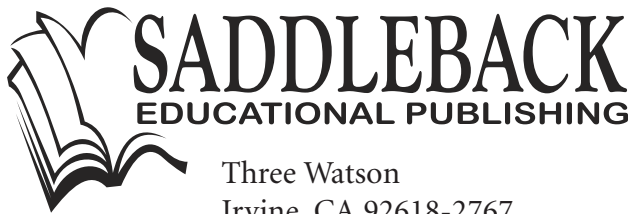


# *Focus* **ON READING**

*A Long Way  
from Chicago*

LISA FRENCH



Three Watson  
Irvine, CA 92618-2767  
Web site: [www.sdlback.com](http://www.sdlback.com)

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**I. PROLOGUE—SHOTGUN CHEATHAM'S  
LAST NIGHT ABOVE GROUND (1929)****BEFORE READING***Focus Your Reading**Vocabulary Words to Know*

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

**privy**—a small building that serves as a crude toilet; outhouse

**snaggletoothed**—having crooked or broken teeth

**obituary**—a printed notice of someone's death

**hayseeds**—awkward and naïve country dwellers

**reprobate**—a person with an immoral character

**penitentiary**—a prison

**philanthropist**—a person who gives money to help others

**circumstances**—conditions, situations

**riveted**—paid complete attention to; rooted to the spot

**disfigured**—having one's looks marred by an injury or a wound

*Things to Know*

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

**Al Capone** and **Bugs Moran** were archrivals in Chicago's gangster underworld. Both men ran illegal bootlegging and racketeering networks in the 1920s. On February 14, 1929, in the **St. Valentine's Day Massacre**, men from the Capone gang trapped seven men from the Moran gang in a garage. Believing that one of the seven was Bugs Moran, the Capone men killed the others with machine-gun fire. As it turned out, Moran was not there.

A **stiff** is an underworld term for a dead body. **Concrete overshoes** refer to the cement that gangsters sometimes put on their victims so that their dead bodies would sink to the bottom of a body of water.

**Prohibition** was the outlawing of the sale of alcoholic beverages in the United States. It was introduced by the 18th Amendment, which took effect in January 1920, and was repealed by the 20th Amendment, which took effect in January 1933.

The **Hupmobile** was an automobile that was made by the Hupp Motor Company in Detroit, Michigan, between 1909 and 1940. It was designed to be a reliable, sturdy car that could be afforded by many working people.

## Focus Your Reading

### *Questions to Think About*

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The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. In how many different ways can you interpret the title of this novel, *A Long Way from Chicago*?
2. Why do you think the author chose to write this book using the first-person point of view?  
(In the first-person point of view, the narrator of the story is an actor in the story. The reader only gets information that the narrator knows or experiences himself or herself.)
3. What motivates Grandma to trick people at times? Is this a good thing?
4. Do Joey's and Mary Alice's attitudes toward their grandmother change over time? If yes, in what ways?
5. When Joey talks about Grandma's town as a place to "ponder all the different kinds of truth," what do his words mean?