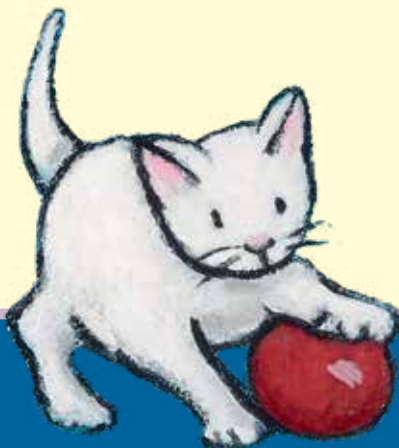
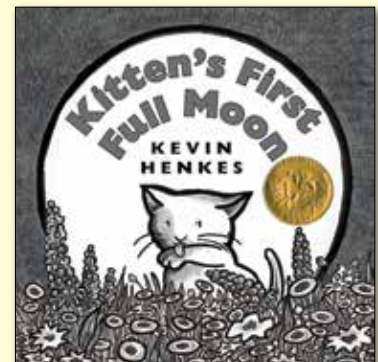
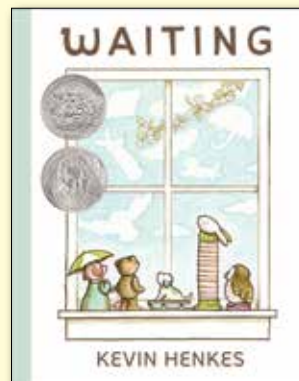
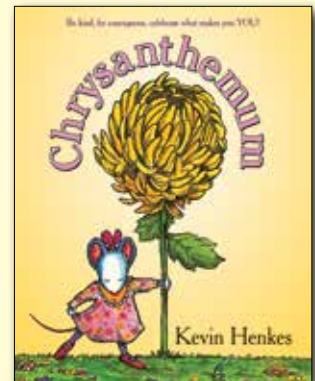
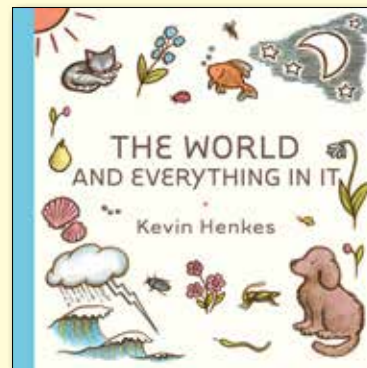
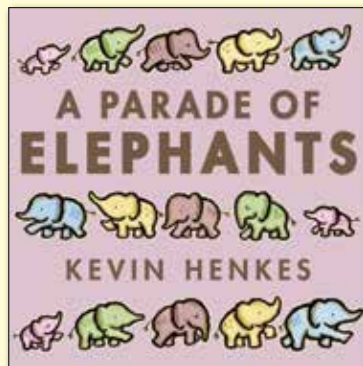


KEVIN HENKES:

An Author Study

Using Art and Writing to
Teach Kevin Henkes's Books
FEATURING:



ABOUT KEVIN HENKES



Photo by Michelle Corpora

Kevin Henkes was born in 1960 in Racine, Wisconsin, and during his childhood, he often visited the local art museum—the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts. He also visited the library on a weekly basis with his family. He pored over books and was intrigued by the authors and illustrators, but he says, “I never imagined that one day I would be one myself.”

He grew up loving books and loving to draw and paint. During his junior year of high school, writing became essential to him, and when he was a senior, a public librarian introduced him to Barbara Bader’s *American Picture Books from Noah’s Ark to the Beast Within*. It was only natural that he would decide to write and illustrate children’s books for a career.

Kevin Henkes began college at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, choosing to go there in large part because of the School of Education’s Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC). The July after his freshman year, he set off for New York with a selection of work and a ranked list of publishers. His first choice was Greenwillow Books, headed at the time by its founder, Susan Hirschman. Mrs. Hirschman signed him up on the spot, and he took the fall semester off to work on what became his first published book *All Alone* (1981).

In 1986, Kevin Henkes’s picture book portfolio blossomed thanks to the birth of some little mice in *A Weekend with Wendell*. Sixteen books featuring a parade of dynamic and unforgettable mouse characters have followed, including the 1994 Caldecott Honor book

Owen; and the most famous of them all, *Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse*. With the release of *Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse* in 1996, Kevin Henkes presented the world of children’s literature with a memorable new addition to its roster of cherished characters. His newest mouse character, Penny, stars in a series for beginning readers that includes *Penny and Her Song*, *Penny and Her Doll*, and *Penny and Her Marble*.

In addition to his picture books, Kevin Henkes has published thirteen novels. *Words of Stone* is especially meaningful to him, because this book was his first to elicit letters from older children and adults. Kevin Henkes says, “Writing a good children’s book comes from someplace within. I think that’s why I love writing about kids who are interested in being a writer or an artist because then I can look at the world through the eyes of a young artist. That’s what I was, so I think I understand them.”

Kevin Henkes writes, paints, and draws in his studio on the third floor of his home in Wisconsin, where he lives with his family. His desk is surrounded by books, including some of his favorite books from childhood, and a cabinet is filled with his drawings. His tools are simple; he writes his drafts using paper and ink and then types them up using a typewriter that belonged to his wife when she was in college. He still uses the light box he had as a child.

Kevin Henkes has been praised both as a writer and as an illustrator and is the recipient of the Children’s Literature Legacy Award for his lasting contribution to literature for children. He received the Caldecott Medal for *Kitten’s First Full Moon*; Caldecott Honors for *Waiting* and *Owen*; two Newbery Honors—one for *Olive’s Ocean* and one for *The Year of Billy Miller*—and Geisel Honors for *Waiting* and *Penny and Her Marble*.

Henkes states: “My main goal is to create books that please me. Of course I’m happy when teachers, parents, or librarians thank me because for them one of my books says something important about tolerance, loyalty, or individuality. But I’m most pleased when children tell me that they loved one of my books, that it made them laugh, that they sleep with it under their pillow.”



A Q&A WITH KEVIN HENKES

Q: When you begin a picture book such as *Wemberly Worried*, do you always know where the story is going, or do your characters ever take you by surprise and pull the story in another direction?*

A: Books begin with character; character is the seed from which a book grows. When I set out to write *Wemberly Worried*, I didn't know the book would end with the start of school, although in hindsight, it seems a logical path for the book to have taken. That's the magic and mystery of creation.

Q: It must be a very different process, working on a novel. Do you still have vivid pictorial images of the characters and their environment in your head?*

A: Writing a novel is very different. I can delve much deeper into a character's psyche, for example. I can describe a scene at length. And I can deal with subject matter that is more complex than the subject matter of my picture books. But, because I'm a visual person, I do have very strong images in my head as I work. I love describing my characters and their environments. Setting a scene—providing proper lighting, the colors and textures of things, sounds—is one of my favorite things about writing a novel.

Q: How does writing a novel differ from writing a picture book?*

A: The thing that's most different for me is that when I'm writing a picture book, I will sometimes see the complete book in my head. With a novel, I don't at all. I know perhaps a character and an opening situation. I think I know where I want to end, but I have no idea how I will get there or who will populate the book in terms of people, other than my main character. I write very, very, very slowly when I'm writing a novel. I usually think about it for about a year, and then I'll take notes for a year, which is happening while I'm working on something else. Then when I write the novel, I write paragraph by paragraph, very slowly. I know other people who write many, many drafts, but that's not the way that I work. I go very slowly and have just one draft, even though I may write one paragraph 15 times before I get it absolutely the way I want it to be. Because I do write in such small chunks, I read it aloud many times as I'm going.

Q: When you began *The Year of Billy Miller*, how did your writing process compare to the 5-step process that young writers learn in school? Do you do any of the following: research, prewriting, drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing?

A: When I began *The Year of Billy Miller*, I wasn't consciously thinking about things like research, prewriting, drafting, revising, and proofreading. But, of course, I do all of those things in my own way. My books usually begin with character. Character is the seed from which my books grow. I took notes about Billy long before I began working on the actual story. My notes included things such as: what he looked like, what he liked to do, who his friends were, what his family was like. This is the kind of prewriting I do. My research involved, among other things, going to lunch (with my notebook) at the restaurant that was the inspiration for Ruby's Cupboard in Part 3. The restaurant was a favorite of my kids when they were small. I hadn't been back to it in many years. I probably could have written the scene from memory and by using my imagination, but it was fun to revisit it.

I think for a long time before I begin to write. When I do write, I write slowly. And I revise as I go. It might take me a week to write one paragraph. I've never used an outline. I tend to figure things out as I plod forward.

Q: What role do plot sequence, character development, setting, theme, and conflict resolution play in your writing process?

A: All these things—plot sequence, character development, setting, theme, and conflict resolution—are important to the writing process. They are tools writers use. I don't think of them by name, per se, but rather use them instinctively. As a writer this is what I want: I want my characters to be believable, I want the story to be convincing. And I want to write good sentences. It's as simple and difficult as that.

Q: What is an example of a theme or major idea that you convey in your body of work?*

A: So many of the children (or mice or other animals) who populate my work use imagination—as play, as an escape, as a tool. Imagination is a theme I've returned to again and again. It is a theme that has been with me from the very beginning of my career.

Q: How long does it take you to complete a new picture book, from getting the idea to final page proofs? How much time do you spend on each illustration, and what kinds of changes do you make to your words and pictures?*

A: Each book is different. Some come easily, and some are very difficult to bring to completion. I'll often think about an idea for months, even years, before I'm ready to write. It's difficult to say how much time I spend on each illustration. I don't do each illustration from start to finish; I do them in stages. I do sketches for the entire book first. Then I'll refine all the sketches. Next, I'll do a finished pencil drawing for each illustration in the book. Inking comes next. At this point, I make several copies of each ink drawing so that I can test different colors before I finally paint each piece. If I change words at this point, it's usually a matter of taking something out that isn't necessary any longer. Perhaps I've "said" what I want to say in the illustration and don't need the words any longer.

Q: When you write a picture book, do you write the whole text first before creating the art? How do you determine where to break the story into pages?

A: When I'm working on a picture book, the words always come first. I try to perfect the words before I draw anything. However, I do think about the pictures while I write. Because I'm both the author and the illustrator, I often edit as I write, knowing that the pictures will provide important information. For example, in *Chester's Way* I didn't mention Lilly's boots, crown, or cape when I wrote the story, although I knew long before the manuscript was finished that Lilly would be wearing them. Determining where to break the story into pages is important—and instinctual in many cases. Some breaks seem natural and obvious. Others take longer to figure out. I cut up the text into sections and move the sections around in a blank dummy until the flow and pacing seem right. Reading the text aloud again and again helps, too.

Q: Do you have any recommendations for ways classroom teachers or parents can help children grow as readers, writers, and artists?*

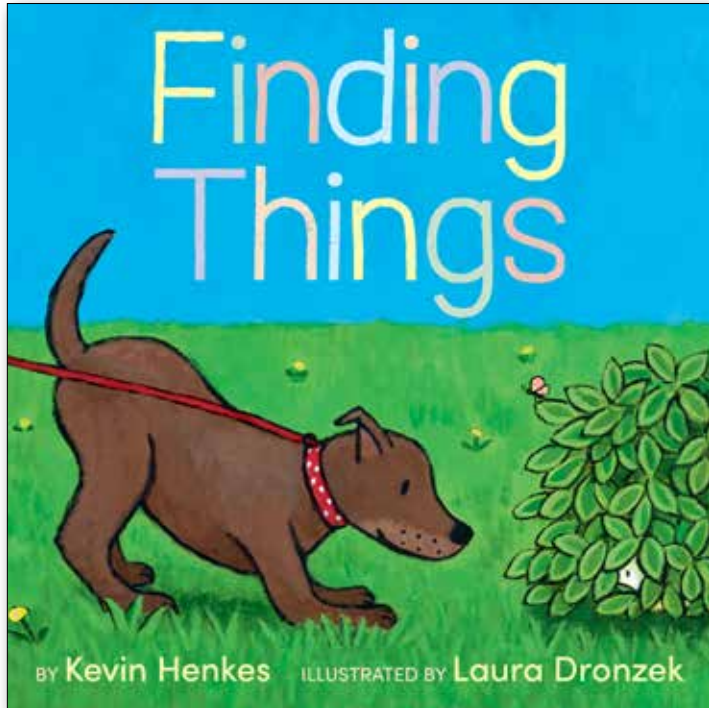
A: Exposure is everything. Read aloud as often as possible. If your child likes to write or draw, make sure that he or she always has paper available. Encourage children to experiment when it comes to art, and remind them to have fun and not be concerned with creating a masterpiece. If, as adults, we value art and books, our children will, too.



*Questions and answers from TeachingBooks.net

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FINDING THINGS: Perfect for making connections!



Interest Level: PreK-1
Guided Reading Level: I
Themes: Pets, Play, Luck, Joy, Relationships

ABOUT THE BOOK

What would you do if you found a little ball, a flower, an empty box, and a kitten? Henkes invites children to look for surprising discoveries and serendipitous connections. Dronzek's bright, cheerful illustrations complement this very sweet story about finding simple joy.

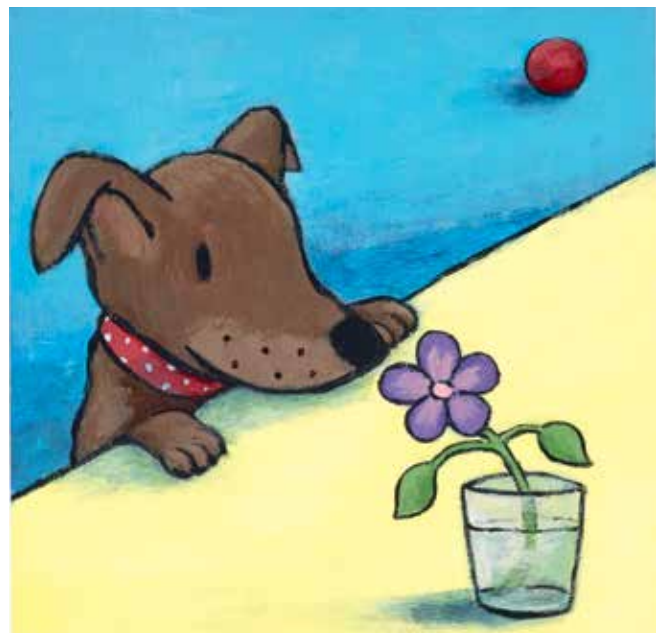


BEFORE READING

Ask the students if they have ever found something that didn't belong to them. What did they find? Did they know if it belonged to someone else? Did they keep it? Discuss whether they should or should not have kept it and why. Tell the students that the little girl in this story finds some things that she is allowed to keep, and ask them to predict how these things could all be used together.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Look at the title page. Who is walking with the little girl? Where do you think she is walking?
2. Read the first page of the story. Where was the ball found? Why was it okay for the girl to keep the ball?
3. Where did she find the flower?
4. Why did the girl put the flower in a cup of water?
5. Read the page about the box. What do you think was in that box? Why is it at the curb? What might the girl do with the box?
6. Where did the girl find the kitten?
7. Why was the girl lucky?
8. How did the girl use all of the things she found?
9. Why was everyone happy at the end of the story?



FINDING THINGS: Perfect for making connections!

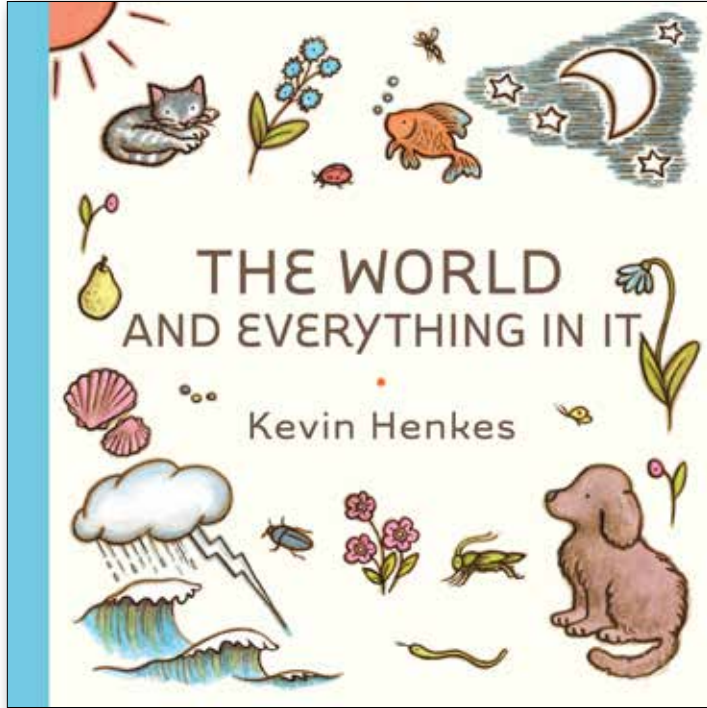
ACTIVITIES

- 1. In the Hunt.** Discuss with the students how they might search for something on purpose. Tell them that you have prepared a treasure hunt for them. They will follow clues to search for a hidden “treasure.” To prepare this activity, write 5-7 simple clues on index cards. Each clue should require the students to infer or draw a conclusion to locate the next clue. For example, one clue might say, “Have you read a good book lately?” This should direct the students to look in the classroom library for the next clue. The final clue should guide the students to the treasure, which could be small toys, stickers, a sweet treat, or plastic gold.
- 2. Think Outside the Box.** Ask the students what they predicted the little girl would do with the box she found. Then ask what they might do with an empty box. Bring a collection of different-sized boxes into the classroom or ask each student to bring in one or two empty boxes from home. Then have the students work individually, in pairs, or in small groups (depending on the size of the box) to make something with their box. Encourage them to be creative. Maybe they will attach boxes to create a cityscape or plan a space exploration in a box big enough to be a rocket ship! Have the students share and explore each other’s box creations.
- 3. Happiness Is...** Discuss how the girl felt at the end of the story. Why was she happy? What makes you happy? Have the students tell a story or draw a picture to show what makes them feel happy and why. Older students can write a story or a poem to convey their ideas.
- 4. Flower Show.** Discuss the flower from the story with the students. Where did the girl find it? What kind of flower do they think it might be? What kinds of flowers have they seen? Research different types of flowers with the students using books and Internet sites. Then have the students create their favorite flower. They might cut and fold a tissue paper flower, paint with watercolors, or draw with pastels or crayons. Hold a Flower Show in the classroom to display the students’ work.
- 5. Have a Ball.** Ask the students, “If you found a ball, what games could you play with it?” Make a list of games that use a ball. Hold a vote to determine which games are the students’ favorites. Then plan a Game Day during which the class plays their favorite ball games!



THE WORLD AND EVERYTHING IN IT:

Perfect for compare and contrast!



Interest Level: PreK-2
Guided Reading Level: G
Themes: living things, nature, world, plants, animals,
concept of sizes, imagination,

ABOUT THE BOOK

Kevin Henkes encourages readers to reflect on all the things that are part of our world. This includes big things, small things, and everything in between. He depicts living things, nonliving things, natural and man-made things. He shows readers how they can touch, hold, or experience parts of the world for themselves, and he invites them to think about where they fit into our big, beautiful world.

BEFORE READING

Review the concepts of big and little. Make a 2-column chart labeled “Big” and “Little.” Ask the students to name things that are big and little, and list their ideas on the chart. Tell the students to look for these things as they read the story with you.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the first page of the story. What is big and what is little on the facing page?
2. Read the next page that discusses little animals. What animals do you see in the picture? What other little animals can you think of?
3. What is something so small that we cannot see it?
4. What little things could the children in the story have?
5. What little things would you like to have?
6. Could the children also have some big things? How?
7. Read the page that shows “big things and little things” and “everything in between.” What things do you see on this page? Which are big? Little? In between?
8. Read the next page that says, “Most of the things are in between. Like you.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
9. What is the difference between living and nonliving things?
10. Which parts of this story showed living things? Nonliving things? How do you know?



THE WORLD AND EVERYTHING IN IT:

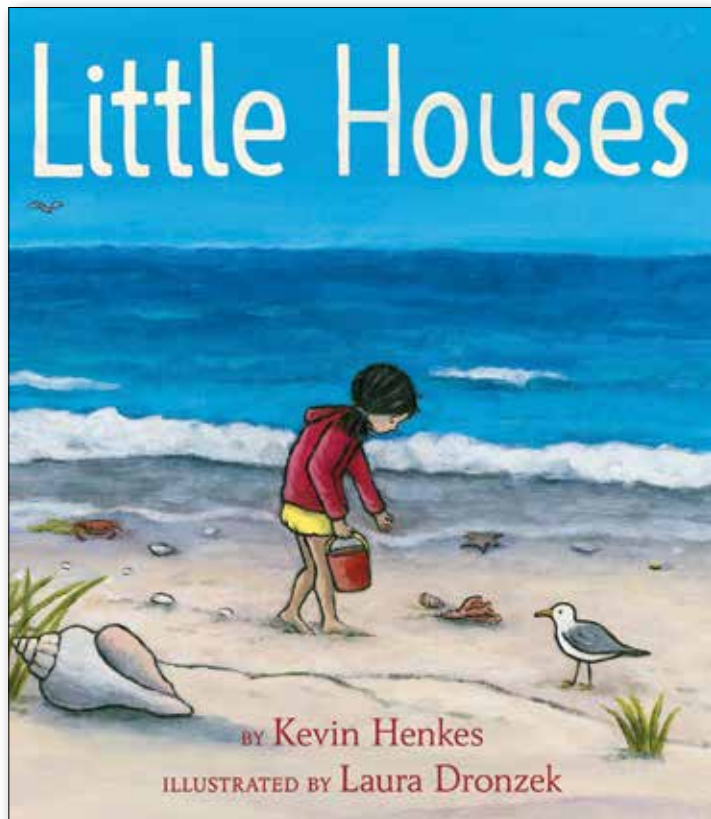
Perfect for compare and contrast!

ACTIVITIES

- 1. Rock Out.** Reread the pages of the story that say: “You can have some of the little things. A pebble.” Ask the students to find some pebbles and rocks from outside and bring them into school. Tell the students they will decorate the pebbles and rocks. First, have the students paint them. Next, have them decide what to add to make their rock or pebble unique. They can glue on feathers, googly eyes, glitter, or ribbon. They might embellish their pebble to look like a stone animal. Or, if their rock is large enough, they can write or paint a word or phrase on it. Display the decorated pebbles and rocks in the classroom.
- 2. Can You See?** Reread the page: “Things so small you can’t see them.” Ask the students why there are things we can’t see with just our eyes. What are some of those things? How can we see something that small? Show the students a magnifying glass and a microscope. Give them an opportunity to observe some items (e.g., a leaf, a whisker, a butterfly wing) using these tools. Ask the students to describe how each item looks under the microscope or the magnifying glass. What do they see that they could not see with just their eyes?
- 3. Plant a Seed.** Point out where plants are depicted in the story (flower, vegetable, tree, nut). Discuss the different kinds of plants that can be grown (e.g., flowers, fruits, vegetables) and ask the students to choose which plants they would like to grow. Then prepare a planting activity for the students. Depending on the time of year, plant outside or inside. If planting indoors, you can plant seeds in small cups filled with soil, or on a wet paper towel, and then place the towel inside a clear reclosable plastic bag so that students can observe when the seeds germinate. Have the students observe and record the stages of their plant’s growth.
- 4. See the World.** The story points out that the sun and moon are big things in the world. Discuss where our world is in relation to the sun and the moon and how each body moves in relation to the others. As a class or in small groups, design a model to represent the movement of the sun, moon, and earth. Students can use clay, Styrofoam, or other materials to create their model. Have students demonstrate the movement of their model in the classroom.
- 5. My Favorite Things.** Show the students the pages that show “big things and little things...and everything in between” and the first page that reads “Everything is in the world.” Ask the students to name all the things they see in these detailed illustrations, and ask them why they think Henkes chose to include these items. Tell the students that they will be creating their own picture of their favorite things in the world that are big, little, and everything in between. The students can make a drawing, a painting, or a collage to represent their favorite things. Have the students present their work to a partner and share why they chose these things.
- 6. Living Proof.** Discuss the main characteristics of a living thing (it grows, takes in food and water, reproduces). Make a two-column chart labeled Living Things and Nonliving Things. Give the students picture cards (e.g., flower, cat, rock, balloon, child, ball) and have the students place the pictures under the correct category. Discuss why each item is a living or nonliving thing.



LITTLE HOUSES: Perfect for encouraging curiosity and wonder!



Interest Level: PreK-3
Guided Reading Level: I
Themes: Shells, Beach, Ocean, Sea Animals,
Family, Grandparents, Wonder/Curiosity

ABOUT THE BOOK

When a young girl visits her grandparents by the beach and collects shells, her grandmother reminds her that each shell is a little house for a sea animal. The girl begins to wonder about the ocean and all the creatures that live in the sea. And then she thinks about how large the world is, and all the questions she has about the ocean and the world around her. But instead of being overwhelmed by all that she wonders, she decides to start exploring by finding little houses to bring to her own house, which has its own small, special place in the big, wide world.

BEFORE READING

Ask the students if they have ever visited the beach. What did they see and do there? If they have not been to a beach, what do they think they would find there?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Show the students the cover of the book. Ask them to predict why the book is titled *Little Houses*.
2. Read the first page of the story and then have the students describe the setting of the book.
3. Read the next page ("Sometimes I think someone is calling me. But it's just the waves...") and ask the students to describe the sounds of the beach in their own words (e.g., waves crashing, seagulls squealing).
4. Read the next two pages. What does Grandma mean when she says that "shells are little houses"? Why do they only keep the shells that are empty?
5. Have you ever put a large shell next to your ear? What does it sound like? (You can provide a shell for the students to try this.)
6. What do you think Grandma is talking about when she says, "things we cannot see"?
7. What does the girl imagine is under the water?
8. What things do you think might be "rolling onto the shore" from the ocean?
9. How does Grandpa feel about the world?
10. When the girl starts wondering, what are some things she wants to know?
11. What questions do you wonder about nature and the earth?
12. What are some of the seabirds in this story?
13. What does the girl do with her favorite shell?



LITTLE HOUSES: Perfect for encouraging curiosity and wonder!

ACTIVITIES

- 1. The Right Sort.** Bring in a collection of shells or ask the students to bring in shells from home. Discuss the properties of the shells: their color, shape, size, and texture. Give pairs of students a small collection of shells. Have them sort the shells into groups and label the attributes they used to arrange the shells. Then they should turn the labels face down. Have the students rotate around the classroom and guess how their classmates have sorted their shells. They can turn over the labels to check their answers.
- 2. Who Lives There?** Provide the students with nonfiction books or websites. Have them create a class list of sea animals that live in a shell. Then ask the students to choose one of those sea animals to research. Older students should write an informational report about it, including a topic sentence, several facts, and a closing sentence. Younger students can choose one fact to record or dictate to an adult. The students should draw or print out an accompanying picture. Display these reports in the classroom so the students can learn about one another's sea creatures.
- 3. It Makes Sense.** Review the five senses with the class. Then ask the students to recall sensory details from the story. What does the little girl see (e.g., the colors of the ocean, the patterns on a shell)? Hear (e.g., the sound of the waves, or the sound of a shell against one's ear)? Touch or feel (e.g., the texture or shape of the shells)? Smell? Taste? Then, as a class, create a poem that includes many sensory details. It can be about the ocean or another topic. Older students can compose individual poems that then can be compiled into a class anthology.
- 4. Under the Sea.** Have the students look closely at the illustrations in the story and discuss the many details that can be seen at the beach. Then plan to create a class collage mural. Some students will paint the background on a large piece of chart paper. Others will draw and cut out sea animals, rocks, shells, seaweed, and seabirds to affix to the chart paper. Sand, small shells, and pebbles can be glued on as well to enhance the mural. Display the collage in the classroom.
- 5. Take Up a Collection.** Discuss how and why the little girl in this story collected shells. Ask the students what they like to collect. Have them write about why they collect these items and what are their favorite parts of the collection. Then plan a special day for the students to bring in their collection to share with their classmates. They can also share their writing with the class.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Laura Dronzek is a painter whose work has been exhibited nationally. Her picture books include the acclaimed *When Spring Comes*, *In the Middle of Fall*, *Winter Is Here*, *Summer Song*, *Birds*, and *Oh!*, all by Kevin Henkes; *White Is for Blueberry*, by George Shannon; *Tippy-Toe Chick, Go!*, by George Shannon; *Moonlight*, by Helen V. Griffith; and *It Is Night*, by Phyllis Rowand. She lives with her family in Madison, Wisconsin.



Photo by Kevin Henkes



A HOUSE: Perfect for exploring what it means to be at home!



Interest Level: PreK-2
Guided Reading Level: H
Themes: Home, Imagination, Counting,
Shapes, General Concepts



ABOUT THE BOOK

Henkes uses clean lines and a pastel palette to explore the features of a home and how the world outside changes it from day to day. He invites young children to look closely and engage with the illustrations, asking questions and encouraging them to reflect on when and how a house becomes a home.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read each page aloud and pause so the children can study each illustration.
2. On each page, ask the question that the author poses in the story, and have the children consider their own home as well when answering. For example, what color is the door of the house in this story? What color is the door of your home?
3. Do you see birds and other animals near your home?
4. How does the time change in this story?
5. How does the weather change during this story?
6. What happens when the people and the pets arrive?
7. Why does the author begin this story with "A house," but end the story with "A home"? What does he mean?

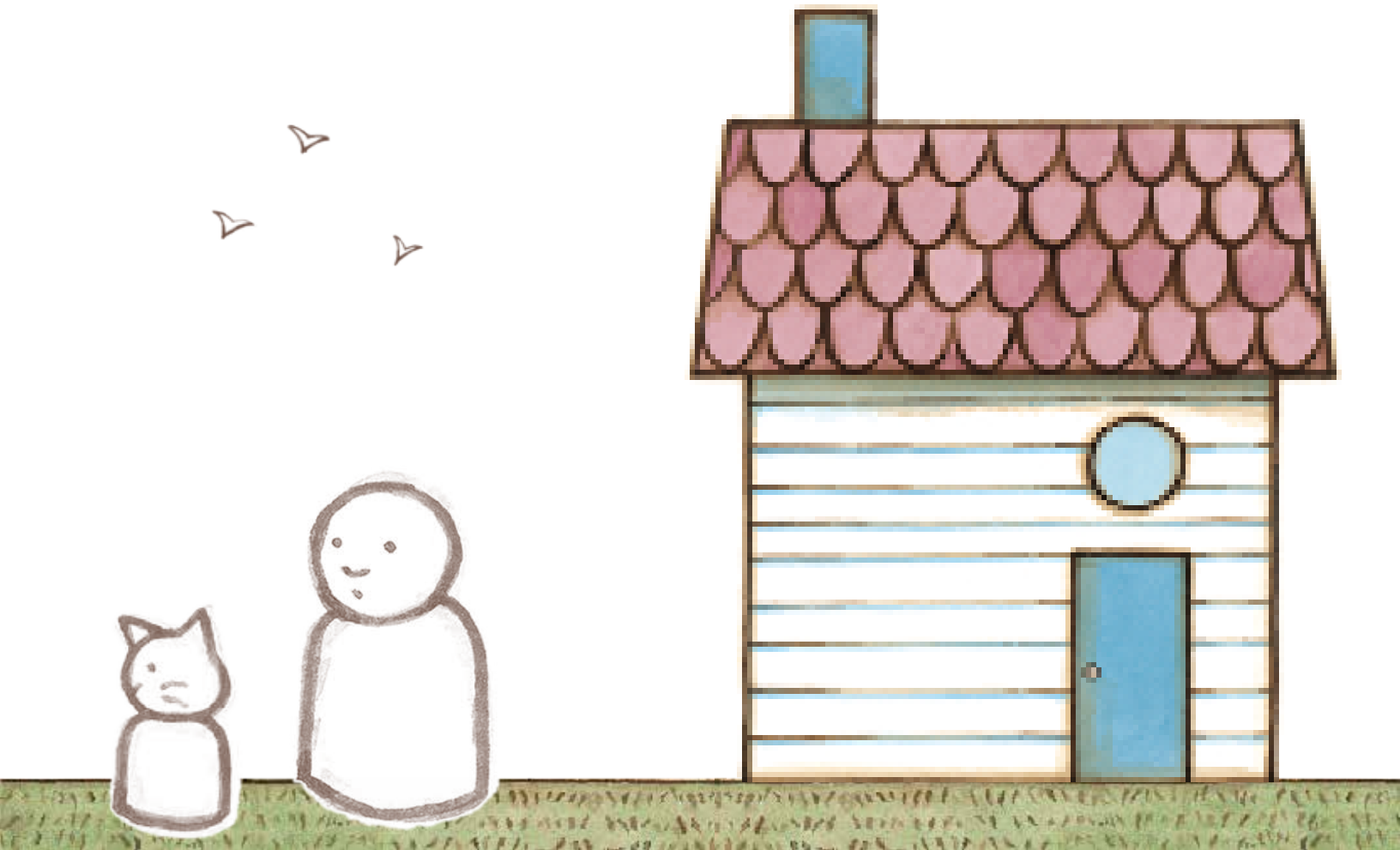


Teaching guide for *A House* prepared by Sue Ornstein, an educational consultant with more than 30 years of elementary teaching experience.

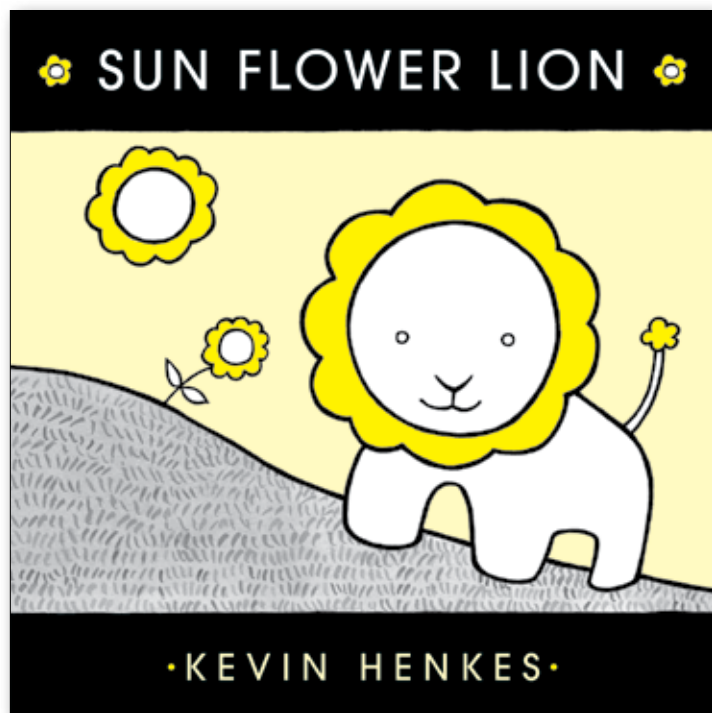
A HOUSE: Perfect for exploring what it means to be at home!

ACTIVITIES

- 1. Get in the Act.** Have the children draw a picture of a house on a large piece of paper to create a setting or background for a puppet show. Children can draw the outside of their house (or an imaginary house) like Henkes did, or choose to make a cutaway drawing which reveals the inside of their home. Then have the children create puppets of their family members. Simple puppets can be created by having the children draw each family member on paper or posterboard, cut the drawings out, and then glue a craft stick to the back of each one. When the puppets are completed, have the children tape their background to a wall or desk, and then use their puppets to act out stories about their family and their home. Children can portray true events or make up stories about their families. Have the children practice their family puppet shows and then perform them for one another.
- 2. Build It.** Discuss the house in this story, and how many different types of homes exist. Have the children build a model either of their own house, or of their “dream house.” They can use blocks, craft sticks, Legos, or other building materials. As an alternate or accompanying activity, have the children draw a “blueprint” of the house, including many details and labeling them to show exactly what the house looks like and what it features.
- 3. For Every Season.** Discuss the seasons with the children and how their home changes as the seasons change. For example, in autumn, colorful leaves might fall near their home, and in the winter, their home might be covered with snow. In the spring, flowers may bloom, and in summer, grass might grow tall in their yard. Give the children a piece of paper and have them fold it twice and then unfold it to create four panels. Then have the children create a four-paneled picture or painting showing what their home looks like in each season.
- 4. Pet Project.** Ask the children to describe the pets in this story. Ask if they have pets of their own at their home, and then ask them to imagine what pet they would choose if they were able to have any pet. Have the children make a colorful drawing of their favorite pet and cut it out. Collect the drawings and affix them to a poster or mural paper to create a “pet store.” The children can then take turns visiting the class pet store and “shopping” for the pet of their dreams. For older children, add sticky note price tags and have the children “pay” for their pet using pretend money.



SUN FLOWER LION: Perfect for introducing the concepts of storytelling!



Interest Level: PreK-3
Guided Reading Level: H
Themes: Imagination, Play, Animals,
Concepts of size and shape

ABOUT THE BOOK

On a warm morning, a little lion sleeps in the sunshine, under a sun that shines so brightly, it looks like a flower. He dreams the flower is as big as the sun. He dreams the flower is a cookie.

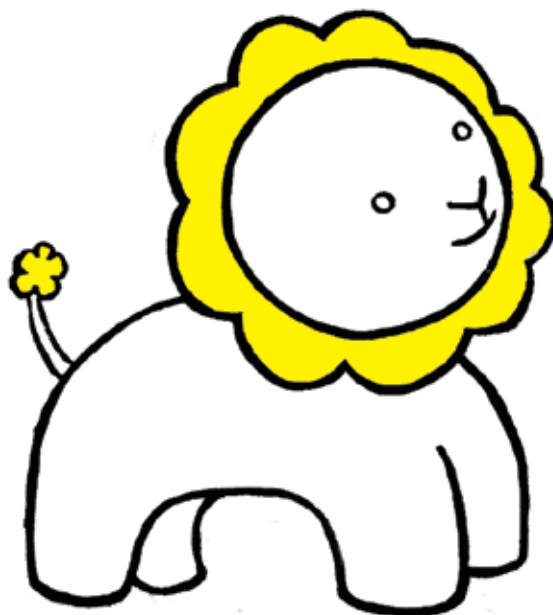
He lets his imagination soar.

Caldecott Medal winner Kevin Henkes uses simple shapes, limited colors, and an engaging text to tell Lion's story in this transcendent and original picture book. *Sun Flower Lion* introduces emerging readers to action verbs and adjectives, while bright illustrations transform simple shapes into something magical. *Sun Flower Lion* is the perfect choice for story times and bedtime and for young children just learning how to read on their own.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This book's title is *Sun Flower Lion*, not *Sunflower Lion*. Why do you think the author chose to do it this way?
2. How many suns do you see on the cover? How many flowers?
3. How many colors are in this book? How many shades of yellow? What are the other colors?
4. Rub your hand over the book's cover. What do you notice about it?
5. The author says that the flower "looks like a little lion." Can you think of a different flower that "looks like a lion"? How is it different? Does it look like the sun?
6. How is the flower like the sun? How is the lion like the flower?
7. In chapter 4, the lion dreams. How do the illustrations change? How do they change when the lion wakes up?
8. In the last chapter we see the lion's family. How many lions are there? How many are cubs? How can you tell which one is the one in the story? What is different about the others?
9. Turn the pages and look at the lion's face. How does it change? What does each change tell you about how the lion feels, or what he is doing?
10. In this book, the sky is yellow and the grass is gray. Why do you think the artist chose those colors?



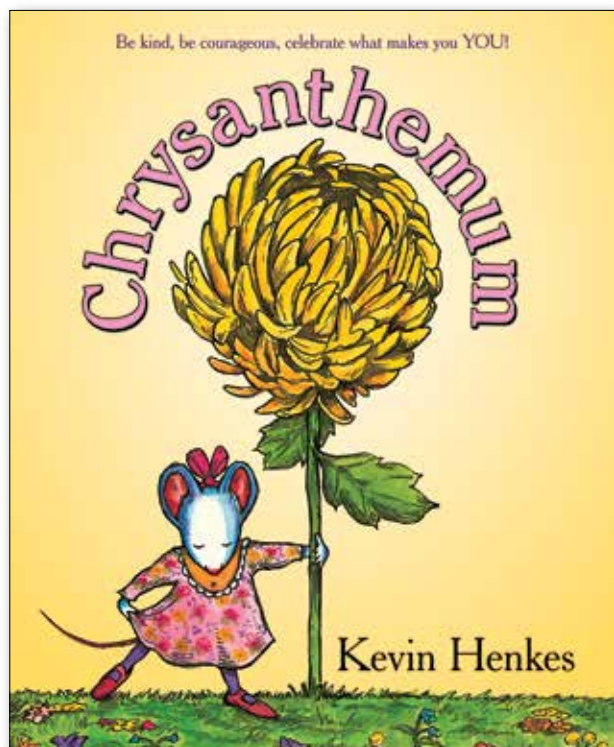
SUN FLOWER LION: Perfect for introducing the concepts of storytelling!

ACTIVITIES

- 1. Dandy Lions.** Have each student draw a picture of the sun. Ask how it is different from the one in the book. How would they turn it into a flower? Would they give it a face? Would it have leaves? Petals? What else could it do? Can they think of any other flowers with animal names (snapdragons, bee balm, foxglove)? Where does the word “dandelion” come from (the French dent de lion, “tooth of the lion”)?
- 2. Get Out The Crayons.** Show the pictures of the lion in Chapter 3. On the board, draw the lion’s body without the head. Ask the children, “What other animal could this be? Can you draw it? How would you turn this body into a horse? An elephant? A tiger?” Look at and discuss the lion’s different facial expressions—awake, alert, contemplative, surprised, asleep. What other expressions can the children imagine? How would they draw them?
- 3. You Be The Teacher.** Ask students to read the story aloud (one chapter each, or for younger students, one line each). Which students have younger siblings? Could they read this book aloud to a younger child? Invite another class to visit. Have your students read the book aloud to them, in pairs or small groups. Give paper and crayons to the younger children and have your students invite them to draw sun, flower, and lion. Give both classes an opportunity to share their art with other students.
- 4. Bring It To Life.** Visit the library and find other books about sunflowers. When do they bloom? What happens after the flower fades? How are their seeds used? What eats them? Have the children plant sunflower seeds and watch as they grow. Keep a chart showing how much water they get, and how often; when the first shoots appear; when they need transplanting to a larger container (or the garden). If possible, collect the seeds to feed to birds.
- 5. Go Exploring.** Older students can look for information about lions in the library or online. Where do lions live? What do they eat? How are they different from the lion in our story? What dangers do they face in today’s world? Lions have been used as symbols for many centuries and in many cultures. Have the students look for pictures of lions as symbols, or for other stories about lions.



CHRYSANTHEMUM: Perfect for learning to love your name!



Interest Level: K-3
Guided Reading Level: L
Themes: Friendship, Family, Bullying

ABOUT THE BOOK

Chrysanthemum loves everything about her perfect name until her first day of school. When a trio of mean girls teases and taunts her about the unsuitability of her name, Chrysanthemum doubts that her name is “absolutely perfect”; she thinks it is absolutely dreadful. It is only when the students go to music class and Mrs. Twinkle reveals to the class her own long, flower-based name—Delphinium—that Chrysanthemum feels better and becomes the envy of the three mean girls.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a chrysanthemum? Have students research and discuss.
2. Why do the mean girls make fun of Chrysanthemum's name?
3. Could her classmates have done anything to stop the girls from teasing Chrysanthemum?
4. What could Chrysanthemum have done to overcome the bullying?
5. How do Chrysanthemum's parents help her feel better each day when she comes home from school?
6. What happened at school to help Chrysanthemum feel good about her name again?
7. How did Jo, Rita, and Victoria change after they met Mrs. Twinkle?
8. Chrysanthemum dreams that her name is Jane (“It was an extremely pleasant dream.”). Do you like your name? Why or why not?
9. If you could change your name to any name in the world, what name would you choose?
10. Read and discuss the epilogue. Why do you think the author chose to include this in the story?



CHRYSANTHEMUM: Perfect for learning to love your name!

ACTIVITIES

1. Making Connections. What if Mrs. Twinkle had not come to Chrysanthemum's rescue? What could Chrysanthemum have done to get the girls to stop badgering her? What good advice could you give her, based on your own experience, about how to deal with bullies and people who say mean things? Talk this over as a group.

2. When I'm Feeling Down. "Chrysanthemum felt much better after her favorite dinner (macaroni and cheese with ketchup) and an evening filled with hugs and kisses and Parcheesi."

What are the foods and games and other comforts that help you feel better when you are feeling down? Write and illustrate and then share responses:

"When I'm feeling down, I feel better when I _____."

3. Beautiful Words. Chrysanthemum's father has a way with words. Her mother says, "Your name is beautiful." Her father adds, "And precious and priceless and fascinating and winsome." Of her cruel classmates, her mother says, "They're just jealous." Her loquacious father says, "And envious and begrudging and discontented and jaundiced."

Explore synonyms and antonyms. Children can work in pairs and come up with two opposite adjectives, and then four synonyms for each, writing and illustrating the following:

Yesterday I felt _____. And _____ and _____ and _____ and _____.

But today, I feel _____. And _____ and _____ and _____ and _____.

Pick a pair of words (asleep/awake) to use as models for brainstorming, and show how you can use the dictionary, thesaurus, and the website www.thesaurus.com to come up with a host of interesting (and captivating and engrossing and intriguing and unusual) synonyms.

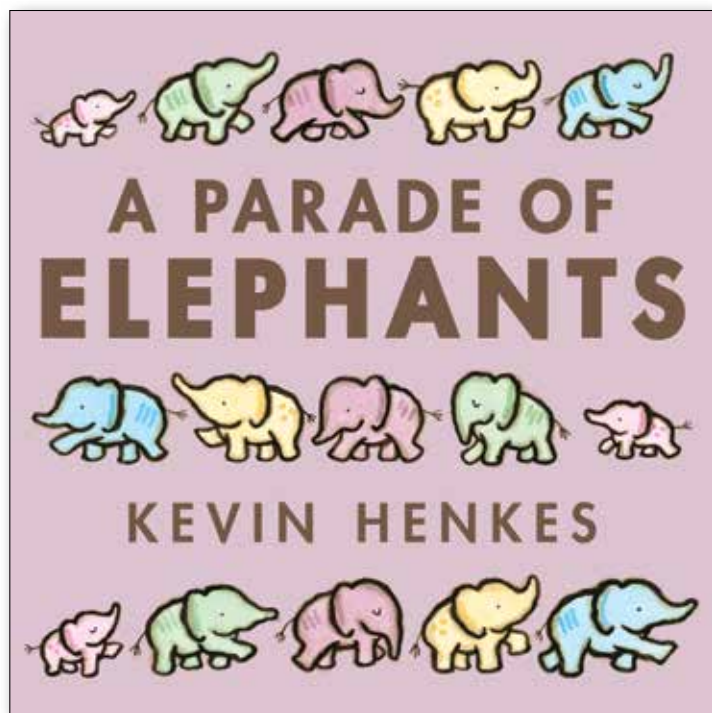
4. Name Games. Celebrate names by making decorative name cards. Children can write their names with colored markers on strips of cardstock paper and decorate them with beads, buttons, glitter, and bits of shiny ribbon. Take digital pictures of each child, print them out, and make a class bulletin board of names and faces labeled with their fancy name cards.

Victoria says of Chrysanthemum, "I'm named after my grandmother. You're named after a flower!" As a homework assignment, children can ask their parents to tell and write down the stories of how they got their perfectly perfect names.

5. Name Garden. Provide precut construction paper petals to students. Have them write each letter of their first name on a petal, and use them to create a name flower. Help students paste the petals on a sheet of paper and instruct them to draw stems and leaves to make the flower complete. Finally, ask students to write three adjectives that describe themselves. Hang all the flowers on the bulletin board to create a unique, special classroom name garden.



A PARADE OF ELEPHANTS: Perfect for introducing basic concepts to the youngest reader!



Interest Level: PreK-K
Guided Reading Level: H
Themes: Elephants, Counting, Concepts of
Up/Down, In/Out, Over/Under, Big/Little, First/Last

ABOUT THE BOOK

Up and down, over and under, through and around . . . five brightly colored elephants are on a mission in this picture book for young children by Caldecott Medal winner Kevin Henkes. Where are they going? What will they do when they get there? It's a surprise!

With a text shimmering with repetition and rhythm, bright pastel illustrations, large and readable type, and an adorable parade of elephants, Kevin Henkes introduces basic concepts such as numbers, shapes, adjectives, adverbs, and daytime and nighttime. *A Parade of Elephants* is an excellent choice for story time as well as bedtime sharing.

BEFORE READING

First, ask the children if they have ever observed how elephants move. Ask if they have ever seen a marching band in a parade, and then have the children march together around the classroom. Next, ask the children to imagine they are a group of colorful elephants marching along together. Finally, tell the children that you are about to read them a book called *A Parade of Elephants*!



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the first page of the book ("Look! Elephants!") and ask: How do you think the author feels about seeing the elephants? How can you tell?
2. Read the next page ("One, two, three, four, five") and ask: What do you notice about the number of elephants on this page? Do you see a pattern?
3. Pause after reading the page, "A parade of elephants." Ask: How can you tell that these elephants are marching? Do they all look the same? Or are they different from one another?
4. Turn to the next page and ask the children to describe the elephants. Then read that page ("Big and round and round they are") and ask the children if they agree that this correctly describes the elephants. Why or why not?
5. Pause again after reading the next page ("Up, down") and ask what the author means by that. Do the same for the next two pages ("Over, under" and "In, out"). On each page, have the children explain what the elephants are doing.
6. Read the next two pages ("They march and they march and they march. They march all day."). Ask: How do you think the elephants are feeling now? Why?
7. Read the page: "And when the day is done, they are done, too." Ask the children what they notice in the picture. If they need prompting, ask: Are the elephants still marching? How can you tell? And what is in the sky?
8. Read the next page ("They yawn and stretch. They stretch and yawn."). Ask: Now you know how the elephants are feeling. How can you tell?
9. Pause after reading, "But before they sleep they lift their trunks..." and ask the children to predict what will happen next.
10. Finish the story and ask: Were you surprised by the ending? Why or why not?

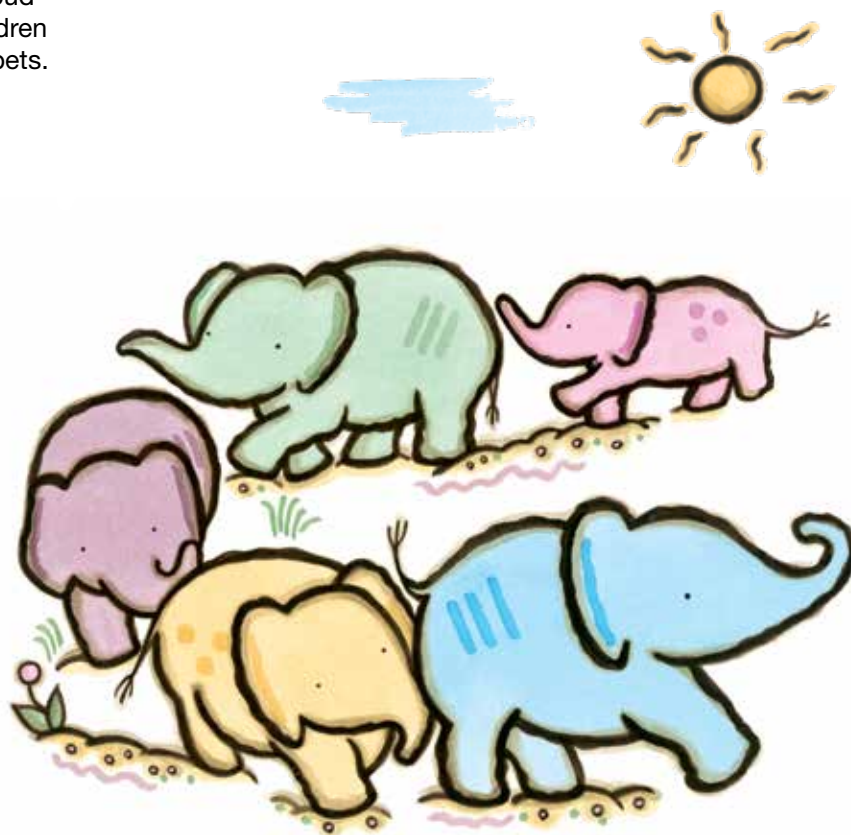
A PARADE OF ELEPHANTS:

Perfect for introducing basic concepts to the youngest reader!


ACTIVITIES

- 1. Get in Shape.** Discuss the round shape of the elephants in this story and then introduce the children to some basic shapes (circle, square, triangle, rectangle). Then have the children go on a shape hunt. They should look around the classroom and identify objects that are shaped like circles, squares, triangles, and rectangles (for example, a desktop is the shape of a rectangle). Finally, have the children make shape posters on which they draw, color, and label the basic shapes.
- 2. Count Me In!** Prepare cards that have the numerals 1-10 written on them, as well as cards that have the number words one through ten. Hand out the cards to the children. Then, as a class, place the numeral cards down in order. Then have the children place the matching number words next to each numeral. Finally, have the children choose a number and draw a picture to represent that number. For example, if they choose “5,” they can draw a picture of five stars. Have them label their picture with both the numeral and the number word.
- 3. Parade of Puppets.** Have the children make elephant puppets using materials such as socks, paper bags, or cardboard for the puppet, and paint, fabric markers, and felt to decorate the puppet. When the puppets are finished, have the children line up and count them aloud together. Then host a parade of elephants as the children march around the classroom with their elephant puppets.
- 4. Which Way Do I Go?** Build an obstacle course with the children either in the classroom or outside. Use concepts from the book when creating the course, so that children are required to go up and down, in and out, and over and under objects as they proceed through the course. This can also be accomplished on a playground. Have the children call out directions to their classmates (e.g., “go under the table” or “go in and out of the tunnel”) to guide them through the course. If it is not possible to go outdoors, and if indoor space is limited, the class can construct a small obstacle course and use the puppets from the previous activity to go through it. The same concepts (up/down, in/out, over/under, big/little, first/last) can be applied as the puppets are directed through the mini-obstacle course.
- 5. Join the Parade.** In this story, the elephants march. Ask the children to choose their favorite animal and draw it. Then they should color and cut out their animal drawing. Attach the picture to a paper strip that fits around the child’s head to create an animal headband. After the headbands are completed, plan an animal parade. The children can wear their headbands, moving and sounding like their animal, as they parade along together.

Look!
Elephants!



WAITING



WAITING

KEVIN HENKES

A colorful illustration of a rabbit, a bear, a penguin, a dog, and a mouse playing with a ball and a shell on a stage. The rabbit is white with long ears, wearing a green collar and a long, striped, fan-like tail. The bear is brown and standing upright. The penguin is white with a brown body and a pink beak. The dog is white with green spots and is running. The mouse is pink and is holding a green umbrella. They are all on a stage with a yellow background. There is a green ball and a pink shell on the floor.

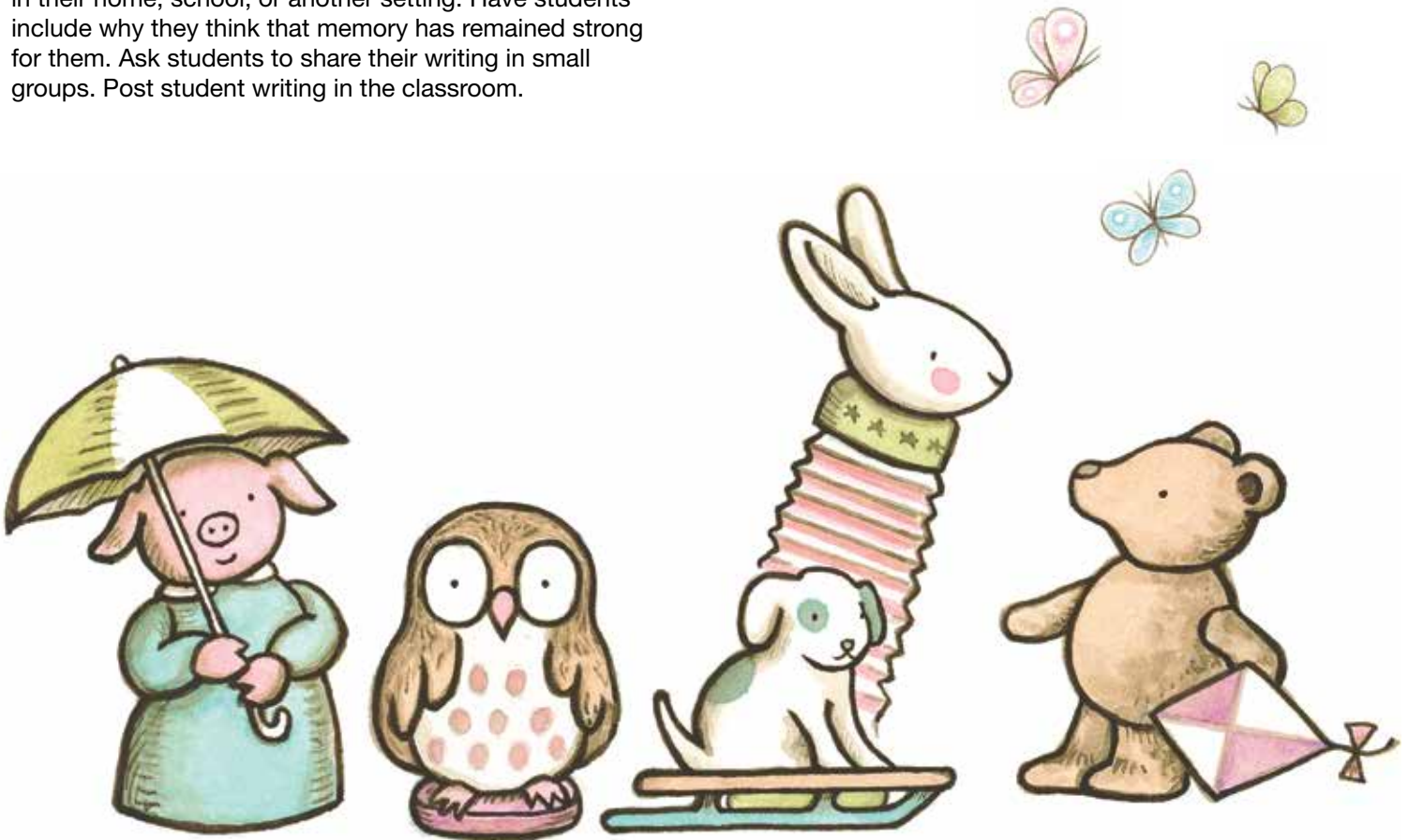
1. Why does the puppy have to wait so long for the snow? How often does it snow?
2. Why is the owl happy more often than the other animals? How often does the owl get to see the moon?
3. What makes the pig and the bear happy? Is there a particular season of the year that might make each of them happier because the rain or the wind occurs more frequently?
4. When one of the friends goes away, where might the departed friend go? Who might take the friends away?
5. Who could have brought the gifts to the friends on the windowsill? What gifts do the friends receive?
6. How do the friends know the elephant came from far away? Why does he leave and never return?
7. How do the pictures of the clouds relate to each one of the animal friends?
8. What occurs in the scenes outside the window? How does what the friends witness outside the window relate to the weather and the seasons of the year?
9. What is the cat with patches waiting for? Based on the expressions on their faces, how do the friends on the windowsill react to the new kittens?
10. What might the cat with patches and her kittens wait for while they sit on the windowsill?

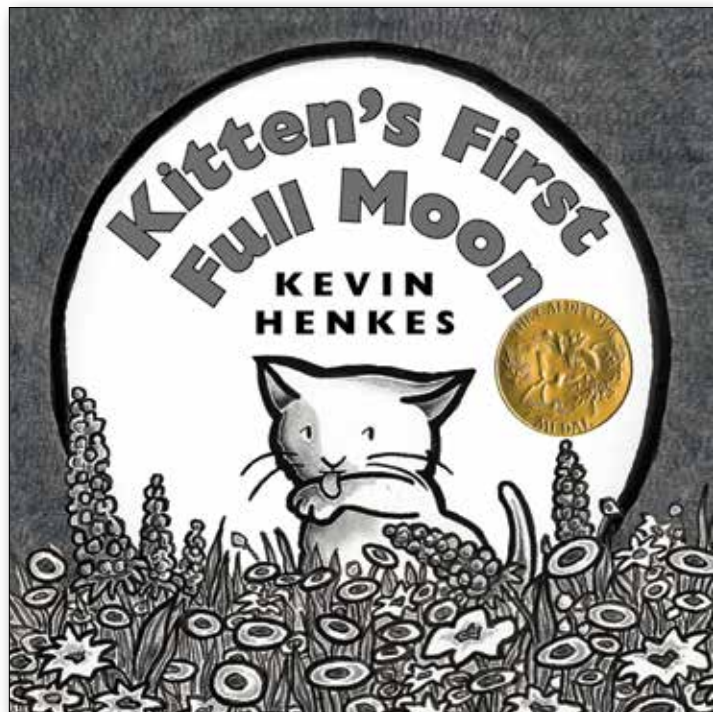


WAITING: Perfect for learning about imagination!

ACTIVITIES

- 1. Every Picture Tells a Story.** Ask students to look through the book and find two illustrations that give the reader information that the words do not say. Discuss the fact that Kevin Henkes both wrote and illustrated the book. Then ask students to draw their own illustration of one of these scenes and to explain the information the illustration conveys. Display the students' art and explanations in the classroom.
- 2. Sky Images in the Clouds.** On a nice day with clouds in the sky, take students outside to observe the clouds and help them to imagine or see familiar objects in the clouds. Ask students to write a poem about an image they see or their experience of searching the sky for familiar cloud shapes. Have students draw the shape of the cloud image they see, and then read their poems to the class. Collect the images and poems to create a classroom book.
- 3. Do You See What I See?** The scenes the friends see outside their window vary from day to day. Ask students to select one of the scenes and write about a time when they saw or experienced a similar scene out of a window in their home, school, or another setting. Have students include why they think that memory has remained strong for them. Ask students to share their writing in small groups. Post student writing in the classroom.
- 4. Patiently Waiting Brings Rewards.** Ask students to write a paragraph about something they are waiting for and why they are waiting, OR something they waited for and received. Students should express the emotions they feel while they wait, or, if they received something they waited for, how they felt when they received it. Create a classroom windowsill display that's similar to the windowsill in the book. Have students draw pictures of themselves waiting and/or receiving what they've waited for. Display their paragraphs next to their self-portraits.
- 5. In Your Own Words.** After reading the book, pair up students with a partner and have them list the events that occurred in the story, in the order in which they happened. After they make their lists, ask students to write a one-sentence reaction to the story on sentence strips, stating what they liked the most or the least or what the story reminded them of. Ask students to read their one-sentence reactions to the class, and post the sentence strips in the classroom.





Interest Level: K-3
Guided Reading Level: G
Themes: Nature, Imagination

ABOUT THE BOOK

As she sits on her porch, Kitten sees the huge moon in the sky and thinks it is a bowl of milk. It looks delicious and she wants to taste it, so she tries reaching and jumping as far as she can and chasing and climbing as fast and as high as she can. She even tries swimming. Every attempt fails, and sadly she walks home—where, to her surprise, she finds a bowl of milk waiting for her on her porch.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What kind of bug does Kitten get on her tongue? What clues do the illustrations give to help you determine the kind of bug?
2. The moon is high in the sky, so why does Kitten think it is possible to reach the “bowl of milk”?
3. During what season of the year does the story take place? What clues do the illustrations give to help you reach that conclusion?
4. Why is Kitten scared when she climbs to the top of the tree?
5. Why is the “bowl of milk” Kitten sees in the pond bigger than the “bowl of milk” in the sky?
6. Why does Kitten jump into the pond? How does she react when she lands in the water?
7. Why does Kitten keep trying to reach what she thinks is a bowl of milk even after she fails multiple times?
8. How do you know how Kitten feels after each failed attempt to reach the “bowl of milk”?
9. What does Kitten find on her porch when she returns home from her night of chasing a bowl of milk? How does Kitten feel then?
10. What phrase is repeated throughout the story? Why would Mr. Henkes repeat this phrase after each of Kitten’s failed attempts to obtain her goal?



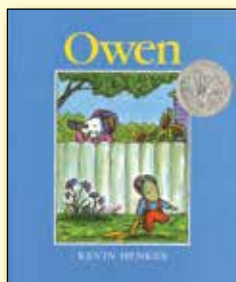
ACTIVITIES

- 1. Learn by Example.** Discuss with students the reasons why Kitten keeps trying to reach an impossible goal. Ask them to retell each of Kitten's attempts and describe how each attempt failed. After the discussion, ask students to write the lesson they learned from the story.
- 2. Black and White Enhance Meaning.** Very few picture books are illustrated in black and white. Ask students why they think Mr. Henkes used black-and-white illustrations. Discuss how the illustrations are an integral part of the story. Then, using Henkes' illustrations as a model, ask students to draw a short series of pictures (3-4) of their pet or a friend's pet. Have students label each illustration. Allow students to use pencil or charcoal and encourage them to add shading and details, where appropriate. Post illustrations in the classroom.
- 3. Phases of the Moon.** Discuss with students the different phases of the moon. Have students fold a sheet of paper into four sections and then draw four different stages of the moon. Ask students to identify and label each stage they draw and then to write a sentence describing what the moon looks like to them at each of the four stages. Have students share their phases and descriptions with a partner.
- 4. Kitten's Character.** Kitten could be described as hungry, inquisitive, brave, fast, persistent, and unlucky. Write these words on the board, and then read a passage from the book. Ask students to select the word they think fits Kitten's actions in that passage, and ask them to explain why they selected that word. Then, going back to the list of words on the board, ask each student to select one word and use it to write a new sentence describing Kitten and giving information from the story about her actions. Students can read their sentences to the class.
- 5. In Your Own Words.** After reading the book, place students with a partner and have them list the events that occurred in the story, in the order in which they happened. After they make their lists, ask students to write a one-sentence reaction to the story on a sentence strip, stating what they liked the most or the least or what the story reminded them of. Have students share and discuss their reaction strips in small groups. Ask each group to share one of the student reactions or a new group idea or insight.



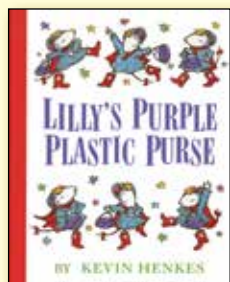
MORE BOOKS BY KEVIN HENKES: A Selected Bibliography

BOOKS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



Owen

Interest Level: K-3
Guided Reading Level: K
Themes: Family, School, Emotions



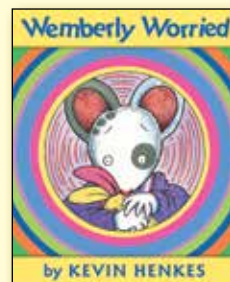
Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse

Interest Level: K-3
Guided Reading Level: M
Themes: Friendship, Family, School



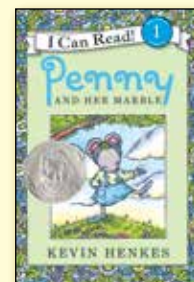
In the Middle of Fall

Interest Level: K-3
Guided Reading Level: H
Themes: Nature, Seasons



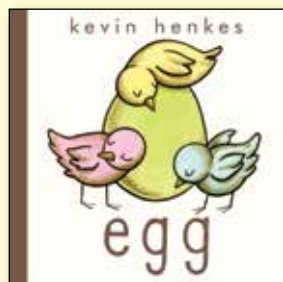
Wemberly Worried

Interest Level: K-3
Guided Reading Level: H
Themes: School, Emotions, Family



Penny and Her Marble

Interest Level: P-3
Guided Reading Level: K
Themes: Emotions, Family



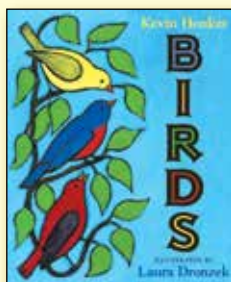
Egg

Interest Level: PreK-3
Guided Reading Level: H
Themes: Diversity, Friendship, Feelings



Old Bear

Interest Level: K-3
Guided Reading Level: H
Themes: Bedtime, Seasons, Nature



Birds

Interest Level: K-3
Guided Reading Level: H
Themes: Birds, Imagination, Nature



Little White Rabbit

Interest Level: K-3
Guided Reading Level: H
Themes: Rabbits, New Experiences, Nature



A Good Day

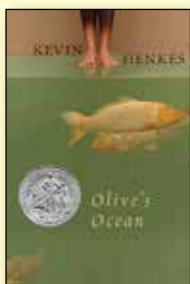
Interest Level: PreK-3
Guided Reading Level: H
Themes: Animals, Opposites, Family

MIDDLE GRADE



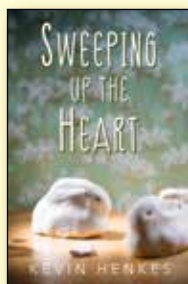
Junonia

Interest Level: 3-6
Guided Reading Level: S
Themes: Friendship, Family, Independence, Nature



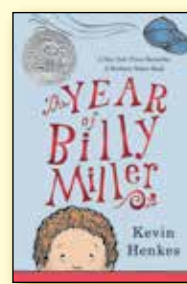
Olive's Ocean

Interest Level: 5-8
Guided Reading Level: V
Themes: Family, Friendship, Emotions, Death



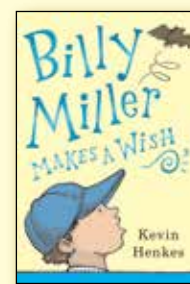
Sweeping Up the Heart

Interest Level: 5-8
Guided Reading Level: V
Themes: Family, Grief, Creativity, First Love



The Year of Billy Miller

Interest Level: 3-8
Guided Reading Level: P
Themes: Friendship, Family, Social Issues



Billy Miller Makes a Wish

Interest Level: 3-8
Guided Reading Level: P
Themes: Family, Social Themes, Emotions & Feelings



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