TEACHER'S GUIDE

Coco Travels to Alabama

By Tia Hargrove • Book 1 of the Coco Travels Series

Grades K–3 • Ages 3–8 • Free for Classroom Use

About This Guide

"Books are passports, libraries are launchpads, and a child who learns to wonder is a child who will go far." — Tia Hargrove, About the Author, Coco Travels to Alabama

This guide is designed to help K–3 educators use Coco Travels to Alabama as a springboard for learning across multiple subject areas — from English Language Arts and social studies to geography, history, science, music, and social-emotional learning. All activities are classroom-ready and require no materials beyond the book.

Coco Travels to Alabama (35 pages) is the first book in the Coco Travels series, a planned 50-state alphabetical adventure. Each book follows Coco Brown, a curious young girl whose mother is a flight attendant, as she imagines traveling to a new American state and discovering its wonders. The book also includes back matter: a "Want to Learn More?" library page, an "Also in the Coco Travels Series" page showing Books 2–4 (Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas), a Coco's Family character page, and an About the Author page.

Book Summary

The story opens at the Brown family breakfast table: Mommy Shonda (a flight attendant who helps passengers stay safe and brings them snacks and drinks), Daddy Kyrie, little brother Semaj, and Grandma Brown, who serves delicious waffles. When Mommy announces she is flying to Alabama — “down where it's sunny and warm” — Coco's imagination ignites immediately.

Coco asks Mommy to bring Alabama stickers, then asks Daddy to take her to the library after work. After school, they drive to the library in Daddy's red car, buckling up for safety. Inside, Coco uses the Dewey Decimal System to find books about places in the 900s (Geography and History) section. She checks out an Alabama book with her own library card.

After dinner, a bath, and brushing her teeth, Coco asks Daddy to read the Alabama book with her at bedtime in her room. As Daddy reads about Alabama's facts, landmarks, and people, Coco's eyelids grow heavy. She drifts off to sleep — and dreams herself right there.

In her dream she is Captain Coco, piloting her own airplane. “Attention, passengers. This is Captain Coco speaking. Please buckle your seatbelts. We are very high in the sky! We are about to land in the state of Alabama.” She lands, then visits three iconic places: the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville (training like an astronaut), the Bellingrath Gardens in Theodore (thousands of beautiful flowers), and Orange Beach (swimming with bottlenose dolphins). She meets Rosa Parks (born in Tuskegee), who would not give up her seat on the bus and helped America be a fairer place for everyone; Jesse Owens (born in Oakville), who won four Olympic gold medals and represented America and made everybody proud; and Nat King Cole (born in Montgomery), whose voice was so special people across America listened on the radio and on television.

Coco wakes to Mommy's kiss and Alabama stickers for her blue sticker book and green suitcase. She gives Mommy another big hug, wonders where she will travel next, and the final spread shows her dreaming of New York, Hawaii, New Orleans, California, Texas, and Georgia. “There are so many places to go!”

The book closes with “Want to Learn More?” — inviting children to visit their local library to find books about Alabama. “Your librarian will love helping you find them. Happy reading!” The series page shows illustrated covers for Books 2 (Alaska), 3 (Arizona), and 4 (Arkansas), followed by the Coco's Family character page and the About the Author page.

Standards Alignment

Coco Travels to Alabama supports the following Common Core and NCSS standards:

Standard	Skill	Activity in This Guide
RL.K–3.1	Ask and answer questions about key details in a text	Discussion questions throughout this guide
RL.K–3.3	Describe characters, settings, and major events	Character map, setting activity, story sequence
RL.K–3.6	Identify point of view	Coco's dream perspective; whose eyes do we see Alabama through?
RI.K–3.1	Ask and answer questions about informational text	Alabama facts page; fact review activity
RI.K–3.4	Determine meaning of words and phrases	Vocabulary list in this guide
W.K–3.3	Write narratives	Writing prompt: Where would YOU travel?
SL.K–3.1	Participate in collaborative discussions	All discussion question sections
NCSS Geography	Understand location and physical/human features of places	Alabama map activity, state facts review
NCSS History	Understand people and events that shaped communities	Rosa Parks, Jesse Owens, Nat King Cole lesson
SEL	Curiosity, family, aspiration, community, safety	Family discussion, career aspiration, safety habit activities

Vocabulary

Before or during reading, introduce these words from the story. Definitions are written for a K–3 audience.

Flight attendant — a person whose job is to help and take care of passengers on an airplane. Mommy Shonda helps passengers stay safe and brings them snacks and drinks.	**Passenger** — a person who rides in an airplane, bus, train, or car but is not the driver or pilot.

Geography — the study of places on Earth, including their land, water, and the people who live there.	**Dewey Decimal System** — a way libraries organize books by subject using numbers. Books about places like Alabama are in the 900s Geography and History section.
Capital — the city where a state's government is located. Alabama's capital is Montgomery.	**State nickname** — a special name for a state. Alabama's nickname is The Yellowhammer State.
Astronaut — a person trained to travel into space. Coco trains like an astronaut at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville.	**Bottlenose dolphin** — a friendly, playful type of dolphin often seen leaping out of the ocean. Coco sees them at Orange Beach.
Olympic gold medal — the highest award given at the Olympic Games. Jesse Owens won four of them.	**Camellia** — Alabama's state flower. A beautiful flowering plant that blooms in many colors.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to spark curiosity and connect the book to students' own lives before you open the cover.

Discussion Prompts

1. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to travel somewhere far away? Where would you want to go?
2. Does anyone in your family travel for work? What do they do?
3. What do you think of when you hear the word Alabama? What do you already know about it?
4. Coco's mom is a flight attendant who helps people stay safe and brings them snacks and drinks. What other jobs involve traveling?
5. When you want to learn about something new, where do you go to find information?

Quick Map Activity

Before reading, show students a map of the United States. Ask them to find:

- Alabama (where Mommy is flying) — can you find it in the southeastern part of the map?
- Your own state — place your finger on it! Is your state north or south of Alabama?

- The four states that touch Alabama: Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Florida

Fun challenge: Close your eyes while someone spins a globe. Wherever it lands, name one thing you would want to discover there. That is exactly what Coco does — she wonders about places and goes to find out more!

Point out that the Coco Travels series visits all 50 states alphabetically. Alabama is first, Alaska is next. Ask: what state comes after Alaska? (Arizona!) Students can see the covers of Books 2, 3, and 4 on the series page at the back of the book.

During Reading: Discussion Questions

Pause at these points in the story to check for understanding and spark conversation.

Pages 3–8: Breakfast with the Brown Family

1. What is Coco's family doing at the beginning of the story? Who is at the breakfast table?
2. What is Mommy's job? What does she do to help passengers?
3. What two things does Coco ask for when she hears Mommy is going to Alabama? Why do you think she wants those things?
4. Coco spreads out her arms and pretends to fly around the kitchen. What does that tell us about her personality?
5. Mommy says Alabama is “down where it's sunny and warm.” What does that tell you about where Alabama is on the map?

Pages 9–16: The Library Visit

1. What does Daddy say before they drive to the library? Why is that an important habit?
2. The library organizes books using the Dewey Decimal System. The 900s section is labeled “Geography and History.” Why do books about places like Alabama belong there?
3. Coco has her own library card and the librarian already knows her by name. What does that tell us about how often Coco visits the library?
4. The library has a sign: “Please Return Your Books on Time.” Why is that an important rule?

Pages 17–20: Bedtime Reading

1. What are three facts you learned about Alabama from the book? Which one surprised you the most?
2. What is Alabama's state bird? Its state flower? Its state tree? Why do you think states have their own special symbols?
3. Coco's bedroom has a globe on the dresser and airplane drawings on the wall. What do those details tell us about what Coco loves?
4. Coco's eyelids get heavy as Daddy reads. Have you ever fallen asleep while someone was reading to you?

Pages 21–27: Captain Coco's Dream

1. What does Captain Coco announce to passengers before landing? Why is that an important safety message?
2. Name the three places Coco visits in Alabama in her dream. Which one would YOU most want to visit? Why?
3. Coco meets Rosa Parks, Jesse Owens, and Nat King Cole. What is one thing the book tells us about each of them?
4. All three of these people were born in Alabama. Why do you think it is important to know where famous people came from?

Pages 28–31: The Morning After

6. How does Coco feel when she wakes up? How can you tell from the illustration?
7. What does Mommy bring Coco from Alabama? How does Coco use them?
8. Look at the last illustration. Coco is already dreaming about her next adventure — you can see New York, Hawaii, New Orleans, California, Texas, and Georgia in her thought bubble. Which of those would YOU want Coco to visit first?

Back Matter: Want to Learn More? (Page 33)

Before closing the book, read the “Want to Learn More?” page aloud to students:

“Coco learned about Alabama by visiting the library — and so can you! Ask a grown-up to take you to your local library and look for books about Alabama and the people and places in this book. Your librarian will love helping you find them. Happy reading!”

1. Coco went to the library to learn about Alabama before her dream. What would you want to look up at the library after reading this book?
2. The book says your librarian will love helping you find books. Have you ever asked a librarian for help? What happened?

After Reading: Activities & Extensions

Activity 1: Alabama State Facts Review

A printable copy of this activity is included at the end of this guide, ready to hand out.

As a class or in pairs, have students complete a simple Alabama facts sheet using information from the book:

- State nickname: _____
- State abbreviation: _____
- State capital: _____
- Three largest cities: _____ , _____ , _____
- State region: _____
- State time zone: _____
- State bird: _____
- State flower: _____
- State tree: _____
- Statehood date: _____
- Alabama is the _____ state *(write the number and its ending — st, nd, or th — for example: 1st, 22nd, 4th)*

Extension (Grades 2–3): Ask students to look up one additional fact about Alabama not mentioned in the book and share it with the class.

Activity 2: Coco's Character Map

A printable copy of this activity is included at the end of this guide, ready to hand out.

Have students draw or write about Coco using a four-box character map:

- What Coco looks like
- What Coco says
- What Coco does
- How Coco feels

Discussion: How is Coco similar to you? How is she different?

Activity 3: Real Heroes Research Project

Introduce students to the three historical figures Coco meets in her dream:

Rosa Parks (1913–2005) — Born in Tuskegee, Alabama. She would not give up her seat on a Montgomery bus in 1955, helping spark the civil rights movement. She helped America be a fairer place for everyone. Key discussion question: What does it mean to be brave? Have you ever stood up for what was right, even when it was hard?

Jesse Owens (1913–1980) — Born in Oakville, Alabama. He won four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, represented America, and made everybody proud. Key discussion question: Jesse Owens practiced very hard. What is something you practice to get better at?

Nat King Cole (1919–1965) — Born in Montgomery, Alabama. He sang beautiful songs and his voice was so special that people across America listened on the radio and on television. Key discussion question: What talent do YOU love to share with others?

Activity 4: Story Sequence

A printable copy of this activity is included at the end of this guide, ready to hand out.

Have students put these events from the story in the correct order (cut and sort, or number them):

- Coco adds Alabama stickers to her blue sticker book and green suitcase
- Coco and Daddy drive to the library in the red car
- Mommy announces she is flying to Alabama
- Coco dreams she is Captain Coco flying over Alabama
- Coco and Daddy read about Alabama at bedtime in Coco's room
- Coco trains like an astronaut at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center
- Mommy comes home and gives Coco a surprise

- Grandma and Semaj walk Coco to the school bus stop
- Coco checks out an Alabama book using her library card

Extension: Ask students to add one more event they felt was important.

Activity 5: Writing Prompt — Where Would YOU Travel?

Coco's imagination takes her to Alabama. Now it's your turn!

Prompt (K–1, draw and label): Draw yourself visiting a place in the United States you would love to explore. What do you see? Who do you meet?

Prompt (Grades 2–3, write a paragraph): If you could travel to any state in the USA, where would you go and why? Describe one place you would visit and one person — real or imaginary — you would love to meet there.

Extension: Look at the final illustration. Coco is dreaming about New York, Hawaii, New Orleans, California, Texas, and Georgia. Which would you choose first? Write or draw your reason.

Activity 6: The Library Connection

Coco learns about Alabama by going to the library — and the book invites every reader to do the same. Page 33 reads: “Your librarian will love helping you find them. Happy reading!”

- Take students to your school or public library. Find the 900s (Geography and History) section together.
- Have each student find a book about a U.S. state they are curious about — just like Coco did.
- Back in class, each student shares one fact they learned from their chosen state book.

Extension: Start a classroom State Book Wall where students add a sticky note for each state they read about. Watch the map fill up as the Coco Travels series grows!

Activity 7: Map It! — Coco's Alabama Adventure

A printable copy of this activity is included at the end of this guide, ready to hand out.

Give students the printable outline map of Alabama. Have them trace the dotted state outline with a pencil to practice its shape, then find the star that marks Montgomery, Alabama's capital city. Point out the compass rose and review the four directions: north, south, east, and west.

Extension (Grades 2–3): Coco also visits Huntsville, Theodore, Orange Beach, Tuskegee, Oakville, and Birmingham in the book. Have students pick one and draw a small picture of what Coco saw there.

Activity 8: Design Your Own Sticker Sheet

In the book, Mommy brings Coco Alabama stickers for her blue sticker book and green suitcase. Coco immediately hops out of bed to add them.

- Have students design their own 4–6 stickers representing what they loved most from Coco's Alabama adventure.
- Then have each student design one sticker representing their own state or hometown.
- Display the sticker designs as a classroom collection.

Discussion: If you were going to add stickers to YOUR suitcase, what places would be on them? What does your suitcase say about where you have been and where you want to go?

Activity 9: Exploring the Series — What Comes Next?

Turn to the “Also in the Coco Travels Series” page at the back of the book. Students can see illustrated covers for Books 2, 3, and 4.

- Book 2: Coco Travels to Alaska. What do you think Coco will discover there? What do you already know about Alaska?
- Book 3: Coco Travels to Arizona. What does the cover illustration tell you about what Coco might see?
- Book 4: Coco Travels to Arkansas. Can you find Arkansas on the map?

Extension: Have each student pick one of the 50 states and draw their own imaginary Coco Travels cover for that state. What would Coco see? Who would she meet?

Social-Emotional Learning Connections

Family & Belonging

The Brown family shows warmth, love, and routine throughout the book. Ask students:

- What routines does your family have that make you feel safe and loved?
- Who in your family teaches you new things, the way Daddy reads with Coco?
- Grandma is part of Coco's everyday life. Who is an important older person in your life?

Curiosity & the Love of Learning

Coco doesn't wait to learn about Alabama — she asks for a book, goes to the library, and actively seeks knowledge. Ask students:

- When you are curious about something, what do you do to find out more?
- Is there something you've always wanted to learn about? How could you find a book about it?
- The library card is Coco's own. What does it mean to have something that is just yours to take care of?

Aspiration & Career Exploration

Coco sees her mother's career and immediately imagines her own future: “I want to be a pilot and fly the airplane!” Ask students:

- What do the grown-ups in your life do for work? Does any of it make you curious about a job someday?
- Mommy helps keep people safe and brings them snacks and drinks. What jobs help people every day?
- What would you like to be when you grow up? What could you practice now to get started?

Safety Habits

The book reinforces safety twice: Daddy says “Let's buckle up for safety” before driving, and Captain Coco tells passengers to buckle their seatbelts before landing. Ask students:

- Why do you think the book shows safety rules twice — in the car and on the airplane?
- What other safety rules do you follow every day at school, at home, or on the road?

Cross-Curricular Extensions

Science & STEM

Space Exploration: Coco trains like an astronaut at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville — home to NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center.

- What do you think it feels like to fly in a rocket? How is that different from flying in an airplane like Mommy Shonda?
- What do you think astronauts need to learn before they travel to space?
- Coco wants to be a pilot. Can you think of other jobs where people travel to amazing places?
- Activity: Draw your own rocket ship and write or dictate one planet or place in space you would want to visit.

Marine Biology: Coco swims with bottlenose dolphins at Orange Beach. The illustration shows two dolphins leaping together.

- Why do you think dolphins leap out of the water? What other animals do you know that jump?
- Dolphins communicate with clicks and whistles. How do you communicate with your friends?
- Activity: Draw an underwater scene from Orange Beach, labeling at least three animals you might find there.

Botany: The Bellingrath Gardens shows Coco surrounded by camellias (Alabama's state flower), butterflies, and lush greenery.

- What is your favorite flower? If you could choose a state flower, what would it be and why?
- Why do you think so many butterflies are at the gardens? What do butterflies need to survive?
- Activity: Design your own state flower and write one sentence about what it represents.

Music & Arts

Nat King Cole: The illustration shows Nat King Cole at a piano with Coco beside him, a vintage television in the background.

- When you listen to music, how does it make you feel?
- Nat King Cole's voice brought people across America to their radios and televisions. What music do you love to listen to today?
- Activity: Play a short clip of Nat King Cole singing. Ask students to close their eyes and draw or write one word that describes how the music makes them feel.

Sticker Art & Travel Journals: Coco collects stickers for her blue sticker book and green suitcase — a travel tradition that captures where she has been and where she dreams of going.

- Why do you think Coco collects stickers? What do you collect that is special to you?
- If you had a suitcase, what would you put on it to show who you are and where you want to go?
- Activity: Design a personal suitcase covered in drawings that represent your life, family, and travel dreams.

Physical Education & Health

Jesse Owens — Practice & Perseverance: Jesse Owens was born in Oakville, Alabama and won four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, representing America and making everybody proud.

- Jesse Owens practiced running every day. What is something you practice to get better at?
- Winning four gold medals is very hard. Have you ever worked really hard at something and felt proud?
- Activity: Hold a simple classroom track day. Discuss what it would take to run even faster over time.

Safety First: Daddy says “Let's buckle up for safety” before driving to the library. Captain Coco tells her passengers to buckle their seatbelts before landing.

- Why is it important to buckle up every time you get in a car or airplane?
- What other safety rules do we follow every day?
- Activity: Have students draw a picture of one safety rule they follow and write or dictate one sentence explaining why it matters.

About the Coco Travels Series

Coco Travels to Alabama is Book 1 of a planned 50-state series that runs in alphabetical order. In every book, Coco's mother flies to a new state, and Coco's curiosity takes her there in her imagination — exploring landmarks, meeting historical figures, and discovering what makes each state extraordinary.

The back of the book includes illustrated covers for the next three adventures:

- Book 2: Coco Travels to Alaska — Coming Soon
- Book 3: Coco Travels to Arizona — Forthcoming
- Book 4: Coco Travels to Arkansas — Forthcoming
- And on through all 50 states!

The series mission: *To inspire curiosity and a sense of wonder about the people, places, and remarkable things that make every corner of America — and the wider world — worth discovering, one story at a time.*

Free Resources for Educators	A Note on Geography

Free Teacher's Guide for this title Free Parent's Guide for families Virtual author visits (video conferencing) — free for K–3 classrooms Bulk discounts: 10% off 20–49 copies, 15% off 50–99, 20% off 100+ Visit www.cocobrownsworld.com	The last NAEP geography assessment found fewer than 25% of American students proficient in geography — the lowest score of any subject tested. Geography has since been dropped from national testing entirely. Coco Travels exists to address that gap, one state at a time, starting at age 3.

Alabama State Facts Review

Coco Travels to Alabama — Teacher's Guide Activity 1

Name: _____ Date: _____

Use the book *Coco Travels to Alabama* to fill in the facts below.

State nickname: _____

State abbreviation: _____

State capital: _____

Three largest cities: _____

State region: _____

State time zone: _____

State bird: _____

State flower: _____

State tree: _____

Statehood date: _____

Alabama is the __ state: _____

Write the number and its ending — st, nd, or th (for example: 1st, 22nd, 4th).

Challenge (Grades 2–3): Look up one more fact about Alabama that wasn't in the book. Share it with the class!

Coco's Character Map

Coco Travels to Alabama — Teacher's Guide Activity 2

Name: _____ Date: _____

Draw or write about Coco in each box below.

What Coco Looks Like

What Coco Says

COCO

What Coco Does

How Coco Feels

Discussion: How is Coco similar to you? How is she different?

Story Sequence

Coco Travels to Alabama — Teacher's Guide Activity 4

Name: _____ Date: _____

These events from the story are out of order. Write the numbers **1–9** in the boxes to show the order they happened in the book.

- ☐ Coco adds Alabama stickers to her blue sticker book and green suitcase
- ☐ Coco and Daddy drive to the library in the red car
- ☐ Mommy announces she is flying to Alabama
- ☐ Coco dreams she is Captain Coco flying over Alabama
- ☐ Coco and Daddy read about Alabama at bedtime in Coco's room
- ☐ Coco trains like an astronaut at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center
- ☐ Mommy comes home and gives Coco a surprise
- ☐ Grandma and Semaj walk Coco to the school bus stop
- ☐ Coco checks out an Alabama book using her library card

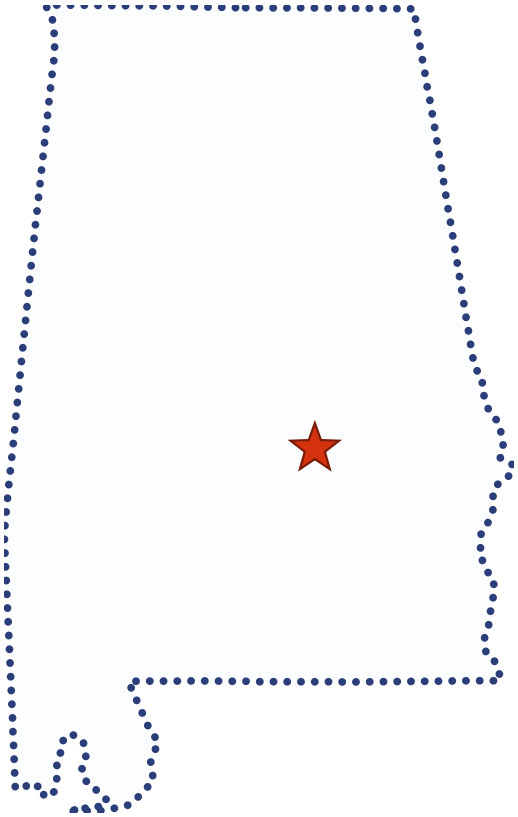
Extension: On the back of this page, write or draw one more event you felt was important.

Map It! — Coco's Alabama Adventure

Coco Travels to Alabama — Teacher's Guide Activity 7

Name: _____ Date: _____

This is a map of Alabama, the state Coco visits in her dream! Trace the dotted line with your pencil to practice the shape of Alabama. The star shows **Montgomery** — Alabama's capital city.





A compass rose shows directions on a map.

★ **Montgomery — State Capital**

Extension (Grades 2–3): Coco also visits Huntsville, Theodore, Orange Beach, Tuskegee, Oakville, and Birmingham in the book. Pick one and draw a small picture of what Coco saw there in the space around the map.