

Empowering Students with Picture Books

5 Creative Activities That Build Voice and Confidence

adamlehaupt.com



Reading Buddies



Trash Orchestra



Sense Poetry



Through The Keyhole



Debates & Book Trailers



Podcast
& Blog



Mascots Make the Best Reading Buddies - Picture Book Lesson Guide

Featured Book: Bears Make the Best Reading Buddies by Carmen Oliver

Primary Subject: English Language Arts

Grade Level Range: K–5 (with adaptations)

Estimated Time: 2–3 class periods

Materials Needed: Featured book, drawing materials, writing paper, stapler, mascot images

Quick Overview

Empowers students through ownership of storytelling.

Objectives: Understand traits of a good reading buddy, create mascot-based class book.

Diverse learner engagement through creativity and humor.

Step-by-Step Implementation

Pre-Reading Preparation:

1. Set Up Your Space: Arrange a cozy reading corner with mascot plush/toy or image.
2. Preview the Book: Highlight key vocabulary like 'buddy' and 'mascot.'
3. Gather Materials: Paper, crayons, pencils, optional digital tools.
4. Prepare Students: Discuss favorite books and pets/stuffed animals as 'reading buddies.'

During Reading Activities:

1. Opening Hook: Show a mascot and ask, 'Could this be a great reading buddy?'
2. Interactive Reading: Pause and ask, 'Does a good reading buddy jump up and down?'
3. Participation: Encourage thumbs-up/down or silent signals.
4. Comprehension: Quick pair-share after reading—what makes a buddy great?

Post-Reading Extension:

1. Core Activity: Write and illustrate mascot-based pages (e.g., 'Eagles Make the Best Reading Buddies').
2. Wrap-Up: Ask students to present their pages or buddy traits.
3. Assessment: Collect stories into a class book and share in a reading celebration.

Common Core Standards Alignment

Reading: RL.K.3, RL.1.3, RL.3.3 – Describe characters, traits, and actions.

Writing: W.K.3–W.5.3 – Narrative writing with details and sequence.

Speaking & Listening: SL.K.1, SL.2.4 – Collaborative conversations, presentations.

Language: L.K.1, L.3.1 – Conventions and vocabulary use.

Cross-Curricular: Art (illustration), Social Studies (school mascot origin).

Differentiation Strategies

ELL: Use mascot visuals, sentence starters ('My mascot is...'), allow home language expression.

Special Needs: Provide drawing templates, offer scribing or voice-to-text tools.

Advanced: Encourage full story arcs, leadership in group brainstorm.

Struggling Readers: Use graphic organizers, allow oral storytelling, buddy support.

Leveling Guide

K–2:

- Simplify task: Focus on drawing and oral explanation.
- Scaffold writing with sentence frames: 'My mascot is ____ and it ____.'
- Assessment: Student can name and describe 1–2 reading buddy traits.

3–5:

- Increase writing expectations: Introduce character traits and structure.
- Optional research: History or qualities of the school mascot.
- Peer editing: Swap stories for revision and feedback.

Extension Activities

Same-Day:

- Draw a mascot badge or 'Best Reading Buddy Award'.
- Write a journal entry as the mascot.

Week-Long:

- Create a hallway gallery of mascot stories.
- Host a classroom launch party and invite parents.

Cross-Curricular:

- Math: Measure pages, count illustrations.
- Science: Explore animal traits of mascot.
- Social Studies: Investigate mascot history and symbolism.
- Art: Design mascot bookmarks or posters.

Parent Involvement & Home Support

Take-Home Info:

- Explain class book project and share student goals.
- Encourage families to read together with their child's page.

Home Extension:

- Create a family mascot drawing or story.
- Ask: 'What makes YOU a great reading buddy?'
- Visit the library and pick a 'buddy-approved' book.

Communication Tools:

- Newsletter/email template included.
- Student reflection sheet: 'My favorite part was...'

Assessment & Documentation

Formative:

- Observation during brainstorming and writing.
- Use peer or self-reflection checklists.

Summative:

- Rubric for story structure and presentation.
- Photos of class book and launch event.

Documentation Tools:

- Story folders, anecdotal notes, writing samples.
- Optional: Add final stories to digital portfolio.

Troubleshooting & Tips

Common Challenges:

- Off-task behavior: Use mascot as classroom anchor.
- Unequal participation: Partner students for support.

Adam's Pro Tips:

- Introduce activity with energy! Show your own mascot sample.
- Use a costume or puppet for added fun.

Resource Alternatives:

- Use a fictional creature or invented mascot.
- Digital version via Google Slides or Seesaw.

Build an Orchestra of Hope - Picture Book Lesson Guide

Featured Book: Building an Orchestra of Hope by Carmen Oliver

Primary Subject: STEM, ELA, SEL, Music

Grade Level Range: K–5 (with adaptations)

Estimated Time: 3–5 class periods

Materials Needed: Building an Orchestra of Hope book, recyclable materials, scissors, tape, glue, writing tools, optional rhythm apps or tuners

Quick Overview

Transforms recyclables into creative expression while empowering students in public speaking and problem-solving.

Objectives: Design a functional instrument, document its construction, and present both its purpose and sound.

Great for engaging all learners with hands-on, cross-disciplinary teamwork and performance.

Step-by-Step Implementation

Pre-Reading Preparation:

1. Set Up Your Space: Create building zones or supply bins with recycled items.
2. Preview the Book: Introduce vocabulary like 'orchestra,' 'Paraguay,' 'upcycle.'
3. Gather Materials: Collect clean recyclables (cans, boxes, string, bottles, etc.).
4. Prepare Students: Watch a short video on instrument families or the Recycled Orchestra.

During Reading Activities:

1. Opening Hook: Show real or video examples of trash instruments.
2. Read Aloud: Pause to ask—"What challenges did they face?"
3. Participation: Ask students to predict what kinds of sounds certain trash could make.
4. Comprehension: Discuss problem-solving and perseverance shown in the story.

Post-Reading Extension:

1. Core Activity: Design and build a working instrument that meets sound and rhythm criteria.
2. Document the Process: Write or draw step-by-step instructions.

3. Presentation: Perform with instrument and share how it was made.
4. Reflection: What was hard? What would you improve?

Common Core Standards Alignment

Reading: RI.3.3, RI.4.7 – Explain connections and interpret visuals.

Writing: W.3.2, W.4.7 – Write informative texts with sequencing.

Speaking & Listening: SL.2.4, SL.5.5 – Present ideas clearly with multimedia support.

Science: NGSS 3-5-ETS1-1 – Engineering design.

Social Studies: Explore Paraguay and global problem-solving.

Differentiation Strategies

ELL: Use visual instructions, bilingual glossaries, and paired builders.

Special Needs: Provide adapted tools, hand-over-hand support, or alternative materials.

Advanced: Build multi-sound instruments or research world instruments.

Struggling Readers: Use drawing-based instructions, voice-record documentation.

Leveling Guide

K–2:

- Focus on making noise-makers and rhythm tools.
- Teacher or older buddy helps document with drawings.
- Emphasize teamwork over presentation polish.

3–5:

- Require instrument to meet multiple criteria (pitch, rhythm, melody).
- Full how-to writing with labeled diagrams.
- Encourage scripted speech and self-reflection.

Extension Activities

Same-Day:

- Sound experiment stations: Guess the material by sound.
- Group rhythm games with instruments.

Week-Long:

- Classroom orchestra: Perform a group piece.

- Host a 'Trashion Show' featuring instruments.

Cross-Curricular:

- Math: Measure sound length/pitch with apps.
- Science: Explore sound waves and frequency.
- Geography: Research Paraguay and music around the world.

Parent Involvement & Home Support

Take-Home Info:

- Explain goal to build instruments and present.
- Ask families to contribute safe recyclables.

Home Extension:

- Build a second instrument at home.
- Interview a family member: What would they build from trash?
- Watch music performances from different cultures online.

Communication Tools:

- Sample newsletter and reminder about presentation day.
- Photo release for showcase documentation.

Assessment & Documentation

Formative:

- Observe teamwork, effort, and experimentation.
- Use checklists for sound criteria.

Summative:

- Rubric for instrument functionality, how-to writing, and presentation.
- Student reflection sheets on challenge and success.

Documentation Tools:

- Photo journals, audio/video recordings.
- Portfolio pages for process and product.

Troubleshooting & Tips

Common Challenges:

- Noise control: Set timed test zones.

- Construction struggles: Offer tape, rubber bands, and paper clips.

Adam's Pro Tips:

- Highlight real-world problem solving—students connect deeply.
- Let students name their instruments for extra ownership.

Resource Alternatives:

- If short on supplies, build in teams.
- Use drawing apps for design planning if no physical tools are available.

Five Senses Poetry Wall - Picture Book Lesson Guide

Featured Book: The Twilight Library by Carmen Oliver

Primary Subject: ELA, Poetry, SEL

Grade Level Range: K–5 (with adaptations)

Estimated Time: 2–3 class periods

Materials Needed: Book copy, sensory word slips, poetry templates, writing/drawing tools, bulletin board supplies

Quick Overview

Students build sensory-rich poems using playful games and personal expression. Objectives: Identify five senses, sort descriptive words, write simile-based poetry. Encourages emotional expression, sensory exploration, and descriptive language development.

Step-by-Step Implementation

Pre-Reading Preparation:

1. Set Up Your Space: Create five labeled bins or posters for senses.
2. Preview the Book: Introduce sensory vocabulary from the text.
3. Gather Materials: Slips of words (e.g., 'spicy,' 'scratchy'), poetry templates, visuals.
4. Prepare Students: Discuss what each sense is and how it shows up in writing.

During Reading Activities:

1. Opening Hook: Ask, 'What does night feel like?' Record responses.
2. Read Aloud: Pause to identify sensory language.
3. Participation: Students raise hands when they hear a sensory word.
4. Comprehension: Chart examples of sensory language by sense.

Post-Reading Extension:

1. Core Activity: Play the Sensory Word Game and sort words into categories.
2. Poetry Writing: Students use sorted words to create poems using similes.
Example: 'Smoke smells spicy like a ghost pepper.'
3. Wrap-Up: Students decorate and illustrate their poems.
4. Display: Create a 'Poetry Forest' or wall display.

Common Core Standards Alignment

Reading: RL.2.4, RL.3.4 – Describe how words supply rhythm and meaning.

Writing: W.1.2, W.3.3d – Write with details and sensory words.

Speaking & Listening: SL.1.5, SL.4.4 – Present stories and ideas with visual support.

Language: L.2.5a – Use words for effect.

Arts Integration: Visual representation through poetry illustration.

Differentiation Strategies

ELL: Include image cards, pre-teach vocabulary, use bilingual glossaries.

Special Needs: Provide word banks, alternative ways to express ideas (drawing/audio).

Advanced: Create multi-stanza or theme-based poems.

Struggling Readers: Use sentence frames ('It smells like...'), buddy writing.

Leveling Guide

K–2:

- Focus on one or two senses, simplified poem structure.
- Use fill-in-the-blank poetry templates.
- Emphasize illustration and oral sharing.

3–5:

- Challenge with multisensory similes or metaphors.
- Require labeled categories and expanded vocabulary.
- Encourage presentation and peer feedback.

Extension Activities

Same-Day:

- Five Senses scavenger hunt around classroom.
- Read a poem from *Night Wishes* or *I Am Smoke* and discuss sensory impact.

Week-Long:

- Build a classroom poetry anthology.
- Invite a local poet to visit or Zoom in.

Cross-Curricular:

- Science: Connect senses to body systems.

- SEL: Write about calming or overwhelming sensations.
- Art: Create a mural inspired by sensory poems.

Parent Involvement & Home Support

Take-Home Info:

- Explain that students are writing poetry using the five senses.
- Encourage families to share descriptive moments from home.

Home Extension:

- Create a family poem about dinner or nature using sensory words.
- Share household items and describe them together ('soft like...').

Communication Tools:

- Email or flyer with examples and student sentence starters.
- Poetry Celebration Day invitation template.

Assessment & Documentation

Formative:

- Observe word sorting and use in discussion.
- Check for understanding during poem drafting.

Summative:

- Rubric for use of senses, descriptive language, and simile format.
- Peer assessment checklist (2 Stars and a Wish).

Documentation Tools:

- Collect illustrated poems for portfolios.
- Photograph bulletin board display.

Troubleshooting & Tips

Common Challenges:

- Mixing up senses: Use visuals and examples.
- Limited vocabulary: Provide rich word banks.

Adam's Pro Tips:

- Keep a basket of extra sensory words for inspiration.
- Model a silly simile or 'bad' poem and let students revise it together.

Resource Alternatives:

- Use digital poetry platforms like Jamboard or Padlet.
- Allow audio recordings of poems for non-writers.

Perspective Through a Keyhole - Picture Book Lesson Guide

Featured Book: *I Don't Draw, I Color* by Adam Lehrhaupt, illustrated by Felicita Sala

Primary Subject: ELA, Visual Art, SEL

Grade Level Range: K–5 (with adaptations)

Estimated Time: 1–2 class periods

Materials Needed: Writing materials, drawing paper, crayons/colored pencils/markers, optional picture books for visual inspiration

Quick Overview

Empathy-building through creative storytelling and visual art.

Objectives: Understand point of view, describe a setting through someone else's eyes, and build emotional connections through narrative.

This lesson helps students imagine new perspectives and express them through writing and art.

Step-by-Step Implementation

Pre-Reading Preparation:

1. Set Up Your Space: Provide visual prompts (e.g., fences, forests, creatures).
2. Preview the Concept: Discuss what 'perspective' and 'point of view' mean.
3. Gather Materials: Writing journals, pencils, drawing tools, and optional mentor texts.
4. Prepare Students: Use a flashlight through cardboard to simulate a keyhole view.

During Reading Activities:

1. Opening Hook: Ask students, 'If you were a bird/spider/raccoon, what might you see through a fence?'
2. Read-Aloud (Optional): Choose a book like *Mel Fell* or *The Tree in Me* to inspire vivid sensory and emotional descriptions.
3. Participation: Group brainstorm - 'What's behind the fence?' 'Who's peeking in?'
4. Comprehension: Discuss how imagery and language help us feel what a character feels.

Post-Reading Extension:

1. Core Activity: Write a story or descriptive paragraph in first-person POV from a character who is seeing the world through a keyhole.

2. Art Extension (Optional): Draw what's beyond the fence or from the character's view.
3. Wrap-Up: Share writing aloud or display illustrated pieces as a 'Gallery of Perspectives.'

Common Core Standards Alignment

Reading: RL.3.6 – Distinguish point of view of characters.

Writing: W.3.3 – Write narratives with real or imagined experiences.

Speaking & Listening: SL.2.1 – Participate in collaborative conversations.

Language: L.3.1, L.3.5 – Use grammar and figurative language.

Visual Arts: Interpret and illustrate emotion and scene from a unique viewpoint.

Differentiation Strategies

ELL: Provide translated sentence starters and word banks.

Special Needs: Offer voice-recorded or dictated options for storytelling.

Advanced: Require layered perspectives (e.g., how the character feels and why).

Struggling Writers: Use graphic organizers to scaffold story elements.

Leveling Guide

K–2:

- Use picture prompts and oral storytelling support.
- Sentence starters like 'I see... I hear... I feel...'
- Focus more on illustration than detailed writing.

3–5:

- Full narrative paragraph in first-person voice.
- Use of descriptive language and emotion.
- Require connection to character traits or motivation.

Extension Activities

Same-Day:

- Partner interviews: read each other's stories and guess the perspective.
- Create a class 'keyhole quilt' of illustrations.

Week-Long:

- Turn into a perspective writing unit with multiple POV characters.
- Compare versions of a scene from different perspectives.

Cross-Curricular:

- Science: Animal vision and sensory perception.
- SEL: Discuss feelings of being seen or unseen.
- Art: Mixed-media collage showing a scene from both sides of the fence.

Parent Involvement & Home Support

Take-Home Info:

- Describe the concept of writing from another's perspective.
- Encourage family storytelling from a pet's or toy's POV.

Home Extension:

- Create a 'window story'—what would a tree see if it looked into your house?
- Take a walk and describe something from a bug or bird's perspective.

Communication Tools:

- Email or handout with writing prompts to try at home.
- Reflection sheet: 'I imagined I was... and I saw...'

Assessment & Documentation

Formative:

- Observe student brainstorming and use of voice.
- Conferencing during writing process.

Summative:

- Rubric for POV accuracy, descriptive detail, and empathy.
- Optional: Artist statement describing their drawing's character.

Documentation Tools:

- Collect written narratives and artwork.
- Class book or digital slideshow of submissions.

Troubleshooting & Tips

Common Challenges:

- Struggling to shift perspective: Use videos or animal photos for reference.

- Minimal detail: Prompt with 'What do you see/hear/smell/feel?'

Adam's Pro Tips:

- Demonstrate writing from a silly POV (e.g., a worm in a boot).
- Let students walk around and peek through real or pretend keyholes.

Resource Alternatives:

- Use comic strip templates for visual storytelling.
- Record audio stories for sharing in class.

Picture Book Debates & Book Trailers - Picture Book Lesson Guide

Featured Book: Please, Open This Book and Warning: Do Not Open This Book by Adam Lehrhaupt, illustrated by Matthew Forsythe

Primary Subject: ELA, Media Literacy, Public Speaking

Grade Level Range: K–5 (with adaptations)

Estimated Time: 3–5 class periods

Materials Needed: Picture books, debate graphic organizers, storyboard templates, tech tools (iPad/Chromebooks), video editing software or apps like Canva, Flipgrid, iMovie

Quick Overview

Critical thinking meets creativity in this high-energy classroom challenge.

Objectives: Construct arguments, express literary opinions, use digital tools for storytelling.

Empowers students with voice, choice, and real-world communication skills.

Step-by-Step Implementation

Pre-Activity Preparation:

1. Set Up Your Space: Create debate zones or video creation stations.
2. Preview Books: Read aloud the chosen books or provide time to explore.
3. Gather Tools: Graphic organizers, debate prep sheets, tech devices, trailer examples.
4. Prepare Students: Introduce debate and book trailer formats with examples.

Option A: Book Debate

1. Team Assignment: Pro vs. Con for a selected picture book.
2. Research & Write: Brainstorm arguments, use character perspectives for fun.
3. Rehearse: Practice using public speaking techniques.
4. Present: Conduct a formal classroom debate. Judges or class vote on winner.

Option B: Book Trailer

1. Book Selection: Student chooses a favorite picture book.
2. Scriptwriting: Draft a short pitch (30–60 seconds) to 'sell' the book.
3. Storyboard & Plan: Visualize scenes, characters, key themes.
4. Record: Use Flipgrid, Canva, or iMovie to create trailer.
5. Screen & Vote: Watch as a class and celebrate creative entries.

Common Core Standards Alignment

Reading: RL.2.1, RL.3.3 – Ask and answer questions; describe characters.

Writing: W.3.1, W.4.2 – Write opinion and informative texts.

Speaking & Listening: SL.3.4, SL.4.5 – Present ideas and add multimedia.

Media Literacy: Interpret, create, and critique digital media messages.

Differentiation Strategies

ELL: Provide sentence starters, visuals, and bilingual trailer options.

Special Needs: Allow audio or visual-only trailers, simplified debate roles.

Advanced: Create a series trailer or book comparison pitch.

Struggling Writers: Use graphic organizers or comic strip templates.

Leveling Guide

K–2:

- Simplified trailer with drawn slides and narration.
- Debate in small groups with sentence starters ('I think... because...').
- Use puppets or costumes for fun delivery.

3–5:

- Full trailer with intro/hook, summary, and call to action.
- Structured debate with intro, 2–3 points, and rebuttal.
- Peer scoring rubric for performance and content.

Extension Activities

Same-Day:

- Watch book trailers from authors or publishers.
- Debate warm-ups: silly topics or practice rebuttals.

Week-Long:

- Host a Book Battle Tournament.
- Submit videos to a digital showcase or school website.

Cross-Curricular:

- Tech: Learn basic editing skills and storyboard creation.

- SEL: Reflect on persuasion and respectful disagreement.
- Art: Design poster campaigns to pair with trailers or debates.

Parent Involvement & Home Support

Take-Home Info:

- Explain students will create persuasive videos or participate in debates.
- Encourage watching family-friendly commercials or trailers together.

Home Extension:

- Create a family book commercial.
- Discuss what makes a good argument or product pitch.
- Watch a trailer and rewrite it from a new perspective.

Communication Tools:

- Newsletter blurbs with voting links or event dates.
- Family voting ballots for take-home trailer screenings.

Assessment & Documentation

Formative:

- Observe planning sessions, argument development, or storyboard building.
- Peer feedback on early scripts and rehearsals.

Summative:

- Rubric for clarity, creativity, evidence, and engagement.
- Trailer or debate performance checklist.

Documentation Tools:

- Save digital files for future sharing or portfolio use.
- Certificates for 'Most Persuasive,' 'Best Hook,' or 'Best Use of Humor.'

Troubleshooting & Tips

Common Challenges:

- Tech hiccups: Have a no-tech presentation option.
- Shy students: Offer voice-over roles or partner projects.

Adam's Pro Tips:

- Let students act as characters in their trailer or debate.

- Host a red carpet event or popcorn screening for added fun.

Resource Alternatives:

- Use printed storyboards or Google Slides if no video tools available.
- Podcast-style recordings for students who prefer audio.