READING GUIDE

This is the Boat that Ben Built

Jen Lynn Bailey
illus. Maggie Zeng

Story Summary

Young Ben sets out to explore the river equipped with a sturdy boat, some sample-collection gear, and his scientific curiosity. Along the way he meets a black bear taking a swim, a moose all wobbly and slim, a goose with a gorgeous grin, and a heron all proper and prim…but things really start happening after the owl HOOs loudly on a whim. A humorous exploration of a northern river ecosystem with an intrepid young boatsman, paired with an extended author's note about its ecology and key species.

Links:
WCLN "Science—Food Web" on YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NcPs_SG7fQ
Pair this book with:
Outside, You Notice by Erin Alladin

Jen Lynn Bailey, illus. Maggie Zeng
This is the Boat that Ben Built

Jen Lynn Bailey's passions for environmental science and education are evident in everything she does. After studying Integrated Science Studies at Carleton University and earning her Bachelor of Science in Education at Martin Luther College, she went on to earn her Master of Fine Arts in Writing at Vermont College of Fine Arts. She has worked on numerous wildlife research studies in the field and in the lab, and has taught both in an elementary school and in a college professional writing program. Today Jen is a policy and planning analyst for Science Promotion and Operations at the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. Her first picture book, *This is the Boat That Ben Built*, combines her passions in an engaging introduction to ecology. Jen lives in Ottawa, Ontario.

Maggie Zeng is a children's book illustrator, graphic designer, concept artist, and animator. Born in Montreal, she attends Concordia University and previously received the Outstanding Achievement Award in Applied Arts Technologies at Dawson College. Maggie loves making story-driven illustrations that convey a feeling of adventure and wonder through fun characters and magical environments. *This is the Boat That Ben Built* is her first picture book.

Picture Book Ages 5–8 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-242-4 | Pages: 40

Themes
Poetry, Ecosystems, Outdoor Education

BISAC Codes
JUV029010 JUVENILE FICTION / Science & Nature / Environment
JUV002100 JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / Fish
JUV002290 JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / Deer, Moose & Caribou
JUV002040 JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / Birds
JUV057000 JUVENILE FICTION / Stories in Verse

Reading Level: Lexile Reading level: AD650L

Curriculum Connections
Science: life systems, food chains/webs; Outdoor Education: observing; Writing: text features; Visual Arts: painting

pajamapress
www.pajamapress.ca

Curriculum Connections:

Activiy	Main Subject Areas	Specific Skills
Read-Aloud	Comprehension	Activate prior knowledge Infer, predict, make connections
Ecosystems	Science	Life Systems
The Great Outdoors	Outdoor Education Science	Observing Food chains/webs
Poetry	Writing	Text Features
Painting with Perspective	Visual Arts	Painting

The Read-Aloud

Learning expectations:
Students will:

- identify reading comprehension strategies (e.g., activate prior knowledge, infer, predict, make connections) and use them before, during, and after reading to understand texts

You Will Need

- *This is the Boat that Ben Built*

How To:

Before Reading

Show the cover and read the title. Ask if the title reminds students of another story they may know (e.g., "This is the House that Jack Built").

Examine the front endpapers and dedication page.

During Reading

First spread: Direct student's attention to the name Ben is painting on his boat. Briefly discuss how people name their boats and the significance the name "Explorer" might have for Ben. Tell students they will hear some parts repeated over and over, and invite them to chime in with the reading as they are able.

Read the first nine spreads rhythmically, pausing briefly after reading each page, to allow students to take in the illustrations, but don't break the rhythm with discussion. Give a longer pause at the end of the ninth spread.

READING GUIDE

This is the Boat that Ben Built

Jen Lynn Bailey
illus. Maggie Zeng

After the ninth spread, turn the page suspensefully, then launch into reading the next four spreads at an accelerated pace with urgency in your expression. Pause again just before turning the final page, then read that last page with a sense of completion and satisfaction.

After Reading

Show the nonfiction section on the last four spreads of the book, without reading them, perhaps commenting that "Here are some cool activities we can try later." Show the back endpaper. Invite discussion on that, and on the whole story.

Activity 1: Ecosystems

Teachers can tailor this activity to align with the science curriculum for their grade. Suggested learning expectations from a variety of grades are given.

Learning expectations:
Students will:

- Grade 1: identify what living things provide for other living things
- Grade 2: identify ways in which animals are helpful to, and ways in which they meet the needs of, living things, including humans, to explain why humans should protect animals and the places where they live
- Grade 3: assess ways in which plants are important to humans and other living things
- Grade 4: build food chains consisting of different plants and animals
- Grade 6: demonstrate an understanding of biodiversity as the variety of life on earth, including variety within each species of plant and animal, among species of plants and animals in communities, and among communities and the physical landscapes that support them

You Will Need

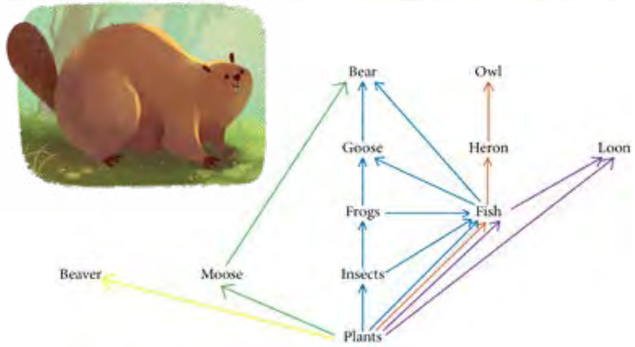
- *This is the Boat that Ben Built*
- internet
- chart paper and markers
- *Wolf Island, The Wolves Return: A New Beginning for Yellowstone National Park*, and *Skydiver: Saving the fastest Bird in the World*, all by Celia Godkin

How To:

1. View a video to introduce students to food chains, food webs, and ecosystems. For example, WCLN's "Science—Food Web" video on YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NcPs_SG7fQ
2. Read the nonfiction section (Welcome to the Northern River Ecosystem) on the last four spreads of *This is the Boat that Ben Built*, and discuss the questions posed there. Check out the search suggestion for bird songs. The final challenge, "Tell the story another way", is expanded upon in Activity 3 below.
3. Using the information in the nonfiction section, draw simple food chains. For example:

4. Add more relationships described in this section, using a different arrow color for each chain.
5. Do additional research on some of the animals described in this section. If more information is found about predators and food sources, add these to the food chains. Students may notice that some of the "chains" are becoming non-linear: some animals or plants appear in more than one chain. A food web is emerging.

pajamapress
www.pajamapress.ca



6. As your research increases and the web gets more complex, you may wish to cut out the living things represented in the web and arrange them on a large surface such as the floor or a blank whiteboard or wall, in order to demonstrate the interdependence of various species.
7. Discuss how human activity that threatens one species in the web threatens the entire web. The following books by Celia Godkin can help students understand species interdependence: *Wolf Island, The Wolves Return: A New Beginning for Yellowstone National Park*, and *Skydiver: Saving the Fastest Bird in the World.*

Activity 2: The Great Outdoors

This activity is the perfect opportunity to incorporate elements of Outdoor Education, which has recently gained increased importance in elementary schools.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- investigate and compare the physical characteristics of a variety of plants and animals
- identify environment as the area in which something or someone exists or lives
- build food chains/webs consisting of different plants and animals

You Will Need

- *This is the Boat that Ben Built*
- clipboards, pencils, and paper for each student (a rectangle of heavy cardboard with a binder clip makes an inexpensive clipboard)
- a book about exploring outdoors, such as *Outside, You Notice* by Erin Alladin
- digital cameras (e.g. phones or tablets), ideally one per student
- digital and print resources for research

How To:

1. Give each student a clipboard, paper, and pencil.
2. Re-read *This is the Boat that Ben Built*, tasking students to record the names of each plant, animal and non-living thing they see or hear about in the book. This is to practice their observation skills. Allow them to share their observations with one another.
3. Read a book about observing outdoors, such as *Outside You Notice* by Erin Alladin.
4. Take students outside with their clipboards, fresh paper, and pencils. Go to an area that is as rich with nature as possible, but even in a paved schoolyard, you will find tiny ecosystems surviving in the cracks. Ask students to record the names (or drawings) of as many living things as they can within the ecosystem, as well as non-living things that are part of the ecosystem.
5. Invite students to take digital photos of the things they have identified.
6. Research some of the organisms the students have identified.
7. Create food chains/webs to reflect what the class has learned, using the photos students have taken.

READING GUIDE

This is the Boat that Ben Built

Jen Lynn Bailey
illus. Maggie Zeng

Activity 3: Poetry

This book reveals several of the elements of poetry in a child-friendly, accessible way.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- recognize simple organizational patterns and text features in specific text forms
- write short texts using simple forms (e.g., their own variation on a familiar poem)
- make revisions to improve the content, clarity, and interest of their written work
- gather information to support ideas for writing from a variety of sources

You Will Need

- *This is the Boat that Ben Built*
- chart paper and markers
- other poetic picture books, such as *All the World a Poem*, by Gilles Tibo

How To:

1. Begin by writing "Features of Poetry" at the top of a sheet of chart paper. Invite students to name some things that they can think of that make a poem different from other types of text, such as a story. Students will probably say "rhyme."
2. Re-read *This is the Boat that Ben Built* as a vehicle for making an anchor chart of the features of poetry. For example, read the first two spreads, exaggerating the lilting rhythm. Read them again, while students clap the syllables. Explain that this musical feeling is called rhythm. Write *rhythm* on your chart. If students did not mention the repetition of some of the words, point it out, and write *repetition* on your chart. Next, point out the alliteration in the title, which also appears on most pages, and add *alliteration* to your chart (explaining its meaning if necessary). Rhythm, repetition, and alliteration all fall under the umbrella of "playing with language," a key characteristic of poetry. Starting at the sixth spread, students will notice rhyme, which can then be added to the chart if it is not there already. See if students recognize the new alliteration on this

pajamapress
www.pajamapress.ca

page as well. After reading, invite students to comment on the number of words in the book. Show a typical story book which has many more words per page. Write "fewer words" on your anchor chart.

3. Refer to the challenge at the end of the nonfiction section, on the last page of the book: "Imagine this story another way." Make lists of plants and animals that are familiar to students: amphibians, birds, reptiles, insects, plants, or whatever you have encountered in your science or outdoor education work.
4. Collaboratively with students, write a new poem, based on *This is the Boat that Ben Built*, using students' suggestions from your lists, perhaps using a different type of ecosystem, mode of transportation, and child's name. The first two lines will be similar to the book. If you have made food chains, you might begin with a plant that is low on the food chain and work up to a carnivore that is at the top. Encourage students to think of appropriate descriptions of actions to go with each plant or animal. For example, your third line could be, "This is the lily pad that grew in the pond that floated the raft that Reilly rowed." Once the poem is complete, revise it to add alliteration and rhyme where possible.
5. Using independent or guided writing, have students write their own poem using a similar pattern. You might want to use the "This is the Poem" template provided. On this template, students choose a mode of transportation, character name, verb, and body of water and write them on stylized lines at the top. They then copy those four words onto the matching lines farther down the page to complete their first two stanzas. More general clues for further stanzas encourage growing independence. Students who do not yet write independently could make illustrations for the collaborative poem.
6. Create illustrated books using the poems.
7. If you wish to extend this activity, consider reading the book *All the World a Poem* by Gilles Tibo, for which a teaching guide with more poetry activities is available here www.pajamapress.ca/resource/all_the_world_a_poem_teaching_guides

Activity 4: Painting Perspectives

Examining the varied perspectives employed by a professional illustrator can help students develop variety in their own art techniques.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- create two-dimensional works of art that express feelings and ideas inspired by observations of nature
- identify the conventions and techniques used in some familiar media forms and explain how they help convey meaning (e.g., camera closeups to show details, medium and long shots to put people and objects in perspective, high and low camera angles to create illusions of size or artistic effects
- identify the physical characteristics of a variety of plants and animals
- extension option: make drawings of trees (for example) that are close and far away, using contrasts in size and placement on the paper to show depth of space, and basing the drawings on observations of real trees and trees in a variety of art works

You Will Need

- *This is the Boat that Ben Built*
- art paper
- tempera paints and brushes
- digital cameras and printer

How To:

1. Examine the illustrations with your students. First note the muted colors the illustrator has used: washed out grays for water; white, yellow, and gray for sky; olive-green for ground; only slightly brighter for trees. How do the colors of tree trunks vary with species (conifer vs. deciduous) and with distance from the viewer? Paints with which students will be most familiar include primary and secondary colors plus brown, black, and white. How might the illustrator have achieved the colors she used? Do we recognize the water even though it's not blue, as we might have painted it? Is water really blue?

READING GUIDE
This is the Boat that Ben Built
Jen Lynn Bailey
illus. Maggie Zeng

2. Leaf through the illustrations again, this time looking particularly at the perspective from which each page is painted. For example, the 2nd spread could be described as a high-angle landscape, not as high as a birds-eye view, but high enough that there is no horizon, no sky visible. The 4th spread is a low-angle landscape. Both paintings have a foreground, midground, and background, but the 4th spread also has a horizon. The 6th and 7th spreads are both birds-eye views, but the 6th is a wide-angle and the 7th is a close-up. The 10th spread shows a side-view close-up and the 11th a cut-away or cross-section.
3. If students did not take photos in Activity #2 above, you might wish to take them outside to do so now. Encourage them to use a variety of camera angles.
4. Choose an illustration from *This is the Boat that Ben Built* as the inspiration for a guided painting lesson. The 10th spread (a close-up with hazy background) might be the easiest one to start with. Choose and print a photo that you or one of your students has taken outside. Referring to both your photo and the book illustration, choose one or more colors to create a wash for the background. If using tempera paints, you might try a mixture of: 2 parts yellow, 1 part blue, 1 part red, 2 parts white, and 5 parts water (as in the painting at the right). Using a large brush, paint the bottom third or so with this mixture, then add four more parts each of white and water, and paint the top two thirds. Allow to dry. Using pencil, lightly draw one living thing that is in your photograph. Paint this living thing using undiluted paint that you have mixed to the right colors if necessary. Allow students time to complete each step after it has been demonstrated, using their own photographs as a guide.

5. Extension option: Depending on the age and abilities of your students, you may wish to repeat the lesson with a more challenging camera angle (e.g. elevated landscape, birds-eye view or cross-section), or allow them to pursue additional paintings on their own.
6. Help students learn the names of the living things they have painted if they have not done so already. Mount the paintings on black paper and add gallery-style name plates. Make a beautiful display of the paintings, with a title such as "Our Schoolyard Ecosystem."

This guide was created with support from Ontario Creates
ONTARIO CREATES | ONTARIO CRÉATIF

Bibliography

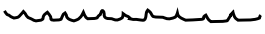
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/language18currb.pdf
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/scientec18currb.pdf
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/arts18b09curr.pdf

This is the Poem that _____ wrote!

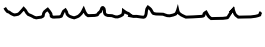
Mode of transportation: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Name of character: _____

Past tense verb: ----------.

Body of water: 

This is the _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ that _____ ---------- .

This is the  that floated the _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

that _____ ---------- .

(Add a plant and what it did)

This is the _____ that _____ in the

 that floated the _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.

that _____ ---------- .

(Add an animal that might eat that plant)

This is the _____ that _____

the _____that _____ in the

 that floated the _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.

that _____ ----------.

(Keep going on your own)

_____

_____

_____

_____