

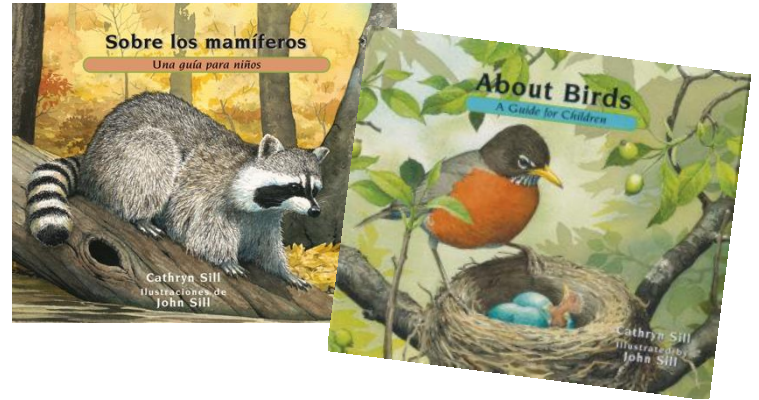
  
PEACHTREE  
**TEACHER'S GUIDE**

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## About... series

Written by Cathryn Sill  
Illustrated by John Sill

Ages 3–8 | Nonfiction  
AR • Lexile • F&P • GRL



### ABOUT THE SERIES

These first guides for children describe clearly and simply how animals look, where they live, what they eat, how they defend themselves, and how they care for their young. An afterword provides further detail.

### BOOKS IN THE ABOUT... SERIES

For a list of ISBNs and formats available, see page 8 of this guide.

### THEMES

- Habitats
- Physical characteristics
- Classification (similarities and differences of species)
- Function and interaction in environments
- Food chain
- Life cycles
- Survival functions
- Nature
- Animals
- Animal behavior

### BEFORE YOU READ

- Read the afterword to familiarize yourself with the species illustrated. This will enable you to answer questions that come up as you read to the class.
- Show the cover art and illustrations to the students and have them share their knowledge about the group of animals featured in the book.
- See if the students can tell you what sets this particular group of animals apart from others.

(Example: Birds have feathers; mammals have hair and produce milk for young.)

- Ask readers to answer the following questions by filling in the blanks with the appropriate animal.
  - What is a \_\_\_\_\_?
  - Where can we find \_\_\_\_\_?
  - Do \_\_\_\_\_ only live in (select an area or place)? Brainstorm where they might live.
  - What do \_\_\_\_\_ look like?
  - Are \_\_\_\_\_ different colors, sizes, and shapes?
  - What do \_\_\_\_\_ eat?
  - Ask students which of the animals they have seen before and have them prepare a list of where they saw them. (e.g., backyard, zoo, or a book)
- Note the different habitats for each creature. Select five to ten new or unusual words found in the book, such as *mammal*, *habitat*, *hibernate*, *carnivore*, *herbivore*, *omnivore*, *venom*, *prey*, or *hatch*. Explain and discuss the words on the list.
- Have students draw a picture of their favorite creature/habitat to use for later discussions.
- Ask students if they have ever seen a particular creature or visited a certain habitat/location. Allow students to share what they know about the creature or location. Have each student sketch a picture of the creature or location.
- Show the cover of the *About...* series book and ask for a volunteer to describe it. Explain that there are different groups based on their characteristics (birds,

fish, insects, etc.), i.e., An octopus belongs to the mollusk group, and this book will tell us what mollusks are, what they do, and where they live. Encourage students to remember some characteristics/ descriptions so they can be listed on the chart.

- As a class, read the questions on the back of the book and fill out the answers on a chart together or individually on an anticipation sheet.
- Instruct students to either agree or disagree with statements that come up during discussions to clarify information. (Can use “Thumbs Up” or “Thumbs Down.”)
- Have students fill in an individual or class K•W•L chart before reading each book. They can also create a Venn Diagram or Thematic Web chart.

What I know	What I want to know	What I learned

- Before reading *About Reptiles*, read the following statements aloud. Have students agree or disagree by using “Thumbs Up” or “Thumbs Down.”

You are a reptile.  
 Fish are reptiles.  
 Reptiles come from eggs.  
 Reptiles have live babies.  
 Reptiles are wet and slimy.  
 Turtles are reptiles.  
 Reptiles are poisonous.  
 Mother reptiles take care of their babies.  
 Reptiles do not help people.  
 The first reptiles were dinosaurs.

- Read the book *About Reptiles*. Afterward, review the statements to find out if students still agree or disagree, based on new knowledge and understandings.
- Before reading *About Amphibians*, read the following statements aloud. Have students agree or disagree by using “Thumbs Up” or “Thumbs Down.”

Frogs are the only amphibians.  
 Amphibians are mammals.  
 Amphibians lay eggs.  
 Snakes are amphibians.  
 Amphibians spend all of their lives in the water.  
 Some amphibians are poisonous.  
 Amphibians only eat plants.  
 Amphibians have many predators.

Amphibians sleep through very hot or very cold weather.

Some amphibians eat snakes and other small animals.

- Read the book *About Amphibians*. Afterward, review the statements to find out if students still agree or disagree, based on new knowledge and understandings.

### AS YOU READ

- Share the information given in the back matter about the species illustrated. Ask readers to think about the following questions as the book is being read for discussion afterwards.
  - How does a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ move?
  - What does a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ eat?
  - How do \_\_\_\_\_ protect themselves?
- Let students know to take note of the illustrations and information from the different places each creature calls home, for later discussion.
- As you read aloud, have students raise their hand every time they hear a word they do not understand or know the meaning of. Write each word on chart paper or on the board and use this student-generated vocabulary list for further study.

### AFTER YOU READ

- Have the students fill out the third section of their K•W•L chart.
- Go on a nature walk and have students look for animals from the groups. Birds and insects should be relatively easy to find.
- Insects and spiders found inside could be used as a learning experience. Give the children an opportunity to observe them with magnifiers and make sure they understand the necessity of releasing them.
- Have a class discussion on the importance of protecting animals and their habitats.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS / CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### LANGUAGE ARTS

- Students may use questions from the “Before You Read” section or do research online to come up with five to ten facts about a creature or habitat. (This can be done as a small group project or an individual report. This could also be a homework assignment.) Have students present their finished projects to the

entire class and display their work on a bulletin board or wall.

- Have students draw an imaginary creature and describe or label its characteristics. Share with the class. Students could also write/dictate a story about the creature and display the pictures and stories on a bulletin board or make into a class book.
- Define and briefly discuss riddles. [They are similar to jokes, but they make you think more and the answer is usually a surprise.] Read several riddles to the students and see if they can guess the answers before sharing them. Have students work in small groups or individually to create their own riddles. Allow them to share their riddle(s) with the class.
- Prepare a word search using sight words from the book(s) and/or new vocabulary words such as: hatch, prey, scaly, hibernate, venom, or the names of common reptiles.
- Using the book *About Fish*, make a list of words that have multiple meanings (organ, foot, filter, mantle, etc.). Have students decide which meaning would fit in a given sentence. After sharing a few sentences, allow students to create their own sentences for others to guess. Examples:
  - My mom plays an organ for the church.
  - Mollusk shells grow from a special organ called a mantle.
  - The children hung their stockings from the mantle.
- Ask students to imagine being a fish. Have them answer the following questions: If I Were a Fish...
  - What would I look like?
  - Where would I live?
  - What would I eat?
  - Who would I live with?
  - What would I do during the day?
  - How would I protect myself?

Using their creative skills and art supplies, have students design their fish and write a one-page story of their life as a fish. Allow students to share their creations with the class. While working on this activity, have a large sheet of butcher paper ready to create an ocean mural. Allow small groups of students to work on drawing, painting, and coloring the butcher paper a little at a time until everyone has had a chance. The ocean should be colorful and informative, including plants, animals, and other things you find on the ocean floor, such as sand and shells. After sharing, have students tape or staple their fish and stories to their ocean and display work in the hallway.

## POETRY

- Have students create an acrostic poem using an animal from a book. For the first letter of the name of the animal chosen, include facts about that animal.
  - Example:
    - R is for Rodent.
    - A is for Active at night (nocturnal).
    - T is for **Templeton the rat in *Charlotte's Web***.
    - RAT, a furry creature that's best left alone.
- Have students write diamante poems about an animal from a book. Explain to students that a diamante is a diamond-shaped poem about opposites (or in this example, a contrasting object).
  - Lines 1 and 7 give the opposites.
  - Lines 2 and 6 give two adjectives that describe the opposite closest to it.
  - Lines 3 and 5 state "ing" words that describe the opposite closest to it.
  - Line 4 contains 4 nouns (the first two describe the first opposite word and the last two describe the last opposite word).

Example:  
Tadpole  
Small, Green  
Wriggling, Swimming, Eating  
Gills, Tail, Lungs, Legs  
Hopping, Croaking, Sleeping  
Slimy, Loud  
Frog

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

- Discuss with students that cinquain poems have 5 lines with 2 syllables in the first line, 4 in the second, 6 in the third, 8 in the fourth, and 2 in the last line. Students can write about a specific fish species, the ocean, or other things found in the ocean such as a specific plant, seaweed, sand, or seashell. Example of a cinquain poem:

*Rainbow*  
*Colorful, Fast*  
*Swimming, Diving, Floating*  
*You will find them in the ocean.*  
*Fishes*

- Read aloud to the class.  
How I wish that I were a fish!  
My day would begin flapping my fins.  
I'd make a commotion out in the ocean.  
It would be too cool to swim in a school.  
In the sea I'd move so free.  
With just one thought...don't get caught!

Place students into groups of six and give each student one piece of construction paper and one sentence strip. You can pre-number the strips one through six for each group before passing out strips, or have each student choose one line from the poem and form groups from their choice, or assign a line to each student once they are placed in groups. Have students write their line on their sentence strip, then draw a picture that represents this line on construction paper. Pass out a sheet of butcher paper to each group and have students put the poem in order, then paste their strips and pictures. Hang each group's work in the classroom and read the poem aloud. Have students say their line when they come to it in the poem.

- Review how a snail carries its shell. Read the poem "Snails," below, aloud from a chart. Next, have students stand and form a circle holding hands, then say each verse. In the first verse, have students step forward into the circle as they say each line. The leader will walk inside the circle, which will grow smaller as students step closer together, still holding hands. In the second verse, have students step backwards as they say each line, allowing the leader once again to walk freely inside the circle. Ask students, "Who does the leader represent?" (answer: the snail) and "Who do they represent as a group holding hands?" (answer: the shell). Point out that snails move by squeezing their body (winding up/moving closer in), then releasing (unwinding/moving out). You can allow students to take turns being the snail.

#### Snails\*

Hand in hand you see us well.  
Creep like a snail into his shell.  
Ever nearer, ever nearer,  
Ever closer, ever closer,  
Very snug indeed you dwell,  
Snail, within your tiny shell.

Hand in hand you see us well.  
Creep like a snail out of his shell.  
Ever farther, ever farther,

Ever wider, ever wider.  
Who'd have thought this tiny shell  
Could have held us all so well.

\*Source: [www.earlyliterature.ecsd.net](http://www.earlyliterature.ecsd.net)

#### SCIENCE

- Get a refrigerator or washing machine box. Cut an oval at the base of the box large enough for a student to crawl through. Paint the box green and make large construction paper leaves. As students learn, they write facts about rainforest amphibians on the leaves and glue them to the box. Inside the box, large pieces of brown butcher paper can be rolled up lengthwise to be trees with large green construction paper leaves protruding. Each child can make tree frogs to hang from trees inside the box. Students can also make predators (snakes, bats) and prey (moths, flies, spiders, grasshoppers) of the tree frogs to include in the box.
- Choose an ocean animal to illustrate. Draw the background to match the animal's colors to help it hide from its enemies. Display the pictures for others to try to locate the hidden animal.
- Have each student select a type of fish to research. Using the Internet, have them find and record the following information about their fish:
  - Name of fish, size/length, weight, height
  - Ocean zone (sunlit, open-ocean, deep-ocean)
  - Is it a carnivore, herbivore, or omnivore?
  - Is it endangered or threatened?
  - How long is its lifespan?
  - Is it a predator, or who are its predators?
  - What size are they when born and how big can they grow?
 After compiling this information, have students create a model of their fish in its natural habitat using art supplies and a shoebox. The model should be as realistic as possible. Allow students to share information about their fish species while displaying their model. Display the models in the classroom.
- Have the students do one or more of the following activities:
  - Sort a variety of animals into the categories of "Reptile" and "Not Reptile" based on the list of characteristics of reptiles.
  - Make a Venn Diagram comparing two different reptiles, such as a snake and a turtle, to examine what is the same or different about them.
  - Identify and label the body parts of reptiles. Discuss how those parts help the reptile survive in its environment.

- Compare the characteristics of reptiles to other animal groups your class has studied, such as mammals, fish, birds, insects, or amphibians.
- Using a Venn Diagram, compare and contrast frogs, toads, and salamanders (all three or any combination).
- Have students make a book in which they draw and explain the different stages of a frog's growth.
- Order classroom tadpoles. Set up a tadpole observation station. Have students start a life cycle journal in which they write and draw daily observations about what they see.
- Have students compare pond and rainforest habitats for frogs. Use two large sheets of butcher paper to compare similarities and differences about the two environments. Display the chart in the classroom or hallway.
- Ask a pet store owner or zoo personnel to bring in live reptiles for observation. Have the expert discuss the needs of reptiles and the pros and cons of keeping reptiles as pets.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

- Show students a large map of North America. Point out the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans on the map. Next, distribute a blank map of North America with the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Have students label each of the oceans, then reread the backmatter from *About Mollusks* and have students locate and label the states mentioned and the specific mollusks found there. Older grades could research other continents and mollusks that are found near them.
- Give each student a sheet of grid paper. Have students correctly label their papers with the directions: north, south, east, west, northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest. Next have them draw a large pond on their map and decorate it by adding plants and animals. Using their maps, have students create a list of instructions to locate specific items on their maps. Next, allow students to work with a partner and exchange maps with each other. They must read the instructions aloud and have their partner locate specific items from this information on the map.

## MATH

- This activity can involve up to five students at one time. **Items needed:** tape, paste, index cards, timer, 5 sheets of paper, 5 fishing rods (sticks), string, 5 small magnets, 25 pictures of fish, a box of paper clips, a large blue bucket (lake).

To make the fishing rods, use a stick or yardstick and tie string around one end of the stick. Tape or tie a magnet at the other end. Print out pictures of fish and paste them on index cards. Cut out the pictures and attach a paper clip to the mouth of each fish. Place the fish in the bucket and give each student a fishing rod. **How to play:** Select one student as the counter and one student as the fisherman. Have all students count the total number of fish in the lake and write the number on their paper. Explain that the fisherman has 30 seconds to catch as many fish as he can. When the time is up the fisherman will stop fishing. The first fisherman keeps the fish he/she caught, then allows the next fisherman to go until everyone has had a chance to fish. After everyone has gone fishing, have students count up the fish they caught and subtract their number from the total number of fish in the lake. Ask each student to write and answer the following questions on paper:

- How many total fish are in the lake?
- How many fish did the first fisherman catch?
- How many fish did the second fisherman catch?
- How many fish did the third fisherman catch?
- How many fish did the fourth fisherman catch?
- How many fish did the fifth fisherman catch?
- How many fish were left in the lake?

Students must create equations to show each answer. Variations of this activity can be to allow each fisherman to go and then count up the number of fish caught, create the equation, then return the fish to the lake for the next fisherman to go until everyone has had a chance.

- Explain that you can classify fish into groups in many different ways. Ask students to share different ways. (Examples include color, stripes, polka dots, size, the number of fins on a fish, small or large mouth, etc.). Have students work in small groups and draw pictures of fish by a certain classification. Have each group share their pictures with the entire class and allow students to guess how the fish were classified.
- Research how much certain animals in a group weigh (e.g. mammals, fish, amphibians, etc.). Find pictures of the different groups and then print out. On chart paper, paste the pictures at the bottom of the page and create a graph showing the weights of different animals. Discuss.

Other graph suggestions: how fast certain animals run, how high an animal can jump, how many young can an animal have per birth in a lifetime, and parts of the U.S. where certain animals live or specific continents where animals live.

- Find a frog coloring sheet from the Internet and print out a sheet for each student. Allow students to color their frogs and cut them out. Put students into small groups and have them sort their pictures by a certain attribute. They must explain how they sorted their frogs. After students have sorted the cards, they may use them to make and extend patterns.
- Have fun sorting animals. *Younger Grades*: Students sort animal pictures into two groups – mollusks and not mollusks. *Older Grades*: Students sort animal pictures according to their animal group – mollusks, mammals, fish, insects, birds, etc.
- Use stickers, stamps, or small pictures of animals to write addition or subtraction number sentences. Older grades could also write story problems involving animals.  
Example:



- Students may use stickers, stamps, or small pictures of sea animals to make patterns. Older grades can label their patterns or make building patterns, (Example: a, b, a, bb, a, bbb, a, bbbb, etc.).

## MUSIC

- Ask students if they have ever been to the beach, and if so, have they looked at the waves or watched the fish in the ocean. Discuss with the class how the waves and the fish in the ocean move. Explain to the class that today they are going to move like the waves and fish in the ocean while listening to music and moving to the beat. Have students form a large circle. Play the song “Wipe Out” by the Surfaris. Have students start by moving as waves, in different directions. They can try making a large wave together, too. Next have students become fish and move like a fish would move.
- Have the students act like a fierce wave, gentle wave, or loud wave; act like a fish taking a swim on a Sunday afternoon or a hungry fish looking for something to eat. Express to students that they are to listen to the melody and rhythm and move to the rhythm of the song. They can use different parts of their body for movement and can move in any direction the music and “sea” takes them. Point out the melody and rhythm of the song and how the beat hits hard on certain notes.

- Using the song below, teach the children the words and make up hand movements to go along with the words. With the sound off, watch a nature video of different animals moving around in their natural habitat. Have the children copy the movements using both arms and legs.

### \*Five Little Bugs

(Sung to the tune of *Five Little Ducks*) Author Unknown

Five little bugs on the forest floor  
Along came a lizard... SLURP!!!  
hen there were four.

Four little bugs on a kapok tree  
Along came a lizard... SLURP!!!

And then there were three.  
Three little bugs without a single clue...  
Two little bugs soaking up the sun...  
One little bug knew that he was done...  
Now there are none.

\*Source: [www.preschooleducation.com/sreptile.shtml](http://www.preschooleducation.com/sreptile.shtml)

## ART

- Make puzzles out of old magazines with animals on the pages.
- Prepare a snake cutout for students and have them glue on different colors of pre-cut diamond shapes in a pattern to make a replica of a diamondback rattlesnake. Other shapes could be added to create new patterns. Display on a bulletin board.
- Make a class mural on a bulletin board or wall by drawing a background of the rainforest with trees, rocks, water, plants, etc. Have students choose an animal that lives in the rainforest, then draw and cut out their picture. On a large index card, have students write the following things about their animal: name of animal, size, lifespan, poisonous/not poisonous, diurnal/nocturnal, predator/non-predator, what it eats, how it protects itself, where it goes to keep warm or cool, where it would go to hide from predators, and does it hibernate? Have them place their pictures and information on the mural.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Choose two taggers to act as the “predators,” then divide the rest of the class into three different types of sea creatures (Examples: rainbow fish, seahorses, and octopuses). The two predators will stand in the

middle of the gym floor and the sea creatures will line up on one side of the gym on a black line. The object of the game is for the sea creatures to get to the other side of the gym and back without getting caught (tagged) by the two predators. If sea creatures are tagged, they must sit down (where they were tagged) and become seaweed. As seaweed, they will use their arms to help tag other sea creatures running around the gym. For example, the two predators call for all seahorses. All the seahorses must run to the other side of the gym, tag the wall, and then run back. If one of the predators tags a child who is a seahorse, then that child has a seat on the floor and becomes seaweed. He then helps the two predators tag other creatures. The predators can rotate which sea creatures they call or can call just one type of creature to run, such as only seahorses, octopuses, or rainbow fish. They can also call “sea creatures” and all of the children must run. The game ends when there are only two “sea creatures” left who will become the next predators (taggers).

- Play Octopus Tag.\*
  - Set up a rectangular “ocean” with boundaries marked. Use rope or chalk to create the boundaries.
  - Have one student be the queen or king octopus and stand in the middle of the “ocean.”
  - Have all students who are the “fish” line up at one end.
  - The queen or king octopus says, “I am the octopus, queen/king of all motion. Let’s see if you can cross my ocean!”
  - The fish try to “swim” across the ocean without being tagged by the octopus. If tagged, they become seaweed and have to keep one foot planted where they were tagged. All seaweed can try to reach out and tag the fish swimming by them, thus turning them into seaweed as well.
  - Once the fish reach the other side, the octopus repeats the chant and all fish must cross again. The game ends when all the fish become seaweed and the last fish tagged becomes the new octopus.

\*Source: Octopus Tag game was found at [www.familyfun.com](http://www.familyfun.com)

## HOME PROJECT / EXTRA CREDIT

(Higher Order Thinking Activities based on Bloom’s Taxonomy)

Give the children the following assignments:

- Pretend you are a frog and describe the world from your point of view. Draw a picture from this vantage point. (Evaluation)

- Design an electronic slideshow presentation to show what you learned about amphibians. (Synthesis)
- If you could be any kind of amphibian, what would you be and why? E-mail your answer to your teacher. (Evaluation)
- Using what you have learned about amphibians, design the perfect amphibian that could not be eaten or caught by predators and has an easier time catching prey. Draw or make a model of this creature. (Synthesis)
- Build a model of an amphibian habitat. (Application)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Cathryn and John Sill are the dynamic team behind the *About...* series as well as the *About Habitats* series. Cathryn is a graduate of Western Carolina State University and a retired elementary school teacher. John is a prize-winning and widely published wildlife artist who holds a BS in Wildlife Biology from North Carolina State University. In their school presentation “The Making of a Children’s Series,” the Sills cover the process of creating a book from original idea to final book, including planning, journaling, researching, writing, editing, proofing, and illustrating. Cathryn emphasizes the writing; she shows materials from actual projects and talks about the printing process. John gives a brief demonstration of the steps he goes through to illustrate books. This program is packed with fun examples of their past work experiences and facts about the creatures featured in their books. The Sills live in Franklin, North Carolina.

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updated 1/21/21

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