

# Empowering the Youngest Readers: Reading Without Words

## In the Classroom or Library:

Incorporate wordless picture books into the curriculum:

- Share wordless picture books with smaller groups of children where possible. This allows all children to closely follow the action in the story and take turns participating.
- Before reading, explain to the students that they are about to read a wordless picture book, which means the story is told completely through the illustrations. As they read, they will take turns telling what is happening based on what they see in the pictures.
- On the first spread, model narrating the story for the students. Note important story elements such as the characters and setting. On pages with multiple images, explain that readers should follow the pictures from left to right and top to bottom.
- Go through the rest of the book slowly with the students. At each page turn, allow them a few seconds of silence to take in the images. Then ask a different child to tell what is happening on each page. If a student struggles, support him or her by asking leading questions and providing key vocabulary.

## SUGGESTED TITLES:



### The Snowman

by Raymond Briggs

A dreamy tale of a boy and the snowman he built, who comes to life at night to have some old-fashioned winter fun.

When the boy awakes the next morning, did any of it really happen, or was it all a dream?

Grades K–3

HC: 978-0-394-83973-8 • PB: 978-0-394-88466-0



### A Ball for Daisy

by Chris Raschka

Any child who has ever had a beloved toy break will relate to Daisy's anguish when her favorite ball is destroyed by a

bigger dog. Chris Raschka explores in pictures the joy and sadness that having a special toy can bring.

*Winner of the Caldecott Medal*

Grades Preschool–2

HC: 978-0-375-85861-1 • GLB: 978-0-375-95861-8



### Beaver Is Lost

by Elisha Cooper

A young beaver is accidentally separated from his family. Follow Beaver as he's chased by a dog,

visits a zoo, and even finds himself in the middle of a busy city street.

Grades Preschool–2

HC: 978-0-375-85765-2 • GLB: 978-0-375-95765-9



### Time Flies

by Eric Rohmann

Inspired by the theory that birds are the modern relatives of dinosaurs. On a stormy night, a bird finds its way into the

dinosaur halls of a natural history museum—and sees the dinosaur skeletons come to life. Eric Rohmann uses color to show the dramatic transformation, and to highlight the bird's narrow escape.

*A Caldecott Honor Book*

Grades K–3

HC: 978-0-517-59598-5 • PB: 978-0-517-88555-0

GLB: 978-0-517-59599-2



### Mine!

by Shutta Crum

Illustrated by Patrice Barton

Have you ever had a toy you really really liked? Have you ever had a lot of toys you

really really liked? Have you ever said "MINE!"? If so, this book is for you! An adorable, playful, picture-based book about two very young children and an adorable dog navigating the troubles and triumphs of sharing.

Grades Birth–Preschool

HC: 978-0-375-86711-8 • Board: 978-0-375-86346-2

EL: 978-0-375-98887-5



### Bluebird

by Bob Staake

Follow the journey of a bluebird as he develops a friendship with a young boy and ultimately risks his life to

save the boy from harm. Both simple and evocative, this timeless and profound story will resonate with readers young and old.

Grades Preschool–3

HC: 978-0-375-87037-8 • GLB: 978-0-375-97038-2

EL: 978-0-375-98904-9

## A NOTE TO EDUCATORS:

Many times, we ask young readers to listen to a story and try to picture the images of the action in their minds. By sharing wordless (or nearly wordless) picture books, we ask young readers to exercise their imaginations in just the opposite way. Young readers can “read” the images of the picture book and create the narrative for the action in their minds. Wordless picture books can help young children think about the basic elements of storytelling, and are perfect for the youngest children who may not have the skills or confidence to read text on their own. They are also perfect when working with a group of children with mixed reading abilities or English language learners, since understanding the story is not contingent on reading the text.



Illustrations © 2012 by Bob Staake

# Classroom Activities



## Predicting

Predicting works well on the first reading of a new story. Show the cover of the book first. Ask students to describe the cover image and predict what they think the book will be about. Who are the characters? What do they imagine the characters will do? Then, at certain points in the story, stop reading and ask students to talk about the predictions they've made and whether they were right or wrong. Then have students make new predictions based on what has happened in the story so far. Predicting story elements will encourage children to use their previous experiences and develop the critical thinking skills necessary to comprehend the plot.

## Story Mapping

After going through the wordless picture book with students, have students describe what is happening in the story. Who are the characters? What is the setting? What is the problem of the story? What events do the problem cause? What is the conclusion or solution to the story? Use the sample story map to understand the various parts of any story.

## Sequencing

After reading, explain that all stories have a beginning, middle, and end. Ask students to discuss what happens in each section of the wordless picture book. When telling the narrative of the book, encourage children to use sequencing phrases like *first*, *then*, *next*, *after that*, and *last* to describe the order in which events happen.

## Characterization

Identify the characters in the book and describe their physical appearance, their behavior and actions, and how the character interacts with other characters. In *Bluebird*, the characters do not have names. How would you identify them? Do the characters need names? How would you describe their physical appearance? What do their faces tell you about their emotions and feelings? Ask multiple students to describe the same character and

compare and contrast their descriptions. Do the characters need names? Throughout the story, what do their faces tell you about their emotions and feelings? As a class, make a list of character traits for the boy, the bluebird, and the group of mean boys.

## Text-to-Self Connections

While reading a wordless picture book with a group, stop occasionally and ask students to make text-to-self connections. Ask if a child has ever felt the way a character feels, or whether they have ever experienced what that character is going through. In *Bluebird*, the little boy starts out lonely and doesn't have any friends. Then the boy makes a new friend. Where appropriate, ask the students to share if they have ever felt lonely. Then later, ask students to talk about a time they made a new friend. How did they feel? Making text-to-self connections enriches a child's understanding of a text by relating the experiences of a character to that of their own lives.

## Grammar Activity

Even though there are no words in the book, you can still identify parts of speech based on the narrative you've created. Create separate lists of nouns, verbs, and adjectives based on the action of the book. For nouns, think about the characters, the places, and the things in the book. For verbs, think about what the characters and things in the book are doing. For adjectives, think about how you would describe the characters, places, and things in the book. How would you describe the setting of the story in *Mine!*?

## Cause and Effect

In storytelling, all actions create consequences. Explain cause and effect to students, using simple examples, such as "Cause: I did not wear a jacket outside when it was snowing" and "Effect: I was cold." Go through the wordless picture book and identify some character actions, and what were the effects of their actions. In *A Ball for Daisy*, the brown dog takes Daisy's ball. What is the effect of the brown dog's actions?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Story Map

**Directions:** A story map is a visual picture of a story, including the major events of the story and the actions of the characters. Using the story map on this page, fill in the parts of a wordless picture book.

**BOOK TITLE:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR:**

\_\_\_\_\_

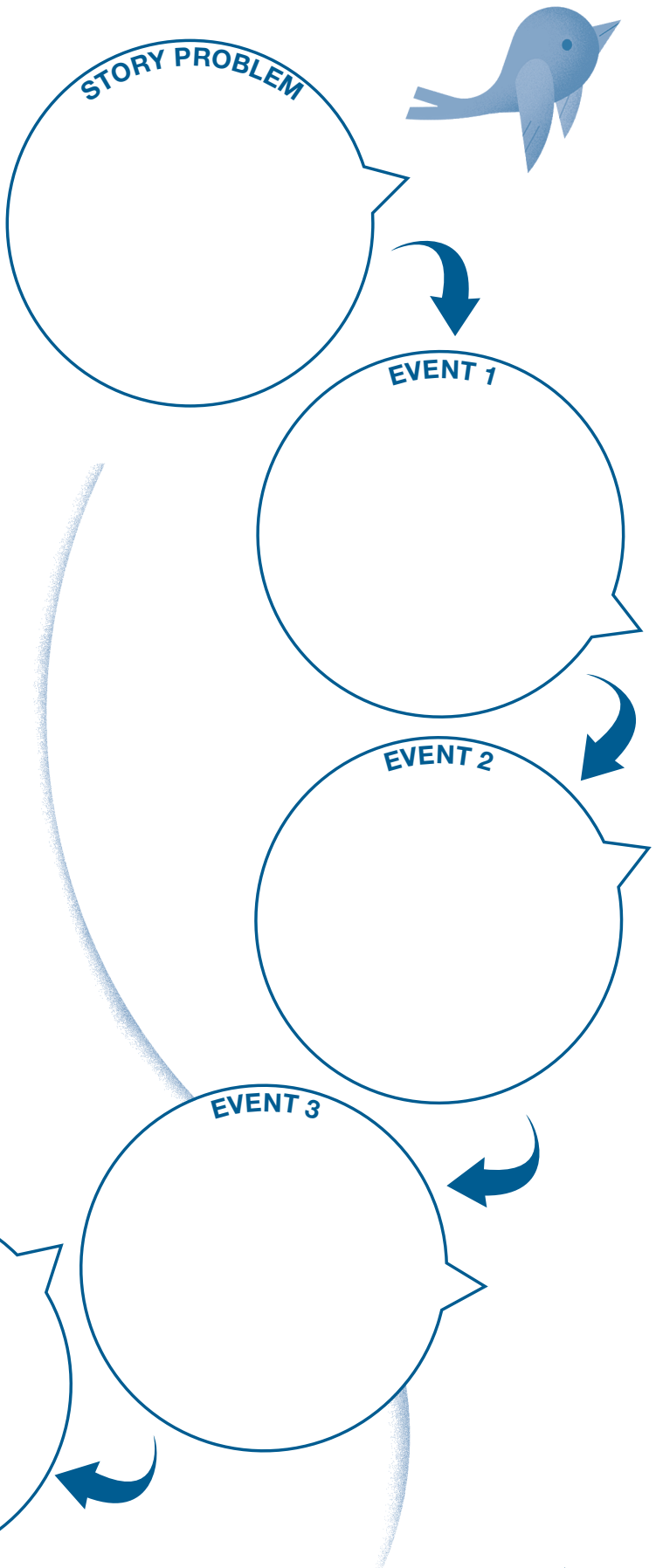
**SETTING:**

**Where:** \_\_\_\_\_

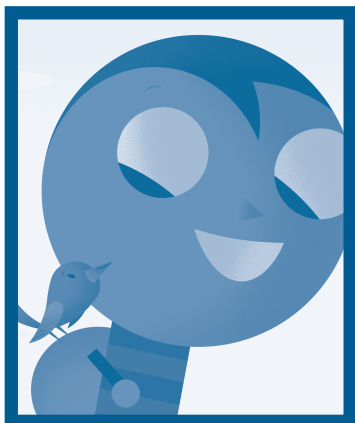
**When:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CHARACTERS:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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**EDUCATORS: REPRODUCE THIS ACTIVITY SHEET TO USE WITH YOUR STUDENTS.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



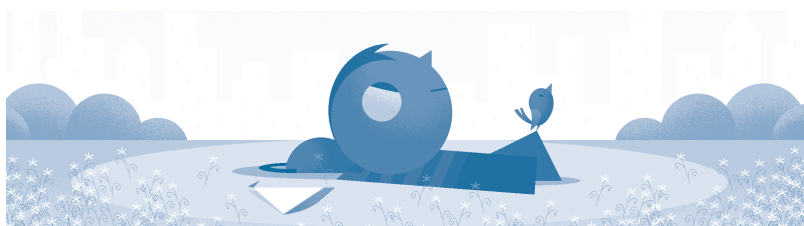
# A Story Without Words

**Directions:** Try to tell your own story without using words. First think of your characters and setting. Then decide the sequence of events in the story, including the problem and its solution or conclusion. After you draw your story, trade with a classmate and try to tell each other's stories, using your own words.

**TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_




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