



Grades Pre-K-2

Authors and Educators Resources

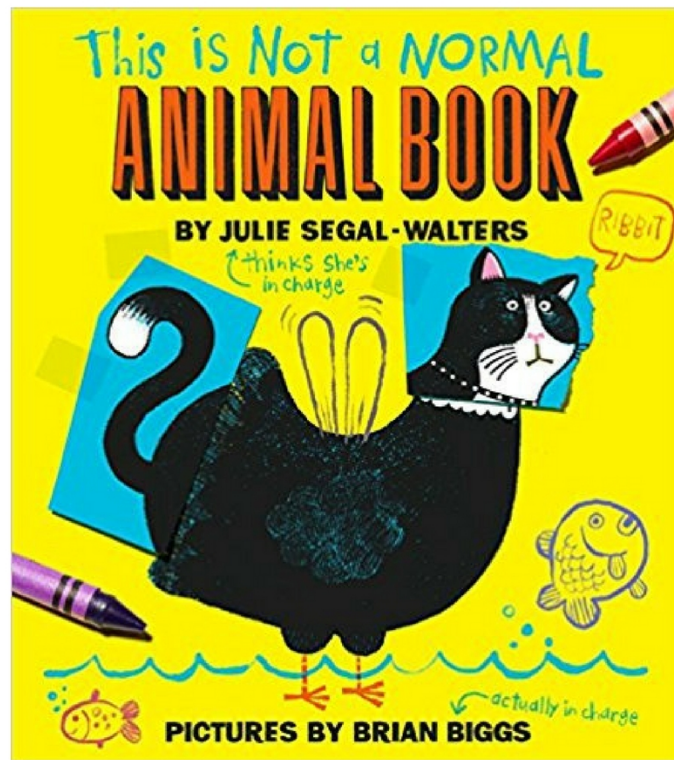


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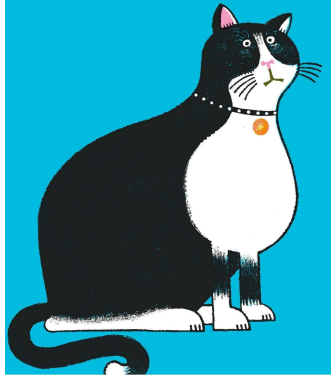
Teacher's Guide by Pamela Brunskill

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Purpose of Guide



In *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*, Julie Segal Walters uses humor and creative storytelling devices to present complex content. Scientific animal facts, social/emotional talking points, and the behind-the-scenes creative process involved in making picture books can all be found within its pages. To navigate this seemingly simple yet multi-layered book, use this guide as your teacher's map.

This educator's guide will provide you with everything you need to incorporate *This is Not a Normal Animal Book* into your classroom with lessons for:

- language arts that explore story structure and voice;
- science, with activities on animal facts and nonfiction back matter; and
- social-emotional development to help guide students in collaboration and compromise, and recognize the importance of making mistakes.

This guide offers suggestions and resources for integrating the book into your classroom for whatever time frame you need. Choose the activities you think best serve the needs of your students. You can choose all or some, and change the order accordingly. Use your professional judgment to adapt the ideas as necessary.

Turn the page to get started!

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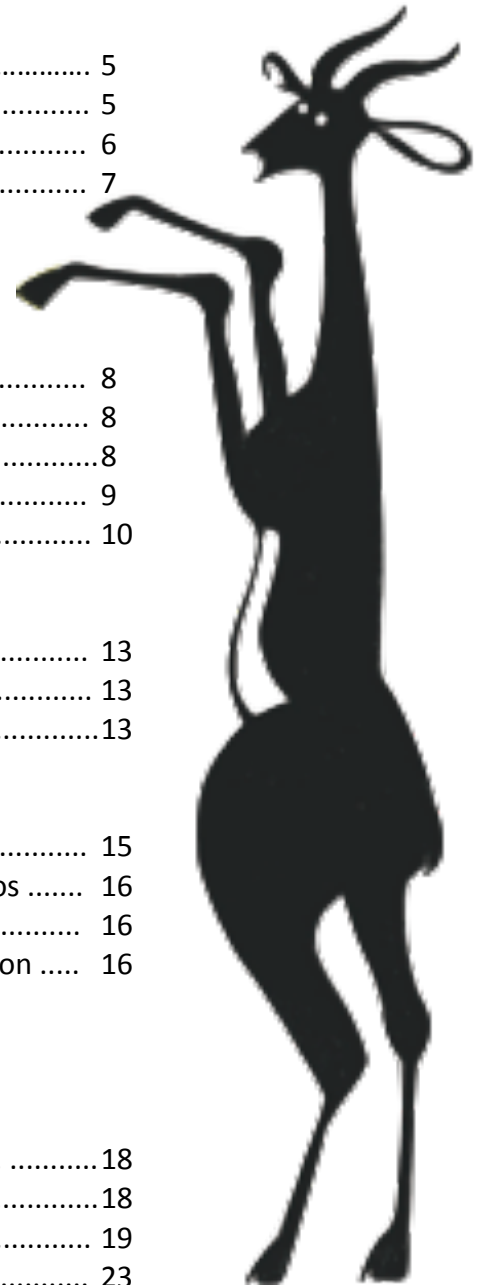
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BEFORE READING THE BOOK



Summary and Background Information

This is Not a Normal Animal Book begins as a stroll through common, everyday, normal animals – mammal, bird, amphibian, insect, reptile, and fish. The story quickly evolves, however, into a meta-fiction disagreement between the author and illustrator over how to draw the animals. The author wants simple, normal animal drawings. The illustrator, however, is confused and makes a bit of a mess. From a cat, to a hen, to a frog, to a bee, to a snake, the illustrator grows increasingly frustrated over how the author wants each animal presented. The conflict reaches its peak when the illustrator refuses to draw the author's choice of fish. Granted, the blobfish is an unusual choice of fish. The illustrator's sense of humor and author's deadpan seriousness come full circle in the closing line, when the author continues to frustrate the illustrator until the very end, and the illustrator continues to have the last word.

Based on a Yiddish proverb, the book is a behind-the-scenes look at the picture book creation process, the importance of collaboration and compromise, and the beauty of both words and art. *This is Not a Normal Animal Book* is a commercial story that breaks the fourth wall, while still remaining appropriate for classroom use. In addition to the themes and concepts mentioned, it also highlights the literary device metafiction and includes nonfiction back matter.

The language arts, science, and social-emotional lessons highlighted in this guide are just the start of how to use *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*. Other discussion topics include:

- thinking outside of the box;
- learning from mistakes and the notion of a growth mindset;
- comparing and contrasting with other blobfish books, nonfiction informational animal books, or books that reflect the behind the scenes of the picture book creation process. *This is Not a Normal Animal Book* is certainly not a normal animal book; it is so much more.

Pre-Reading Activity Suggestions



Language Arts

- Ask the students, “How can we identify or group animals?”
 - Some responses could be how they move (walk, waddle, slither, fly), how they keep warm (fur, feathers), where they live (water, land, inside, outside), etc. Explain that the book they are going to read deals with grouping animals, and how we think about what animals do.
- Complete a picture walk of *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*. Ask students what they think the title has to do with the book and who they think is telling the story. What does the art suggest the mood/feeling of the book—is it going to be funny, sad, serious, etc.?

Social-Emotional

- Ask students *How many times have you had to do something you don’t want to do?*
 - Explore the themes of this book: ask students to share their experiences with collaboration and compromise, such as having to clean their rooms, going to bed, or sharing art supplies with a friend. Ask them what they do when they make mistakes. Have students record their experiences in response journals or on pieces of paper that they can revisit periodically.

Science

- Make a chart with a picture of each of the following: Mammal, Bird, Amphibian, Insect, Reptile, and Fish.
 - Have students share what they know about each, and record their responses in the appropriate columns. Ask them to pay attention to the animals in the book as you read to decide where each animal belongs, and let them know that you’ll revisit this chart after they read it.

Preparing to Read Aloud—A Book with Two Voices

Because *This is Not a Normal Animal Book* is written with two main characters talking back and forth, it will help students to follow the story during a read aloud if you complete the reading using two voices, puppets, or some other distinguishing cues.

You may want to have another person read the story with you—one of you can read the author’s words and the other reads the illustrator’s words. If you use puppets—one for the author and one for the illustrator—you can have students hold up the correct puppet while that character speaks. It will also help if you change your voice for each character to help students identify which character is speaking.

About the Author--Julie Segal-Walters



Julie Segal-Walters is a children's book author who lives in Washington, D.C. with her husband, son, and pesky cat.

Before becoming a writer, Julie was the president and founder of Civic Action Strategies, a grassroots organizing and democracy development consulting firm. She worked in Kosovo, where she directed citizen engagement programs for U.S. and European organizations. Julie is a lawyer and former Congressional lobbyist for civil rights and civil liberties.

She is fluent in Spanish, has appeared as a commentator on Court TV, C-Span, NPR, and Univision, and taught courses at American University in lobbying and public policy advocacy. She can now be found advocating for her many favorite children's books to anyone who will listen. Julie also attended culinary school and spends most of her spare time browsing her cookbook library and cooking for family and friends. Julie does not bake. She thinks baking is too hard and has too many rules.

About the Illustrator--Brian Biggs



Brian was born in Arkansas in 1968, moved to Texas in 1979, fled to New York City in 1987 to attend Parsons School of Design, lived in Paris, France for a few years, ran away to San Francisco in 1993, and since 1999 he has lived in Philadelphia. He works in an old garage and writes about himself in the third person.

He has worked as an art director and graphic designer, animator for interactivity and multimedia projects, teacher, writer, and illustrator. He has written and drawn comics and graphic novels, designed publications, and illustrated for many many magazines and newspapers. He illustrates children's books; for magazines, newspapers, and advertising; posters, toys and puzzles. He also works with animation, music, and various other media. Examples of all this stuff can be found on his website at <http://mrbiggs.com>.

Some notable clients include The Museum of Modern Art NY, The New York Times, The Washington Post, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, Abrams Books, Random House/Knopf, Hyperion/Disney, The Penn Gazette, and Bell Sports.

EXPLORING THE BOOK

Language Arts Exercises meet the following learning goals: Identify Key Ideas and Details, Analyze Craft and Structure, and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- **The Visualizing Strategy**
The visualizing strategy allows students to engage actively with text. By seeing a “movie in the mind” while listening to or reading a book, students are better able to enter the story world. To activate the visualizing strategy, read *This is Not a Normal Animal Book* aloud to the students but do NOT show them the pages in the book. As you read, have students draw what they think the author is describing. Then, re-read the book and share the images with students. Compare the images in the book with those that the students created--how are they alike and different, and why do the students think that? Ask students if it was difficult to create images just from hearing the words.
- **Text Type: Fiction and Nonfiction**
Books can be categorized by type: fiction or nonfiction. Fiction books tell a story and are not true. Fairy tales folktales are fiction. Nonfiction books share facts. Alphabet books and biographies are nonfiction.
This is Not a Normal Animal Book is both fiction and nonfiction.
It tells the story of how an author and an illustrator work together to create a book. It also explores the classification of animals. Students can also compare the book with Steve Jenkins’ *The Animal Book*, which is a traditional, “normal,” animal nonfiction book.
- **Story Structure: Circular**
Ask students why they think *This is Not a Normal Book* ends the way it does. (The book ends with the gerenuk because then the plot comes full-circle. It started with the cat, another mammal. This is a good place to examine the social-emotional impact of the author upsetting the illustrator again.) Have students identify other stories that are circular, such as Laura Numeroff’s *If You Give a...* series or Tara Lazar’s *The Monstore*.
- **Discussion Questions**
Talking about a text can help students make sense of it. As psychologist Lev Vygotsky noted in his social development theory, students learn by interacting with others. Use the discussion questions on page 9 with your students to help them better understand various components of *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*.



<p>What is <i>This is Not a Normal Animal Book</i> about? What clues do Segal-Walters and Biggs provide?</p> <p><i>This is Not a Normal Animal Book</i> is both a concept book about animals and a story about working with others. Segal-Walters and Biggs provide hints from the very beginning. The front cover exhibits the interplay between the author and illustrator. The first page of the “story” tells the reader about the concept of how to classify animals. This continues through the entire book.</p>	<p>What surprised you in this book?</p> <p>Answers will vary. Accept all reasonable responses.</p>
<p>Where do you think this story takes place?</p> <p>Answers will vary. It could be in an office or a studio workspace--anywhere where the author and illustrator can interact.</p>	<p>What words stood out to you in the book? Why?</p> <p>Answers will vary. Accept all reasonable responses.</p>
<p>How would you describe the author? The illustrator?</p> <p>Answers will vary. Some options for describing the author include controlling, knowledgeable, and storyteller. Some options for describing the illustrator include frustrated, teasing, and funny.</p>	<p>How do the illustrations show what the author is or is not saying?</p> <p>The illustrations show the animals being described, both in hybrid and regular forms.</p>
<p>Who is telling the story? Why do you think that?</p> <p>The author and illustrator both tell the story. It is a conversation between the two that tells about the different types of animals. As the illustrator figures out what is happening and why the author wants him to draw the things she does, that’s when the reader figures it out, too.</p>	<p>Have students generate their own language arts-related question to the book!</p>

- Author's Craft: Voice

Authors employ literary devices to connect with readers. They convey meaning in different ways. Julie Segal-Walters uses voice to develop the characters in *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*. Voice shows a character's personality. Explain that characters' voices come through a text through dialogue with special words and phrases. They make characters unique. Share some other examples of books with strong voice, such as Robin Preiss Glasser's *Fancy Nancy* series or Mo Willem's pigeon books. Then, distribute *Match It!* (page 11) to students and have them work with partners to identify which statement belongs with which character from *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*. Bring the whole class back together to go over the activity sheet.

This is Not a normal **ANIMAL BOOK**



BY JULIE SEGAL-WALTERS
PICTURES BY BRIAN BIGGS

↑(aren't they pretty?)

Name _____

Date _____

Match It!

Directions:

Read the lines from *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*. Decide who said it. Put an X in the right box.



Whose Voice?

	Author	Illustrator
Yes...it would be a FROG!		
This is SO confusing.		
Take it easy. I'm doing the best I can.		
Oh, come on.		
It would be a blobfish.		
Try getting THAT image out of your head.		

Think About It

How do you know that the line belongs with the author or illustrator?

What is it about that character's voice that tells you?

ANSWER KEY

Name _____

Date _____

Match It!

Directions:

Read the lines from *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*. Decide who said it. Put an X in the right box.

Whose Voice?

	Author	Illustrator
Yes...it would be a FROG!	X	
This is SO confusing.		X
Take it easy. I'm doing the best I can.		X
Oh, come on.		X
It would be a blobfish.	X	
Try getting THAT image out of your head.		X

Think About It

How do you know that the line belongs with the author or illustrator?
What is it about that character's voice that tells you?

Science Lesson Suggestions

- Finding Animal Facts

Motivate students to participate in information writing by asking them which animal in the book was their favorite and why. Ask, “How does it differ from the other animals in the book?” Then have them recognize different ways of organizing information about animals by asking, “How are the animals described in *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*?” (The author explains how certain characteristics make an animal. For example, when she talks about the frog and says that if it made honey, then it would no longer be a frog; it would be a bee. She describes animals by their defining characteristics. Have students consider if there are characteristics determinative of that animal and explain why or why not.) You can also ask students to find out what a gerenuk is (A gerenuk is a long-necked antelope found in Africa. It is a mammal).

- Fact-Checking the Illustrator

The illustrator makes some absurd comments at the end of the book; they are not intended to be facts. Help students research how animals are classified. Share the backmatter with the students.

- Classifying animals: Charades

Have students play Animal Charades (page 14). After each student acts out the animal, write the animal in a chart on the board, indicating what group each animal belongs in. Once everyone has presented, ask students what else they wonder about sorting animals.



Name _____

Date _____

Animal Charades

Rules

The class is broken up into two teams.

To play Animal Charades, each person acts out an animal from the chart below WITHOUT talking.

The person's team tries to guess the animal within two minutes. If the team can't guess the animal, then the opposing team gets a chance to "steal." Teams get one point for each correct guess. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Animals

cat	hen	frog	bee
snake	blobfish	shark	gerenuk
monkey	dog	rabbit	whale
alligator	centipede	write-in-your-own:	write-in-your-own:



Social-Emotional Lesson Suggestions

- Discussion Questions:
 - What problem exists between the author and the illustrator? How do they solve it? (The author has an unconventional approach to describing animals, and the illustrator has a hard time following it. He grows increasingly frustrated by the directions and starts to push back, drawing things that are not exactly what the author wants. They resolve their conflict when the illustrator finally offers a compromise—he doesn't have to draw the blobfish. Instead, he posts an actual photograph of a blobfish, thereby satisfying the author and protecting himself from doing something he doesn't want to do.)
 - Why do you think the author and illustrator don't agree? If you were the illustrator, how might you handle the conflict differently? What about the author? Do you think the author or the illustrator is considering the other's point of view enough? Answers will vary. One possible response about why the two characters don't get along includes the notion that the author and illustrator have very different personalities. They view the project differently, and each wants the book to conform to their idea. This goes to the notion of perspectives and point of view. Students can offer suggestions for handling the interaction differently. Answers will vary according to individuals as to being the illustrator.)
 - As you read the story aloud, have students consider whether the author and illustrator are frustrated by their inability to control or change what they must accept. Stop periodically to examine the emotions of the characters. Have students compare the feelings and actions of the characters with their experiences that they wrote about in response to "How many times have you had to do something you don't want to do?"



- Collaboration, Point of View, and Problem-Solution
Being able to work together on a project is a theme in *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*. It is also a common theme in classrooms and in the “real world.” You can adapt any of the activities in this guide to make them partner work or group projects. Additionally, if you get permission, you can post work online in a collaborative space such as Google Doc, and have students navigate the trials and tribulations of working with another person. Engage students in discussing different points of view, and acknowledging that others may view things differently. Hold discussions and role play scenarios in which students act out respectful and disrespectful ways of interacting with others.
- Comparative Titles
Find other examples of books that deal with collaboration and conflict resolution. Some include *The Little Red Hen* and O’Neill’s *The Recess Queen*. Make a list of the different ways the characters worked collaboratively and solved their problems with one another. Have students decide on a strategy they would like to try out, and write it on the Collaboration Goal Sheet (page 17).
- Discuss the Pros and Cons of the Author-Illustrator Interaction
How did it make you feel? Did you connect with the author? The illustrator? Neither? Both? Why? Ask students about the characters’ motivations, feelings, and perspectives. *Why do you think the author or illustrator said or did X? How could the author and illustrator have resolved their conflict differently? What would you do differently?* After this discussion, have students revisit what they wrote about *How many times have you had to do something you don’t want to do?* Have students revise their writing to include insights about collaboration and compromise, and what they will do in future situations.



COLLABORATION GOAL SHEET

Collaboration is the effort made by two or more people to achieve a common goal. It is not always easy. In *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*, the author and illustrator have to overcome their differences to produce a picture book about animals. There is give and take. Neither one gets exactly what they want all the time.

Some qualities that make for good collaboration include:

- Listen to the other person
- Give clear directions
- Each person does their part
- Disagree with the idea, not the person (Respect one another)
- Apologize if you've hurt someone's feelings

What is **one** goal you want to try?



AFTER THE BOOK

Bringing it All Together

- Revisit the essential question: “How do we identify or group animals?”
 - Ask students the different ways they can think of to group animals.
Review the chart they created on the first day and see what they can add to it.
- The Picture Book Process
Explain that a good picture book utilizes the power of words and art when telling a story. Both are equally important. The author leaves room for the illustrator to tell a portion of the story.
Have students search the classroom library for other picture books that show the story told in both words and art. One suggestion is *How This Book Was Made* by Mac Barnett. Ask students to brainstorm a list of items that are often described in words and those that are often portrayed in art. Use the T-chart on page 21 to record their ideas. (In picture books, often names and action sequences are described in words while physical descriptions like color and shape are represented in art.)

FUN FACTS: Brian Biggs took multiple photos of each individual crayon in order to use images with consistent shadows. Also, Julie Segal-Walters wrote all of the words even though it seems like the pair collaborated!



- Fan Fiction Summative Assessment

Using *This is Not a Normal Animal Book* as a mentor text, students will participate in a Writer's Workshop to write a new sentence or story about animals using the same general formula from the book. To do so, make multiple copies of the writing paper on page 21, and instruct the students to write down an information piece about animals and their characteristics. Tell them that they will follow a similar procedure that Julie Segal-Walters and Brian Biggs did when they produced their book, wherein someone else will illustrate their writing! Students can all start off their stories with the same opening:

Animals can be classified into groups by their unique traits. Here are some examples of each category:

Then the students will choose different animals to describe by their characteristics, such as:

This is a lizard. If the lizard stored fat in a hump for weeks... it would be a camel.

The students should write solely as the author, and not include the dialogue between the author and illustrator that is shown in *This is Not a Normal Animal Book*. After the students have finished their stories, have them swap papers with a peer to illustrate it.

Debrief with the class as to how well the illustrator's images fit the writers' visions. Ask students how they felt about having someone else working on their story, and if they learned anything about collaboration in the process. Some prompts include: Did the illustrator bring something new to help you see that something had value? Did any conflicts or disagreements surface? How did you resolve them? Remind students that the goal is to wind up with something you write and then have the experience of reflection to have someone else take your words and do something with it.



Animals can be classified into groups by their unique traits.

Here are some examples of each category:

Name _____

Date _____

Picture Book T-Chart

Directions: Gather a bunch of picture books. Record items that are described in words and art in the chart below.

Items described in WORDS	Items described in ART



Name _____ Date _____



Name _____ Date _____

(title)

written by _____

pictures by _____

Standards (CCSS, Virginia, Indiana)

The activities in this guide meet the following language arts standards, as of 10/27/17.

Language Arts Common Core State Standards:

- Key Ideas and Details—CCRA.RA.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3
- Craft and Structure— CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.5, CCRA.R.6
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas—CCRA.R.7, CCRA.R.10
- Writing—CCRA.W.3, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.W.5

Virginia Standards of Learning:

- Oral Language—K.1, K.2, K.3, 1.1, 1.2, 2.2
- Reading—K.5, K.6, K.8, K.9, 1.5, 1.8, 1.9, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8
- Writing—K.11, K.12, 1.12, 1.13, 2.12

Indiana Academic Standards:

- Reading Foundations—K.RF.1, 1.RF.1, 2.RF.1 (more can be met, depending on how teachers structure lessons)
- Learning Outcome for Reading Literature—K.RL.1, 1.RL.1, 2.RL.1,
- Key Ideas and Textual Support—K.RL.2.1, K.RL.2.3, K.RL.2.4, 1.RL.2.1, 1.RL.2.3, 1.RL.2.4, 2.RL.2.1, 2.RL.2.3, 2.RL. 2.4
- Structural Elements and Organization—K.RL.3.2, 1.RL.3.2, 2.RL.3.2
- Connection of Ideas—K.RL.4.1, L.4.2, 1.RL.4.1, 1.RL.4.2, 2.RL.4.1
- Learning Outcome for Writing—K.W.1, 1.W.1, 2.W.1
- Narrative—K.W.3.3, 1.W.3.3, 2.W.3.3
- Speaking and Listening—K.SL.1, K.SL.2.1, 1.SL.2, 1.SL.2.1, 2.SL.1, 2.SL.2.1

