

Book Links

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:
WHOO'S UP AT NIGHT
BY KRISTIN RYDHOLM

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The day may be over as sleepy children head off to bed, but parents know that the questions continue: “What’s that noise outside?” “Can a bat hurt me?” “Can I have an owl like Harry Potter’s?” Nighttime can be a source of curiosity as well as anxiety for children, and teachers can assist in the demystification process by creating a study unit on nocturnal animals. A good theme unit always begins with having children brainstorm what they already know and what they want to learn about a subject. Owls and bats will undoubtedly head up any list of nocturnal animals, but what about wombats? The following titles are all highly recommended picture books to help introduce children to a variety of nocturnal animals. Suggest these selections to parents as well as teachers; most would be excellent recommendations for bedtime reading as well as classroom sharing.

Bibliography

The Best Book of Nighttime Animals. By Belinda Weber. Illus. by Mark Bergin. 2006. 32p. Kingfisher, \$12.95 (9780753459850). 591.5. K–Gr. 3.

This picture book would be a good initial source for an overview of nocturnal animals around the world. The drawings, many of which look like snapshots from a nocturnal family reunion, do a good job of representing the variety of animals in their various environments.

Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night. By Joyce Kilmer. Illus. by Rick Allen. 2010. 32p. Houghton, lib. ed., \$16.99 (9780547152288); e-book, \$16.99 (9780547768663). 811. Gr. 3–6.

Each poem in this 2011 Newbery Honor Book is a spotlight on an animal or an aspect of nocturnal life. The woodcut illustrations are sandwiched between a poem on the left and additional information about the subject on the right.

Diary of a Wombat. By Jackie French. Illus. by Bruce Whatley. 2003. 32p. Clarion, \$14 (9780618381364); paper, \$6.99 (9780547076690). K–Gr. 3.

The diary format in this winning title could serve as a classroom introduction to point of view. The fictional text is filled with facts, which are supported in the realistic illustrations.

Assure the wombat’s new fans that this rascal has additional adventures in *Diary of a Baby Wombat* (2010) and the forthcoming *Christmas Wombat* (2012).

Fireflies at Midnight. By Marilyn Singer. Illus. by Ken Robbins. 2003. 32p. Atheneum, \$17.99 (9780689824920). 811. Gr. 2–4.

Although the poems in this book are about animals within the 24-hour spectrum, there are many poems dedicated specifically to animals of the night. Singer is an award-winning poet for children and tells tales of the animals while also informing the reader of what makes each unique.

I Love the Night. By Dar Hosta. Illus. by the author. 2003. 32p. Brown Dog, \$16.95 (9780972196703). K–Gr. 2.

This book is an explosion of color and words. The author clearly enjoys collecting words and animals and sharing them with children in an engaging format. Hosta also does an excellent job of modeling her illustration technique in two online videos.

Little Owl’s Night. By Divya Srinivasan. Illus. by the author. 2011. 32p. Viking, \$16.99 (9780670012954). PreS–K.

Little Owl, with his big, big eyes and his itty-bitty wings, is having “a wonderful night” as he flits between snails and stars. He watches an opossum family trek along and a skunk eat berries. Night is Little Owl’s playground, but inevitably the sun must come up, and soon bedtime arrives.

North Country Night. By Daniel San Souci. Illus. by the author. 1990. 32p. Yearling, o.p. K–Gr. 3.

This book is an NSTA–CBC Outstanding Science Trade Book, and that title is well earned. San Souci focuses on winter nightlife on a snowy evening in the woods. The format of this book makes it seem as though the reader is going on a winter’s walk, with the animals as tour guides. Each animal is introduced and then fades to the background as another is introduced on the following page. The text also tactfully addresses the food chain of the animals. A “look-again” detail: in the beginning of the book, the cabin lights are off, but they are on at the end of the book when the day begins.

Owl Babies. By Martin Waddell. Illus. by Patrick Benson. 1992. 32p. Candlewick, \$15.99 (9781564021014); paper, \$6.99 (9780763617103); board, \$6.99 (9781564029652); e-book, \$6.99 (9780763661878). PreS–Gr. 1.

This book has gained popularity in its board-book format because of its simplicity, repetitive text, and bold, detailed illustrations. It’s the larger picture book, though, that truly allows readers and viewers to feel as if they are in the owl home with the babies. This story would translate beautifully into a pantomime for a small group of students.

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Owl Moon. By Jane Yolen. Illus. by John Schoenherr. 1987. 32p. Philomel, \$16.99 (9780399214578). K–Gr. 2.

This Caldecott Medal–winning book sensitively addresses a special relationship of a father and a daughter who participate in a family rite of passage—“owling.” The journey begins when the little girl opens the door to a winter tableau—a snowy day in the country. This book successfully conveys a full range of emotions and sensory details that make the reader feel the journey as well as see it. A “look-again” detail: although the book emphasizes owling, a keen eye can find other animals of the night, such as a fox, a mouse, and a raccoon.

Raccoon Tune. By Nancy Shaw. Illus. by Howard Fine. 2003. 32p. Holt, \$17.99 (9780805065442). K–Gr. 2.

This lyrical and humorous romp emphasizes the chaotic mealtime antics of a gaze of raccoons. Although the illustrations often convey anthropomorphic aspects of a raccoon, the message is clear—these animals are resourceful, noisy, and persistent.

While the World Is Sleeping. By Pamela Duncan Edwards. Illus. by Daniel Kirk. 2010. 32p. Orchard, \$16.99 (9780545017565); e-book, \$4.99 (9780545362146). PreS–Gr. 2.

The refrain, “while the world is sleeping,” and clear rhyming scheme make this picture book read like a lullaby. A young girl’s owl companion flies over the countryside to visit different animals of the night. Accompanied by Kirk’s big and bold illustrations, this would be a particularly good selection for younger children.

White Owl, Barn Owl. By Nicola Davies. Illus. by Michael Foreman. 2007. 32p. Candlewick, \$16.99 (9780763633646); paper, \$6.99 (9780763641436). K–Gr. 2.

While a grandfather goes up in a tree to secure an owl house, his granddaughter looks down on the ground to discover owl pellets. Both wait patiently for a barn owl to appear and discover this new home. Additional features of this book are informational details about owls integrated into the watercolor illustrations and an index. Follow this with Davies’ *Bat Loves the Night* (2001). A “look-again” detail: the endpapers at the front of the book show an empty tree, but those at the back show the tree with an owl house and its residents.

Who Goes There? By Jennifer A. Ericsson. Illus. by Bert Kitchen. 2009. 40p. Roaring Brook/Neal Porter, \$17.99 (9781596433717). PreS–Gr. 2.

In the quiet of the night, Owl surveys his surroundings, searching for dinner. Ericsson effectively uses pace and repetition as she introduces a series of animals, each turning out to be a creature that Owl will not eat. Brief descriptions of animal characteristics and behaviors are accompanied by intricately detailed illustrations.

Nature After Dark

Although the following books are primarily intended for children who are doing research, these titles would be invaluable resources for outdoor-education teachers. Both books encourage the reader to go outside and experience nocturnal nature.

The Night Book: Exploring Nature after Dark with Activities, Experiments, and Information. By Pamela Hickman. Illus. by Suzanne Mogensen. 1999. 48p. Kids Can, o.p. 591.5. Gr. 3–6.

Children are taught how to dissect owl pellets, create an underwater light source to view aquatic animals at night, and identify night creatures.

Night Science for Kids: Exploring the World after Dark. By Terry Krautwurst. 2003. 144p. illus. Lark, o.p. 591.5. Gr. 3–7.

Some of the projects included in this book are slanted toward conservation of nocturnal animals. There are directions for building a bat house and an owl house and for creating a moth-friendly garden.

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Common Core Connections

A unit on nocturnal animals should begin with the creatures that live in the students' states. Implement the Common Core State Standards with these classroom-ready activities that explore the world of nocturnal animals.

In the Classroom: Mask the text in Martin Waddell's *Owl Babies*, using paper or Post-it notes, and present the book to the class as a wordless story. Ask the children to share what they think is going on in each picture spread. Remind them to look carefully at the owls to see if they can guess how the owls are feeling or what they are thinking on each page. Also, discuss what students learn about owl behavior from the images. At the end of this activity, tell the children that you will remove the Post-it notes and read the actual text to see if their ideas were the same as the author's.

Common Core Connections

- **RI.K.7.** With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).
- **RI.1.6.** Distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and information provided by the words in a text.

In the Classroom: Ask the children to share what they know about owls. Read Nicola Davies' *White Owl*, *Barn Owl* and Jane Yolen's *Owl Moon* to the class, and create a classroom chart that compares these titles.

Common Core Connections

- **RI.1.9.** Identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).
- **RI.3.1.** Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

In the Classroom: In *I Love the Night*, Dar Hosta uses creative combinations of adverbs and adjectives (e.g., "splendidly splendid") throughout the text. As you read the book aloud, ask students to put their thumbs up when they hear an example of these formations. At the end, see how many of these combinations students can recall. Create a list of these

adverbs and adjectives, and double-check it by scanning the book again. Then ask students to decide what these words have in common. This list would be a wonderful resource for children to refer to in writing exercises to replace overused words, such as great. Extend the exercise by creating a classroom list of adverbs and adjectives that are antonyms for great (e.g., horribly horrible, terribly terrible).

Common Core Connections

- **RI.3.4.** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

In the Classroom: The name of the game is "Whoo Am I?" Present each child with a piece of paper folded in half to resemble a greeting card. On the cover, each child should write five facts about a specific nocturnal animal; *The Best Book of Nighttime Animals*, by Belinda Weber, would be an excellent source of information. Have students write the name and draw a picture of the animal on the inside of the card. Display the finished cards in the classroom to make an interactive bulletin board.

Common Core Connections

- **RI.1.1.** Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

In the Classroom: Alternate reading the poems "Bat Wraps Up" and "Night Spider's Advice," from Joyce Sidman's *Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night*, and "Bat" and "Spider," from Marilyn Singer's *Fireflies at Midnight*. Ask each student to write a poem about senses from a spider's or a bat's point of view using the following prompts for each line: I see; I feel; I taste; I hear; I smell. Have students illustrate their poems, and then assemble the students' work into a classroom anthology. Additionally, each child can record a reading of his or her poem to be used as a listening-center option.

Common Core Connections

- **RI.1.4.** Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.
- **RI.2.4.** Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.