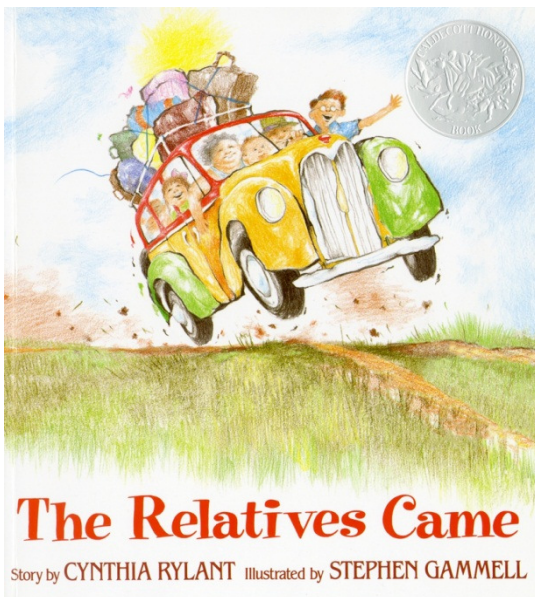


# The Relatives Came

by Cynthia Rylant (author)  
and Stephen Gammell (illustrator)  
A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit



## About the Book

In a rainbow-colored station wagon that smelled like a real car, the relatives came. When they arrived, they hugged and hugged from the kitchen to the front room. All summer they tended the garden and ate up all the strawberries and melons. They plucked banjos and strummed guitars.

When they finally had to leave, they were sad, but not for long. They all knew they would be together next summer.

This Caldecott Honor Book and New York Times Best Illustrated Book will capture children's attention!

*Permission to use book jacket image and book description granted by Simon & Schuster.*

## Book Details

**The Relatives Came** written by Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Stephen Gammell. Simon & Schuster, 1985. ISBN 9780689717383. Ages 4-7. AD940 Lexile.  
<http://www.simonandschuster.com/>

## About the Author



Cynthia Rylant is the author of more than 100 books for young people, including the beloved **Henry and Mudge**, **Annie and Snowball**, and **Mr. Putter & Tabby** series. Her novel **Missing May** received the Newbery Medal. She lives in Lake Oswego, Oregon.

Rylant went to Morris Harvey College (now the University of Charleston) and then to Marshall University, where she graduated with a master's degree in English in 1976. Out of college she worked as a waitress for a while, then a librarian at the Akron Public Library. She had discovered "literature" in college, but when working in the children's section at the library, she discovered classics like **Goodnight Moon** and **Charlotte's Web**. These first experiences with children's and young adult literature inspired her to write her own stories.

Her first book, **When I Was Young in the Mountains**, was published in 1982, winning the American Book Award and becoming a Caldecott Honor Book for Diane Good's illustrations. The story was based on her life in Cool Ridge of West Virginia, where she grew up, though it appeals to anyone interested in Appalachian life.

Rylant moved to Oregon in 1990 and continued writing picture books, children's chapter books, young adult fiction, and poetry. **Missing May** won the Newbery Medal and the Boston Globe/Horn Book Award. Four of Rylant's books have been named Notable Children's Books, two were named Best Books for Young Adults by the American Library Association, and Rylant received the 1992 Ohioana Award for **Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds**.

Cynthia Rylant uses her stories to share her memories with others. The best writing, to her, is personal, revealing writing. "Because," she says, "we all, I think, long mostly for the same things and are afraid mostly of the same things, and we all want someone to write about all of this so we won't feel too crazy or alone."

*Photograph and biographical information courtesy Simon & Schuster; used with permission.*

## Author Resources:

### Author page on Simon & Schuster website

<http://authors.simonandschuster.com/Cynthia-Rylant/>

### The Ohio Legacy Series: Cynthia Rylant: A Gentle Mentor; an essay by Angela Johnson

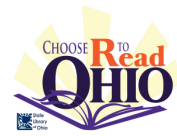
<http://www.ohioana.org/features/legacy/crylant.asp>

Reprinted from the Winter 2001 *Ohioana Quarterly*, this appreciation by Ohio author Angela Johnson is part of a series of essays featuring various contemporary Ohio authors and artists writing about how being from Ohio or how the work of other Ohio writers has influenced their own work.

### Cynthia Rylant Special Collection at Kent State University

<http://speccoll.library.kent.edu/children/rylant.html>

This is the inventory listing of a collection of Cynthia Rylant's papers, including manuscripts and correspondence, which is housed at the Kent State University Library.



<http://library.ohio.gov/ctro>

## About the Illustrator

Stephen Gammell is the beloved illustrator of more than fifty books for children, including ***Song and Dance Man*** by Karen Ackerman, which received the Caldecott Medal; two Caldecott Honor Books, ***The Relatives Came*** by Cynthia Rylant and ***Where the Buffaloes Begin*** by Olaf Baker; and ***The Secret Science Project That Almost Ate the School*** by Judy Sierra. Stephen lives with his wife, Linda, in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Stephen Gammell grew up in Iowa. His father, an art editor for a major magazine, brought home periodicals that gave Stephen early artistic inspiration. His parents also supplied him with lots of pencils, paper, and encouragement. He is self-taught. He started his career with commercial freelance work, but became interested in children's book illustration. His first book, ***A Nutty Business***, was published in 1973. Since then, he has illustrated over fifty titles.

He is particularly well known for the surreal, unsettling illustrations he provided for Alvin Schwartz's ***Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*** series of short horror stories, still a favorite in adolescent fiction.

*Biographical information courtesy Simon & Schuster; used with permission.*

## Illustrator Resources:

### Illustrator page on Simon & Schuster website

<http://authors.simonandschuster.com/Stephen-Gammell/1105336>

### "Like" Stephen Gammell on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Stephen-Gammell/185926953621>

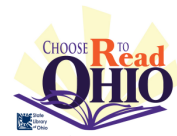
### HarperCollins Children's page about Stephen Gammell

<http://www.harpercollinschildrens.com/HarperChildrens/Kids/AuthorsAndIllustrators/ContributorDetail.aspx?CId=12110>

## For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:

Contact Michelle Fadlalla,  
Director of Marketing, Education & Library at Simon & Schuster  
212-698-7325 or [michelle.fadlalla@simonandschuster.com](mailto:michelle.fadlalla@simonandschuster.com)

*Please note that Cynthia Rylant does not do author visits, according to the publisher.*



<http://library.ohio.gov/ctro>

## Get Ready To Read!

*Encouraging early literacy skill-building in young children.*

**The Relatives Came** is a good book for preschoolers as well as early elementary aged children. Many of the activities, ideas, and discussion questions included in this toolkit incorporate the **five practices** that help young children get ready to read:

### Reading - Writing - Talking - Playing - Singing

**Reading** to and with a child is the single most important way to help children get ready to read as it helps develop six key early literacy skills: print motivation, phonological awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, print awareness and letter knowledge. **Writing** (including drawing and scribbling) helps children learn about print, letters, and vocabulary, and helps establish pre-reading skills. **Talking** helps children learn oral language – a critical early literacy skill – and also increases vocabulary and comprehension. **Playing** helps children think symbolically, learn self-expression, and put thoughts into words. **Singing** slows language down so children can hear the different sounds that make up words and develop letter knowledge and phonological awareness. All of these components lead to children being ready to learn how to read when they begin school.

Parents, teachers, and librarians are encouraged to utilize these activities with children whether at home, in the classroom, or at the library.

The Five Practices are featured in **Every Child Ready to Read** (<http://everychildreadytoread.org>), a library-based early literacy outreach initiative of the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children. For more information, please visit **Ohio Ready to Read** at <http://www.ohreadytoread.org/>.

## Talk About It!

*Topics to share when discussing **The Relatives Came** with children.*

- Talk about relatives. Who qualifies as a relative? Discuss how sisters, brothers, cousins, aunts, uncles, and other relatives are related. Encourage the children to describe their own extended families, or other large families that they know.
- Ask the children about basic details in the text and illustrations. Where do the relatives live? What kind of car did they drive? Where did the relatives sleep? How long did they stay? What did they eat? What activities did they do together?
- In **The Relatives Came**, the relatives come from Virginia, and stay for weeks and weeks. Have the children talk about a time when they either stayed at a relative's house for an extended period, or a time when relatives stayed with them for a long time. Was it a special occasion, perhaps a holiday? How long did they stay? What was the experience like?

- Visiting family can be an enjoyable time, but problems can occur too! What are some problems that arise in the book (not enough room in the house, hard to sleep next to so many people, etc.)? Have children talk about a time when similar problems occurred in their experience. What did the family do about it?
- In ***The Relatives Came***, the relatives pack a few things for the trip. What do the relatives bring with them? What are some important things you can think of to take on a trip? Why?
- There are many reasons why a family might get together. What are some reasons families get together? (birthdays, holidays, reunions, etc). What do these events mean? Why are they important?

## Learn and have fun!

*Here are some ideas for extending the experience of reading ***The Relatives Came***.*

- Gammell's illustrations are active, with fun colors. Have children divide into groups of 2 or 3 and assign each group a page. Have each group describe what is going on in their assigned page, giving as much detail as possible.
- Have children create a family tree, using pictures of family members and poster board. This activity is best suited for children 6 years or older. (Be aware of the family situations of the children in your group. This may be a challenging project for some children).
- Gather some friends and divide the children into two groups. Let one group pretend they are the family in the story. Let the other group pretend they are the relatives that came to visit. Take turns talking about how each group would feel if they were in this situation. For example, a child who is pretending he was in the family might say that he was glad for the relatives to leave so he did not have to share his bedroom or toys anymore. Someone who was on the relative side might say that she enjoyed going to visit the family because she did not have to do the chores she would have had to do at home.
- Have children write about a time when their relatives came to visit. Have them illustrate their story as well, and then share.
- Fun storytimes to associate with ***The Relatives Came*** include:
  - Family/Relatives
  - States
  - Family unit/Responsibilities
  - Visitors
  - Trips, Vacations, Packing

- Other books that may be used in conjunction with ***The Relatives Came*** include:
  - ***Family Photo*** written by Dana Meachen Rau, illustrated by Mike Gordon.
  - ***All Kinds of Families*** by Mary Ann Hoberman, illustrated by Marc Boutavant.
- Sing songs or read poems about family. Some examples from <http://www.canteach.ca/elementary/songspoems3.html>

### **Grandmas and Grandpas**

Grandmas and Grandpas are everything nice.  
Like presents and candy and raspberry ice.  
And chocolate fudge sundaes, with cherries on top.  
And popcorn and peanuts and grape soda pop.  
In winter or summer, in rain or in sun,  
Grandmas and Grandpas are wonderful fun!

### **Family**

Our family comes  
From many homes,  
Our hair is straight,  
Our hair is brown,  
Our hair is curled,  
Our eyes are blue,  
Our skins are different  
Colors, too.  
We're girls and boys,  
We're big and small,  
We're young and old,  
We're short and tall.  
We're everything  
That we can be  
And still we are  
A family.  
We laugh and cry,  
We work and play,  
We help each other  
Every day.  
The world's a lovely  
Place to be  
Because we are  
A family.



## Tie It In!

Using this book with Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards.

**Educators:** Here are examples of activities using **The Relatives Came** that align with Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards at the Pre-Kindergarten level (3-5 years). Other standards may also apply.

**Librarians, parents, and others:** The Ohio Department of Education adopted Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards in 2012 to describe key concepts and skills that young children develop during the birth-to-five year period. The purpose of these standards is to support the development and well-being of young children and to foster their learning. The standards for ages 3-5 describe the developmental skills and concepts that young children should know and be able to do by the end of their preschool experience. For more information, including the complete set of standards, follow this link to the Ohio Department of Education site: <http://go.ohio.gov/IE0xp>.

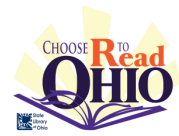
These activities may also be used in library programs, family activities, and other projects.

### Language and Literacy

- **Reading – Reading Comprehension – The Relatives Came** is a great example of a children's picture book with engaging illustrations. Giving modeling and support, name the author and illustrator of the story and define the role of each in telling the story. Talk to children about the author and illustrator. Talk about other books the author/illustrator has created. Have these books readily available so students can look at them.

### Cognition and General Knowledge

- **Mathematics - Number Sense and Counting.** Throughout **The Relatives Came**, many family members can be seen on several of the pages. Pick a page, and together, have the children count how many family members they see. Point to each family member as you move along the page.
- **Science – Science Inquiry and Applications: Inquiry.** In **The Relatives Came**, the relatives leave Virginia when the grapes are nearly purple enough to pick. When they arrived they ate strawberries and watermelons. Talk about some of the fruit that grows locally. What fruit have the children seen growing? Bring fruit to class for the children to look at, describe, and eat.
- **Social Studies – Geography: Spatial Thinking and Skills.** In **The Relatives Came**, the relatives visiting are from Virginia. Have children discuss where their relatives are from, and use a map to mark different states and countries.



<http://library.ohio.gov/ctro>

## Explore More!

*Additional ideas and resources to use with **The Relatives Came**.*

### Learn more about Cynthia Rylant

<http://www.kidsreads.com/authors/au-rylant-cynthia.asp>

Read about the activities Cynthia enjoys most, why she loves being a writer so much, and what she was like as a child.

### Appalachian Treks

<http://appalachiantreks.blogspot.com/>

A blog detailing the beautiful trails in the Appalachian countryside, as well as the history, culture and people of the region. A fun resource for planning a trip!

### Applit

<http://www.applit.org/>

Resources for readers and teachers of Appalachian literature for children and young adults.

## About Choose to Read Ohio

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio and the Ohioana Library Association, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits: <http://library.ohio.gov/ctro>.

This toolkit created June 2012. Revised March 2013.



The Relatives Came written by Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Stephen Gammell. Simon & Schuster, 1985. ISBN 9780689717383.Â Stephen Gammell is the beloved illustrator of more than fifty books for children, including Song and Dance Man by Karen Ackerman, which received the Caldecott Medal; two Caldecott Honor Books, The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant and Where the Buffaloes Begin by Olaf Baker; and The Secret Science Project That Almost Ate the School by Judy Sierra. When the Relatives Came is a funny book about crazy relatives that come to visit in the summer. During their visit they have lots of fun eating, singing, dancing and bonding. Just as everyone is getting use to be together it is time for their vacation to end. The Relatives Came is well written and beautifully illustrated children's book. I bought it to read to my grandchildren, and now they are reading it to me! We absolutely love looking at the pictures, over and over.Â This book was good for my five year old. Her cousins were coming to visit us this summer from the south. They make this trip every summer and we go to the south every winter. This book gave her the opportunity to ask some questions about their trip and to better understand how special and important family visits are.

The Relatives Came is well written and beautifully illustrated children's book. I bought it to read to my grandchildren, and now they are reading it to me! We absolutely love looking at the pictures, over and over. The relatives come to visit from Virginia and everyone has a wonderful time.Â Looks like we don't have any reviews for The Relatives Came yet! author. Cynthia Rylant. Cynthia Rylant is the author of more than 100 books for young people, including the beloved Henry and Mudge, Annie and Snowball, Brownie & Pearl, and Mr. Putter & Tabby series. Her novel Missing May received the Newbery Medal. She lives in Lake Oswego, Oregon.