

BETH FERRY

CLASSROOM KIT

Teach Beth Ferry's books with this helpful classroom kit! Includes common themes, pre-reading ideas, tips for engaging older readers, discussion questions, and activities.



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Photography by Theresa Artigas

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beth Ferry is the *New York Times* bestselling author of numerous picture books, including *Stick and Stone*, *The Scarecrow*, and *The Nice Dream Truck*. She lives with her family in New Jersey.

TEACHING BETH FERRY'S BOOKS IN THE CLASSROOM

Beth Ferry's books offer ample opportunities to develop foundational reading skills, practice social emotional learning, explore creativity, and foster a lifelong love of storytelling! Here, we have gathered some tips and tools for you and your students to engage with her vast array of titles.

COMMON THEMES IN BETH FERRY'S BOOKS

FRIENDSHIP

Friends are important to all the characters in these stories. Some become friends by sharing a habitat or uniting for a cause. Some characters learn that true friends help others and stick up for each other, and some befriend others unwittingly. These characters come to realize that friendship enriches their lives and brings them joy.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSERVATION

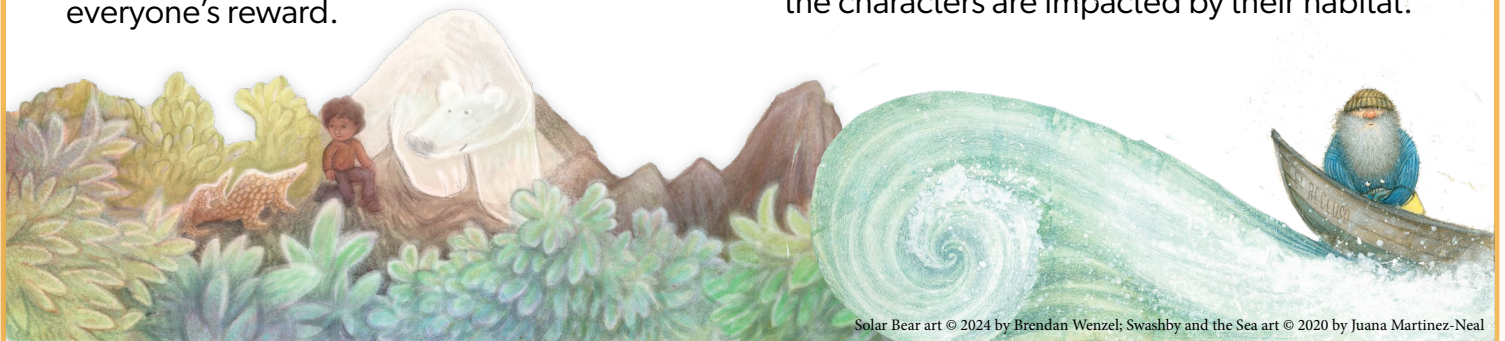
One character learns about endangered animals and how we must help protect them. A second character reuses and repurposes an object, which helps to sustain our environment. Another gets everything he needs to live from the sea. Preserving our environment is everyone's responsibility and ultimately everyone's reward.

NATURE

Elements of nature are featured in each of these stories, including weather changes, animals and their life cycles, and how the natural world transforms as it moves from one season to the next. Nature affects where the characters live and how they interact with each other and the world around them.

HABITATS

A character travels through habitats around the world to see how the animals living there might be in danger. This includes the ocean, plains, forests, mountains, and cities. Other characters are deeply affected by their own habitat and by the creatures who share that habitat. A different character experiences how the land around him changes with the passage of seasons and time. In every story, the characters are impacted by their habitat.



Solar Bear art © 2024 by Brendan Wenzel; Swashby and the Sea art © 2020 by Juana Martinez-Neal

PRE-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Friends and friendship are featured in each of these stories. Why is it important to have a friend? How might you make a new friend? How can you be a good friend to someone?
- What is the setting of a story? Show your students the cover of the book you are teaching. Where do you think this story is set? How can you tell?
- Beth Ferry often plays with words. Sometimes she uses words that rhyme or words that start with the same letter (alliteration). As a class, review Beth Ferry's books and count how many times alliteration is used. Next, read one of the books aloud and point out examples of rhyme and alliteration.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING OLDER READERS

Older readers will enjoy hearing these stories just as much as younger ones, but they will also have the opportunity to reflect on the books more broadly and explore the texts in more depth. You can challenge them to analyze the author's style and then try to write their own story in that style. For example, after reading *Crab and Snail*, have your older students create their own graphic novel, or after reading *The Scarecrow*, have students write their own rhyming text.

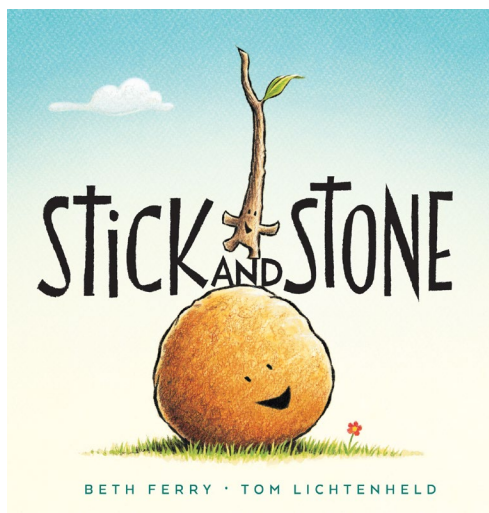
Humor is embedded in many of these stories. Sometimes it's a subtle pun or quip. Have older students reread the stories and identify humorous elements. For example, at the end of *Stick and Stone*, the pinecone says, "Sorry I needled you so much..." or the barnacles in *Crab and Snail* say, "Nope, not a drop on Drip." "All dry!"

You can also ask older readers to focus on one story element in a book. For example, what do they notice about the characters in *Swashby and the Sea*? How are they different and how are they alike? Or discuss the anthropomorphism in *Stick and Stone*. Teach the difference between anthropomorphism and personification and have students write examples of each. You can choose one story

element for older students to explore (e.g., characters, setting, plot, theme) or instead have them reflect on the story as a whole and use their critical thinking skills to compose a book review.



Solar Bear art © 2024 by Brendan Wenzel



STICK AND STONE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Stick and Stone are both alone. But they become friends one day when Stick stands up for Stone. They enjoy being together and exploring their environment until a terrible storm comes and separates them. Happily, Stone finds Stick and rescues him. By the end of the story, the two friends become a trio with Pinecone and learn that friends are kind, helpful, and forgiving.

Key Themes: friendship, nature

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do Stick and Stone feel at the beginning of the story? How do they feel at the end?
- How do Stick and Stone become friends?
- What do they like to do together?
- What happens during the hurricane?
- How does Stone help free Stick after the storm?
- What numbers do Stick and Stone look like?
- What happens to Pinecone at the end?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

TAKE BY STORM

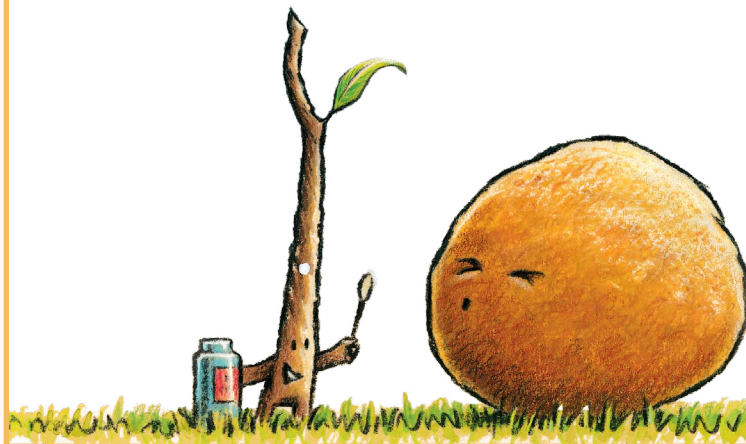
Discuss the storm that separated the two friends. What kind of storm was it? What other kinds of extreme weather are there?

As a class, learn more about extreme weather using age-appropriate resources like nonfiction books, science magazines for kids, or Internet sites such as *National Geographic Kids* or *SciShow Kids*.

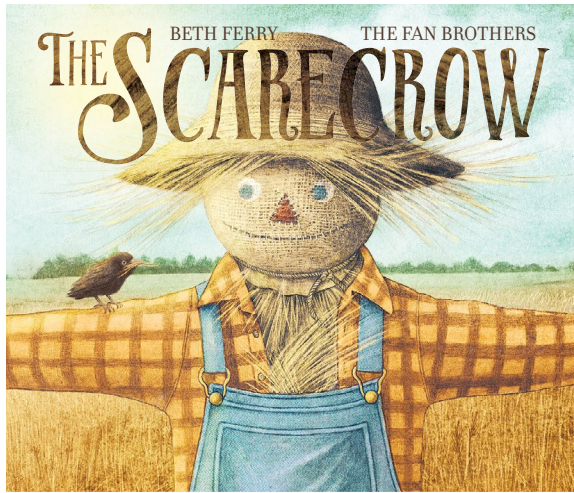
FANTASTIC FRIENDS

Discuss the friendship between the two main characters. When Pinecone makes fun of Stone, how is Stick a good friend? When Stick gets stuck in a mud puddle after the storm, how is Stone a good friend? How does he solve Stick's problem?

Discuss how good friends stick up for each other, help each other, and solve problems together. Ask your students to think of a time when they helped a friend or a friend helped them. Have them share their experiences with the class and then ask them to draw a picture of themselves and their friend.



Art © 2015 by Tom Lichtenheld



THE SCARECROW

ABOUT THE BOOK

Scarecrow stands alone, season after season, until one day, a baby crow drops out of a tree. Scarecrow rescues him and the two become instant friends. When the crow is old enough to fly, Scarecrow is again left to his loneliness. But as time passes and seasons change, Scarecrow learns that friendship endures. Told through lyrical, rhyming text, this story will have readers cheering for this kind, compassionate scarecrow.

Key Themes: friendship, seasons

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is a scarecrow? Where would you find one? What is its purpose?
- Read the page that says, "Then something drops from midair. A small, scared crow lying there." Pause and ask: What do you think might have happened to the crow? Then read the rest of the page, "Broken nest? Broken wing?" and compare students' ideas.
- Why is it surprising that Scarecrow rescues the baby crow?
- Read the page that begins with "for crows are birds and birds must fly." Ask your students to describe all of Scarecrow's feelings as he watches the crow fly.
- When the crow returns, what season is it? How can you tell?
- Where do the crows make their nest? How does that make Scarecrow feel?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

IN SEASON

As you read the story, ask your students to notice how the setting changes along with the seasons. Discuss how the trees and fields look different depending on the season. Then have each student divide a piece of drawing paper into four boxes. Label each box with a season's name at the top and then draw a tree in each one, making sure that the tree's appearance reflects the respective season.

LEAF PEEPERS

Discuss the types of leaves pictured throughout the book. Then, if possible, take your students outside to collect leaves.

Bring the leaves inside and use books (suggestion: use *Stick and Stone: Best Friends Forever!*) and Internet resources to identify the leaves. Make leaf rubbings, leaf prints, or leaf drawings, and then label the types of leaves. Display in the classroom.



Art © 2019 by Terry Fan and Eric Fan



SWASHBY AND THE SEA

ABOUT THE BOOK

Captain Swashby retires to a small, peaceful home by the shore, where the sea provides him with everything he needs. But when a little girl and her granny move in next door, Swashby's reclusive lifestyle changes dramatically. He leaves messages in the sand telling his neighbors to stay away, but the sea has other ideas and changes those messages so that they are friendly and inviting. First begrudgingly, and then unwittingly, Swashby ends up befriending the girl and her granny. Ultimately, he learns that new neighbors can become dear friends and maybe even family.

Key Themes: friendship, ocean life

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What did Swashby do for a living? Where does he choose to retire?
- When the girl and her granny move in next door, how does Swashby's life change?
- What does Swashby do to chase the neighbors away? Why don't his messages work?
- When can you tell that Swashby is becoming friends with the girl and her granny?
- How does the sea help Swashby in this story?
- What lessons has Swashby learned by the end of the story?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

LOTS OF LETTERS

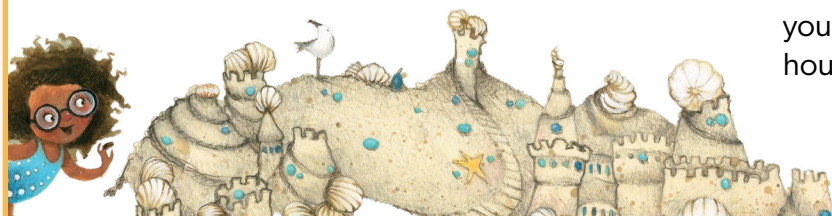
Review the story, focusing on the pages that show how the sea changes Swashby's messages into new, welcoming words. Then provide your students with several letter tiles or small letter cards. Working in pairs or small groups, organize the letters into words and write them down. Challenge your students to make as many words as possible and see who can build the longest word. With younger students, this can be a whole class activity. Demonstrate how to manipulate the letters to build new words, focusing on word families (e.g., can, man, ran) and how just one letter can create a whole new word.

MY SANDCASTLE HOUSE

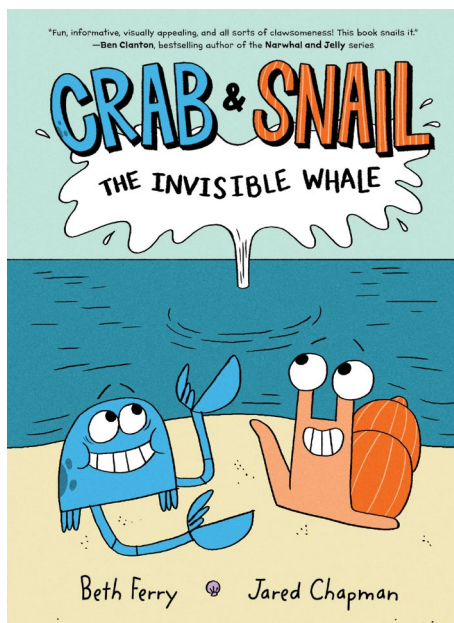
Design the Outside: Imagine you are building a house made out of sand, but you will be living in it. Draw what it will look like from the outside. Will it have a moat or a bridge? How many towers will it have? How many windows? What will you add? Shells, flowers, flags, or a garden?

Design the Inside: Now imagine you can magically cut your sandcastle house in half so we can see the inside. Draw a cross-section of your house. How many floors? How many rooms? Is there a staircase? Is there a kitchen? Include all the rooms that a house needs to be livable.

Compare: Now compare the outside of your sandcastle house to the inside. Would the inside you drew be able to fit into the outside of the house that you drew?



Art © 2020 by Juana Martinez-Neal



CRAB & SNAIL: THE INVISIBLE WHALE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Best friends Crab and Snail happily spend their days together by the sea. One day it starts to rain, but it turns out that it is not actually raining at all. Instead, Crab and Snail are being doused by a whale's waterspout! Isabel, the invisible whale, wants to befriend them, and Crab and Snail are always glad to make a new friend. As the sun sets, Isabel serenades them with a whale song lullaby to end another happy day by the shore.

Key Themes: friendship, ocean life

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Crab and Snail are "BBFs." What does that mean?
- Where do they live in the ocean?
- Who are Drip and Grip?
- When it is raining, Crab and Snail realize it is only raining on them. Why?
- What does the Gull tell them?
- Who becomes their new friend? What is special about her?
- How does the story end?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

NOW YOU'RE TALKING!

Read a few pages out loud and discuss the format of this story. How is it different from the author's other books? Then, have students choose two characters to feature in their own story formatted like this book. You can give them a template with printed speech bubbles, or they can draw their own speech bubbles. Students can share their work in pairs or small groups so they have the opportunity to read aloud the dialogue between the two characters.

SEA WORLD

As a class, make a list of the sea creatures shown or mentioned in this book. Also note small details in the setting, such as rocks, seagrass, and shells. Then, ask students to create a large class mural of this book's setting and characters. Some students can create the background, while others draw, cut out, and glue on the sea creatures. Mixed media such as sand and grass can be added as well. Display the completed mural in the classroom.



Art © 2022 by Jared Chapman



SOLAR BEAR

ABOUT THE BOOK

A polar bear transforms into a solar bear to shine light on the increasing risks to animal species across the planet. What would the world be like without them? What can we do to protect endangered species? This timely book speaks to the next generation, who must become “solar kids” to enlighten the world and spark change to save the animals of planet earth.

Key Themes: endangered species, nature conservation

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What endangered animals are introduced in the book?
- Explain what the author means when she writes, “From those of us who have no voice to those of you who have a choice.”
- How are humans’ and animals’ paths linked?
- Read the following sentence: “We’ll tell you that the words ‘Who cares?’ are killing all the polar bears.” How is this possible?
- What do you think the world would be like with so many animal species disappearing?
- How can you become a “solar kid”? Why is it important?
- What are the leading causes of extinction? How can we help?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

TAKE ACTION

Read the sections “How Can You Become a Solar Kid?” and “There Are Wonderful Success Stories That Tell Us What We Do Matters” found at the end of the book. Then, have students choose an action they can take today. For example, students might design posters to display around the school or neighborhood to make others aware of how many animals are endangered. They could also decide to organize a classroom or schoolwide recycling program. Discuss how even small actions can impact our world.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Make a list of the lexicon used when discussing wildlife protection. The list might include terms such as “endangered,” “species,” “extinction,” “habitat,” “conservation,” “threatened,” “environment,” “poaching,” and “pollution.” Tell students they will be creating a dictionary of these terms. In pairs, choose a term, and then write the word on a page, define it, and illustrate it. Then collate the pages into a class dictionary.



Art © 2024 by Brendan Wenzel



FLYER MCTIRE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Flyer McTire loves whizzing around the racetrack on a speedy race car while the fans cheer him on. But after one fateful pit stop, Flyer is fired. He is tossed onto a junkyard and fears he will be left there forever. But one morning, a little boy chooses him and brings him home. There Flyer is turned into a tire swing. As he and the boy jubilantly swing together, Flyer McTire decides that whizzing through the air with his greatest fan brings him the most joy of all.

Key Themes: friendship, sustainability/conservation, embracing change

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is Flyer McTire's job? Why does he love it?
- What happens to him after his last pit stop trip? When he is fired, where does he go?
- How does he feel when he is in the junkyard?
- What happens when a boy comes to the junkyard? Where does he bring Flyer McTire?
- What happens to Flyer McTire at the farm?
- How does he feel about becoming a tire swing? Why?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

Flyer McTire had once been a race car tire, but he is repurposed and made into a tire swing. Discuss why this practice is good for the planet. Have your students bring in materials from home that can also be reused. Just like Flyer McTire was made into a swing, your class will also be repurposing objects to create something new! Each student (or small groups) can let their creativity shine to create a new item out of recycled materials. Here are some examples: a plastic milk bottle can become a bird feeder, a box and bottle caps can become a toy robot, and old socks can become puppets.

TIME FOR A CHANGE

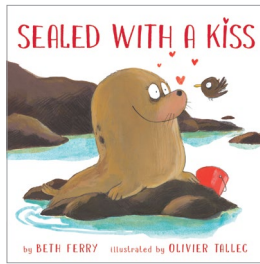
From racing in a race to being sent to the junkyard to becoming a swing, create a timeline showing the changes in Flyer McTire's life. How does Flyer McTire feel about these changes? Why? Ask your students to think of a time when there was a big change in their own lives (e.g., moving, attending a new school, loss of a pet, having a new baby sibling). Ask: How did you feel about this change? Was it easy or hard? Why? How did you react to the change? In small discussion groups, share these experiences. Hopefully, students will realize they are not alone and that everyone's life is filled with change. While confronting change can be challenging, it can also bring about excitement and joy!



Art © 2026 by Matt Myers

MORE BOOKS BY BETH FERRY

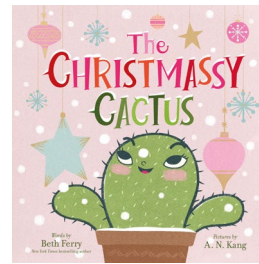
FRIENDSHIP STORIES THAT ARE ALSO GREAT FOR THE HOLIDAYS



Sealed with a Kiss

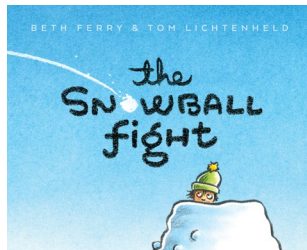


The Bold, Brave Bunny

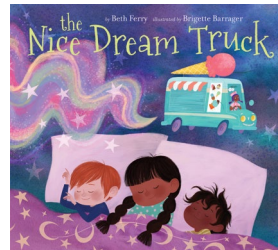


The Christmassy Cactus

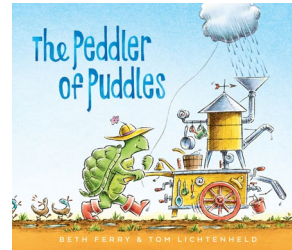
FRIENDSHIP STORIES IN DIFFERENT SEASONS



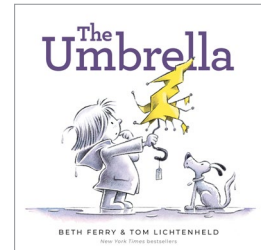
The Snowball Fight



The Nice Dream Truck



The Peddler of Puddles



The Umbrella

BOOKS ABOUT INNOVATION, GENEROSITY, AND KINDNESS

EXPLORING HUMAN CONNECTION, A GROWTH MINDSET, AND THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD



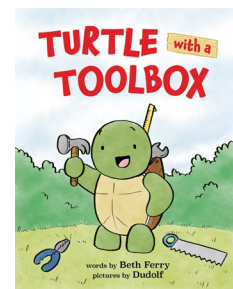
Marsha is Magnetic

EMBRACING CHANGE WITH EMPATHY



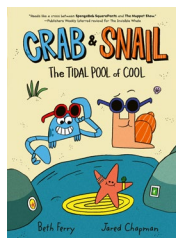
A Moving Story

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

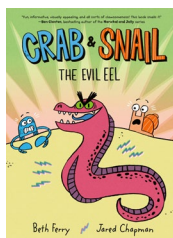


Turtle with a Toolbox

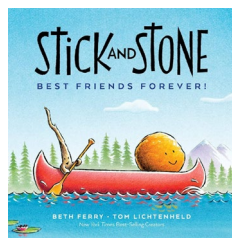
MORE CRAB AND SNAIL!



Crab & Snail: The Tidal Pool of Cool



Crab & Snail: The Evil Eel



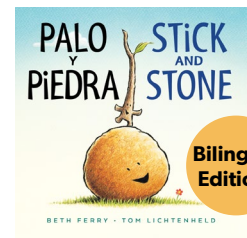
Stick and Stone: Best Friends Forever!



Stick and Stone: Explore and More



Stick and Stone: On the Go



Palo y piedra/Stick and Stone Board Book

Guide prepared by Sue Ornstein, an educational consultant with over 35 years of elementary teaching experience.