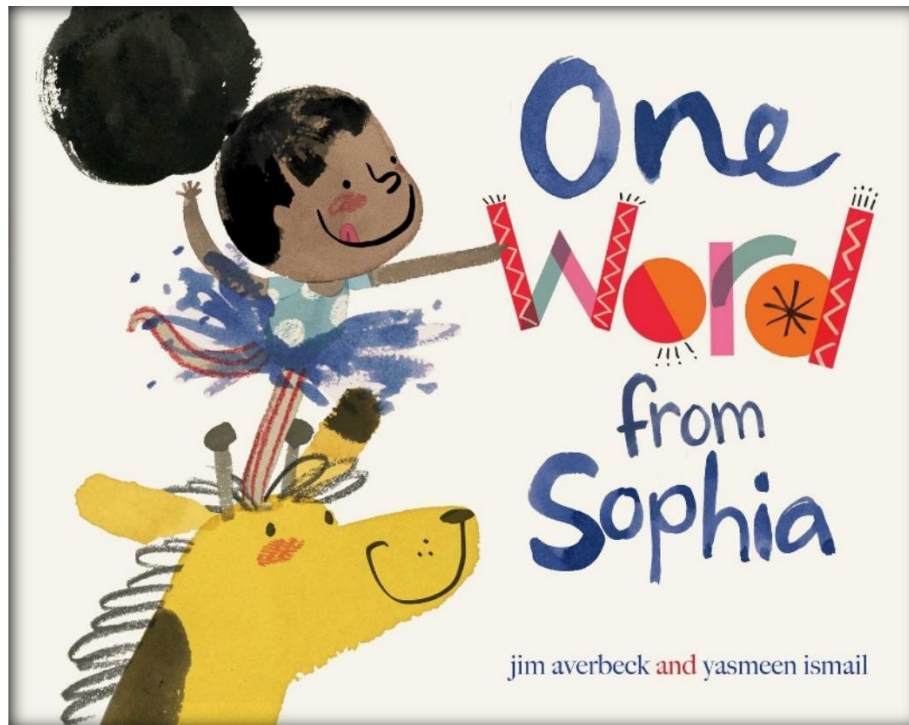


## A Common Core State Standards Aligned Curriculum Guide



*Sophia wants a pet giraffe for her birthday. It is her one true desire. However, she has a problem. In fact, she has four problems—she must first convince her mother (a judge), her father (a businessman), her uncle Conrad (a politician), and her very strict grand-mamá to approve.*

*Determined, persistent, and creative, Sophia uses all her wiles to persuade each one . . . but to no avail. “Too many words,” they complain after each elaborate presentation. Undeterred and undefeated, Sophia rethinks her approach—editing and revising it to its essence until she finds just the right word. Simplicity, directness, and sincerity prevail. True desire triumphs in this funny, warm-hearted confection that celebrates words even as it shows that less of them can often be more.*

### About the Author



**Jim Averbek** is the author of several books, including *One Word from Sophia*, *Two Problems for Sophia*, *Love by Sophia*, *Except If*, and *Oh No, Little Dragon!* He lives in San Francisco, California. He has a degree in civil engineering from Case Western Reserve University. When he was studying engineering, he and his fellow students had competitions to build a concrete canoe (that had to float in Lake Erie) and an egg container (to be dropped off a five story building with no parachute.) He still uses design thinking to come up with words and illustrations for his stories. He often tries several ways to write a story before he finds the one that works best. Jim can be found online at [jimaverbeckbooks.com](http://jimaverbeckbooks.com).

### About the Illustrator



Irish-born, UK-based **Yasmeen Ismail** is an award-winning author and illustrator. Her illustrations are full of energy and movement. When Yasmeen is planning her picture books she must make sure that each illustration is interesting. Yasmeen tries hard to make her books fun to look at. Life is good, and she loves her job. Yasmeen can be found online at <https://www.yasmeenismail.co.uk/>

## Discussion

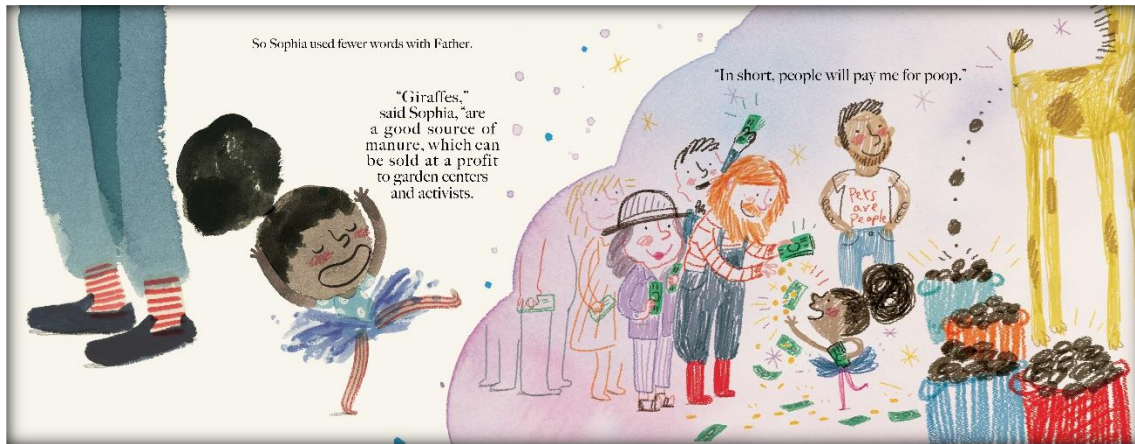
These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common State Standards: (RL.K.1, 3, 4, 7) (RL.1.1, 3, 4, 7) (RL.2.1, 3, 7) (RL.3.1, 3, 4, 7) (RL.4.1, 3, 4, 7) (SL.K – 4.1)

Choose the questions and activities below that work best with the age and interests of the child or classroom.



1. Sophia wants a pet giraffe really, really badly. It is her true desire. Have you ever had or do you have a true desire—something you really, really want? How does it make you feel to want something so much?
2. What do you really want? It may be more than one thing. Make a list. How do you get what you really want?
3. How does Sophia communicate her feelings? How does she get what she wants?
4. What do you think of Sophia's attempts to persuade her family? Would any of them work for you, in your family, if you wanted something badly enough? Do you think she used too many words? Why or why not?
5. Sophia chooses a giraffe as a pet. What animal would you choose for your pet? How would you persuade your family to let you get it?

6. In this book, both words and illustrations join together to tell the story. Some things we learn from the words alone. Other things are just shown in the illustrations. What are some things we learn about Sophia from the illustrations? Don't forget to include the illustrations on the cover and inside cover pages. Talk about what you see.



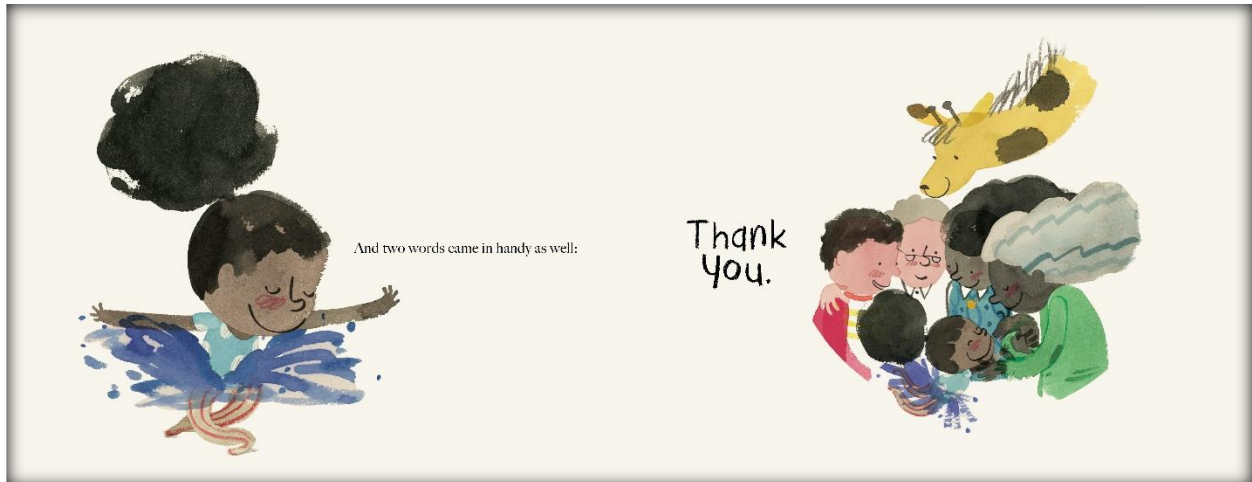
7. This story has some words that might be unfamiliar or new to you. What new words did you learn? What was your favorite new word? Can you think of some big words that you don't often use in everyday conversation? Make a list.

8. What do you think of the one word Sophia finally uses?

9. Sophia was very happy with her birthday present and found that the two words, thank you, came in handy. Thank you is a way of saying how grateful you feel. When you feel grateful, it feels good inside. What are some things you are grateful for?

10. What are some things you noticed about Sophia's family? What could you tell about each of them based on how they responded to Sophia's attempts to be persuasive?

11. What was your favorite part of the book? Did any parts make you laugh or smile? Which ones?



### Activities & Projects

These activities align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (L.2.4E) (L.3.4D) (L.4.4C) (SL.K–4.4, 5) (W.K.1, 2, 3, 5) (W.1.1, 2, 3, 7, 8) (W.2.1, 2, 3, 5, 8) (W.3–4.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8)

1. Look at your list of your true desires—what you really, really want. Choose one. It could be a pet, a toy, a video game, or something else. Imagine how it would feel to get it. How would you convince your family to let you get it? Create a presentation. It can be elaborate—with drawings, a chart, a slide show, or even a poem to accompany it. What would be your approach?
2. Draw a picture, and write a story or a poem, of something you really, really want.
3. The illustrations in the story are filled with energy, emotion, and colorful details that tell us something about Sophia and her family. What is your favorite picture? Why? In addition to her family, Sophia's household includes Mr. Bun, Tiger Eye, Pony Boy, Snakey Poo, and Ted. Who is in your household? Draw a picture of your family or entire household; include your pets if you have any.



4. Sophia learned three different words that mean “too many words”: effusive, verbose, and loquacious. Can you think of three different words that are synonyms—that mean the same (or similar) thing? For example, the word desire can also be expressed as want, wish, longing, or dream. The word happy can also be expressed by the words joyful, jubilant, rapturous, or euphoric. Make a list of words and their synonyms.

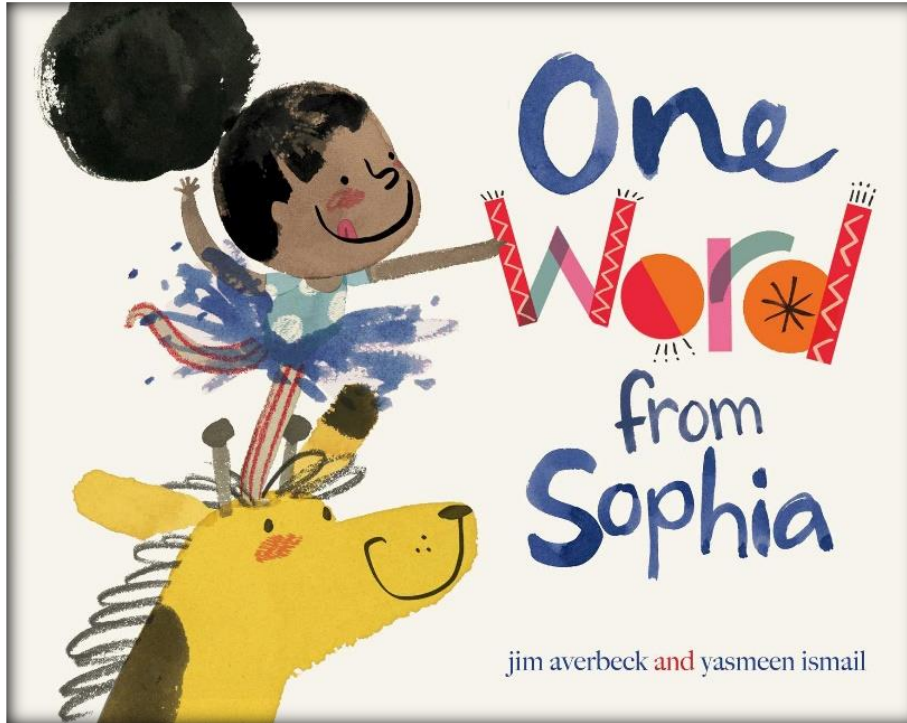
5. One Word from Sophia has fun with words. There are big words that aren’t often used in everyday conversation. There are words that mean the same or similar thing (synonyms). There are a lot of words to choose from so that you can express exactly what you are thinking or feeling. While you don’t want to be verbose and use too many of them, knowing more words can help you find just the right ones when you need them. This book has a glossary in the back to explain the meaning of unfamiliar words. Find five words that are new to you and make your own glossary.

6. Create word art. Pick some of your favorite words and make them into art. You can create art in so many ways: on a computer, with markers and paper, or as a sculpture, mobile, or cut-paper collage. You can make your words colorful, funny, important, or scary.

7. Make a gratitude book. Write down at least one thing that you are grateful for each day. How does it feel when you read it back? What is Sophia grateful for?

8. Assign or let the children choose a character from the book to portray. Reenact the story as a play or reader’s theater.

**CLOSING ACTIVITY**  
**MAKING A PICTURE BOOK**



**Preparation:**

- Supply pencils, markers, crayons, drawing paper, and stapler.

**Class Instructions:**

- Ask “Who likes to write stories?” or “Who likes to draw?” or “Who likes to build things?”
- Divide the class into teams with at least one writer, one drawer, and one builder.
- Instruct the class to write a 4 to 16 page story with illustrations and a cover.
- Instruct everyone to participate and contribute their skills.
- Encourage students to use *One Word for Sophia* and other picture books as models for their books. They should give the main character a problem to solve.
- Have them think about the intention and interpretation of language and their word choices as they create the story and build the book.

**Discussion:**

- Have students read their stories.
- Have students share the story behind the story by talking about how they made the book.
  - How did each person contribute? What skills did each person bring?

- If someone's idea didn't get used, how did they deal with that?
- Did they discuss the story first?
- Was it easy or hard to do this together?
- Did they discuss different solutions to the story problem?
- Did they get stuck, and, if so, what did they do?
- How did they decide to build the book? Did they consider different ways?
- Why did they choose the story they did?
- Why did they make the book as they did?

*Adapted from guide written in 2015 by Judith Rovenger. Judith is on the adjunct faculty of Long Island University and has taught at Columbia, Wesleyan, and Rutgers Universities. Her area of specialty is in ethics and emotional intelligence in literature. She is the former director of Youth Services at the Westchester Library System (NYS).*

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