



EK BOOKS TEACHER NOTES & RESOURCES

Title: Birdie Lights Up the World

Author: Alison McLennan

Illustrator: Lauren Mullinder

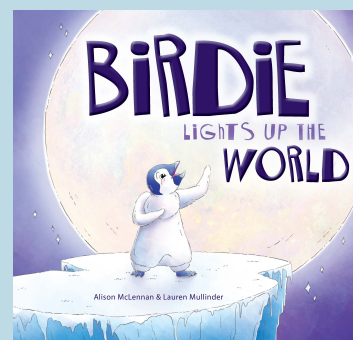
Price: ANZ \$24.99 | USA \$19.99 | CA \$24.99 | UK £10.99

ISBN: 9781922539489

Publication date: June 2023

Audience age: 3-8 years

Key Curriculum Areas: English, Science / STEAM, The Arts – Visual Arts / Music, Health and Physical Education



SYNOPSIS:

Birdie the penguin believes she is the chosen one who lights up the world every night with her song. Her zoo friends believe this too. In this sensitively illustrated story, featuring a cast of zoo animals, Birdie the penguin has a special role to play. Until one day she gets sick and discovers that perhaps her role was not as important as she thought. She and her friends discover that the world can light itself up at night without Birdie's song. Birdie begins to question what her purpose is. She tries to learn the jobs the other animals do, without success. She feels lost and confused – until her zoo friends help her realize her true purpose. The author has said that she wanted to deliver the message that we all have special, unique gifts and it's our responsibility to share them with the world. If we have a song to sing, we should sing it, whether it fills a stadium or only brings joy to one person ... it all counts. Parents, grandparents, librarians and teachers will all want to gift or recommend this book. It's for everyone, but especially for any child who has been told they are good at something and then feels the weight of responsibility to take lessons and compete, and to be the best. Birdie Lights Up the World will inspire them to do the things they love for the pure joy of it.

THEMES:

Exploring and expressing talents. Building self-esteem. Being true to yourself. Appreciating life's pleasures. Friendship.

SELLING POINTS:

- A sensitively written and illustrated animal story
- Contains themes to help children express their gifts, build self-esteem and know that, just by being themselves, they are enough.
- In a time when there is so much pressure on children to know what they want to do 'when they grow up,' and to achieve at sport or creative pursuits from a young age, this book gives permission for kids to express themselves just for the joy of it.

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:

Alison McLennan began writing creatively while raising her family. When not writing children's books, she can be found on stage in musical theatre productions, working as a voiceover artist, or curled up reading a book with her cat Honey.

Lauren Mullinder has had a passion for drawing ever since she was able to hold a pencil. Lauren lives in Adelaide, Australia with her husband and dog Charlie and loves spending time in nature with a sketchbook in hand.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION:

A lot of pressure can be put on kids with questions of “what do you want to be when you grow up”. And when a child is good at something, everyone then expects them to take lessons, and compete and be the best and win ribbons etc. I’d like to take that pressure off kids so they can just do things they love for the pure joy of it. I also think that we all have unique gifts, and that we should share them with the world, whether we fill a stadium or just bring one person joy. It all matters, and it all counts. We give a gift to the world just by being ourselves. I want kids to have strong self esteem and to know that they are enough.

INTERVIEW:

AUTHOR

What is the inspiration for this story?

I spent many years wondering what my purpose was. And while I had gifts and talents, if I wasn’t getting the lead part in the play or if a book I had written wasn’t getting published, I thought I wasn’t good enough. I came to realise that enjoying, expressing and sharing my gifts was all that mattered, whether there was any recognition or not. And deeper still, I came to realise that just being my true authentic self was a gift, that there was no one else quite like me in the world. I hope this story will help children understand they are unique and special just by being themselves. I hope it will encourage them to enjoy and share their gifts, and light up the world in their own way, without any burden of expectation.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

The most exciting part of any book collaboration is seeing the illustrations for the first time. When you see the story in your head come to life on the page, it’s so thrilling. I think Birdie and her friends are so beautiful and the zoo they roam freely is really magical. I love writing stories, but it’s a lonely exercise, so creating a book with an illustrator, an editor and a designer is really rewarding and exciting.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

Being patient. I’m not good at that part. Waiting to see the illustrations for the book and waiting for the book to come out so you can share it with everyone is very hard for me.

ILLUSTRATOR

What media do you use to create your illustrations? Briefly describe your process.

I use a combination of pencil work and digital painting techniques. I start by sketching out my ideas using a coloured pencil (blue and green for this book) and then scan these sketches into the computer. I use a drawing program called Photoshop and a drawing pad called a Cintiq to create the final images. I start by drawing a good copy of my linework, tracing over my original sketch using layers and fixing any mistakes. I then layer different colours and textures to make characters and backgrounds until everything comes together as a finished illustration.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

I loved creating the characters of Birdie and her friends and seeing them come to life on each page. I wanted to weave in the importance of friendship to this story, so added some extra moments in the illustrations to show that following your dreams can be more rewarding when sharing it with other people in your life. (Tip - compare the front and back end papers).

What was the most challenging part of this project?

For this story, I wanted to design a zoo that didn’t look like a traditional zoo, but one which could have been designed from the animals point of view - no cages, no locked doors, but an open design where different environments joined together to create an amazing world. Trying to work out how this different habitats would join together was quite challenging, but also a lot of fun!

TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

N.B. These questions and activities can be adapted to suit the experience and ability of students.

DISCUSSION:

Before Reading

- Tuning in: Ask students to turn and talk to a partner about an activity, hobby, sport or exercise that they enjoy. It can be something they love to do, not necessarily be good at it or practise often. Encourage them to discuss how the activity makes them feel.
- As a group, list some of those activities from the students that wish to share. These might include; drawing, writing, reading, acting, singing, playing an instrument, a sport or physical activity, a mindfulness exercise, baking, knitting, building, etc.
- Look at the cover of *Birdie Lights Up the World*. Ask, what do you see? What do you think this character is feeling? How does it make YOU feel? What does it make you wonder? What do you think this story might be about? Do you think this book will be helpful?

During Reading

- What How do you think Birdie 'lights up the world'?
- Why does Birdie have 'a very great responsibility'? What does this mean? How might this feel to be depended on so much?
- How do the other animals care for Birdie when she is sick? Do you think they will be alright without her singing?
- Why do you think the lights twinkled without Birdie's singing? Did you know this would happen?
- How do you think this realisation made her feel?
- Why does Birdie feel she needs another job to be useful? Is she being useful?
- What do you think will happen next?

After Reading

- What is the story about? What is the main idea? How did it make you feel? Do you have a part that you relate to or enjoyed the most?
- What did you learn about Birdie?
- Why do you think it was so important for Birdie to have a purpose? What do you think she liked about being able to light up the world?
- How did Birdie feel when she realised her singing didn't seem to make a difference (as the lights twinkled anyway)? What did she actually learn in the end?
- What does it feel like to have a very great responsibility for something? Are you responsible for something / someone / practising a task regularly? How does that feel? Do you think Birdie found the responsibility difficult, or was 'lighting up the world' something she really enjoyed?
- Discuss the differences between a responsibility being a burden and being a joy.
- What did you think of the friends' reactions to Birdie being sick and not being able to sing? Why did they panic? Do you think they could have done anything differently? What did the other animals realise in the end?
- What do you like about the illustrations? Has the illustrator effectively portrayed the characters' feelings? How? What kinds of colours and textures has she used to express the different emotions and times of the day?
- What can we learn from this story? We all have our own gifts and talents that can light up someone's world – what's yours?

ACTIVITIES:

ENGLISH

Vocabulary: Nouns, Verbs and Adjectives

(ACELA1437) (ACELA1452) (ACELA1454) (ACELA1468)

- Locate in the book, sort and write relevant nouns (names), verbs (action words) and adjectives (describing words), like the examples below.
Nouns: Birdie, world, sunset, sky, light, feathers, teeth, throat, seaweed, animals, tree trunks, tusks, leaves, purpose, etc.
Verbs: light, alight, coax, sing, twinkle, depended, fall, feeling, speaking, disappeared, chattered, squeaked, shrieked, collect, invited, watching, applauded, etc.
Adverbs: quickly, truly, exactly, expectantly, softly, etc.
Adjectives: aflame, special, darkness, poorly, clammy, chattery, clogged, dry, biggest, shocked, confused, useful, tricky, tall, sad, beautiful, loud, etc.
- Students could add their own words to these lists, and write definitions for unfamiliar terms
- Students could write a sentence about Birdie or their favourite thing to 'light up the world', including some of these terms and making sure to use words from each column (nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives). Illustrate your own picture or write in a moon or penguin template. See **BLM 1** and **BLM 2**.

Vocabulary: Spelling 'gh' as in 'light'

(ACELA1437) (ACELA1454) (ACELA1470) (ACELA1439) (ACELA1438) (ACELA1817) (ACELA1458) (ACELA1778) (ACELA1455) (ACELA1821) (ACELA1822) (ACELA1474) (ACELA1471) (ACELA1472) (ACELA1823) (ACELA1824) (ACELA1825)

- Listen to, repeat pronunciation and read the word 'light'. Notice the spelling pattern 'gh' and note how this pattern sounds silent. On a chart, make a list of other words in the book or your own that have the same spelling pattern. Is the 'gh' always silent? Does it depend on the position inside the word?
For example, from the text: *light, alight, night*
Other words with a similar sound / pattern: *knight, fright, sight, tight, bright, height, might, plight, right, sleigh*.
Other words with the 'gh' spelling pattern: At the start, sounds like 'g': *ghost, ghoul, ghastly*.
At the end: *dough, plough, bough, though*.
Sounds like 'f': *cough, draught, laugh, rough, tough*.
- Alternatively, students could make the words and 'light' them up. For example, use glitter, shine a torch through the paper (words hole-punched), light up words with invisible ink and a blue light, etc.

Vocabulary: Synonyms and Antonyms

(ACELA1437) (ACELA1452) (ACELA1454) (ACELA1468)

- Synonyms are words with similar meanings. Antonyms are words with opposite meanings. Birdie's job in the book was to 'light' up the world. Without her singing, the world would fall into 'darkness'. Write some **synonyms** that have a similar meaning to 'light'. For example, *illuminate, bright, shine, gleam*.
- Now write some **antonyms** that have an opposite meaning to 'light'. For example, *darkness, night, gloomy*.

- Students could circle words in a list that are synonyms for 'light', or antonyms for 'light'
- Students could rewrite the following sentence (or their own) with synonyms, and then antonyms for the underlined words, to either keep or change the meaning: 'Without her singing, the world would fall into darkness.'
- Students could illustrate their sentence with a picture of Birdie under the night sky. Watercolour paints or pencils in light and dark shades could be used for the illustrations.

Comprehension

(ACELT1575) (ACELT1783) (ACELT1578) (ACELT1580) (ACELT1584) (ACELY1646) (ACELY1650) (ACELA1787) (ACELT1587) (ACELT1582) (ACELT1591) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1670)

- Through writing and discussion, answer comprehension questions relating to the story, such as:
 - **Knowledge:** Who was in the story? What was the main idea / focus? Where do the events take place? What was Birdie's job?
 - **Comprehension:** Retell the story in your own words. What were the main themes? What happened when Birdie lost her singing voice? What did she realise? What are the differences and similarities between Birdie's expectations at the start and at the end of the story? How did the animal friends show Birdie what was most important?
 - **Application:** How did Birdie's need to have a purpose affect the other animals? Why was it important for Birdie to have confidence in herself? What helpful tips could you give to someone to ease the pressures they place on themselves?
 - **Analysis:** What are some of the features of penguins? Draw a diagram with labels for the parts of a penguin. Create an infographic about a topic / activity you enjoy. Compare the different phases of the moon.
 - **Synthesis:** Predict how Birdie will react in the future if she loses her voice again. What helpful tips can you give to someone who is sick? What ideas can you think of for creating your own song or designing an object that can 'light up the world'?
 - **Evaluation:** Do you agree that Birdie should continue to sing for the animals? Why or why not? What is the most important thing to remember about having responsibilities? What kinds of messages are told through the story? What are the positive and negative aspects?

Comprehension: Story Sequencing

(ACELA1447) (ACELA1463) (ACELT1578) (ACELT1580) (ACELT1785) (ACELT1584) (ACELY1650) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1670)

Complete a story sequence showing the events that happened in the book, by leading the stars to the moon. See **BLM 3**. Use the following sentences, or your own, to complete your sequence.

1. Birdie's song coaxed the lights to twinkle.
2. One day, Birdie woke up feeling very poorly.
3. Birdie's voice disappeared.
4. The lights twinkled and the whole sky was aflame, without Birdie's song.
5. Birdie tried to make herself useful for the animals.
6. Birdie gathered her courage to sing, and lit up the world again.

Narrative Writing

(ACELT1581) (ACELT1582) (ACELT1586) (ACELY1651) (ACELY1661) (ACELY1662) (ACELY1671) (ACELY1672)

- Students can write a narrative, imagining themselves bringing joy to others with their special talent. What is their gift? How does it help others? What problem occurs when their gift is taken away? How will it be returned, or will it be resolved in another way? How will the character show courage or self belief? What lesson is to be learned?

- Remember to include a setting, interesting characters, a series of events, a problem and a resolution. Set it out with a beginning, middle and end.

Alternative idea:

- Imagine you could control the light and dark in the world. Would you use this power for good or evil? What is your purpose? How would it make you feel? How would your choices affect others? What challenges might you face? How will you overcome the difficulties, and how will the problem be resolved?

Recount / Reflective Writing

(ACELA1437) (ACELT1575) (ACELT1783) (ACELY1651) (ACELA1787) (ACELT1582)

- Encourage students to think about a time when they took on a great responsibility, or bravely tried something they thought they couldn't do. Students should include how they felt, how they managed the situation, the challenges and outcomes.

Thinking Tools / Graphic Organisers

(ACELA1429) (ACELT1575) (ACELT1783) (ACELT1583) (ACELT1589) (ACELY1650) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1670)

- Placemat Chart:** Students can complete the chart to include their understandings and feelings about Birdie, including her appearance, habitat, abilities, personality, etc. Fill in the headings, such as: Birdie lives..., Birdie has..., Birdie can..., Birdie tries..., Birdie is... See **BLM 4**.
- Y-Chart:** Students can imagine themselves as Birdie as she rediscovers her ability to light up the world. Complete the graphic organiser with the headings: Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like. See BLM 5.
- De Bono's Six Thinking Hats:** Think about the scenario where Birdie realised the lights twinkled and the whole sky was aflame without her singing, and what she realised about finding her purpose. Use the six hats to consider her feelings and the information available. Red (fears, feelings, intuition), White (information, facts), Yellow (Benefits, positive thinking), Blue (big picture, focus, learnings), Green (creative thinking, alternatives), Black (risks, problems, obstacles).

SCIENCE / STEAM

DIY Constellation Planetarium

(ACSSU004) (ACSSU019) (ACSSU032) (ACSHE013) (ACSHE034) (ACSHE022) (AC SIS014) (AC SIS024) (AC SIS011) (AC SIS025) (AC SIS026) (AC SIS012) (AC SIS027) (AC SIS040) (AC SIS041) (AC SIS029)

A constellation, in astronomy, is a group of stars that forms a particular pattern or outline, typically representing an animal, mythological figure or inanimate object. Astronomers use constellations to name stars and meteor showers.

- Using a paper tube (or Pringles can), black paper, constellation patterns, scissors and a torch, students can create their own planetarium to see how lights twinkle in the night sky.
Questions for students to explore:
 - What is a constellation?
 - What is the purpose of studying constellations, or why are they used as landmarks in the sky?
 - What are the names of the different constellations?
 - What do they look like? What does each kind of constellation represent?
 - What can you discover through your planetarium?

Instructions for making a planetarium can be found here:

[How To Make A Planetarium - Little Bins for Little Hands](#)

Light Refraction Trick

(ACSSU005) (ACSSU020) (ACSSU033) (ACSHE013) (ACSHE034) (ACSHE022) (ACSI014) (ACSI024) (ACSI011) (ACSI025) (ACSI026) (ACSI012) (ACSI027) (ACSI040) (ACSI041) (ACSI029)

Refraction is the change in direction of a wave, caused by a change in the wave's speed. Waves include sound waves and light waves.

Light refraction is when a wave passes from one transparent medium to another, as the wave changes its speed and direction. For example, when a light wave travels through air and then through water, the wave will slow and change direction.

- Students can experiment with this light refraction trick using a glass cup, water, white paper, whiteboard and whiteboard marker. Draw a picture or pattern on the whiteboard and lean it up against the wall. Put a piece of white paper under the glass, and position the glass a little distance from the whiteboard. Fill the glass with water and see how the picture / pattern changes. Instructions and a video can be seen at:
[Reversing Pic Illusion | Light Refraction Trick - Science Experiments for Kids - Ronyes Tech](#)

Exploring Reflections with a Light Box

(ACSSU005) (ACSSU020) (ACSSU033) (ACSHE013) (ACSHE034) (ACSHE022) (ACSI014) (ACSI024) (ACSI011) (ACSI025) (ACSI026) (ACSI012) (ACSI027) (ACSI040) (ACSI041) (ACSI029)

Materials for this experiment include; a box, tracing paper, clear plastic wrap, mylar sheeting (aluminium sheets), tape, scissors, and decorative items.

- Using the box frame (lids cut off), cover one end with tracing paper. Cut the mylar sheet into strips (as tall as the box) and tape into cylinder or tear drop shapes. Fit these into the box and cover tightly with plastic wrap. Hold the light box up to various light sources in your environment (not the sun!) with the tracing paper facing you, experimenting with different angles to see different patterns and colours.

Instructions can be found here: [Reflection Science with Light Patterns in a Box - Buggy and Buddy](#)

Science involved – The mylar tubes are reflecting light. By changing the angle of the light box, the angle of reflection changes, creating patterns on the tracing paper.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Healthy Mind / Healthy Body Ideas:

(ACPPS003) (ACPPS004) (ACPPS005) (ACPPS006) (ACPPS017) (ACPPS018) (ACPPS020) (ACPPS021) (ACPMPO08) (ACPMPO12) (ACPMPO25) (ACPMPO28)

Mindfulness and physical activity are ideal for mental and physical health, as well as building relationships with family and friends.

- Role play or create stick puppets to act out a retelling or a scene from the book
- Sing your favourite song or perform a tune or musical show for your friends and family
- Watch the stars twinkle in the night sky
- Find different constellation patterns, making note of shapes or images you see
- Keep a moon journal over a one- or two-week period to observe the changes of the moon's phases
- Use night lights, torches, light boxes and so on to keep your room from falling into darkness
- Visit the zoo and observe the behaviours of different animals
- Be responsible for something you enjoy – taking care of a pet, practicing a skill, a job around the

house, and so on

- Enjoy your favourite activity – just for the joy of it!
- Show care and kindness to someone who is unwell
- Write down or draw what it means to be a good friend
- Help others with tasks or jobs to be done
- Show courage to believe in yourself – try something new or unfamiliar
- Make bravery rocks, cards or keepsakes to remember your courage
- Act out the behaviours of different animals – a waddling penguin, a strong elephant, a tall giraffe, a jumping monkey, etc.
- Sit and enjoy the sunset or the moon rising with a loved one.

THE ARTS – VISUAL ARTS

Twinkling Night Painting

(ACAVAM106) (ACAVAM107) (ACAVAM108) (ACAVAR109)

- Observe and discuss the illustration technique used in the book, and that of other night-sky / sunset paintings.
- Using black paper, acrylic paints, brushes and an old toothbrush, students can create a beautiful evening sky with twinkling lights and moon. Use white paint to ‘flick’ the stars into the sky with the toothbrush, and paint a large round circle for the moon. Students can choose to include Birdie on the ice if they wish.
- Alternatively, students might like to create a sunset picture with colour, exploring shading and hues of oranges / pinks.

Papier-Mache Light Up Moon

(ACAVAM106) (ACAVAM107) (ACAVAM108)

- Students can create their own ‘aflame’ moon using a large balloon, paper towel (cut into strips), papier-mache glue, paint brushes, paint and LED light or string lights. Cover the blown-up balloon with about eight layers of paper towel, and once dry, remove the balloon, paint and insert the lights inside the moon.

THE ARTS – MUSIC

Singing Games

(ACAMUM080) (ACAMUM081) (ACAMUM082) (ACAMUR083)

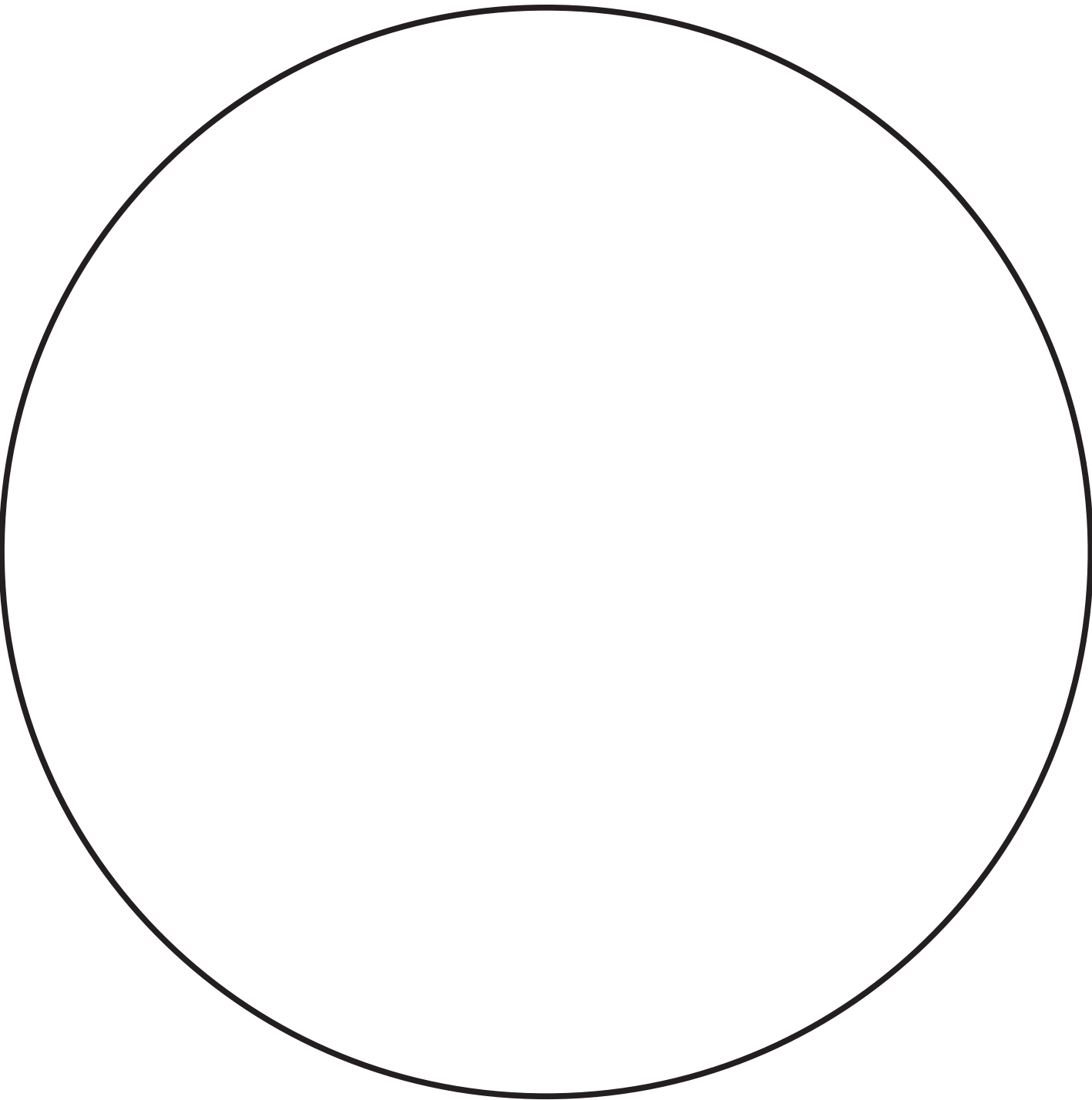
- Discuss different kinds of music and how they can make us feel. What kind of songs do you think Birdie was singing?
- Play singing games with a group of students, including singing, clapping, movement and instrumental games.

A list of activities can be found here: [15 More Singing Games for Children’s Choir | Ashley Danyew](#)

Moon Template

NAME _____

DATE _____



Birdie

NAME _____

DATE _____






Story Sequencing

NAME _____

DATE _____

Cut out the sentences below and paste in order to light up the world.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Birdie’s song coaxed the lights to twinkle.

Birdie’s voice disappeared.

Birdie gathered her courage to sing, and lit up the world again.

One day, Birdie woke up feeling very poorly.

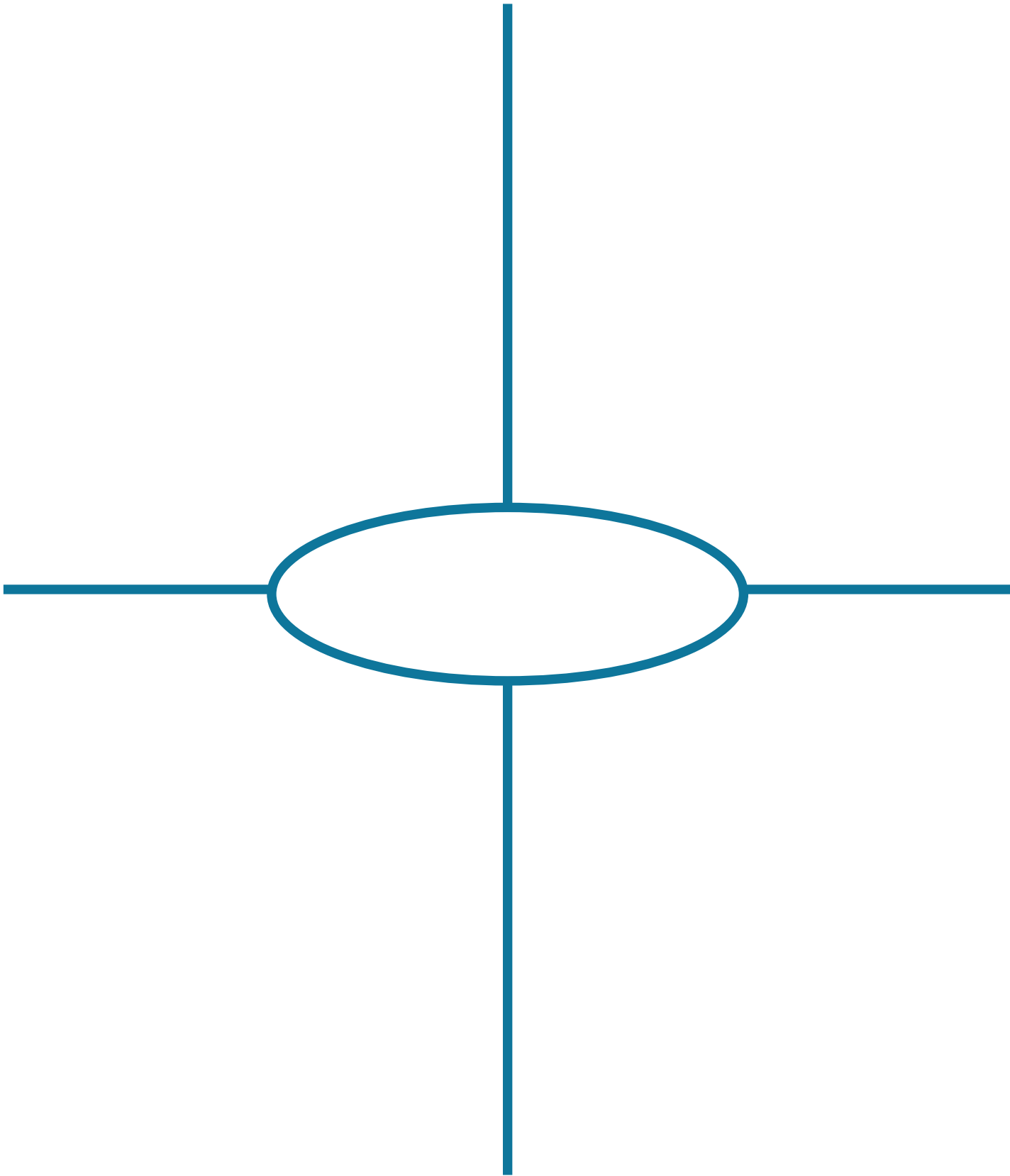
The lights twinkled and the whole sky was aflame, without Birdie’s song.

Birdie tried to make herself useful for the animals.

Placemat Chart

NAME _____

DATE _____

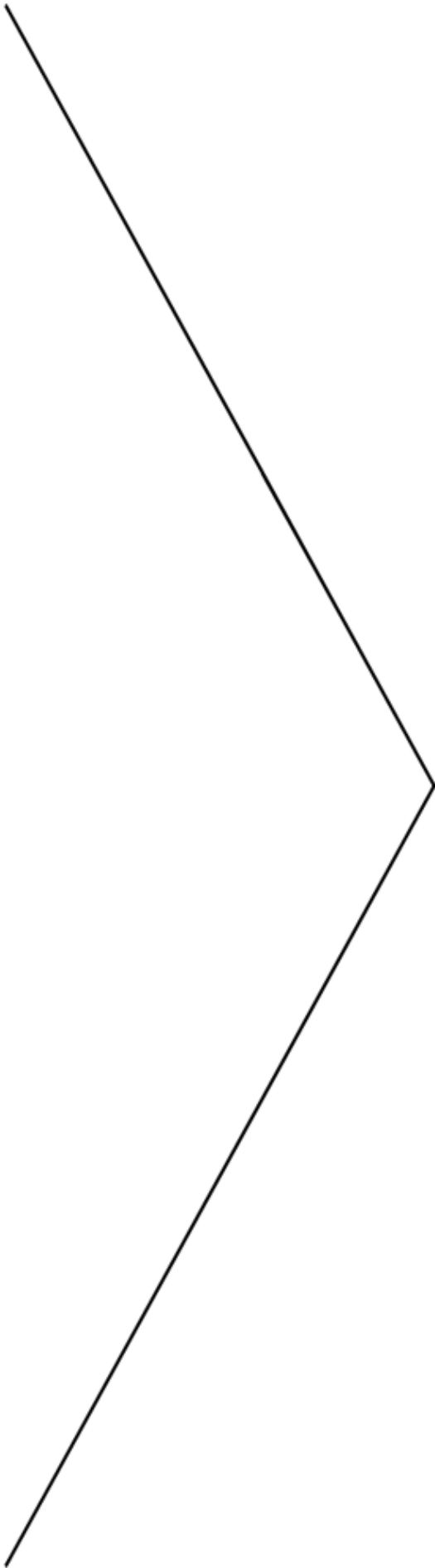


Y Chart

NAME _____

DATE _____

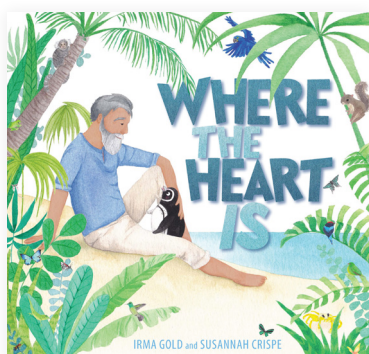
Looks like



Feels like

Sounds like

RELATED TITLES ORDER FORM

☐


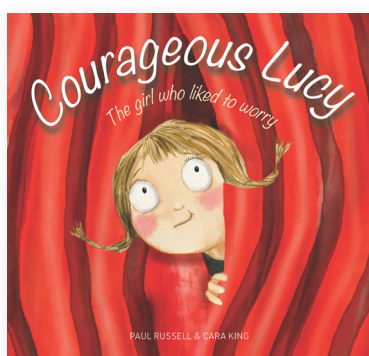
Where the Heart Is

IRMA GOLD & SUSANNAH CRISPE

A moving, funny and heartfelt exploration of a penguin's unlikely friendship and his extraordinary journey home.

THEMES: FRIENDSHIP, ENVIRONMENT, CONSERVATION

9781925820874 | Hardcover | 245 x 255 mm | 9½ x 10 in | 24 pages | Colour |
USA \$18.99 | CA \$24.99 | UK £10.99 | AU \$24.99 | NZ \$24.99

☐


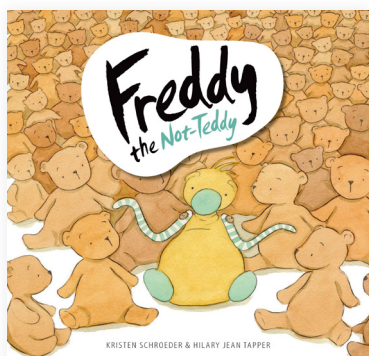
Courageous Lucy

PAUL RUSSELL & CARA KING

Lucy worries a lot, but just taking one tiny step toward doing something new is all it takes to be courageous.

THEMES: ANXIETY, BRAVERY, OVERCOMING FEARS, SCHOOL

9781925820775 | Paperback | 245 x 255 mm | 9½ x 10 in | 32 pages | Colour |
USA \$12.99 | CA \$16.99 | UK £6.99 | AU \$14.99 | NZ \$14.99

☐


Freddy the Not-Teddy

KRISTEN SCHROEDER & HILARY JEAN TAPPER

This heart-warming story about a boy and his 'not-teddy' will inspire children to express themselves just as they are.

THEMES: ACCEPTANCE, STANDING UP FOR OTHERS, INCLUSION, FITTING IN

9781922539090 | Hardcover | 245 x 255 mm | 9½ x 10 in | 32 pages | Colour |
USA \$18.99 | CA \$24.99 | UK £10.99 | AU \$24.99 | NZ \$24.99

Contact your school supplier to order.

School: Customer Number:

Contact Name: Order Ref:

Phone No: Email:

Address:

EK Books are also available from all good bookstores and

www.ekbooks.org