

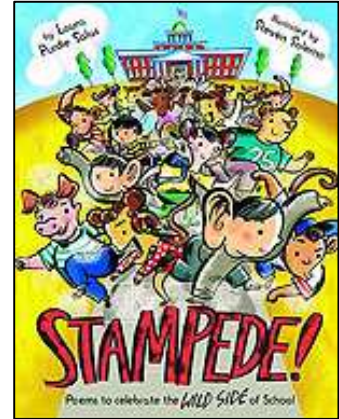
Teaching Guide

Stampede! Poems to Celebrate the Wild Side of School

by Laura Purdie Salas, illustrated by Steven Salerno
Clarion Books, 2009 * ISBN: 978-0618914883

About the book:

There's only one place to find creatures that stampede like elephants, swarm like bees, swoop like sparrows, and swing like monkeys. School! These eighteen funny and imaginative poems observe students in their natural habitat and reveal their unusual behavior, crazy communication, and very healthy appetites. Whether they're in the classroom, on the playground, or in the cafeteria, school brings out the animal in all of them. And if you look carefully as you turn the pages, you may even glimpse some of the wild side in yourself!



About the author:

Laura Purdie Salas was inspired to write these poems when her daughter Maddie had two teeth pulled and came out of the dentist's office looking like a walrus. (A very cute walrus, of course.) From that point on, Laura began viewing all kids with fangs and fur instead of ponytails and soccer shirts. Laura is the author of several other poetry and nonfiction books for children. She lives with her family in Minnesota, and you can learn more about her at laurasalas.com.

About the illustrator:

Steven Salerno is so busy creating illustrations for children's books, magazines, and advertising that he wishes he had eight arms, just like an octopus! He has illustrated many popular picture books for children, including *Bebe Goes Shopping*, which was chosen as a Best Book of the Year by Nick Jr. magazine, as well as his own stories, *Coco the Carrot*, *Little Tumbo*, and *Harry Hungry!* Steven is a graduate of Parsons School of Design and lives in New York City. You can visit him online at stevensalerno.com

Pre-reading:

What type of animal would you like to be? Why?

Questions to consider:

1. Which words rhyme in the first poem? How do you write a rhyming poem?
2. Why does the new girl feel like a mouse? Have you ever felt lost in a maze at school too? How can we help new students feel welcome?
3. Do you like to jump in mud puddles like the boy in “Whole Hog?”
4. Is it hard to concentrate when you are hungry in school? Why does that feel like a bear? “I’m a starving bear in springtime” is that a simile or a metaphor?
5. Why is the girl dreading picture day? What did her dad call her a butterfly?
6. Do you wish you could crawl into a den sometimes at school? When do you feel this way? What special things does she keep in her desk?
7. Has anything ever made you blush? What other animal could be used to show how you look when embarrassed?
8. Are you a good duck in school? Why or why not?
9. “My sharp words are/quills to prick you.” What does the author mean by sharp quills? Have you ever used sharp quills with someone?
10. What’s your favorite school lunch? Why might you use a dog for a food poem?
11. If your school had prairie dog tunnels big enough for kids would you go inside? Why or why not?
12. Where are you king? Do you think everyone is king of something?
13. Who are your favorite sparrows to play with?
14. What is the problem in “Printer Problems?” How do you improve handwriting?
15. What strategies can a kid use instead of counting with their fingers? Do you think it is important to memorize certain math facts or not? Why?
16. P.U. is about an embarrassing moment. Write about an embarrassing moment you’ve had too.
17. What do you do when you don’t know the answer, like the kid in “Turtleneck?”
18. Why is there a stampede? When else do kids stampede?
19. Which poem is your favorite? Why?
20. How did the illustrator mix real kids with animals?



Projects:

Language Arts: Write your own school/animal poem! Use Laura Purdie Salas' poems for inspiration but choose new animals and new situations at school or home. Share!

Art: Create a collage with your poem, photographs of your animal, and kids' faces from magazines.

Science: Create a three-dimensional animal out of whatever materials you find around the house. Then, list five facts about that animal on an index card. Turn in both!

Reading: As your teacher reads the poems aloud, raise your hand when you hear two rhyming words!

Author Interview:**What is your favorite thing about writing poetry?**

Poetry is so flexible! It can hold any thought, any mood, any emotion. I can be silly or serious, sarcastic or amazed when I write a poem. I can tell a story or just describe something. And I can talk about things that would sound kind of funny if I brought them up in normal conversation (like how much an angry kid reminds me of a porcupine, or what the spine of a book would say if it could talk). So I can never be "not in the mood" to write a poem. There's no wrong mood!

How did you first fall in love with the form?

By accident. I wanted to write about the illness of someone I loved. I sat down to write, but instead of a diary entry or an essay, poems came out! I was shocked. They weren't good poems, but they were important. They helped me get through some really hard times and also made me want to write more, more, more poems!

Describe a bit about your process for creating a poem and a collection of poetry.

Most poems start with a question, like "I wonder what lives inside that tree," or "Which of my favorite things start with the letter B?" or "How can I describe this amazing puddle?" Then I play with forms. I like to write acrostics, haiku, and other forms, plus nonrhyming free verse poems. Sometimes I try one poem in several forms before one feels right. Sometimes I like a poem so much that I want to write a bunch more like it. Then I get obsessed with poems like that, and they start spilling out, even when I should be working on other things!

What can we look forward to next?

My next poetry book will be BOOKSPEAK: POEMS BY AND ABOUT BOOKS. It doesn't have a pub date yet, but it will come out from Clarion as well.

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and author, visit her website to find hundreds of other guides to children's literature.