

# Autism Awareness in Literature

A Teacher's Guide to Paired Texts Centering Around Autism for 4th Grade



Allison Barao

Paired Text Teacher's Guide Assignment

LIBS 642- Children's Literature

Old Dominion University

Professor Perry

## Pre-reading warm-up activity that hooks students

To hook students, the teacher should show the BrainPop video: [Autism](#).

This 5-minute video gives students some background on the subject if they haven't been introduced to autism before. After watching the video, the class should have a discussion about how they may interact with a classmate or a friend who is autistic. A large part of inclusion is understanding what triggers a peer who may have autism, and not putting everyone in the same box.

Students should understand that every person is unique, neurotypical and neurodiverse alike. Students should reflect and respond to the following questions in a discussion journal:

- What is one thing I can do to make a peer with autism feel included in my classroom?
- What are some actions that some individuals with autism may demonstrate?
- What are some ways that I am unique?

## Bulletin Board Ideas

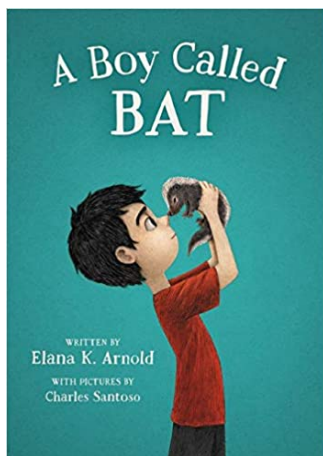
1. Create a bulletin board featuring puzzle pieces, explaining to students that puzzle pieces are a symbol of representation for autism. This bulletin

board should be one that raises awareness for autism throughout the school. On each puzzle piece, students can write facts about the autism spectrum or kind messages.

2. After reading the paired texts, students can use digital tools to create interest in reading the two books. Students can use tools like **FlipGrid** to record book reviews, **Voki** to explain the premise of the books, or create **Google Slides** to give additional information about the books. Teachers can then print QR codes to post on a bulletin board in the school that other students can scan and engage with.

## Synopsis: *A Boy Called Bat* by Elana K. Arnold (fiction)

Cover Art Citation: Arnold, Elana K. (2017). *A boy called Bat*. Pictures by Chris Santoso. Walden Pond Press. 208 p.



Bixby Alexander Tam, also known as Bat, is a 3rd grade boy on the autism spectrum who gets a great surprise from his veterinarian mother- a baby skunk. Throughout the first novel in this three-book series, readers eagerly follow as Bat tries to convince his mom in his short one-month time frame that he should keep this new kit, Thor, as a pet, and empathize with the main character as he navigates his

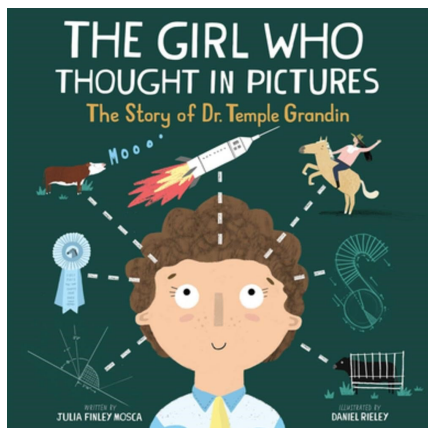
social life as a neurodiverse child.

“Comfortably familiar and quietly groundbreaking, this introduction to Bat

should charm readers, who will likely look forward to more opportunities to explore life from Bat's particular point of view.”- [\(Kirkus, 2016\)](#)

## **Synopsis: *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin* by Julia Finley Mosca (nonfiction)**

Cover Art Citation: Mosca, Julia F. (2019). *The girl who thought in pictures: The story of Dr. Temple Grandin*. Illus. by Daniel Rieley. Innovation Press. 40 p.



Throughout her life, nobody quite understood young Temple, and doubted her success when she was diagnosed with autism. *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures* uses rhyme to tell the story of how unique-minded scientist, Temple Grandin's connection with animals helped her create designs

to improve farming practices. Grandin's story will inspire readers and remind them that all minds, autistic or neuro-typical alike, are worthy and capable of success.

“Aspects of Grandin's complex life have been simplified and the poetry is sometimes forced, but this is an effective, age-appropriate introduction to a remarkable person.”- [\(Kirkus, 2017\)](#)

## Discussion Questions: *A Boy Called Bat*

1. Bat is very sensitive to different smells and sounds. At school he wears his earmuffs to block some of the sounds that bother him. Why, even though the vet is often noisy and smelly, does the clinic not bother Bat like school does?
2. Bat's teacher, Mr. Grayson has a class pet- Babycakes. How does Bat feel about the "open-door Babycakes policy" and how does it affect Bat's feelings about Mr. Grayson's class and school?
3. When Bat took Janie's pajama top, the two siblings had very different views on the situation. Why do you think that Janie felt so angry, and why was Bat confused about why Janie was angry? What were Bat's intentions in stealing the pajama top?
4. Bat has a hard time making friends- he takes things very literally and doesn't pick up on many social cues. Throughout the story, Israel tries and tries again to become friends with Bat. Eventually, the two become friends. What made the boys become friends? Did any outside aspects aid in their friendship?
5. How might this story have been different if it were written from the perspective of Bat rather than the narrator's point of view?

## Discussion Questions: *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin*

1. Growing up, Temple didn't talk. We learn that when she grew up, she now speaks around the world and is a very well known scientist. What gave Temple the courage to speak as she got older?
2. Why was it so easy for Temple Grandin to form connections with animals, but not with her classmates and other people?
3. Temple is a very bright scientist who's science many people now follow, but people didn't always believe in her. What do you think her life would be like if she didn't have her new teacher that believed in her and taught her that she could do whatever she wanted?
4. The invention that Temple built was modeled off of machines she had seen in farms that helped cows calm down. Why did this invention help Temple calm down as well?
5. The author wrote this story using rhyme. If she had written it without rhyme, but more of a "traditional" biography narrative, how would your interest in the story and understanding of Temple's life be impacted?

## Discussion Questions: Comparing the Texts

1. In both *A Boy Called Bat* and *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures*, the main characters have a strong connection to animals. Why is it that both of these characters connect so deeply with animals but have a hard time connecting with other people?
2. Bat and Temple were both treated unfairly by their peers, presumably because they do not respond in social situations the way that many of their peers do. Have you ever been a bystander to someone being treated unfairly? Describe the situation and how you responded.
3. Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between Temple Grandin and Bat. What are some of the traits they share?
4. Do *A Boy Called Bat* or *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures* evoke different emotions for you while reading? Did reading a realistic fiction book with the characters' thoughts and feelings impact you differently than a nonfiction book filled with real facts about a famous scientist?
5. In both books, we see that teachers had such powerful impacts on our main characters. What were some ways that Mr. Grayson in *A Boy Called Bat* and Temple's new teacher inspired the characters to step out of their comfort zones?

## VA SOL Connections: Teaching Ideas and Lesson Extensions

- *Language Arts Connections*
  - **ELA 4.5 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of fictional texts, narrative nonfiction texts, and poetry.**
    - In this character analysis lesson, students will choose one character from *A Boy Called Bat* to explore the character's traits and how they changed throughout the story. Students should include examples in the form of feelings, traits, and motives to describe the character in the beginning, middle, and end of the story. Teachers can give students a choice of how to demonstrate their analysis whether it be a poster/visual representation, a written product, or a digital product.
    - Students will expand their vocabulary by using context clues to interpret the meaning of unfamiliar words in the book *A Boy Called Bat*. Teachers should choose words that would be challenging for students in their class. Students should define and illustrate the words using context clues from the book.
    - In this lesson, students will demonstrate their knowledge of story elements by creating a story map. Story elements should include: characters, setting, problem/solution, rising action, climax, falling action, and a resolution. Students



should use specific quotes and examples from the text to demonstrate their knowledge of the book.

- **ELA 4.6 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of nonfiction texts.**

- Students will practice using and applying text features in this lesson. Teachers should assign students in pairs or small groups to each cover a page in *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures*. Students will decide on and create one or more text features that they could add to the page that would add to their understanding of the book and Temple's life.
- In this lesson, students should be in small groups to conduct a mini novel study about *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures*. Students will formulate questions that can be answered from the text that will spark a discussion amongst the group.
- There are many examples of cause and effect in *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures*. Students should reread the text and identify different cause and effect scenarios that took place throughout Temple Grandin's childhood into her adulthood.

- **ELA 4.7 The student will write cohesively for a variety of purposes.**

- Students will choose a chapter from the book *A Boy Called Bat* and will rewrite it from a different character's point of

view. Students should be sure to include character emotion and dialogue to highlight the differing perspectives.

- In this lesson, students will write a book review for one of the two books. Before writing, the teacher should show different examples of book reviews and the class will make notes of what each review includes. After, the class will, together, write a rubric of what their book reviews should look and sound like. Finally, students will choose either *A Boy Called Bat* or *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures* to write a book review. They should record themselves using a digital tool such as FlipGrid or Seesaw.
- Using one of the scenarios from *A Boy Called Bat* or *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures* where the main character feels left out or different, students should write a “Reader’s Theater” to demonstrate what they would do in a similar situation. This lesson will add in social/emotional aspects as students reflect on social situations where someone feels left out and how to remedy the problem.

- *Library Connections*

- **ELA 4.9 The student will demonstrate comprehension of information resources to research a topic.**

- Bat loves animals of all kinds, and during the book is especially drawn to baby skunks- kits- even emailing a skunk expert for advice and information. For this research project students should choose an animal on which to conduct research. Librarians should provide information such as websites, books, and, if appropriate and allowed, contact information for experts on the subject. After students have researched their animal of choice, they can use tools in the library such as Google Slides,
- In this lesson, students will think about Temple Grandin's invention that made both her and cows feel more comfortable. Students will brainstorm an invention that would help either themselves or animals- allowing room for student choice. After conducting research and planning their invention, students will use the library's Makerspace to create a mini version of their invention.
- Students will use a variety of resources and books in the library to research autism. In this lesson, the librarian and teacher can compile books and videos that relate to children and/or adults on the autism spectrum. Students can present their research to the class or school to bring autism awareness.

## Websites related to the book pairing

- [www.dragoo.org](http://www.dragoo.org)

In *A Boy Called Bat*, we meet scientist Dr. Jerry Dragoo, who is a real skunk expert. On this website, students can learn all about skunks, as well as find Dr. Dragoo's documentary "Is That Skunk?"

- <http://elanakarnold.com/>

Students and teachers can explore author Elana K. Arnold's website and blog, learning about all of the different books that she has written.

- <https://www.amazingscientists.com/>

This website has a plethora of activities that students and teachers can use with the Amazing Scientists book series, as well as information on the author and illustrator of the books. There is also information on how to write the author!

- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>

This website can be used to learn background knowledge about autism and to find resources and events.

- <https://www.templegrandin.com/>

Temple Grandin's website has information about her accomplishments, information on conferences at which she is speaking, information about autism, and also provides resources for children.

- <https://www.grandin.com/>

This website, aimed more toward adults, gives information about Temple

Grandin's livestock inventions and behaviors.

## About the Authors and Other Books by the Authors

### **Elana K. Arnold**

Elana K. Arnold is an award-winning author who writes books for children and young adults. She has made her way onto many notable awards and honors lists such as the Printz Honor, National Book Award finalist, Global Read Aloud selection, and many of her books are Junior Library Guild selections. She lives in California “with her family and menagerie of pets”. (Arnold, 2021).

**Website:** <http://elanakarnold.com/>

**Twitter:** @ElanaKArnold

[Q&A with the Author](#)

### **Other Books by Elana K. Arnold**

Arnold, Elana K. (2018). *Bat and the waiting game*. Pictures by Chris Santoso. Walden Pond Press. 208 p.

Arnold, Elana K. (2019). *Bat and the end of everything*. Pictures by Chris Santoso. Walden Pond Press. 192 p.

Arnold, Elana K. (2020). *An ordinary day*. Illus. by Elizabet Vukovic. Beach Lane Books. 40 p.

Arnold, Elana K. (2019). *What Riley wore*. Illus by Linda Davik. Beach Lane Books. 40 p.

### **Julia Finley Mosca**

Julia Finley Mosca is a copywriter and a former journalist. After working for many years with big companies like *Entertainment Tonight* and *Yahoo!*, she became a mother and later began her career as children's book author with the *Amazing Scientists* series.

**Website:** <https://www.amazingscientists.com/authorillustrator>

**Twitter:** @JFinleyMosca

### **Other Books by Julia Finley Mosca**

Mosca, Julia Finley. (2017). *The doctor with an eye for eyes: The story of Dr. Patricia Bath*. Pictures by Daniel Rieley. Innovation Press. 40 p.

Mosca, Julia Finley. (2020). *The girl with a mind for math: The story of Raye Montague*. Pictures by Daniel Rieley. Innovation Press. 40 p.

Mosca, Julia Finley. (2019). *The astronaut with a song for the stars: The story of Dr. Ellen Ochoa*. Pictures by Daniel Rieley. Innovation Press. 40 p.

## Further Reading- 4th Grade Level

- Higashida, Naoki and Yoshida, K.A. Translated by Mitchel, David. (2016). *The reason I jump: The inner voice of a thirteen-year old boy with autism*. Random House. 135 p.
- Ursu, Anne and McGuire, Erin. (2013). *The real boy*. Illus. By Erin McGuire. Walden Pond Press. 352 p.
- Lord, Cynthia. (2008). *Rules*. Scholastic Press. 200 p.
- Daniels, Dustin. (2013). *Understanding Samantha: A sibling's perspective of autism*. Illus. by Jaehyun Lamia Bae. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. 24 p.
- Peete, Holly Robinson and Peete, Ryan Elizabeth. (2010). *My brother Charlie*. Illus. by Shane Evans. Scholastic Press. 40 p.
- Ely, Lesley. Translated by Dunbar, Polly. (2004). *Looking after Louis*. Illus. by Polly Dunbar. Albert Whitman. 32 p.
- Guglielmo, Amy & Tourville, Jacqueline. (2018). *How to build a hug: Temple Grandin and her amazing squeeze machine*. Illus. By Giselle Potter. Atheneum Books for Young Readers. 48 p.

## Further Reading- Teacher Background or Other Reading Levels

- Grandin, Temple. (2006). *Thinking in pictures: And other reports from my life with autism*. Vintage Books. 270 p.
- Grandin, Temple and Johnson, Catherine. (2009). *Animals in translation: Using the mysteries of autism to decode animal behavior*. Scribner. 368 p.
- Melson, Gail F. (2009). *Why the wild things are*. Harvard University Press. 248 p.

## References

Arnold, Elana K. (2017). *A boy called Bat*. Pictures by Chris Santoso. Walden Pond Press. 208 p.

Arnold, Elana K. (2021). *About Elana*. Alana K Arnold. Retrieved from <http://elanakarnold.com/about-elana/>.

Author/Illustrator. *Amazing Scientists*. (n.d.).  
<https://www.amazingscientists.com/authorillustrator>.

*Autism*. BrainPOP. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.brainpop.com/health/geneticsgrowthanddevelopment/autism/>.

Commonwealth of Virginia. (2010). *English Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools- Grade Four*. Virginia Department of Education. Retrieved from [https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards\\_docs/english/2010/stds\\_english4.pdf](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/english/2010/stds_english4.pdf)



Grochowski, Sara. (2020, January 30). Q & A with Elana K. Arnold. Publishers

Weekly. Retrieved from

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-authors/article/82302-q-a-with-elana-k-arnold.html>.

Kirkus Reviews. (2016). [Review of the book *A Boy Called Bat*, by Elana K.

Arnold]. Kirkus Reviews, Retrieved from

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/elana-k-arnold/a-boy-called-bat/#>

Kirkus Reviews. (2017). [Review of the book *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The*

*Story of Dr. Temple Grandin*, by Julia Finley Mosca]. Kirkus Reviews, Retrieved

from

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/julia-finley-mosca/the-girl-who-thought-in-pictures/>

Mosca, Julia F. (2019). *The girl who thought in pictures: The story of Dr. Temple*

*Grandin*. Illus. by Daniel Rieley. Innovation Press. 40 p.