stylistic device that gives living or human characteristics to non-living or inanimate things. For example, “Mother Nature” and “Father Time.”

Examples from *Gone With the Wind*

- “. . . popcorn in a popper.” (page 253)
- “Doan holler, Miss Scarlett! Please, doan holler agin!” (page 263)
- “Fight and fall back! Fight and fall back!” (page 198)
- “. . . her flesh crawled. . . .” (page 438)
- “. . . every man who could walk was in the rifle pits or chasing the Yankees. . . .” (page 222)
- “There were tears on her cheeks, her bonnet was hanging on her neck by the ribbons and her hoops swaying violently.” (page 164)
- “. . . the reek of heavy cheap perfume came into the room with her.” (page 164)
- “. . . [nursing was] groans, delirium, death and smells.” (page 105)
- “I’m as bad as Honey Wilkes,’ she thought suddenly. . . .” (page 80)

READING ACTIVITY: SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL *GONE WITH THE WIND*

It is impossible to give a complete summary of a 1,037-page novel in a paragraph or two. Some basic details, however, can serve as a review or as a summary. *Gone With the Wind* takes place primarily at the (imaginary) Tara Plantation, which is located twenty-five miles south of Atlanta, and also in the town of Atlanta. The novel has five parts.

Part One opens on the Tara Plantation from April 1861 until May of 1862. Scarlett O’Hara attends a party at Twelve Oaks in April 1861 when the Civil War begins. Scarlett pours her heart out to Ashley Wilkes, who informs her that he is not going to marry her, but will marry his cousin Melanie Hamilton instead. From his reclining position on the couch, Rhett Butler overhears the whole scene, which angers and embarrasses Scarlett. Then out of spite, Scarlett marries Charles Hamilton, Melanie’s brother. Charles goes to war and dies of pneumonia following a case of measles.

Scarlett bears a son she names Wade and visits Savannah and Charleston with Wade. Later, with her son, she leaves Tara to stay with Melanie and Aunt Pittypat in Atlanta.

Part Two takes place in Atlanta from May 1862 until May 1864. Rhett Butler appears on the scene and pays a large price at an auction (a fundraiser for the war effort) to dance with the widowed Scarlett.

Part Three takes place in Atlanta from May 1864 until September 1, 1864. Ashley makes Scarlett promise to take care of Melanie until after Melanie's baby is born. Melanie gives birth on September 1, 1864, while the enemy invades Atlanta. Scarlett, with the help of Rhett Butler, is able to secure a wagon to escape Atlanta while it is in flames. Melanie, Melanie's new baby Beau, Scarlett's son Wade, Prissy the slave, and Scarlett leave the city for Tara. After a harrowing buggy ride, they arrive at Tara. Upon arrival, Scarlett and Melanie learn that Scarlett's mother has died. Scarlett continues to reside at Tara through the end of the Civil War in April 1865 until January 1866.

Part Four begins in January 1866. Scarlett is desperate for money to pay the taxes on Tara. When Rhett Butler refuses to help, she marries Frank Kennedy, her sister's longtime beau, to secure the tax money. Scarlett's father, who lives at Tara with Scarlett's sister, falls from a horse and dies.

In Atlanta, Frank, Ashley, Rhett, and some others raid a shantytown. Frank is killed and Ashley suffers wounds. Scarlett is left with her son, Wade Hampton Hamilton, and daughter, Ella Lorena Kennedy. She marries Rhett, and the two honeymoon in New Orleans.

Part Five details the marriage of Rhett and Scarlett during the Reconstruction era (approximately 1867-1872). Rhett restores Tara and builds a home in Atlanta. The two have a daughter Bonnie who dies in a riding accident. When Melanie dies, leaving Ashley a widower, Scarlett realizes she loves Rhett, not Ashley. But it is too late. Rhett leaves, and Scarlett vows to bring him back, uttering the famous line, "I'll think about it tomorrow. After all, tomorrow is another day."

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Have students read the summary of *Gone With the Wind's* plot and then answer the following questions about what type of plotting tools Margaret Mitchell used to write the novel.

1. A chronological plot occurs in sequential order; a flashback skips to an earlier time and back to the present. The plot in *Gone With the Wind* is typically _____.
2. A progressive plot is one that unfolds throughout the book; one has to wait until the end of the book to discover the outcome. In a book with an episodic plot, each chapter is complete in itself. *Gone With the Wind* is a book with a(n) _____ plot.
3. A flat character is one that the reader does not know all about; a round character is one that the reader knows well. Scarlett is a _____ character.
4. The setting is where and when the story occurs. Much of *Gone With the Wind* is set in the town of _____ and the story begins in the year _____.
5. A backdrop setting is not essential to the plot; an integral setting is necessary to the story. *Gone With the Wind* is an example of a book with a(n) _____ setting.
6. An open ending leaves readers unsure of what will happen. Write a closed ending for the novel.



Margaret Mitchell wearing uniform of Red Cross Volunteer during World War II.
Courtesy of the Kenneth G. Rogers Collection, Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center.

PART IV: MARGARET MITCHELL: HER LATER YEARS

Education Objectives:

- Students learn what happened to Margaret Mitchell after she wrote *Gone With the Wind* and became famous.
- Students learn the importance of giving to the community.

Activity: Have students read the material on the following page about Margaret Mitchell's later life and then complete the vocabulary list.

Activity: "Now Try This" Have students answer the questions about the reading.

Activity: "Now Try This" Students write an obituary for Margaret Mitchell based on their readings.

READING ACTIVITY: MARGARET MITCHELL'S LATER LIFE AND SERVING OTHERS

Just six months after its release in June 1936, *Gone With the Wind* had sold a million copies. Suddenly, Margaret Mitchell realized that she needed to make some decisions about the rest of her life. Writing another book was the last thing she wanted to do. She was already overwhelmed by fame, attention and the large amounts of fan mail that she felt obligated to answer. Both Margaret Mitchell and her husband John Marsh suffered many health problems. On the same day as Margaret's back surgery in 1940, John became seriously ill.

The author of *Gone With the Wind* did much of her work quietly; she did not want attention for her good deeds. She saw the need for medical doctors in the African American community. To help improve the quality of health care in her home city, she quietly paid for fifty African American young men to attend medical school and become doctors. No one—not even the students—knew their sponsor for many years; some never found out that it was Margaret Mitchell who had helped them. One of those students was Otis Smith, one of the first African Americans to practice pediatrics in the state of Georgia.

In 1942, Dr. Benjamin Mays asked Margaret Mitchell for a scholarship contribution for Morehouse College. She gave the money and asked for no publicity. Her contributions continued and increased through the years. Margaret Mitchell anonymously provided the tuition of many African American students in pre-professional courses. Most of these students never knew the identity of their benefactor because Dr. Mays helped protect Margaret Mitchell's wish for privacy. She and her husband also gave to Morehouse College. Margaret recommended starting a private hospital for African Americans; her contributions and support resulted in the Hughes Spalding Pavilion at Grady Hospital.

Margaret also supported efforts to integrate the Atlanta Police Force. She testified before Congress in support of an international copyright law. She tried to help single mothers, at the Florence Crittenden Home for unwed mothers, by assisting them in their efforts to gain employment. She did this by paying for such things as new clothes and hair permanents. Margaret also started a fund for poor patients at Grady Hospital and made donations to the Atlanta Historical Society and to the library in Fayetteville, Georgia. She paid for medical expenses at the Sisters of Mercy at St. Joseph's Hospital. She was quick to respond to any need she saw—even a stray cat in the neighborhood.

Margaret Mitchell Marsh—unlike Scarlett O'Hara—was never one to say “I'll think about that tomorrow.” She worked to help make improvements in Atlanta.



*Margaret Mitchell christening the USS Atlanta, ca. 1941.
Courtesy of the Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center.*

MARGARET MITCHELL AND WORLD WAR II: HELPING HER COUNTRY

Lieutenant Commander E. John Long of the U.S. Navy invited Margaret to christen a new cruiser—the USS *Atlanta*. Peggy was delighted. As a native who had written about Atlanta, Margaret was perfect for the occasion. The christening date for the cruiser was set for September 6, 1941, at the Navy shipyards at Kearny, New Jersey.

A short time later, the United States suffered an attack. On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was bombed. The involvement of the United States in World War II had begun.

Always a volunteer when needed, Margaret had worked with the Red Cross from age sixteen. Less than ten days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the famous author threw herself into the work of the Red Cross. The diminutive author tended to such tasks as sewing, writing, and serving food to the troops.

When 2,000 military men came to Piedmont Park in December 1942, Margaret helped the Red Cross set up a canteen and helped plan a U.S. Army show there. Margaret made sure there was music and dancing for them to enjoy.

Margaret was invited back to New Jersey on December 24, 1942, to re-christen the USS *Atlanta* as a ship to be used in World War II. Mitchell became particularly attached to the men on the *Atlanta* and when she learned that they could not always get the things they needed, she mailed items such as toiletries along with personal letters directly to them.

Margaret was shattered to learn that the USS *Atlanta* had sunk off the island of Guadalcanal in November 1942. Margaret became sick at her stomach when she remembered the faces of the men she knew so well.

With the help of the Red Cross, the author of *Gone With the Wind* launched a campaign to raise \$35 million to replace the ship. Her fundraising helped secure not just \$35 million but \$65 million—enough for two cruisers and a destroyer. In February 1944 Margaret and John accepted the invitation for her to christen the new USS *Atlanta* in Camden, New Jersey.

During World War II, Lieutenant Denis Barois, a French aviator, became a friend of the author's after he sought her help. Allied bombers had mistaken a French town for an ammunition depot and destroyed the town. Margaret Mitchell helped rebuild the town. As a result of her volunteer efforts, the author was granted French citizenship.

Margaret Mitchell set a good example. She tried to show others how to make the best of bad situations and she demonstrated how a citizen with means could assist those in need.

MARGARET MITCHELL: HER DEATH

Margaret Mitchell's death was unexpected, and tragic for the city of Atlanta and for her fans around the globe. On August 11, 1949, while with her husband on their way to see the film *The Canterbury Tales*, the author was half way across the street when she was struck by a speeding taxicab. She was crossing Peachtree Street only a few blocks from the apartment where she wrote *Gone With the Wind*. Margaret was in a coma and died five days later, on August 16, 1949. Margaret Mitchell Marsh was forty-eight at the time of her death. She is buried in Atlanta's Oakland Cemetery.

LOOK THIS UP!

Directions: Several terms in the passage above were not defined. Some other terms, while related in some way, were not used. Use the Internet and a dictionary to define the following:

Clara Barton	creative writing	Florence Crittendon	integrate
citizenship	pediatrics	tuition	canteen
MADD	ovation	Red Cross	stray
surgical	dressings	fundraising	anonymous

Now Try This! How Can You Give Back to the Community?

1. From an early age Margaret tried to help others. Who has helped you? _____

2. Margaret tried to help her country. What can you do to help your country in wartime?

In peacetime? _____

3. Margaret made sure the military had music and fun when they visited Atlanta.

a) Use your library or the Internet to find out some of the songs of the 1940s.

b) Listen to some of them.

c) Who was Glenn Miller? _____

d) What were some of his songs? _____

4. On the Internet find out what happened to the *USS Atlanta* at the Battle of Guadalcanal.

5. Why was Margaret Mitchell such a private person? _____

6. Why help African Americans in a time when there was such prejudice in the South?

Now Try This! Writing an Obituary

Now that you have read about Margaret Mitchell and her accomplishments, write her obituary. Try to include as much information as you can so the reader will know of her birth, death, and successes. Consult your local newspaper and look at the obituaries to find some samples. Remember the “pyramid-style” when writing your obituary or news story.



Gone With the Wind movie poster, ca. 1939.
Courtesy of the Kurtz Collection, Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center.

PART V: THE MOVIE *GONE WITH THE WIND*

Education Objectives:

- Students learn some facts about the movie *Gone With the Wind*
- Students learn about the Academy Awards for the movie

Activity: Have students read the “Eye-Opening” facts about the film *Gone With the Wind* and about the Oscars and then answer the reading comprehension questions.

FACTS ABOUT THE 1939 FILM *GONE WITH THE WIND*

- When critics said the novel and the film did not portray African Americans in a positive way, Margaret asked them to consider Sam and Mammy. She reminded them that both were people of dignity, worth, and character. She said they acted more admirably than Scarlett, the female protagonist.
- Selznick instructed publicity directors not to refer to the fire scenes in *Gone With the Wind* as “The Burning of Atlanta.” The scene was actually intended to depict the burning of certain buildings that contained war materials, he reminded them.
- One of the first scenes filmed for the movie was this fire scene—just before the fall of the city. In reality, Selznick filmed the destruction of an old movie lot in California for this scene. He used stand-ins for the characters of Scarlett and Rhett. He could not show the actual stars because he had not cast Scarlett and also because he feared that the fire might be dangerous to the popular film star Clark Gable (Rhett).
- Most of *Gone With the Wind* was filmed in Hollywood, except for a few scenes showing the fields and the gardens of the Wilkes’ plantation. Even the scenes of Tara were filmed in California.

- In the 1939 movie *Gone With the Wind* there is a scene in which Scarlett walks among 2,000 dead and wounded soldiers who are spread on the ground. When only 800 extras showed up, the casting department placed uniforms filled with packing beside the live soldiers; the real uniformed men moved the bags of packing to simulate real soldiers writhing beside them.
- During the filming, Clark Gable refused to cry on camera when Scarlett (played by Vivien Leigh) falls down the wide and steep staircase. Gable finally agreed to do the scene with tears and without tears provided he could decide which “take” to use. The movie version shows Rhett crying.
- In one scene Rhett Butler carries Scarlett up that long staircase. The director, Victor Fleming, ordered Clark Gable to carry Vivien Leigh up the steps repeatedly. Finally, Fleming confessed to Gable that the men were guessing how many times Gable could carry her up the steps before he would be completely exhausted.
- In another scene, Rhett Butler must carry Melanie Wilkes (Olivia de Havilland) to the wagon. Gable found he could hardly lift de Havilland. For a joke the crew had tied weights to the blankets that covered her.
- The movie *Gone With the Wind* is almost four hours long. Because the movie is so long, theater owners had to include an intermission for the audience. *Gone With the Wind* opened first at Loew’s Grand Theater in Atlanta on Friday, December 15, 1939. Clark Gable and many of the stars were in the audience.
- In 1939 it took eleven hours to fly across the United States from California to Atlanta.
- Film producer David O. Selznick tried to control how movie theaters showed the film. Selznick issued a twelve-page booklet to guide Loew’s Grand Theater and theater owners across the country in showing the motion picture. His tips included: 1) when to dim the houselights, 2) when to start the music, 3) how many minutes to give for intermission, and so on.
- Tickets for the premiere cost \$10; all of the 2,051 seats in Loew’s Grand Theater sold out immediately.
- Clark Gable addressed the crowd in front of Loew’s Grand Theater before the showing and told them it was not his night; instead it was “Margaret Mitchell’s night and Atlanta’s night.”
- After the premiere, the prices for the movie ranged from 75 cents to \$1.10.
- Five weeks after the premiere, Macmillan issued the paperback edition of *Gone With the Wind* for 69 cents. The paperback edition was an immediate success.

THE PREMIERE OF *GONE WITH THE WIND* IN ATLANTA

The premiere of the film *Gone With the Wind* took place on December 15, 1939. The city had prepared for months for the event. Mayor William B. Hartsfield was responsible for securing Atlanta as the spot for the premiere, as opposed to the normal premiere spots of Los Angeles and New York. The premiere of the movie only lasted for one night, but there were two days of events leading up to the opening. The city planned a parade from the airport to the Georgian Terrace Hotel, where the film’s white stars were staying. The hotel still stands today at the corner of Peachtree Street and Ponce de Leon Avenue. Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh toured the city’s Cyclorama, where a wax replica of Gable is today. Gable told his tour guide the only thing missing from the museum was him. The next night, the Junior League entertained the celebrities and the city of Atlanta by hosting a costume ball. The choir from Ebenezer Baptist Church performed spirituals at this party. A ten-year-old Martin Luther King Jr. was among the children who performed with the choir as part of the grand *Gone With the Wind* celebration.

THE ACADEMY AWARDS

Gone With the Wind also made film history. The movie and its cast received fifteen Academy Award nominations. The movie won ten golden Oscar statuettes at the Academy Awards ceremony on February 29, 1940, in Hollywood.

Sidney Howard won the Oscar posthumously (after his death) for Best Screenplay. Director Victor Fleming accepted the Best Picture Award for GWTW; Fleming's film *The Wizard of Oz* also had a nomination for Best Picture Award that year. Victor Fleming won a second Academy Award: Best Director for GWTW. For her performance as the feisty Scarlett O'Hara, British actress Vivien Leigh won the Oscar for Best Actress. For her role as Mammy, Hattie McDaniel became the first African American to win an Oscar (McDaniel won for Best Supporting Actress). Ernest Haller and Ray Rennahan won the Oscar for Best Cinematography and both Hal Kern and James Newcom won the Oscar for Best Film Editing. Lyle Wheeler won the award for Best Art Direction. Jack Cosgrove won the Special Technical Achievement Award.

William Cameron Menzies received a special award for Outstanding Achievement in the Use of Color. *Gone With the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz* were among the first full-length motion pictures to wow audiences with color cinematography. David O. Selznick received the Irving Thalberg Memorial Award for Most Consistent High Level of Production. Interestingly, Clark Gable did not win an award. All together, 4,400 people participated in making the movie.

BOOK TO MOVIE

Activity: Using the Internet

If you visit the Margaret Mitchell House & Museum, the *Gone With the Wind* film museum there has a "From Book to Movie" exhibit (which opened in January 2006). Can you think of other books that have been made into movies? How long does it take for a book to be adapted as a film? It depends on many factors, such as when the film rights were purchased, and how strong the demand is for a film version. Try to find examples of books that became movies soon after publication (within two to three years) and examples of books that were turned into movies long after they were published. Be clever and creative. Give yourself a point for every title that no one else in your class has!

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

by J.K. Rowling

BOOK Published: 1998

Film Adaptation: 2001

Title & author:

BOOK Published: _____

Film Released: _____

Gone With The Wind by Margaret Mitchell

BOOK Published: 1936

Film Released: 1939

Title & author:

BOOK Published: _____

Film Released: _____

Title & author:

BOOK Published: _____

Film Released: _____

Title & author:

BOOK Published: _____

Film Released: _____

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

1. The first African American to win an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress was _____ for her role as _____.
2. Of the two stars of the film *Gone With the Wind*, one won an award, but one did not. The one who won the award was _____; the one who did not win was _____.
3. *Gone With the Wind* and its cast did not win an award for
a. Best Film. b. Best Screenplay. c. Best Song. d. Best Supporting Actress.
4. The director of *Gone With the Wind* also received an Oscar nomination for:
a. *The Wizard of Oz* b. *The Yearling* c. *The Little Princess*
5. *Gone With the Wind* won _____ Academy Awards.
a. 3 b. 10 c. 9 d. 6
6. How many people were involved with the making of *Gone With the Wind*?
a. 4,400 b. 40,404 c. 404,004 d. 444

Activity: Movie Madness in 1939

Film historians have long considered 1939 to be one of the greatest years in motion picture history. *Gone With the Wind* indeed “swept” the Oscars, but it was by no means the only memorable movie made that year. Using books and/or the Internet, write down the year each of these movies was released. You might be surprised how many of them came out in 1939. (All of the films below were released in 1939, or just a few years before or after. Give this quiz to your parents and/or grandparents and see how well they do!

1939 Supporting Actor Trivia:

<i>Gone With the Wind</i> _____	<i>Yankee Doodle Dandy</i> _____
<i>The Wizard of Oz</i> _____	<i>Stagecoach</i> _____
<i>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</i> _____	<i>Gunga Din</i> _____
<i>The Little Princess</i> with Shirley Temple _____	<i>Wuthering Heights</i> _____
<i>Of Mice and Men</i> _____	<i>Babes in Arms</i> _____
<i>Goodbye, Mr. Chips</i> _____	<i>Boys Town</i> _____
<i>Casablanca</i> _____	<i>Drums Along the Mohawk</i> _____
<i>Citizen Kane</i> _____	<i>Ninotchka</i> _____
<i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> _____	

Actor Thomas Mitchell, who played Scarlett’s father, the plantation owner Gerald O’Hara, appeared in three other memorable films in 1939: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Only Angels Have Wings*, and *Stagecoach*. Mitchell won the Best Supporting Actor Oscar for that year for his performance in John Ford’s classic Western, *Stagecoach*. He was some busy actor!



Margaret Mitchell House on Crescent Avenue.
Courtesy of the Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center.

PART VI: THE MARGARET MITCHELL HOUSE – 17 CRESCENT AVENUE

Education Objectives:

- Students learn about the history of the house where Margaret Mitchell was living when she wrote *Gone With the Wind*.
- Students learn about the architecture of the Victorian period and how to identify its elements.
- Students learn how to map out an apartment.
- Students learn how Margaret Mitchell and her husband lived in the apartment.

Activity: Do the reading activity about the history of the house on the corner of 10th and Peachtree Streets before Margaret Mitchell lived there. Have students answer the questions about the reading.

Activity: Have the students read the section “Margaret Mitchell and her Husband in Apartment #1” and do the floor plan mapping activity below.

READING ACTIVITY: THE CORNER OF 10TH AND PEACHTREE STREETS

A visitor at the corner of 10th and Peachtree Streets today finds a three-story brick home. This building originally belonged to the family of Cornelius J. Sheehan. He built the house in 1899, near the end of the Victorian period (1837-1901). The red brick house is easy to spot due to its leaded-glass windows, steep gable roof, upstairs porch off a corner room, and a first-floor veranda (another name for a covered entrance) that wraps around the front of the home.

After his wife died in 1906, Sheehan, who worked with *Grier’s Almanac*, sold the house and moved away. The house went through many owners and changes.

In 1913, Atlanta businesses began to spread into the housing areas. The owner of the old Sheehan house at 806 Peachtree decided to move the house back and to begin using the Crescent Avenue side as the main entrance. He moved the house approximately fifty feet back from its original spot. The house now had a new address: 17 Crescent Avenue.

In 1919 the owner of the one-family dwelling on Peachtree Street converted the home into a ten-unit apartment building called the Crescent Apartments. An important person would soon occupy apartment #1 on the lower level in this apartment building and would begin an important literary work inside its walls!

Answer These Questions:

1. Why is the period from 1837 to 1901 called the Victorian period? (You may want to look up the term in an encyclopedia or on the Internet.) _____

2. Sheehan lived in the house at the corner of 10th and Peachtree. He made some of his money through working with *Grier's Almanac*. What is an almanac? (Use a dictionary if you need to do so.) _____

3. *The Little House* by Virginia Lee Burton is a children's book that tells the story of a house that changes locations. The book won the Caldecott Award because of its pictures. Using the voice of the house at 10th and Peachtree, tell the story of being picked up and moved backwards so that your main entrance is now Crescent Street. _____

Reading Activity: Margaret Mitchell and Her Husband in Apartment #1

In September 1921 John Marsh went to the March Hare Tea Shop in downtown Atlanta. John first met the vivacious Margaret Mitchell at the shop referred to by its regular guests as the "Rabbit Hole." They were married on July 4, 1925, and moved into apartment #1 of the Crescent Apartments, once the home owned by Cornelius Sheehan. The couple lived here from 1925 to 1932.

Margaret—now known to her friends as Peggy—enjoyed the social scene. Many people entered the young couple's home each week. Fun-loving Margaret taped two calling cards to their front door: "Mr. John R. Marsh" and "Miss Margaret Mannerlyn Mitchell." The pair loved their 650-square-foot home that Margaret called "The Dump." Today, this three-room apartment has been refurbished to look much as it did when Margaret Mitchell and John Marsh lived there.

The front room is a sitting room. Because it is small, there is little room for furniture. There are three narrow, high windows in the front room. Near these windows a small table holds a portable Remington typewriter. On a similar typewriter in this very room Margaret composed and typed most of *Gone With the Wind*.

The bedroom also served as the couple's dining room. The couple, neither of whom liked to cook, ate in the same room in which they slept. The three-quarter bed, which in size is in-between a twin and double (full) bed, occupies a large part of the room. Margaret also had a sewing machine in a corner.

The front room and bedroom/dining room have solid, elegant Victorian furniture. The term Victorian refers to a time between 1837 and 1901. Some of the couple's furniture had been passed down through their families.

The kitchen is the third and last main room in the apartment. While Margaret toiled on her manuscript, she depended for many years on her maid Bessie Jordan to help cook and clean.



Margaret Mitchell House floorplan.

Now Try This! The Floor Plan of the Apartment – How Did They Live?

Directions: Complete the exercise at the bottom of the page as you read the following passages.

The Front Room

Upon entering Apartment No. 1, one arrives in the front room. (1) Write front room in the appropriate place in the floor plan above. (2) Put an X where Margaret Mitchell's desk and typewriter sit.

Bedroom/Dining Room

Another door opens into a room that served Margaret Mitchell and John Marsh as both a dining room and a bedroom. Most of us cannot imagine eating at a table in the bedroom all the time, but the arrangement served Margaret and John well.

- (1) Write dining/bedroom in the appropriate place in the floor plan above.
- (2) The table was under the window. Put a Y where you think the table might fit.
- (3) The bed was probably on the right as one entered the room. Put a Z where you think the bed might fit.

The Kitchen

The kitchen is in the back of the apartment. You could enter the kitchen from the bedroom. (1) Write the word kitchen in the correct square on your house plan.

Bonus Question: Can you find the artist's symbol for where the stairs are on the plan? Write the word stairs near the symbol for the stairs outside the sitting room.

MAPPING THE FLOOR PLAN OF APARTMENT #1

On the drawing, indicate 1) the front room; 2) the green sofa; 3) the dining/bedroom; 4) the small dining table (Y); 5) the bed (Z); 6) the kitchen; 7) the stairs.



Margaret Mitchell House, ca. 2006.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION: RESTORING THE MARGARET MITCHELL HOUSE:

In September 1994 (long after Margaret’s and John’s deaths), serious damage resulted when a fire ravaged the Tudor Revival house on Crescent Avenue. Even Apartment #1 where Margaret and John lived suffered some harm. Daimler-Benz, an international industrial group that became Daimler-Chrysler in 1998, contributed \$5 million for the purchase of the land and the restoration of the historical landmark. On May 21, 1996, less than two months before the historic site was going to open to the public in time for the Atlanta Olympic Games, fire struck the house again.

This time there was even more damage to the house. Because of another fire down the street, firefighters were slow getting to the Margaret Mitchell House. The blaze destroyed the front rooms of the house, but much of the brickwork remained intact. Apartment #1 survived. The Margaret Mitchell House opened its doors to visitors on May 17, 1997. In only one year, more than 40,000 visitors toured “The Dump,” as Margaret lovingly called the apartment in which she wrote almost all of *Gone With the Wind*. Today, some 60,000 come from all over the world to tour “The Dump” and the Margaret Mitchell House each year.

Bibliography:

Here are some suggested readings on Margaret Mitchell and *Gone With the Wind*.

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Marianne Walker, *Margaret Mitchell and John Marsh: The Love Story Behind Gone With the Wind*.

Pauline Bartel, *The Complete Gone With the Wind Trivia Book: The Movie and More*.

Mary Rose Taylor, *Before Scarlett: The Girlhood Writings of Margaret Mitchell*.

Don O'Briant, *Looking for Tara: The "Gone With the Wind" Guide to Margaret Mitchell's Atlanta*.

Margaret Mitchell, *Lost Laysen*.

Herb Bridges, *Gone With the Wind: The Definitive Illustrated History of the Book, the Movie, the Legend*.

Patrick Allen, ed. *Margaret Mitchell, Reporter*.

The Civil War, Slavery, and Reconstruction:

Beringer, Richard E., Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still Jr.
Why the South Lost the Civil War.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*.

Faust, Patricia, ed. *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War*.

Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*.

Kolchin, Peter. *American Slavery: 1619 - 1877*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.
Best general single-volume history of slavery. Very readable.

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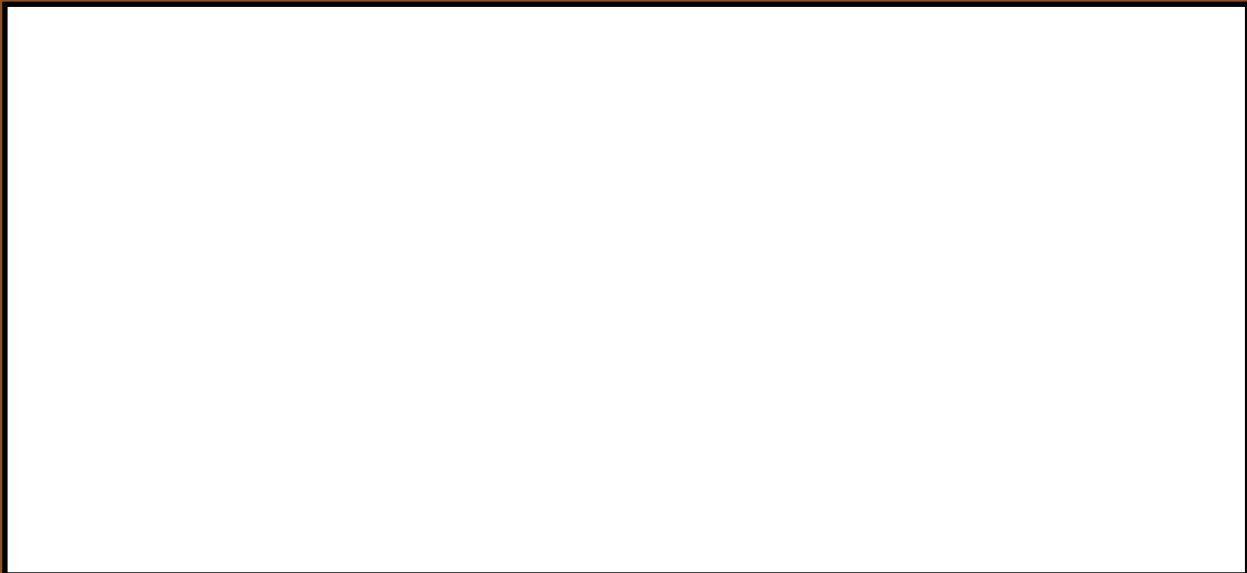
Website Links:

MargaretMitchellHouse.com—Margaret Mitchell House

<http://www.gawomen.org/honorees/mitchellm.htm>—Georgia Women of Achievement, a short biography of Margaret Mitchell

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