

A Common Core Curriculum Guide to LISTEN

By Gabi Snyder, Illustrated by Stephanie Graegin

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Readers follow a young girl as she steps outside her home and hears a mix of noises on her street, including a dog barking, a car honking, and motorcycles zipping by. When she stops to listen, she notices each individual sound, such as a dog yip-yip-yapping, shoes slap-slap-slapping against the pavement, and the thump-thump-thump of kids jumping rope. She also begins to pay close attention to the words people say and the feelings they show. As she listens more closely, she notices subtler sounds. Finally, she listens to the sounds inside herself. She has managed to listen “past the noise.”

Author Gabi Snyder explains that listeners need to pay attention and focus on each sound they hear. Illustrator Stephanie Graegin shows how careful listening can yield unexpected delights such as noticing the tippy-tap-tap of rain falling on your umbrella or the brush-rush-hush of wind moving through the trees. Taken together, words and illustrations make a convincing case for the joys of attentive listening.

Using this book as the basis of discussion, adults can explain how attentive listening helps us notice the unique sounds around us. The book ends with a useful feature entitled “More about Listening,” which details the important differences between active listening and passive hearing.

DISCUSSION OF KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

The discussion questions and activities below draw on Common Core State Standards for reading text (RL) that ask children to ask and answer questions about the key details in a text (RL.K-3.1), retell stories including key details and demonstrate understanding of the central idea (RL.K-3.2), and describe characters, settings, and major events in a story. Children should also be able to describe how characters respond to major events and challenges (RL.K-3.3).

1. What did the girl hear when she first stepped out into the big, wild world?
2. What individual sounds did the girl hear when she closed her eyes and listened?
3. What does it mean to “listen past the noise”?
4. Where does the story take place? How is this neighborhood like yours? How is it different?
5. The story ends with this statement:

“When all you hear in this big, wild world is
NOISE . . . stop. Close your eyes. And listen
to everything waiting to be heard.”

How do you feel about this advice? Explain your thoughts.

6. Imagine you could interview the girl about her experiences listening to the sounds around her. Write down the questions you could ask. Then work with a partner. Take turns acting as the interviewer and asking the questions or as the person being interviewed. Here are some things you could ask about:

- Noise
- Listening past noise
- The sounds she heard
- Words of joy, words that sting, and sounds that show feelings
- Hearing the voice inside herself
- Her thoughts about listening



To learn about craft and structure, the Common Core State Standards asks us to help students identify words and phrases that suggest feelings (RL.K–3.4), think about the features of nonfiction text (RL.K–3.5), and acknowledge different points of view and distinguish the reader’s point of view from the author’s (RL.K–3.6). The questions and activities below emphasize these understandings.

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- Illustration Only**

A colorful illustration of a young girl with brown hair in two buns, wearing a red and white jacket and brown pants, standing on the steps of a house entrance. The house has a white door with a small window and a blue handle. There are green bushes on either side of the steps and a small black bicycle leaning against the right bush. The scene is set in a bright, sunny environment.

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Illustrations and Sound Words

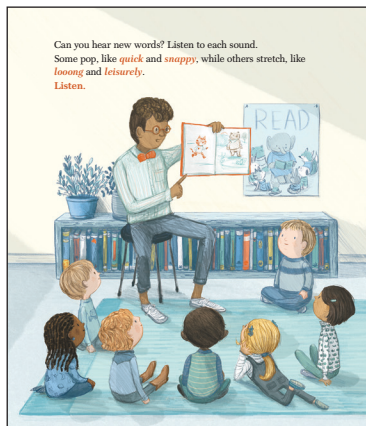
Look at this example using illustrations and sound words, which help you understand the noises on the street. Then answer the questions below:



- What additional people do you notice in the story?
- What sounds can the girl hear on the street?
- These sounds are called “NOISE!” in the text. Why?

Illustrations, Sound Words, and Sentences

Look at this example of a page that includes an illustration, sound words, and sentences. All these pieces help you understand who is included in the story, the sounds they can hear, and where they are located. Use all the information on the page to answer the questions below:



- What additional people do you notice in the story? Where are they? What are they doing?
- What sounds could you hear if you were in the picture? How do the new words sound? How do you know?
- Why are some words written in red?

3. **Learning More about Listening.** Read the final pages titled “More about Listening.” Discuss the following information that is given:

- The difference between hearing and listening
- The different types of responses to sound: startle response, bottom-up response, and top-down response
- Listening to feelings

What questions do you have about listening? How can you find the answers?

WRITING

The Common Core State Standards emphasize writing informative and explanatory text in the early grades. The writing activities below provide experience writing to inform (W.K–3.2), and to explain a sequence of events (W.K–3.3).

1. **Take a Listening Walk. Write and Draw about Your Experiences.** Just like the girl in the story, you can take a listening walk. Ask an adult to come with you. Bring a pad and pencil to jot down what you hear and sketch a few pictures.

Follow these steps to gather your information:

- When you step outside, stop for a moment. What do you hear? Write down these sounds. Make a sketch.
- When you close your eyes, what individual sounds do you hear? Try writing the sounds as you hear them. Did you hear the yip-yip-yapping of a dog like the girl in the story, or did you hear other sounds? Do you hear people talking?

Are animals making sounds? Are cars, trucks, buses, or airplanes making sounds? Take time to notice what you hear. Write down the sounds. Make a sketch.

- What unusual sounds do you hear when you stop to listen carefully? The girl heard the tippy-tap-tap of rain falling on her umbrella. What did you hear? Write down these sounds. Make a sketch.

Now, using all the sounds and sketches you gathered on your listening walk, draw and write about what you heard. (See the “Listening Walk” reproducible activity at the end of this guide.)

2. Creating a Story Wheel to Tell the Girl’s Story.

Use the “Telling the Girl’s Story” story wheel reproducible activity at the end of this guide to summarize the important things the girl learns about listening. Follow these five steps:

- Think first about what happened in the story. List the things the girl noticed as she listened.
- Select the four most important things in your list to put in your story wheel. Number them in the order that they happened in the story.
- Put one idea in each part of the wheel. Number, draw, and label each part.
- In the center of the story wheel, write the book title and the author’s and illustrator’s names.
- Use your story wheel to tell a partner about the important parts of the story.

3. Write your own sound-words book.

In the book, there are many words that imitate the sounds they are describing. For example, beep imitates the sound of a car’s horn, and caw imitates the sound a crow makes. See how many sound words you can list and illustrate. You can include sound words from *Listen* and other sounds you have heard.

Before you begin:

- You can watch the Onomatopoeia Alphabet Book at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBQCgjo1QTU>. This video uses the word *onomatopoeia* to identify and sing about sound words for each letter of the alphabet.
- You can also find lists of sample sound words to incorporate at <https://www.sps186.org/downloads/basic/607638/OnomatopoeiaWordListActivity.pdf>

Create a cover for your book, inside pages showing sound words with an accompanying illustration, and a back cover. Add as many pages as you like. Here is a sample of a layout.

Back cover	Front cover

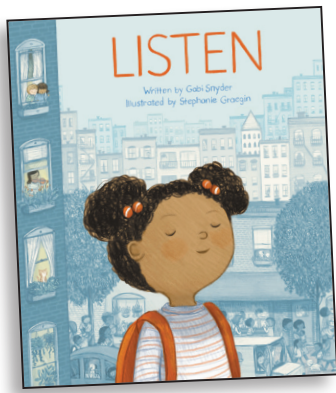
Sound word:	Sound word:
Sound illustration:	Sound illustration:

EXTENDING THE EXPERIENCE

1. Read other books about listening:

- *Strega Nona* by Tomie dePaola
- *Quiet Please, Owen McPhee!* written by Trudy Ludwig & illustrated by Patrice Barton
- *That Is Not a Good Idea!* by Mo Willems
- *Wordy Birdy* by Tammi Sauer & illustrated by Dave Mottram
- *The Rabbit Listened* by Cori Doerrfeld





Listening Walk Activity

When you step outside, stop for a moment. What do you hear? Write down these sounds. Make a sketch. Using all the sounds and sketches you gathered on your listening walk, draw and write about what you heard.

Sounds I heard when I stepped outside

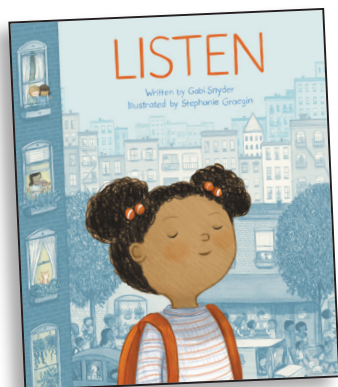
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Individual sounds I heard when I closed my eyes

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Unusual sounds I heard when I stopped to listen carefully

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Telling the Girl's Story

Use this story wheel to summarize the important things the girl learns about listening.

Follow these five steps:

- Think first about what happened in the story. List the things the girl noticed as she listened.
- Select the four most important things in your list to put in your story wheel. Number them in the order that they happened in the story.
- Put one idea in each part of the wheel. Number, draw, and label each part.
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