



STORY SUMMARY

Dotty the dachshund knows she was born to dance ballet. When told to sit, she does a *plié*. Asked to stay, she does an *assemblée*. Fed up with Dotty's lack of discipline, Mrs. Austere sends her to the Canine School of Obedience, but Dotty just can't seem to learn. Heartbroken, the little dog

flees to the park—where an unexpected new friend is waiting. Could he know the secret to helping Dotty dance out her dreams with her own style of discipline?

Pair this book with:

- *A World of Mindfulness* by Erin Alladin
- *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae



Author/Illustrator **Rebecca Bender** is best known for her award-winning Giraffe and Bird books. Her illustrations also grace the chapter books *Slug Days*, *Penguin Days*, and *Duck Days*. Rebecca's awards and honors include the OLA Blue Spruce Award, a Cooperative Children's Book Center best-of-the-year choice, and a Toronto Public Library best-of-the-year selection. Rebecca graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design at the top of her class, earning the Medal for Illustration. She lives in Burlington, Ontario, with her husband and children.

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THEMES

Growth Mindset, Empathy, Dance, Character Education

BISAC CODES

JUV031020 JUVENILE FICTION / Performing Arts / Dance

JUV002070 JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / Dogs

JUV039140 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Self-Esteem & Self-Reliance

JUV019000 JUVENILE FICTION / Humorous Stories

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Language Arts: syllables, making connections; Physical Education: dance; Math: coding a sequence; Health: empathy, mindfulness

READING LEVEL

Lexile: AD580L | Fountas & Pinnell: N

THIS GUIDE CONTAINS:

ACTIVITY	MAIN SUBJECT AREAS	SPECIFIC SKILLS AND TOPICS
Read-Aloud	Language Arts Character Traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activate prior knowledge, make connections • adjectives • friendship
Clap and Stomp It	Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • syllables
Dance Research and Performance	Physical Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research and technology • perform dance moves in sequence
Have You Ever Felt That Way?	Language Arts Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make connections between the text and lived experience • develop and explore the concept of empathy
Ballet Coding	Math Dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write and execute code that involves sequential events • perform dance moves in sequence
Acceptance of Ourselves	Language Arts Character Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make connections between texts • celebrate each person's unique characteristics
Take a Moment to Breathe	Outdoor Learning Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connect with nature by sitting still and observing • use mindfulness strategies

THE READ-ALOUD

For this activity, teachers can choose the discussion points most appropriate for their particular group of students.

Learning Expectations:

Students will:

- activate prior knowledge and make connections while reading and listening to text
- be introduced to (or review) verbs and adjectives
- put movements to words

You Will Need

- *Ballewiena*
- chart paper
- markers

How To:

Before Reading

Show students the front and back cover of the book. Ask them what they notice (colors, the dog's costume, etc.).

Assess prior knowledge of students by asking what they know about dogs, specifically dachshunds. Ask students to predict what they think the story will be about based on the cover. Prompt students to explain what parts of the cover illustrations make them think that.

During Reading

As you read the book with your students, take time to sound out the words in italics.

First spread: Ask, "What do you notice about Dotty's character from the illustrations?" "What rhyming words do you notice?"

Second spread: Look at the illustrations of the human versus the dogs in this spread. Discuss why the human is illustrated in black and white. "What does that make us, the reader, think about?"

"Do you think Dotty has good listening skills? Why or why not?" "What is Dotty's dream?"

Ask students to make a connection to the text by sharing their own dreams (for example, what they want to be when they grow up).

Third spread: "Looking at the first page in this spread, how do you think Dotty is feeling? Compare this to how you think Dotty is feeling on the second page of this spread. Is she feeling the same or different?"

Discuss the word *obedience* and what that means for Dotty. Ask students if there are any other places that come to mind when they are learning about the word *obedience*.

Fourth spread: Discuss what the word *grueling* means.

"Why do you think Dotty can't do what is being asked of her?" "Do you think she's trying to get into trouble?" "Do you think she can't sit?" "What does the yellow around Dotty on the second page of this spread do for the reader?"

Fifth spread: "In this spread, we see Dotty running away. What about her illustration tells the reader how she is feeling?"

Sixth spread: "A new character is introduced in this spread. His character is described as 'chattering.' What do you think this means?"

Louis-Pierre calls Dotty "pitou." Tell students this means "doggie" or "pooch" in French.

Seventh spread: "Why do you think Dotty is able to follow the movements of Louis-Pierre, but is not able to listen to Ms. Austere?"

Eighth spread: "Louis-Pierre uses some pretty funny methods to get Dotty to practice the moves she needs to learn. Which one is your favorite?" "Do you think Dotty is able to be herself in these movement exercises?"

Ninth spread: The author writes, “Dotty practiced and practiced, even when she wanted to give up.” Discuss with students whether they have ever felt like this. Invite them to share their experience, if they are comfortable doing so. Discuss what the word compliment means.

Ask how Louis-Pierre compliments Dotty in this spread (“Look how much discipline you’ve gained, Pitou! The more focus you have, the better you dance.”) Invite students to share times when they have received compliments and ask them to share how those compliments made them feel.

Tenth spread: Talk about what makes a someone a good friend. Discuss how Louis-Pierre shows Dotty he is a good friend in this spread.

Eleventh spread: Discuss the word anticipation and what it means in relation to this spread. “What do you notice about the people in the audience?” “What about the animals?” “Is it similar or different to the beginning of the book?”

Twelfth spread: “How do you think Dotty is feeling on stage?”

Thirteenth spread: Discuss what the words *soared* and *glorious* mean.

Fourteenth spread: “Do you think Ms.Austere’s feelings about Dotty are the same as they were in the beginning?” “What adjective could you use to describe how Ms.Austere is feeling about Dotty?” “Based on Dotty’s illustration, how do you think Dotty is feeling?”

Fifteenth spread: “In this spread, Dotty changes schools. Change can be scary sometimes, but it can also be exciting. Has there a time when you had to make a change that made you feel scared? Happy?”

“Dotty learns to control her body movements and find it even helps her to ‘sit and stay.’ Why is it good for us to rest and calm our body and minds?”

After Reading

Compare the last page of the story to the picture book *A World of Mindfulness* by Erin Alladin. Talk about strategies that help our bodies and minds calm down and why this is good for our mental health.

ACTIVITY 1: CLAP AND STOMP IT

Using the *Ballewiena* endpapers, students will break ballet terms into syllables through kinesthetic action.

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- read unfamiliar words by breaking them into syllables

You Will Need

- *Ballewiena*

How To:

1. Read *Ballewiena* by Rebecca Bender.
2. Show students the front and back endpapers where the French ballet terms are written. Ask students to tap or stomp out the syllables of each word.
3. Extension: Find other words in the text to segment.



ACTIVITY 2: DANCE RESEARCH

Students will use technology to research different ballet moves, then arrange multiple moves in sequence for a performance.

Learning Expectations:

Students will:

- use technology to perform research
- use dance moves in sequence to create a cohesive piece

You Will Need

- *Ballewiena*
- access to technology (iPad, chromebook, etc.)
- access to internet

How To:

1. Students will be provided with the one of the ballet moves from the endpapers of *Ballewiena*.
2. Students will work in small groups to research 1–2 moves.
3. Students will learn how to do their assigned dance move and present it to the class.
4. After actively listening and learning from the presentations, groups will choose 3–4 ballet moves and put them into a cohesive sequence.
5. Groups will then present the finished piece to the class.

ACTIVITY 3: HAVE YOU EVER FELT THAT WAY?

Students will be introduced to the term *empathy* and make connections between the text and their lived experience.

Learning Expectations:

Students will:

- explore and practice empathy
- make text-to-self connections

You Will Need

- *Ballewiena*
- “Have You Ever Felt That Way?” blackline master
- chart paper
- markers

How To:

1. Read *Ballewiena* as a whole class.
2. Bring attention to the fourth spread of the book where Dotty is told to sit, but she chooses opposite movements.
3. In a whole-class discussion, identify times when students have been asked to do something like “sit still” or “stop talking” but they found it too difficult to do so. Identify what they did instead.
4. Make connections between student answers and what Dotty does in the book.
5. Record student ideas and responses on chart paper for students to have during their writing activity.
6. Students complete drawings and/or sentences on the “Have You Ever Felt That Way?” blackline master.
7. Optional: Consider having an author’s chair session where students share their drawings and connections to the class. Point out similarities between the presentations to help students make connections within the context of their classroom community.



ACTIVITY 4: BALLET CODING

Students will create a sequential ballet dance sequence for Dotty.

Learning Expectations:

Students will:

- write and execute code/instructions that involves sequential events
- perform dance moves in sequence

You Will Need

- *Ballewienna* by Rebecca Bender
- “Ballet Coding” blackline master

How To:

1. Read *Ballewienna*.
2. Do a picture walk of Dotty completing the ballet dance moves throughout the text.
3. Introduce the terms *up*, *down*, *right*, and *left* to assist with coding.
4. Instruct students to use an arrow to create a ballet dance for Dotty.
5. Optional: Have students attempt to complete the dance they coded for Dotty.
6. Extension: Use painter’s tape to create the “Ballet Coding” blackline master on the floor to provide students with a kinaesthetic opportunity to complete this task.



ACTIVITY 5: ACCEPTANCE OF OURSELVES

Students will celebrate their unique characteristics by identifying areas where they excel.

Learning Expectations:

Students will:

- make connections between texts
- identify and celebrate the unique characteristics of their classmates

You Will Need

- *Ballewienna*
- *Giraffes Can’t Dance* by Giles Andreae
- chart paper
- markers

How To:

1. Read *Ballewienna*.
2. On a piece of chart paper, make a t-chart. On one side of the t-chart, identify what Dotty is told to do (sit, stay). On the other side of the chart, write down how Dotty excels.
3. Read *Giraffes Can’t Dance* by Giles Andreae.
4. On the t-chart, identify what Gerald has difficulty with in his story. On the other side of the t-chart, identify how Gerald finds a way to finally dance.
5. As a class, do a community sharing circle about what each person in the classroom feels that they are good at. Pose a question that would make them think of doing the opposite and ask how that would make them feel. For example, if a student says they are good at piano, ask how they would feel if they were told they had to use their toes to play, or that they could only play guitar.
6. Discuss what “growth mindset” means. Ask students to think about ways that both Dotty and Gerald demonstrate a growth mindset. Give students the opportunity to discuss, using a think-pair-share model, for approximately two minutes.

7. After students have shared their think-pair-share conversations, bring them back together as a group. Observe that both characters needed help from a secondary character (a friend) to help them find their way. Talk about why it's okay to ask for and to need help sometimes.
8. Consider having students write a journal entry about a time when they needed help from a friend, or about an area where they excel.



ACTIVITY 6: TAKE A MOMENT TO BREATHE

Students find a space outside to be still and observe the peaceful sounds of nature.

Learning Expectations:

Students will:

- connect with nature through silent observation
- use mindfulness strategies

You Will Need

- *Ballewiena*

How To:

1. After reading *Ballewiena*, review the last spread where Dotty learns to “appreciate a good sit and stay.”
2. Talk about why learning how to sit quietly or stay still can be good for our mental and physical health.
3. Discuss how doing this kind of activity takes practice and time to learn—just like Dotty in the book!
4. Find a spot outside. Have students sit still and focus on the sounds they hear.

Bibliography

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Start here



Ballet Coding

		Plié		
Pas de chat		Chassé		Fouetté
			Jeté	
	Arabesque			



End here

Have You Ever Felt That Way?

Dotty is told to “sit” at the obedience school. What does she do instead?

Put yourself in Dotty’s shoes. Have you ever been told to do something like “sit still,” but you did something else instead?