

Title: Nelson Mandela
Author: Kadir Nelson
Grade Level: 2nd Grade



SUMMARY

From the book cover to the bibliography, Kadir Nelson illuminates the life of a great historical figure, Nelson Mandela. This captivating biography shows the journey of an African man committed to defending the defenseless and creating equality for all. Your family will be stunned by the life like paintings, which reveal South Africa's struggle to achieve equality, and display the joy felt when apartheid finally ended. Together, you will learn about Nelson Mandela's lifetime of sacrifice, and celebrate when he is selected to be a South African leader. Through reading this book, you and your child will develop deep respect for this inspiring world leader.

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- conquered (pg. 6)
- defend (pg. 7)
- apartheid (pg. 9)
- vowed (pg. 17)
- discrimination (pg. 19)
- renewed (pg. 22)
- comrades (pg. 28)

You might use a question like:

What is apartheid? How do the words and images on pages 9-10 help you understand this word?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

1. The author uses the phrase “ancestors in the sky?” Point out this phrase to your child as it is used throughout the book. Talk about the meaning of the phrase and how it is developed each time it's used.
2. What do you notice about the way Kadir Nelson shows Nelson Mandela in the images throughout the book?
3. What led to Africans becoming powerless in South Africa? Ask your child to use the details in italics on pages 5-6 to explain this in their own words.
4. What do you think inspired Nelson to become a lawyer and “defend those who could not defend themselves?” Review the pages before this quote on page 7 with your child, looking for details from his early life that may have caused him to fight for justice.
5. What do you feel as a reader on pages 17-18? What does Kadir Nelson do in the illustrations and in the words to make you feel this way?
6. Travelling was an important aspect of Mandela's life. Talk about why he chose to go to other countries. Talk about the positive and negative consequences of his travels with your child, by asking, “What good things happened after his visits? How did his travels inspire him and others? What bad things happened as a result?” Use the biography on the last page to help your child point out the negative consequences.
7. What was the author's purpose in writing this picture book? What is his central message about Nelson Mandela? Be sure to read the last two pages together to support your discussion, which provides a more extensive biography of Mandela.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

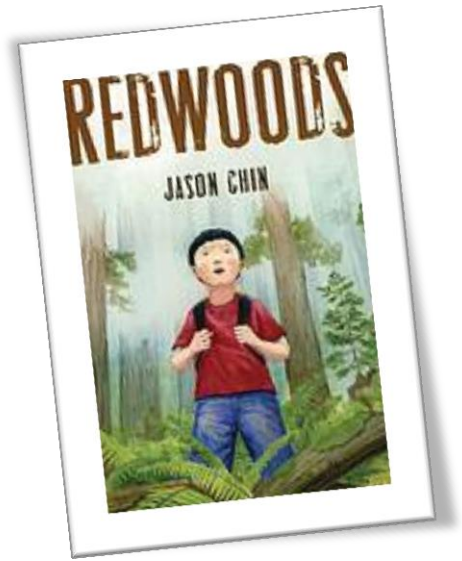
- 1) Read aloud a newspaper article to your child or watch a news clip together reporting Nelson Mandela's death in 2013. (Here's one kid friendly version: <https://newsela.com/articles/mandela-obit/id/2103/>) Ask your child to use details from the picture book to explain what led Nelson Mandela to become such a respected and beloved leader.
- 2) Nelson Mandela's wife, Graca Machel was constantly seen at her husband's side, supporting him in his efforts. Together, look through these images of her here:



http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/graca-machel-nelson-mandelas-wife-has-her-own-unique-story/2013/07/06/2939484e-e5b5-11e2-80eb-3145e2994a55_gallery.html. Ask your child to point out evidence from the images of

Graca Machel's support. What are some different ways she supported her husband?

Title: Redwoods
Author: Jason Chin
Grade Level: 2nd Grade



SUMMARY

In *Redwoods*, a young boy finds a book on the subway about the coastal redwoods in Northern California. As he begins to read about these massive trees, he is drawn into their magical world. As your family reads along, you too will find yourselves in the company of these coastal giants. Jason Chin uses amazing facts and eye-catching illustrations to tell you all about the habitat of the redwoods and how these trees thrive and grow. The book's format –both nonfiction and fiction – is a great way to encourage your family to learn about this important area of America and feel as though you are on an adventure yourselves!

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- ancestors (pg. 2)
- shallow (pg. 4)
- diameter (pg. 7)
- conditions (pg. 8)
- infestations (pg. 10)
- ingenious (pg. 14)
- interior (pg. 21)

You might use a question like:

In the book, what does the word ingenious mean? How do the words on page 14 help you understand this word? Can you say in what ways the trees are "ingenious?"

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

- 1) In this book, a young boy is transported to the redwood forest in Northern California. As a family, talk about what makes this forest so special. Be sure to go back to the book as you talk with your child. How does the author use words and pictures to make you feel like you are in the redwood forest with the boy?
- 2) On page 10, the author says redwood trees are "very good at defending themselves." Ask your child how the trees defend themselves. Go to pages 10-12 and ask your child to explain what tools the trees use to protect and keep themselves healthy.
- 3) As you read about the temperatures and conditions in the redwood forest, talk about what makes Northern California a perfect place for trees to live. How do the temperature and precipitation patterns in this region help support the trees?
- 4) What is the focus of the paragraph on page 21? (The page starts with "The crown of a redwood...") Tell your child to look carefully at the page and ask: What is this page about? Can you tell me in a sentence?
- 5) The redwoods are a habitat for lots of plants, insects, birds, and animals. What other organisms make their homes in redwood trees? As you read the book, ask your child to point out other living things that live in the redwood forest. Have your child name specific organisms listed in the book.
- 6) When you're done reading the book, ask your child: Why do you think the author wrote this book? As a family, talk about what the author wants you to think about redwood trees by the end of the text. Be sure to look at the sections at the end of the book, "Redwoods in Danger" and the Author's Note, as you think about the author's point of view.

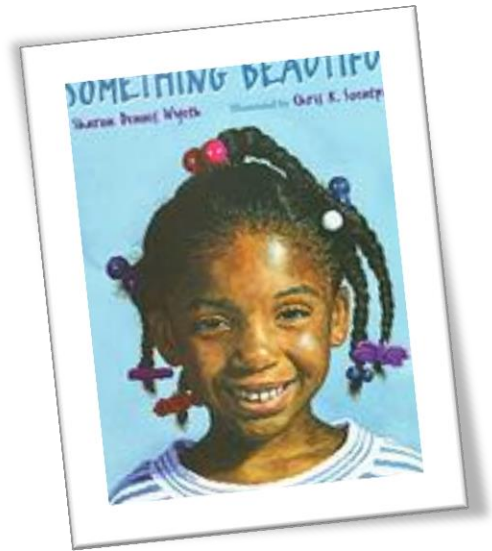
EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. Author and illustrator Jason Chin has a passion for natural ecosystems. Check out some of his other books, like *Gravity*, *Island: A Story for the Galapagos*, or *Coral Reefs*. In all of his books, Jason Chin uses eye-catching illustrations and interesting facts to make you feel like you're there, experiencing a new place.



2. Keep the adventures going by creating a book of your own! Think about a place you love to visit and explore. What would you want people to know and love about this place? Create a short book for your family and friends so they can know about this cool place. It could be a story like Chin's *Redwoods*, or an informational book too. Use your own experiences and look up some fun facts about the place to get you started. Be sure to draw some pictures to capture your readers' imaginations!

Title: Something Beautiful
Author: Sharon Dennis Wyeth
Grade: 2nd Grade



SUMMARY

"Everyone needs something beautiful," a mother tells her daughter. As the little girl looks around her neighborhood, she has a hard time finding her "beautiful." As she begins to ask around, she realizes there are beautiful things all around her. As you watch the main character find her own beautiful, you will be inspired by the choices she makes to create beauty around her and the ways in which she becomes an influence for good in her community. Your family might relate to this book as the text and illustrations describe life in an urban setting. Even if you're not from an urban setting, your family will love the lessons of beauty in this book. After reading *Something Beautiful*, you will be excited to find and create "something beautiful" in your own community!

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- courtyard (pg. 1)
- sizzles (pg. 11)
- launderette (pg. 21)
- cautioned (pg. 29-The Author's Note)

You might use a question like:

In the book, what does the word launderette mean? How does the image help you understand the word?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

- 1) The author uses words and pictures at the beginning of the story to describe her neighborhood. Using the words and pictures on pages 1-8 to help you, talk about some of the tougher aspects of the narrator's neighborhood.
- 2) The word beautiful is central to the story. Ask your child how the narrator defines beautiful? Talk about how this definition compares to your own understanding of beautiful.
- 3) As the girl walks through her community, she asks people to explain their "something beautiful." What are some things that the people in her community find beautiful?
- 4) How does the girl's attitude change across the text? What causes this change? Can you point out in the text where these changes happen?
- 5) Compare the words and illustration on the first four pages to the last pages. How are they similar and different? What do the author and illustrator do on the last four pages to make you feel hopeful?
- 6) One theme in this book is that each person in a community can be an influence for good. What events in the book make you think about this theme? Can you find any other themes in the book?

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

- 1) What are some things that the girl or other characters in the book do to make their community more beautiful? Make a list of these ideas. Now, make another list of things that are beautiful in your own community. As a family, create and carry out a plan to improve your community in some way.
- 2) In the story, the narrator interviews people in her community to understand what each person sees as "something beautiful." Help your child to name a few community members he or she could interview to find out what they find to be beautiful. Together, contact those individuals and arrange an interview. Your child can then create a poster, describing these beautiful things using words and pictures.

Title: Stellularuna

Author: Janell Cannon

Lexile: 2nd Grade Read Aloud



SUMMARY

Stellularuna is a fruit bat who becomes separated from her mother, and undergoes many adventures on her way home. It is a classic tale of similarities and differences. At the end of the story, all of the delightful characters find that, with a little respect and experience, none of us are so different, after all. Your child will be charmed by the main character and her adventures, and will love the accompanying pictures. Your family will learn about the habits of fruit bats and birds, and engage with vocabulary such as swooped, clambered, and perched. Stellularuna will provide a wealth of discussion about what makes us both unique and part of a community.

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- clutch (pg. 2)
- swooped (pg. 3)
- clambered (pg. 4)
- perched (pg. 5)

You might use a question like:

In the book, what does the word clutch mean? How does the image help you understand the word?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

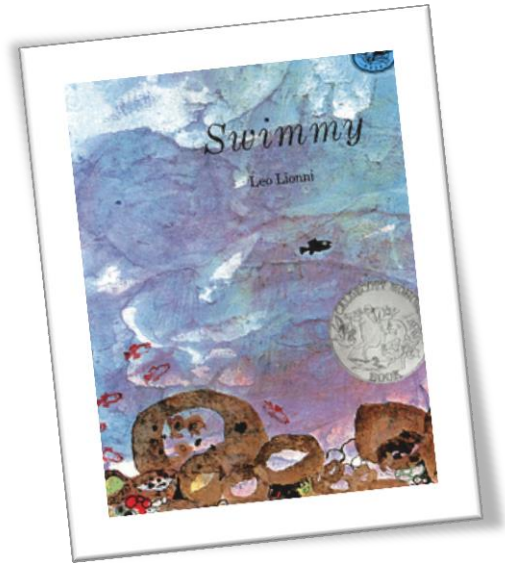
1. When Stellularuna falls into the nest, immediately the birds notice something different about the bat. What do they notice? Ask your child to point out other differences between the bats and birds.

2. As you read the text together, take note of the similarities between Stellaluna and the birds. What do Pip, Flitter, Flap and Stella find they have in common?
3. On pages 3-4, momma bird tells Stellaluna about behavior she dislikes. What does momma bird consider to be bad? As you continue to read the story, do you notice Stellaluna changing? At the end of the story, is Stella behaving badly?
4. After reading the text, flip back and forth between the first few pages and the last. As a family, discuss: How does Stellaluna's adventure begin? How does it end? Have your child explain how the beginning and ending are connected.
5. What does Stellaluna learn about herself after falling into the birds nest?
6. Stellaluna wakes up in the morning after leaving the three birds to an interesting view: a bat, just like her! Who is upside down and why? How many meanings does "upside down" have? What are they and how does the meaning change depending on the character? Be sure to use the images and the words in the story as you discuss this as a family.
7. The book shows a lot of differences and similarities between bats and birds. After reading the story, make a list of these similarities and differences with your child. Encourage him/her to flip back through the pages as you make your list. Ask, "What lesson do these comparisons help teach the three birds and Stellaluna?" What does Stellaluna's experience with the birds teach you about friendship?

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. In Stellaluna we learn lots of interesting aspects about bats in the context of a touching story. The wonderful descriptions of bats open up the opportunity to learn more about the fascinating animals. For example, these bats are able to see and eat mangos! Find out more about these bats by looking up books and articles in your local library or online. Remember to include key details like bats that can see and eat fruit when you're looking for texts.
2. Stellaluna is a beautiful tale, but it is complicated. Can you try to break it up into 3 pieces or parts to summarize what happens in the story? You can start by calling them: Beginning, Middle and End. Later, give each part a title as you see fit!

Title: Swimmy
Author: Leo Lionni
Grade Level: 2nd Grade



SUMMARY

Have you ever felt different? Where Swimmy lives, he is the only fish that isn't red. He also swims faster than all of the other fish. Swimmy is the only fish to survive an attack from a bigger fish, leaving him all alone! He sets out on his own to find a new school of fish and along the way learns a lot about the ocean around him. You will be rooting for Swimmy as he uses his new knowledge to help his new friends. Your

family will enjoy watching this small fish grow in big ways. Leo Lionni uses a variety of painting methods to create colorful images that will catch your child's attention as you read about Swimmy's adventures. Children will relate to Swimmy's unique attributes and will learn that differences are often strengths!

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- clutch (pg. 2)
- swooped (pg. 3)
- clambered (pg. 4)
- perched (pg. 5)

You might use a question like:

In the book, what does the word clutch mean? How does the image help you understand the word?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

8. At the beginning of the book talk about how Swimmy is different from other fish. See if your child can name some of his differences.
9. Events leave Swimmy all alone. Talk about how he responds to his new situation.
10. After Swimmy finds the new school of fish, he says, "Let's go and swim and play and see things!" What does this show you about his point of view of the things he saw on his journey?
11. Swimmy's new friends fear big fish. Talk about how he responds to their fear. How does the story come to an end?
12. Swimmy changes throughout the story. See if your child can point out ways he changed and parts of the story that show his changes. Talk about what can be learned from Swimmy's transformation.

EXTRA ACTIVITY

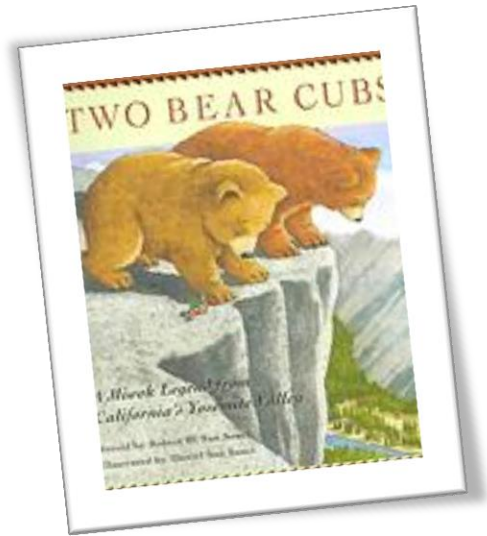
The illustrations in *Swimmy* support the ideas in the text and often add more details to the story. As you reread the story together, stop on each page and discuss the author's choices in images. Think about the colors, shapes, and pictures he chose to use and ask, "How do the pictures add to the ideas in the text?"

Title: Two Bear Cubs:

A Miwok Legend from California's Yosemite Valley

Author: Robert D. San Souci

Grade Level: 2nd Grade



SUMMARY

Have you ever wondered how certain land formations came to be? For many generations, Native American tribes have shared stories and legends to answer questions about the natural world. *Two Bear Cubs* is a legend that comes from the Miwok Native American People in California's Yosemite Valley. In this tale, two bear cubs do not heed their mother's advice and wander off, falling asleep on a rock. As they sleep, the rock grows and grows, eventually becoming a giant mountain. Their mother becomes worried and asks for help from the other animals to find her cubs. In the end, an unlikely creature is able to save the cubs. The playful, adventurous cubs in this story will charm your child. Your family will enjoy seeing this story unfold, as many animals try to help Mother Bear find her cubs! As the story concludes, families can have rich discussions about the many lessons and themes woven throughout this legend including the importance of listening to directions or that greatness can come in small packages.

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- waded (pg. 2)
- cautioned (pg. 5)
- stirred (pg. 6)
- brimmed (pg. 10)
- grieving (pg. 11)
- agile (pg. 16)
- resourcefulness (pg. 25)

You might use a question like: *On page 6, the author uses the word stirred. Usually when we hear the word stirred, it is referring to mixing something up in a bowl or pot, but in this text, the*

author uses this word differently. How do the words around it help you understand the meaning?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

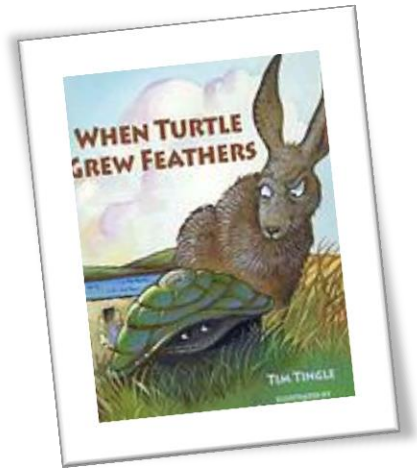
13. Before reading this legend, read the background information about the Miwok people on the first page and at the end of the book with your child. As you read the story, stop throughout and discuss: How might the lifestyle and beliefs of the Miwok people have influenced the legend? As you review the illustrations, what information about the Miwok people did the illustrator apply in his illustrations?
14. How does the author introduce this legend? As a family, use the words in the text to discuss how the author introduces the characters and setting. How does the problem develop at the beginning of the text? Be sure to reread pages 5-6 to guide your discussion.
15. How does Mother Bear respond when she realizes her cubs are missing? What do her actions show you about her character?
16. As Mother Bear asks the other animals for help, ask your child to point out words or phrases that are repeated. How does this repetition impact the way the story is told? Practice reading the dialogue between the characters, using different voices to make it clear when each animal is speaking.
17. What does it mean on page 13 when it says, "Here his courage failed him?" Ask your child to reread the sentence to help him/her explain.
18. What causes all of the other animals to laugh on page 16?
19. In what ways are Measuring Worm and his approach to rescuing the cubs different than the other animals' attempts? How do these differences help Measuring Worm to be successful? As you discuss, flip back to pages that show and describe the other animals' attempts to rescue the cubs. Notice what they say, do, and think in their process and compare this to the worm's process.

20. Native American Legends are often designed to answer questions about the natural world, but they also teach lessons. Talk about the bear cubs and other animals' experiences in this tale. What did the cubs learn? What can we learn as we think about Measuring Worm's successful rescue of the cubs?

EXTRA ACTIVITY

The author included a section at the end of the book called, "About the Miwok People." Point out to your child that this section is structured using headings, with facts and information related to the heading in each section. Use this structure as a guide for your own nonfiction text about the Miwok people. Pick 3-4 sections that your family finds most interesting and create a page about each topic for your book, using the same heading at the top, and describing the most interesting facts, in your child's own words. Younger siblings can help illustrate these pages, or you can search for photographs online together, to cut and paste into your book.

Title: When Turtle Grew Feathers
Author: Tim Tingle
Grade Level: 2nd Grade



SUMMARY

You may be familiar with the fable, *The Tortoise and the Hare*, but the Choctaw people tell this story differently. According to their legend, the turtle wasn't actually a turtle, but a turkey in a turtle's shell! You and your child will be intrigued by this alternate version of the fable, noticing the similarities and differences between the two stories.

Through funny dialogue between characters and illustrations loaded with action and feeling, Tim Tingle engages readers of all ages. By the end of this tale, your child will learn an important lesson about the power of helpful friends, as well as the lesson that it isn't always the biggest or fastest that wins in the end!

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- shattered (pg. 5)
- denied (pg. 10)
- clearing (pg. 11)
- stammered (pg. 20)
- churning (pg. 22)

You might use a question like:

In the book, what does the word "shattered" mean? How does the image help you understand the word?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

21. After reading the entire story, compare the first page to the last. Talk about the similarities between these pages. Why was it important for the author to introduce and conclude this tale by linking it to the Choctaw people?

22. What led to Turtle's shell becoming broken? Have your child point out in the text what caused this. Then, reread the next few pages after this event. Talk about how Turkey and Turtle respond to this challenge.
23. The author and illustrator bring a lot of feelings to life through the dialogue and images throughout the text. As you read the story, ask your child to describe what the characters are feeling. What specific words or images are used to express those feelings?
24. Throughout the tale, the author uses rhyming words. Practice reading these lines with your child, asking them to point out the words that rhyme. Try replacing a couple of the rhyming words with a synonym and then read the original language. Then ask your child, "How do these rhyming words add to the rhythm of the text?"
25. When rabbit first meets turtle he says, "I feel real fast! I'm ready to race. Who wants a little mud in his face?" Later, the text says, "For the first time ever, Rabbit couldn't think of a thing to say." What led to this transformation? Reread the pages in between together, discussing events and moments where Rabbit starts to show that his attitude is changing.
26. Reread the moral on the last page of the story. As a family, discuss how Turtle learned these lessons.

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Find a version of the original fable, *The Tortoise and the Hare*. Read this story together, noting similarities and differences between the Choctaw version and the original fable. With your child, discuss how the character's experiences differ in these two versions. Ask, "How do these differences impact the lessons learned by the characters?"

Here are a few possible titles, which include the original fable:

The Rabbit and the Turtle, retold and illustrated by Eric Carle

The Bilingual Anthology of Aesop's Fables, by [Javier Muñoz](#) (All stories are written in both English and Spanish!)

Aesop's Fables by Jerry Pinkney

