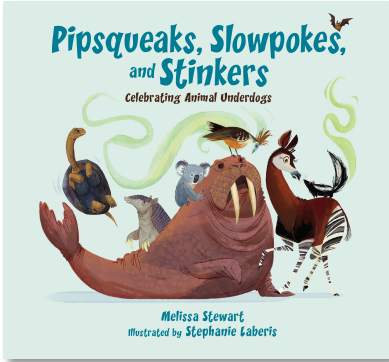




PEACHTREE

TEACHER'S GUIDE



Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs

Written by Melissa Stewart | Illustrated by Stephanie Laberis

HC: 978-1-56145-936-0 | PB: 978-1-68263-202-4

Ages 4–8
AR • Lexile • F&P • GRL P; Gr 4

ABOUT THE BOOK

Everyone admires animals that are big and fast and strong. But this book isn't about them. It's about the unsung underdogs of the animal world. Don't you think it's time someone paid attention to them?

Written in a humorous, conversational voice, *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* offers a lighthearted look at a parade of critters that are small, slow, stinky, lazy, clumsy, shy, and more. These traits might seem like weaknesses, but they're actually strengths. They help the animals survive in an eat-or-be-eaten world. After reading this book, you might think twice before making quick judgments about the animals around us.

THEMES

Animal behavior | Humor

Strengths and weaknesses | Defense against predators

Animal survival techniques

BEFORE YOU READ

Introduce *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* by reading the title, subtitle, and the names of the author and illustrator. Then show your class the cover. After discussing the terms pipsqueak, slowpoke, stinker, and underdog, invite children to share what they think the book will be about. Do they think underdogs are worth celebrating? Why or why not? Be sure to record all their responses to chart paper.

AS YOU READ

Work with students to create a data table that lists the name of each animal, its underdog feature, and how it survives despite or because of its apparent "weakness." (To make this process more interactive for younger children, you may wish to print out photos of the animals in advance and invite students to add the images to the data table.) Your final data table may look like this:

How "Underdog" Features Help Animals Survive

Animal	"Underdog" Feature	How Animal Survives
Etruscan pygmy shrew	Small	Hides where larger predators can't reach it
Amau frog	Small	Hides where larger predators can't reach it
Galápagos tortoise	Slow	Protected by a hard, strong shell
Hoatzin	Stinky	Has a stinky smell that makes predators feel sick
Zorilla	Stinky	Has a stinky spray that makes predators run away
Okapi	Shy	Stays safe by living alone and hiding in shadows
Koala	Lazy	Needs less energy than other animals
Giant armadillo	Lazy	Needs less energy than other animals

Little brown bat	Lazy	Needs less energy than other animals
Western fence lizard	Clumsy	Risking falls allows it to catch quick-moving prey
Walrus	Plump	Has blubber to keep it warm and provide energy
Seal	Plump	Has blubber to keep it warm and provide energy
Sea lion	Plump	Has blubber to keep it warm and provide energy
Naked mole rat	Unattractive	Uses its teeth to dig for food; furless body helps it stay cool

AFTER YOU READ

Grades K–2

Divide the class into six small groups. Give Teams 1 and 2 an index card with the words *Etruscan pygmy shrew* and *okapi* written on it. Give Teams 3 and 4 an index card with the words *little brown bat* and *sea lion* written on it. Give Teams 5 and 6 an index card with the words *Galápagos tortoise* and *western fence lizard* written on it.

Invite each group to use the information in the data table and *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* (including the backmatter) to determine what the animals' survival strategies have in common. Then encourage each child to use words and pictures to record the group's ideas. If students on Teams 5 and 6 struggle to find a similarity, guide them to the idea that a Galápagos tortoise and western fence lizard are both able to survive despite the challenges associated with their underdog feature.

After volunteers from each team have shared their drawings with the class, work with your students to develop a main idea statement for *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* and record it on chart paper. Then guide a class discussion in which students are able to make a connection between the ideas presented in this book and bullying.

Grades 3–5

After dividing the class into small groups, give each team an enlarged photocopy of the first column of the data table and provide time for students to cut apart the animal names. Then encourage the teams to use the information in the data table and *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* to sort the

animals into categories based on how their underdog feature helps them survive.

Next, give each group six index cards and invite them to write one of the categories they've identified on each card. Be sure to let students know that they don't have to use all six cards.

When the teams seem ready, invite one group to tape their category cards to the wall above the classroom meeting area. Then invite the other groups to tape any cards with additional categories to the wall. Encourage the class to discuss all the categories. Can any of them be combined?

As the discussion winds down, assign each group one category and ask the teammates to choose a representative who will tape the relevant animal names under the category card on the wall. After all the representatives have had a turn, provide time for students to discuss any differences of opinion they have about the classifications. Then ask the class to compare their categories to the order in which the animals are presented in the book. Do they notice any patterns? Finally, work with your students to develop a main idea statement for *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* and record it on chart paper. Then guide a class discussion in which students are able to make a connection between the ideas presented in this book and bullying.

LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITIES

Grades K–2

After students have watched the Time for Text Features video mini-lesson on Melissa Stewart's website (www.melissa-stewart.com/video/videos_mini.html) encourage them to study and discuss the text features in some of the books recommended at the end of the video. Then invite them to use the information in the main text and backmatter of *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* to create their own text feature posters.

After students have had time to share their text feature posters with the class, hang the posters in the hall so that the entire school can see them.

Grades 3–5

To introduce students to the use of point of view in nonfiction writing, divide the class into six groups. Give each team a packet of sticky notes and one of the following books: *The Most Amazing Creature in the Sea* by Brenda Z. Guiberson; *I, Fly: The Buzz About Flies and How Awesome They Are* by Bridget Heos; *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating*

Animal Underdogs by Melissa Stewart; *Bone by Bone: Comparing Animal Skeletons* by Sara Levine; *Swirl by Swirl: Spirals in Nature* by Joyce Sidman; and *Born in the Wild: Baby Mammals and Their Parents* by Lita Judge.

Invite each group to read its book and discuss who the narrator is and who, if anyone, the narrator is addressing. When teammates come to a consensus, one member should write the group's ideas on a sticky note and attach it to the book.

When the class seems ready, encourage each group to rotate to a different table, leaving its book behind. Students should read the book at their new table and discuss how the previous group classified it. If they agree, they should add a second sticky note with an example to support the previous group's ideas. If they disagree, they should add a second sticky note explaining their rationale. Repeat this process until each group has reviewed all the books. Next, introduce and explain the terms first-person narration, second-person narration, and third-person narration to your students, and encourage students to share their ideas about how each of the six books should be classified. During this discussion, classmates should feel free to respectfully disagree, ask questions, and offer their own insights. To facilitate the conversation and promote full-class engagement, help students stay focused on the topic. Restate any unclear comments or ideas, and encourage students to give one another the time they need to formulate and express their ideas and rationale.

Answers: First-person—*The Most Amazing Creature in the Sea* by Brenda Z. Guiberson; *I, Fly: The Buzz About Flies and How Awesome They Are* by Bridget Heos. Second-person—*Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* by Melissa Stewart; *Bone by Bone: Comparing Animal Skeletons* by Sara Levine. Third-person—*Swirl by Swirl: Spirals in Nature* by Joyce Sidman; *Born in the Wild: Baby Mammals and Their Parents* by Lita Judge.

All Grades

- Download a copy of the Readers Theater script written to accompany *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* from the author's website (www.melissa-stewart.com). After your class has practiced it a few times, coordinate with other teachers so that your students can perform the Readers Theater for their classes. Your students may wish to make hats or name badges representing

their assigned animal to wear during the performance.

- Encourage students to write letters to or draw pictures for author Melissa Stewart, explaining which animal in *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* they connect with most and why. Send the letters to Author Fan Mail, Peachtree Publishing Company Inc., 1700 Chattahoochee Ave., Atlanta, GA, 30318. If you include an e-mail address, Melissa will send a note to your class.

ART ACTIVITIES

Grades K–2

To help your class understand the process nonfiction authors go through when they review the accuracy of sketches created by an illustrator, find photos that show each of the animals in *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* in its natural habitat.

Invite students to choose one of the animals and write a short description of the animal and where it lives. Then ask the children in another class at the same grade level to illustrate the text. Like professional authors and illustrators, the young writer and the artist shouldn't meet or even speak to one another.

When the drawings are done, the original writer reviews the artist's work. Did the artist make any factual errors? If so, encourage students to form groups and brainstorm ways the writer can explain the problems clearly and politely in writing. Then encourage the groups to share their strategies and possible wording during a whole-class discussion.

Grades 3–5

Invite your students to look carefully at the artwork throughout *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs*. As a class, list all the questions the book's illustrator, Stephanie Laberis, had to ask herself and then research to make the art accurate. Possible questions include: Where does each animal live? What plants grow in its habitat? What are the animal's predators and prey? What time of day is it? What time of year is it? Using their list of questions, students can do some research and then create a mural that depicts a local animal in its natural habitat.

RELATED READING

Carwardine, Mark. *Natural History Museum Book of Animal Records*. Richmond Hill, ON, Canada: Firefly Books, 2013.

Jenkins, Steve. *The Animal Book: A Collection of the Fastest, Fiercest, Toughest, Cleverest, Shyest and Most Surprising Animals on Earth*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.

REVIEWS

“The point that every animal, no matter how seemingly weak, has ‘its own special way of surviving’ is effectively made. The narrative also offers discussion-encouraging questions, and the lively painted portraits depict the animals fairly realistically, placing them in simplified natural settings, sometimes with a humorous touch.”

—*Booklist*

“Friendly and approachable, this compendium is sure to create some new favorites in the animal kingdom.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Many diverse and fascinating animals depicted in humorous and informative portraits...”

—*Foreword Reviews*

AWARDS

- Eureka! Gold Nonfiction Children’s Book Award —California Reading Association, 2018
- Golden Kite (Nonfiction Honor Book) —Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, 2019
- Massachusetts Book Awards (Honor Book) —Massachusetts Center for the Book, 2019
- Virginia Readers’ Choice (Master List) —Virginia State Reading Association, 2020–2021
- Delaware Diamonds Awards (Nominee, K–2) —Diamond State Reading Association, 2019–2020
- Keystone to Reading Elementary Book Award (Preschool Nominee) —Keystone State Reading Association, 2019–2020

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Melissa Stewart is the award-winning author of more than 180 science books for children. She holds degrees in biology and science journalism and serves on the board of advisors for the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators. Melissa speaks frequently at conferences for educators and is available for school visits.

www.melissa-stewart.com

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Stephanie Laberis is a character designer and illustrator who specializes in creating art for animation and children’s publications. She has illustrated several picture books, including *My Little Golden Book of Sharks* and *A is for Awful: A Grumpy Cat ABC Book*. Stephanie lives and works in the San Francisco Bay area.

www.stephlaberis.carbonmade.com

Peachtree Teacher’s Guide
prepared by Melissa Stewart

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