

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Snow falls, animals burrow, and children prepare for the wonders winter brings. Caldecott Medalist and award-winning author Kevin Henkes's striking text introduces basic concepts of language and the unique beauty of the winter season. Laura Dronzek's expressive paintings beautifully capture the joyful wonders of winter. This is an engaging companion to the best-selling *When Spring Comes* and *In the Middle of Fall*.



Interest Level: PreK–2  
Guided Reading Level: J  
Themes: Winter, Seasons

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**KEVIN HENKES** is the author and illustrator of more than fifty critically acclaimed and award-winning picture books, beginning readers, and novels. He received the Caldecott Medal for *Kitten's First Full Moon* in 2005, and *Waiting* won a Caldecott Honor and Geisel Honor in 2016. Kevin Henkes is also the creator of a number of picture books featuring his mouse characters, including the #1 *New York Times* bestsellers *Lilly's*

*Big Day* and *Wemberly Worried*, the Caldecott Honor Book *Owen*, and the beloved *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*. His most recent mouse character, Penny, was introduced in *Penny and Her Song*; her story continued in *Penny and Her Doll* and *Penny and Her Marble* (a Geisel Honor Book). Bruce Handy, in a *New York Times* Book Review piece about *A Good Day*, wrote, "It should be said: Kevin Henkes is a genius." Kevin Henkes received two Newbery Honors for novels—one for *The Year of Billy Miller*, and the other for *Olive's Ocean*. Also among his fiction for older readers are the novels *Junonia*, *Bird Lake Moon*, *The Birthday Room*, and *Sun & Spoon*. Kevin Henkes has been published by Greenwillow Books since the release of his first book, *All Alone*, in 1981. He lives with his family in Madison, Wisconsin.



## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**LAURA DRONZEK** is a painter whose work has been exhibited nationally. Her picture books include the acclaimed *Birds*, by Kevin Henkes; *Oh!*, by Kevin Henkes; *White Is for Blueberry*, by George Shannon; *Tippy-Toe Chick, Go!*, by George Shannon; *Moonlight*, by Helen V. Griffith; *It Is Night*, by Phyllis Rowand; and, most recently, *When Spring Comes*, by Kevin Henkes. She lives with her family in Madison, Wisconsin.



Photo by Michelle Corpora



Photo by Kevin Henkes

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the first two pages: "Winter is here. It's everywhere. It's falling from the sky." Ask the students what the author means. What is falling from the sky?
2. What else falls from the sky besides snow? (Possible answers: rain, sleet, hail.) Can these also fall from the sky in winter? Why or why not?
3. What does the author mean when he writes, "Winter is reaching through the branches and crouching in doorways and settling here and there softly, so softly"?
4. Read the page that includes "Ice covers the pond." What is ice? Why is there ice in winter?
5. Ask the students what they need to wear if they are going outside during winter. Then read the page about getting ready for winter. Is it easy to get dressed for winter? Why or why not?
6. Read the page "Winter is outside, of course, but it's inside, too." Ask the students to describe how winter is inside too.
7. Ask the students what colors they think of when you say "winter." Then read the pages "Winter is white and gray. But with the dark of night, Winter is blue. Blue, blue, deep blue." Do they agree? Why or why not?
8. What does the author mean when he writes that winter "comes and then it stays and stays and stays, and when it's time to leave, Winter shrinks away bit by bit"?
9. Read the page describing how winter is "moving on out into the world into the air, into..." and then ask the children to predict the next page.
10. Show the students the very first and last pages of the book. What do they notice? Why did the illustrator draw mittens at the beginning, and flowers at the end?
11. Ask the students to think about their senses as you reread the story. Ask them to describe what winter sounds like, looks like, feels like, smells like, and even tastes like.



## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

**LET IT SNOW.** Ask the students to describe snow and list their suggested adjectives and phrases on a chart. Then have the students write a poem about snow. They can refer to the chart for ideas. Have them glue their poem onto a piece of construction paper and decorate the borders of the paper using glitter glue, paint, or other materials that can be used to represent snow.

**WONDERFUL WINTER.** Look through the book and ask the students to name the winter activities that the children are enjoying in the story (e.g., sledding, making a snowman, ice-skating). Survey the students about which of these winter activities is their favorite and have them indicate their preference by making a tally or using a Post-it note. Then as a class, or individually, create a graph to represent the data. You can provide the students with a bar graph template and have them color it in accordingly. Discuss the results of the survey by asking questions such as, “Which activity is the most popular? Which was the least favorite? How many more children enjoy sledding than ice-skating?”

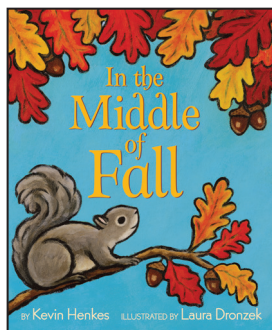
**DO YOU WANT TO BUILD A SNOWMAN?** Ask the students to write directions for how to build a snowman. Remind them to use temporal words (first, next, then, last) as they explain the steps for creating the snowman. Students can also add an illustration.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER.** Discuss migration—many birds fly south in winter while some birds stay up north. Look at the illustrations to see some winter birds (e.g., cardinals, owls) and show the students pictures of other birds that do not migrate during winter (e.g., sparrows, black-capped chickadees, mourning doves). As a class, design a winter mural. Have the students draw and cut out winter birds to affix to the mural. Very young children can be given pictures of the birds to color.

**GET INTO THE ACT.** Provide the students with a listening and movement activity as you read the book aloud. Tell the students that as they listen to the story, they will act out what they hear. They can show the snow “falling from the sky,” winter “reaching through branches,” children getting ready to go outside on a snowy day, and the wind as it “howls in every language and the windows rattle.” The students can also act out winter as it “shrinks away bit by bit” and slowly turns into spring. Encourage the students to be creative as they listen to the story and act it out in their own unique way.







## COMPANION BOOK ACTIVITIES

The following activities can be used to teach the companion books *When Spring Comes*, *In the Middle of Fall*, and *Winter Is Here*.

**WITH FLYING COLORS.** Henkes writes that “Winter is white and gray. But with the dark of night, Winter is blue. Blue, blue, deep blue.” Discuss the unique colors that also dominate the other seasons. Children might suggest that spring is green, and also pink and yellow with new flowers; summer is sunny orange and yellow, with blue and turquoise swimming pools; and fall is yellow and red and orange. Give children a large piece of paper and have them create four boxes. They should label each box with the name of a season and draw a picture using the colors they think represent that season.

**IT’S THE BEST.** Ask the children to compare the four seasons. Older children can create a T-chart for each season, listing the pros and the cons, while younger children can do this as a class while you record their ideas. Then, have children select a season (older children should choose the one possessing the most pros on their list). Group the children by seasons they have selected. Have two teams debate which season is the best, while the other two teams observe. The debating teams should try to convince the observers that their season is the best. At the end of the debate, have the audience vote to see which team won. Then switch, so that the observing teams now have a debate while the other two teams are audience observers.

**ADOPT A TREE.** Choose a tree for the class to “adopt” and to observe throughout the year. Have the children keep a seasonal journal, starting at the beginning of the school year (summer). On each journal entry, they should record the date, the season, a description of what the tree looks like, and draw an illustration to match. Repeat this activity in the fall, winter, and spring. Discuss how the tree changes from season to season.

**IT’S ABOUT TIME.** Create a timeline of the months of the year. Directly beneath this timeline, create another timeline of the four seasons. Ask the children questions about each of the two timelines and discuss when each season starts and ends. Point out that the summer season continues into September, and help students recognize which months each season spans.



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