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# Gator Gumbo: A Spicy-Hot Tale

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Fleming, Candace. *Gator Gumbo : A Spicy-Hot Tale*. Illustrated by Sally Anne Lambert. Melanie Kroupa Books / Farrar Straus Giroux, 2004. ISBN 0374380503. \$16.00. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Vicky M. Turner

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Humorous stories; Picture books;

Subject: Alligators--Juvenile fiction; Animals--Juvenile fiction; Gumbo (Soup)--Juvenile fiction;

Monsieur Gator is growing old and slow. He can no longer catch his regular food -- skunks, possums, and otters – for lunch and is relegated to a vegetarian diet of leaves, roots, and berries. One day he remembers his maman's gumbo recipe and begins to cook. First he builds the fire, adds a pot, and then asks “Who's going to get some water for the gumbo?” “I ain't,” snicker the possum, otter and skunk. “Then I'll be doin' it myself,” and he does. The other critters won't help with the crawdads, the okra, spices or rice either, but when the gumbo's ready, they all want a taste. “Humph,” says Monsieur Gator, “I'm gonna eat this gumbo all by myself.” The critters beg for just one taste, but when they get too close to the pot and even fall in, Old Man Gator is not at all opposed to eating them too!

This creative take-off on the Little Red Hen story combines bayou critters dressed in swampland clothes, a spicy tale, and a not so subtle moral. There is one sort-of French swear word that may offend some readers and the fact that the critters get eaten in the end may bother some children.