

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## For *The Longest Storm* and *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot*



### ABOUT THE BOOKS

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These two visually appealing picture books give young children an opportunity to think about how people and animals responded to the global pandemic of 2020–21. In *The Longest Storm* by Dan Yaccarino, one family struggles with “having nothing to do and too much time to do it.” Eventually, those struggles give way to an appreciation for each other and then joy when the “storm” finally passes. In *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot*, author Lenora Todaro and illustrator Annika Siems reveal how animals around the world often thrived and expanded their habitats once humans hunkered down.

Both the bold illustrations in *The Longest Storm* and the whimsical depictions of animals gathering in human habitats in *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot* will enthrall and delight young children. These picture books give readers a chance to reflect on their own experiences during the pandemic—and to consider how people and animals alike adapted to a changed environment.

### PRAISE FOR *THE LONGEST STORM*

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★ “At once timely and timeless....”

—*School Library Journal*, STARRED

★ “A new classic.”

—*Booklist*, STARRED

★ “Splendid....Resonant and reassuring.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, STARRED

★ “An emotionally nuanced, authentic picture book that simultaneously hints at and avoids mention of recent events. Conveying instantly recognizable sadness and stresses, it clearly shows how connection and resilience can prevail in the face of any storm.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, STARRED

## A Junior Library Guild Selection

“Timely, fascinating and informative! *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot* will make children laugh, wonder, and most importantly, see the interconnectedness between human life and wildlife. The short vignettes and beautiful illustrations make this book accessible to children of all ages. It lends itself perfectly to facilitating lively elementary classroom discussions about the pandemic, animal habitats and conservationism.”

—Rebecca McMurdie, Principal,  
KIPP Washington Heights Elementary School, New York, NY

“If you’re looking for a book with wide appeal and broad curricular connections, look no further than *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot*! I teach grades K–5 and I try to incorporate the Global Goals into as many lessons as I can. I see this book fitting into several of those categories—Life on Land, Sustainable Cities and Communities, and Climate Action, to name a few—making for a strong way to tie in a global focus and STEM themes.”

—Laura Luker, MLS, Library Teacher  
Massachusetts School Library Association President

“In this series of delightful vignettes in which animal behavior and habitat change during the COVID-19 lockdowns, Todaro playfully captures some of the serious problems of coexistence between humans and wild animals.”

— Dr. Matthias-Claudio Loretto,  
Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS • *THE LONGEST STORM*

1. On the first page of the book, the storm has begun. Framed pictures filled with happy faces look very different from the expressions on the family’s faces as they come inside from the storm. How do you think the family feels about the storm?  
(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1)

2. “No one knew how long it would last.” As the family looks out the window, what do you think is on their minds? Do you remember what you were thinking at the start of the pandemic? What were some things you worried or wondered about at the start of the “storm”?  
(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1 & SL.2.3)

3. As the storm continues, the family begins to struggle and life in the house becomes difficult. The ceiling begins to leak. The children are arguing. What else is going wrong?





(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7)

4. One day, the father yells at the three children who then glumly head upstairs to their rooms. Even the dog looks sad. Do they seem happy after they go their separate ways? What do they do while they're alone?

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1 &amp; 2.3)

5. "But then came the night we all heard a rumbling in the distance." What is each member of the family doing when they first hear the thunder?

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1)

6. What clues can you find in the illustrations that indicate the power went out in the house?

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7)

7. How does the thunderstorm bring the family back together? How does the way they act toward one another change? What were some of the things they began to enjoy together?

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL. 2.1 &amp; 2.3)

8. When the storm is finally over, the view outside changes. Instead of rain and dark skies, what does the family see as they look out the door? How do the colors change in the last few pages of the book? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS • *SEA LIONS IN THE PARKING LOT*

1. In the city of Adelaide, Australia, kangaroos normally spend their time "nearby in the hills among the shrubbery and woods." Once the pandemic begins and people have to stay inside, where do the kangaroos go? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1)

2. Who usually feeds a herd of Sika deer at a park in Nara, Japan? Once people no longer came to the park, what did the deer eat? Where did they find food during the pandemic? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1)

3. Where do most of the world's giant pandas live? How did the pandemic help pandas that were living in zoos? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1)

4. Flamingos "roost and nest in the wetlands of Navi Mumbai in India." What are wetlands? How did the absence of "people, fishing boats, and construction" help the flamingos prosper during the pandemic? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.4 and RI.2.1)



5. Sea turtles thrived during the pandemic. Why? When you look at the illustration of the turtles on the beach, what is missing? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1 & SL.2.1)

6. Where did the lions rest while safaris were on pause? How did the pandemic change where the lions spent their days? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1)

7. What do gorillas share with humans? Why did park rangers wear face masks and use hand sanitizer when they came near the gorillas during the pandemic? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1)



8. In Haifa, Israel, wild boars usually venture away from their grassy nests only at night. During the pandemic, what changed? What are the boars doing when they “root through gardens?” What other things did the boars do that humans might not have liked? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1 & L.2.4)

9. Venice is a city in Italy that sits in a lagoon and has no roads, only canals. What is a canal? With “gondolas and motorboat taxis moored” during the pandemic, what happened to the water in the canals of Venice? What animals live in the canals of Venice? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.4 & RI.2.1)

10. Look at the pictures of the sea lions in Mar del Plata, Argentina. With no humans about, where do they take up residence? What did the sea lions like to do at the resort? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1)

11. Why do spring peepers make the noise they do? The author compares the size of peepers to something you can probably find in your classroom. What is it? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1 and SL.2.1)

12. Where do urban coyotes live? What time of day do packs of urban coyotes usually hunt? How did that change during the pandemic? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1)

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

1. For both books, the illustrations not only enhance the story, they also help tell the story. In *The Longest Storm*, look at different parts of the book and see how the pictures illustrate the family’s thoughts and feelings. For example, one page shows each member of the family doing something alone—tossing a ball, reading a book, looking at pictures, etc. What do the pictures tell you about each of their moods? Then look at the family having breakfast together after the thunderstorm. How would you describe their moods in that picture? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7 & SL.2.2)

2. Why do you think the author called his story *The Longest Storm*? Do you think the pandemic was like a storm? Why or why not? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.2 & 2.4)

3. The illustrator of *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot* created charming and clever depictions of animals exploring cities and other places usually filled with humans—from a kangaroo waiting at a bus stop to sea lions eyeing a fish store sign. Which illustration of animals in a human habitat is your favorite? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.2)

4. When the power goes out in *The Longest Storm*, the family lights candles and snuggles together as they wait for the storm to pass. How do you think the author uses color to emphasize the effects of the thunderstorm—and *The Longest Storm*? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7)



5. Think about the family in *The Longest Storm*. From creating art and reading books on their own to watching movies and playing board games together, they found lots of ways to spend their time. What were some of the things you did on your own during the pandemic? What were some of the things you did with other people, either in person or virtually? Draw a picture of your favorite pandemic activity. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3, SL.2.4 & 2.5)

6. At the back of *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot*, there is a section called Notes on Habitats, Biomes, and Wildlife Behavior. What does the word habitat mean? How did animal habitats

expand during the pandemic? Think about the family in *The Longest Storm*. Did their habitat expand or did it get smaller? How did your habitat change during the pandemic? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.4.E, RI.2.1, RL.2.3, & SL.2.4)

7. What does the word biome mean? In the section at the back of *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot*, the author mentions nine different biomes highlighted by the American Museum of Natural History in their Hall of Biodiversity—from coral reefs and coastal wetlands to tropical forests and savannas. Read about the biomes of the animals featured in this book. Do any of the animals in the book share a biome? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.4.E & RI.2.1)

8. Fugitive. Boisterously. Romp. Solitary. Captivity. Forage. Indigenous. Barren. Wielding. Canopy. Abandoned. Cosmopolitan. Brackish. Translucent. Quays. Respite. Migration. Trilling. Kin. Serene. There are a lot of interesting words that may be new to you in *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot*. What do you think those words mean from reading them in the story? Look them up to see if you're correct. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.4.A & 2.4.E)

**9.** Collective nouns are words that describe groups of things, for example a school of fish or a stand of trees. There are many delightful animal group names, and several can be found in *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot*. How many can you find in the book? Can you think of any others? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.1A & SL.2.2)

**10.** When times are difficult, it can be helpful to recognize how humans—and even animals and plants—can adapt to hard times and even become stronger. How did the family in *The Longest Storm* change and adapt during their long stay at home? After reading *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot*, what were some of the ways animals adapted to changes in their environments?

**11.** Think about how you may have adapted during the pandemic. Perhaps you went to school online for the first time or picked up a new hobby, like drawing or dancing. What are some changes or adaptations from the pandemic that would you like to keep? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3, RI.2.1, & SL.2.4)



**12.** Throughout *The Longest Storm*, the family dog comforts the children, plays with the family, and appears sad when family members are sad. How do you think “*The Longest Storm*” affected the family’s pet? Do you have a pet? What was it like for your pet during the pandemic? Do you think pets adapted and changed during the pandemic like the wild animals in *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot*? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3, SL.2.4, & RI.2.1)

## EXTRA CREDIT

**1.** *The Longest Storm* isn’t about an actual storm. It’s the author’s way of looking at the pandemic and how people all over the world had to stay apart from one another and wait out the “storm.” What types of storms do you have where you live? Snowstorms? Thunderstorms? Hurricanes? How does your family handle storms? Do you make any preparations ahead of time? (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1 & SL.2.4)

**2.** In the epilogue of *Sea Lions in the Parking Lot*, the author writes, “It will take international cooperation to make big changes, but each of us individually can slow down, make more room for one another, and create safe spaces for wildlife to thrive in our neighborhoods, and for us to flourish alongside them.” On the opening page, there is a picture of a macaque monkey holding a face mask. One way to create safe spaces for wildlife is to dispose of trash properly so it doesn’t negatively affect animals and their habitats.

- 3.** What kinds of animals live in your biome? Write a list of some of the things you can do to care for animal habitats in your area. **(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.4 & W.2.2)**
- 4.** Conservation biologists are scientists who study ways to positively impact the environment and the creatures who share the earth with us. To learn more about the important work conservation biologists do, visit [amnh.org/explore/ology/biodiversity/being-a-conservation-biologist-eleanor-sterling](http://amnh.org/explore/ology/biodiversity/being-a-conservation-biologist-eleanor-sterling). **(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.1)**
- 5.** Spring peepers are only about an inch tall, but these tiny frogs make a very large noise. Listen to the noise spring peepers make—you can hear their song at [audubon.org/news/listen-birds-arent-only-ones-singing](http://audubon.org/news/listen-birds-arent-only-ones-singing). How would you describe the sound spring peepers make? **(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RI.2.1 and SL.2.4)**

*This guide was written by Jane Becker, an experienced writer and copy editor who received a BA in English from Colby College. She began her career in children's books and has particularly enjoyed creating curriculum guides for the past 8 years. In her spare time, she is an avid reader, book recommender, and library volunteer.*



# THE LONGEST STORM

Dan Yaccarino

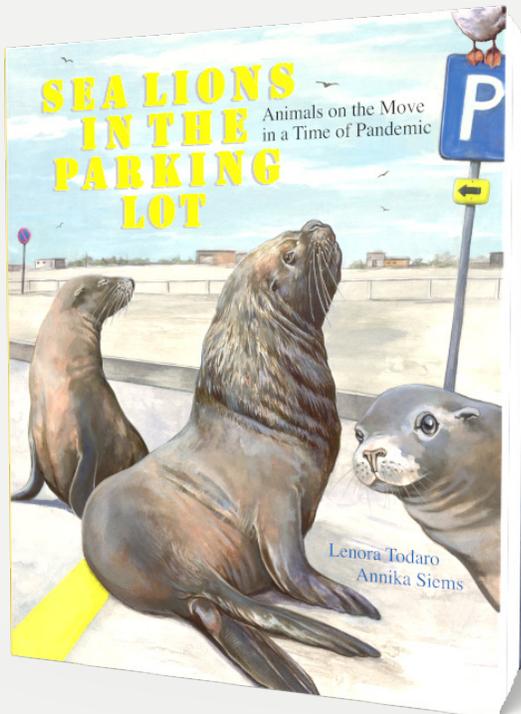
\$18.99

ISBN: 978-1-6626-5047-5

Grades: Pre-K+

Ages: 4-8

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED by Dan Yaccarino



# SEA LIONS IN THE PARKING LOT

ANIMALS ON THE MOVE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

Lenora Todaro

\$18.99

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ILLUSTRATED by Annika Siems

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