

Duck Dunks

Classroom Activities

The following are ideas for classroom tie-ins for use with the book *Duck Dunks* (by Lynne Berry, illustrated by Hiroe Nakata). Skills-based activities are listed first; activities that tend more toward literary exercises are listed last. WRITING PROMPTS are flagged as shown, in all capital letters. In addition, I have indicated activities that will tend to be most appropriate for younger students (pre-K and K) vs. older students (grades 1, 2, and 3). Of course, please feel free to pick and choose among all the activities, to suit your particular students, your teaching style, and your curriculum needs. Have fun!

The letter "D" (with duck puppet craft activity)

For YOUNGER students:

Read *Duck Dunks* when working on the letter D or on letter D day. Introduce the book by reading the title; ask students if they notice anything similar about the two words in the title. Both start with the letter D! Ask students to listen for other D words when you read the book.

After reading, ask students to list all the D words they remember from the book; write correct responses on the board and read a corresponding line from the book, putting emphasis on the D sound/word. Students may need some help/prompting to remember all the D words; for example, re-read a specific line with a D word and then ask students to spot the D word in that line. In addition to duck(s) and dunk(s), correct responses are: ducklings, dive, dry, dripping, damp, drift. Also, a word not appearing in the text but pictured is dragonfly. After recording all correct responses on the board, underline the letter D in each.

Have students make duck puppets. (See instructions at: www.lynnberry.com/duckpuppet.htm. The materials are simple, the process is simple, and the puppets are adorable!) Read the book again, asking students to put their duck puppets on their nose every time they hear a D word.

Phonemic awareness

Phonemic awareness, or phonological sensitivity, refers to the ability to recognize that words are made up of smaller sounds, as well as the ability to manipulate these sounds. Sound recognition and manipulation are two of the skills that help children decipher written language, as they learn to recognize the relationship between spoken sounds and written symbols. Rhyming books can help develop phonemic awareness.

For YOUNGER students:

When reading the book aloud, ask students to help you complete the rhyming lines.

For OLDER students:

Ask readers to identify the rhyme pairs in *Duck Dunks*. WRITING PROMPT: Ask students to choose two or three rhyme pairs and write a short poem incorporating those rhymes.

Position words (with duck puppet craft activity)

Duck Dunks has many position words: in, out, into, up, on, off, next to.

For YOUNGER students:

After reading the book, have students make *Duck Dunks* puppets (see "letter D" activity, above, for a link to duck puppet instructions). Play a "Simon Says" style game to practice position words with the

duck puppets: "Simon says put your duck ON your head. Simon says put your duck NEXT TO your right ear..."

Verb work

Duck Dunks is full of action and strong, action verbs!

For OLDER students:

Consider adding some of the less familiar or more challenging-to-spell verbs from *Duck Dunks* to vocabulary and/or spelling lists: bob, gurgle, whirl, burble, shiver, brag, spy, yelp, flinch, waddle.

WRITING PROMPT: Ask groups of students to choose three of the verbs from your list, then write and perform a short skit that involves the actions of those verbs.

Work with students to identify the verb in different sentences from the book. Focus on interesting verb usage, for example, "Ducks waddle home...." Does this paint a more vivid picture than to say, "Ducks walk home"? What sort of picture does it paint? Are the ducks moving quickly or slowly? What verbs could replace "waddle" to paint a different sort of picture? Use examples and questions such as these to show students the descriptive power of verbs!

For YOUNGER students:

Get students moving! As needed, demonstrate the action of different verbs from the book. Then play a "Simon Says" style verb-work game: "Simon says waddle. Simon says shiver. Simon says flinch..."

Math skills

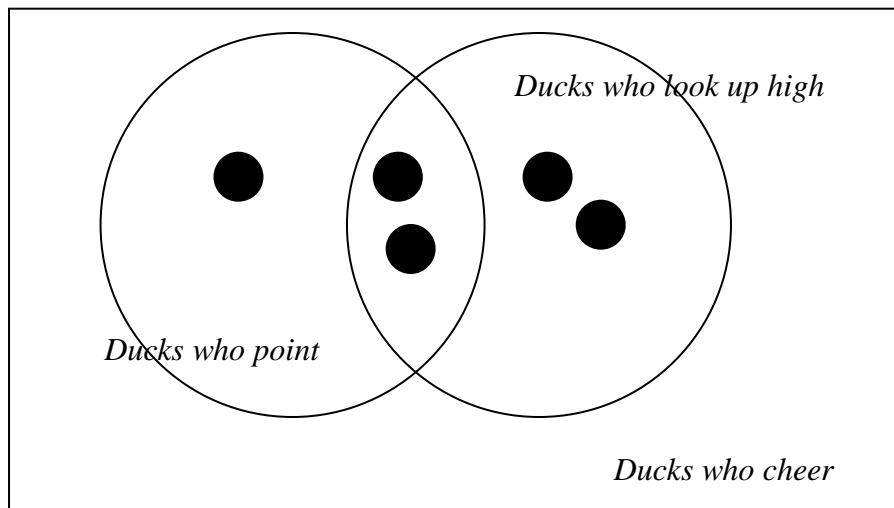
Duck Dunks hides some basic math concepts and skills.

For YOUNGER students:

The ducklings frequently participate in different activities; two ducks do one thing, as three ducks do another, or four ducks do one thing, as one duck does another. Give students a chance to count the ducks engaged in each activity. Or ask students to represent ducks engaged in different activities by miming the actions of the ducks or using their duck puppets (see "letter D" activity, above, for a link to duck puppet instructions). For example, when three students (or duck puppets) mime holding a kite, and two students mime holding the kite string, how many total "ducks" do we have? When five student are playing a game of tag, and we remove one duck to be *it*, how many "ducks" are not *it*?

For OLDER students:

The ducks also demonstrate concepts of grouping. For example, when the ducks are flying a kite: "Three ducks point. Four look up high./Five little ducks cheer, 'Fly, kite, fly!'" Here, there are not 12 (i.e., $3 + 4 + 5$) ducks, but the same five ducks, each of which belongs to one or more different groups. These groups are: ducks who cheer and point; ducks who cheer and look up; and ducks who cheer, point, and look up. You might work with students to develop a Venn diagram to illustrate the relationship of these different duck groups:



You might consider making a copy of the page of the book that shows these ducks, have students cut out the ducks, and place each duck in its proper place in the Venn diagram. (Note that the two non-pointing ducks might look a bit like they're pointing up high, but they're actually holding the kite string. You might need to clarify this with students if you use the actual duck images in this exercise!)

Making connections

Strong readers make connections: between what happens in a story and what happens in their lives, across different stories, and within a story.

For YOUNGER students:

To help young readers make connections between *Duck Dunks* and what happens in their lives, read the book and then ask students to help you list all the things the ducks do during their day at the beach. Have students done any of the same summertime activities? Have students done other beach activities? Ask students to rank the activities, from favorite to least favorite. Or, ask students to vote for their one favorite activity, and graph the results on a bar graph (activities on the x-axis, number of students who voted for each activity on the y-axis). Use the graph to answer the questions: Which activity is the favorite of the most number of students? Which activity is the favorite of the least number of students? Remind students how great it is that different students have different favorites!

Alternatively, instead of focusing on beach activities, focus on beach creatures. Ask students to help you list all the creatures the ducks encounter on their day at the beach. After reading once, you may need to picture-walk the book with students slowly and carefully, to spot all the creatures and their antics! Ask similar questions as for beach activities, i.e., have students seen any of these creatures during a day at the beach, have students seen other creatures, which creatures are favorites, etc.

As a third alternative, before reading the book, ask students what activities they like to do in the summer or during a day at the beach (or what creatures they have seen at the beach). Ask students whether they think the ducks might do any of the same activities (or see any of the same creatures). Read the book to find out!

For OLDER students:

To help students make connections within *Duck Dunks*, you might talk about how the story has a circular construction: the last four lines mirror the first four lines. There are, however, some differences. Ask students to identify the differences, and discuss how the differences help change a story beginning into a story ending.

For ideas about making connections across stories, see the "compare & contrast" exercise, below.

Compare & contrast: other beach books

For OLDER and YOUNGER students (modify terminology, approach, and specific questions to suit the age group):

Work on identifying similarities and differences between books by comparing and contrasting *Duck Dunks* with other books about swimming, trips to the beach, or summertime activities. Examples of books you might choose for this activity include *Bats at the Beach*, by Brian Lies; *Marshmallow Kisses*, by Linda Crotta Brennan, illustrated by Mari Takabayashi; *Sally Goes to the Beach*, by Stephen Huneck; *Turtle Tracks*, by Sally Harman Plowden, illustrated by Tee Plowden; or any other of your favorite picture books about the beach or summer. Some items you might wish to introduce as your students compare and contrast books:

- Fiction vs. nonfiction; realistic fiction vs. fantasy
- Rhymed vs. unrhymed
- Many words vs. few words
- Voice. Introduce the concept of voice by talking about how the writing makes you feel, and comparing/contrasting the feel of *Duck Dunks* with that of other books. For example:
 - Does the writing feel serious? Or silly/funny?
 - When you read the book, do you feel rambunctious and loud? Or quiet and still?
 - Does the writing make a day at the beach seem exciting? Or peaceful?
- Style of illustration. In a picture book, the illustrations have a "voice," as well, and the questions in the above list apply. In addition:
 - Are the writing voice and the picture voice the same within a single book? Why or why not?
 - If you were the illustrator of one of these books, what would your pictures look like? Would your pictures have a different sort of voice (i.e., would your pictures be more/less silly, more/less serious, more/less busy, more/less colorful, etc.)? Why or why not?
 - Ask students to draw a new cover or illustration for one or more of the books.

Feel free to use Venn diagrams in comparing/contrasting books! (Each book would be a circle in the Venn diagram; similarities would go in the overlap between circles, and differences would go outside the overlap.)

Compare, contrast, & extend: Duck Skates

For OLDER and YOUNGER students (modify terminology, approach, and specific questions to suit the age group):

Duck Dunks is a companion book to *Duck Skates*, allowing another opportunity for compare/contrast work, as well as an opportunity to extend (i.e., have students think about and/or write their own stories). You might approach this work by asking students to focus on story elements: Are the characters in the two books the same or different? What about the plot? The setting?

In considering these questions, get specific about various aspects of the different story elements, for example:

- **Plot.** The two books do tell different stories, so the overall plots are different. But are any aspects of the plot the same? One aspect of similarity you might discuss with students is that both are circular plots. *Duck Skates* is a home-adventure-home story (the ducks start at home, go out and have an adventure, and end up back home). *Duck Dunks* is not a home-adventure-home story (the story doesn't start with the ducks at home), but does have circularity in the language used at the beginning and end of the story (as described in the "making connections" activity, above). So the books are similar in having circularity, though different in the specifics of their circularity. Explore with students: are there other ways in which the two plots are similar?

WRITING PROMPT: Ask students to extend. If you were writing a duck book, what would happen in your story? For younger students, write a group story or have students work on a picture story; for older students, ask students to write their own story about the ducks.

- **Setting.** How are the settings different? Are there any similarities? Ask students to extend: if you were writing a duck book, which setting would you choose? The snow? The beach? A new setting? Why?

WRITING PROMPT: Ask students to write a short additional scene for either or both of the books, including an additional snow activity or beach activity that does not appear in the books. (Combine this exercise with the "making connections" activity, above.)

- **Characters.** Are the main characters in *Duck Dunks* and *Duck Skates* the same five ducks? How do we know? (The individual ducks don't have names, so they could be five completely different ducks!) Is there evidence in their behavior? Their appearance? Are there any differences in the ducks between the two books?

What about minor characters in the two books? (Each book has "extras" that appear in the illustrations, so this exercise may be combined with picture-walking the two books to spot the extras. In *Duck Skates*, the minor characters are a cardinal, two bunny rabbits, and a reindeer. In *Duck Dunks*, the minor characters that appear at least twice include two redbirds, a seagull, a dragonfly, several crabs, and a hermit crab; fish appear on one page of the book.) Are these minor characters the same or different between books? Why or why not? This question may be tied into discussion of setting: what animals do we expect to see in a winter/snowy setting vs. a summer/beach setting? Are there any characters missing that we might expect to see in each setting? (Combine this question and discussion with the "making connections" activity, above.)

How do the minor characters behave in the two books? Picture-walk slowly and carefully to catch all the antics of these critters! Do the minor characters seem to have fun in the stories? Do you think they are the ducks' friends? Would you like to be an "extra" in a duck book?

Ask students to extend: if you were writing a duck book, what sorts of things would the ducks do? Would they do a lot of quiet, sitting-still things? Or a lot of active adventure things? What else could you imagine these ducks doing in *Duck Dunks* or *Duck Skates*?

WRITING PROMPTS:

- Ask students to write their own story about one of the minor characters from either or both of the books. Some possible topics: likes and dislikes; favorite activity; "a day in the life of;" a character from one book meets a character from the other book, for example, the cardinal from *Duck Skates* meets the seagull from *Duck Dunks*.
- Ask students to write a duck story in which they appear as a minor character.