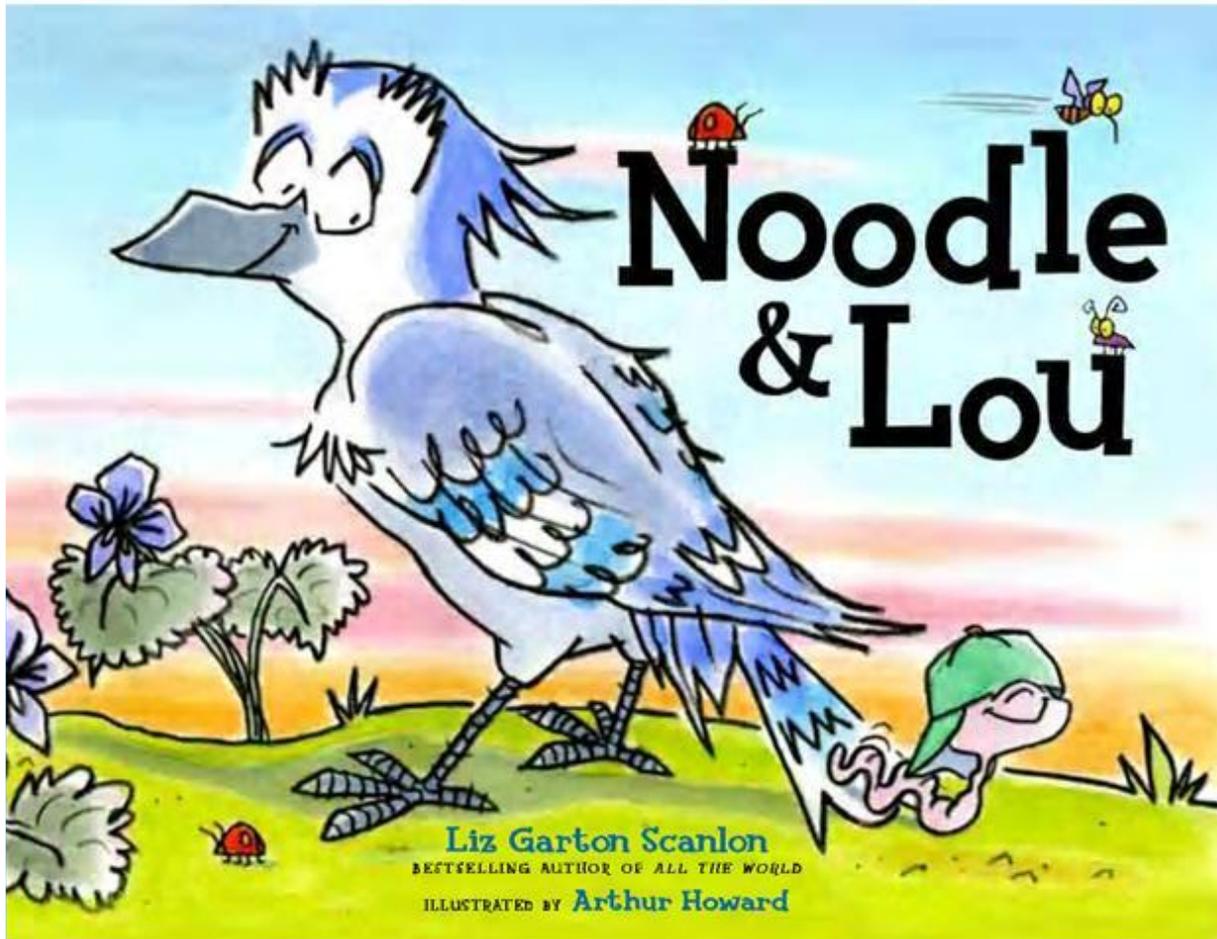


A Teacher's Guide to

Noodle & Lou

Written by Liz Garton Scanlon

Illustrated By Arthur Howard



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Story Summary

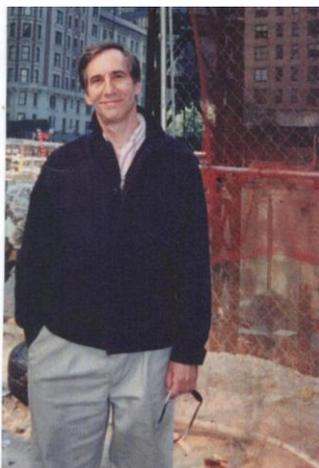
Noodle is a worm who is having a very blue day. Luckily, his best friend, Lou, is there to help chase those blues away.

About the Author



LIZ SCANLON's Noodle and Lou are really just worm-and-bird versions of herself and the many folks she's lucky enough to call friends, folks who always seem to see the best in each other. She made her first friends growing up in Colorado and later, in Wisconsin. Now she lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband and two daughters and even more friends. Liz spends her time writing, teaching, knocking around with her family, and running on the hike-and-bike trail near her house. Learn more about Liz and her other books at www.LizGartonScanlon.com and <http://liz-scanlon.livejournal.com/>.

About the Illustrator



ARTHUR HOWARD is the illustrator of the celebrated *Mr. Putter & Tabby* series by Cynthia Rylant, as well as a number of books he wrote himself including *Serious Trouble*, *Cosmo Zooms* and *When I Was Five*. He lives in New York City, where he likes to walk with friends, swim with friends, draw with friends, and go out and hear all kinds of music with friends too.

Pre-Reading

Take a Book Walk

Look at the front cover and find the title and names of the author and illustrator. Who are Noodle and Lou? What are the bird and worm doing? Now look at the back cover. What are the bird and worm looking at? What might they be saying to each other?

Read the story description on this inside jacket flap. How will Lou help Noodle “chase those blues away”?

- Identify the information that different parts of a book provide (e.g., title, author, illustrator).
- Predict what might happen next in text based on the cover, title, and illustrations.

Being a Friend

What do you do when a friend feels sad? What do your friends do when you're sad? Using a chart like the one below, help students brainstorm things they could do to cheer up a friend.

With my _____,	I can _____
hands	pat my buddy on the back.
arms	give a hug!
mouth	smile and say, “I love you.”
feet	dance with my friend.

Help students trace their bodies from head to toe onto paper and cut out their shapes. Let them add facial features, hair and clothing. Next, help them add words from the chart to the applicable body parts in the drawing. For example, on the arms of the drawing, a child might write, “I give my friends hugs,” and on the feet, “I dance with my friends.”

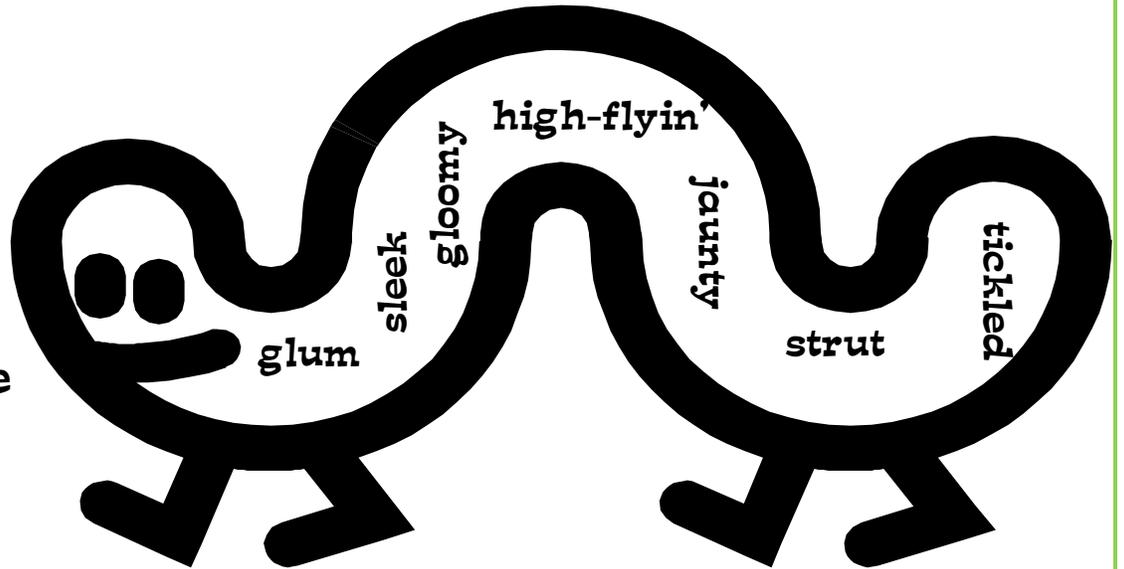
- Describe ways to build and maintain friendships.
- Name major body parts and their functions.

Vocabulary

Your students may be unfamiliar with the following words. Encourage them to use text and picture clues to infer meanings.

- Use context to determine the relevant meaning of unfamiliar words or multiple-meaning words.

Use both text and picture clues to decipher these words:



Use text clues to decipher these words:



Discussion Questions

1. Who are Noodle and Lou? (*knowledge*)
2. What does Lou say to make Noodle feel better? (*comprehension*)
3. How does Noodle thank Lou in the end? Brainstorm a list of ways you could thank those who are kind to you. (*application*)
4. One reason Lou felt blue is because “the grass grew much greener in other worms’ rows.” What does this mean? Tell about a time when you felt the same way. (*analysis*)
5. What would happen if Lou were the one who felt blue? Think about how Lou responded to each of Noodle’s complaints. Notice that he doesn’t refute Noodle’s claims; he puts a positive spin on them. For example, when Noodle says, “My head has no eyes!” Lou responds with, “So life’s a surprise.”

Make a list of things that might make Lou sad, and what Noodle could say to cheer him up. (*synthesis*)

If Lou said...	Noodle might say...

6. Are birds and worms usually friends? Why or why not? What makes Noodle and Lou’s friendship so special? (*evaluation*)

Student Activities

Strut Your Stuff



Turn to the page near the end where Noodle, "...gave his sorry old slither a jaunty new strut." Ask students what they think "strut" means. Point out Noodle's "chin" held high and the wiggle in his "step" as he shimmies down Lou's tail. How does Noodle feel when he struts?

Help students design their own Noodle hat to inspire their strut. Make a visor from card stock or foam using a template like the one found at First Palette:

http://www.firstpalette.com/tool_box/printables/visor.html, or purchase plain caps or visors from a craft store.

Explain that people or animals usually strut when they feel happy or confident. What makes your students feel confident? Brainstorm a list of pictures or words that depict things your students feel confident doing. The list may include skills that the children could not do a year ago (skipping, whistling, riding a bike, catching a ball, writing or recognizing their names, etc.). Have students decorate their caps or visors with these words and pictures. Invite them all to wear their caps or visors backwards, just like Noodle. Now they're ready to start strutting!

- *Recognize that spoken words can be represented by print for communication.*
- *Describe and select physical activities that provide opportunities for enjoyment and challenge.*
- *Explore space, using expressive movement.*

Hey, Lou!

Look for the text balloon near the beginning of the story where Noodle is calling for Lou. Have students illustrate their favorite scenes, retelling the story using only Noodle and Lou's dialogue.

Find the text balloon near the end of the story where the ladybug is saying, "What a worm!" Discuss what this phrase means, and what may have prompted the ladybug to say this. Have students choose their favorite bugs from the illustrations and

imagine what the bugs might be saying. Let students draw the bugs and add speech balloons.

- *Describe characters in a story and the reasons for their actions.*
- *Dictate or write sentences to tell a story and put the sentences in chronological sequence.*
- *Write short letters that put ideas in a chronological or logical sequence and use appropriate conventions (e.g., date, salutation, closing).*

We Need Noodle!



Lou gives Noodle lots of reasons to feel good about himself. If only Noodle realized how useful earthworms really are!

Visit the following National Geographic for Kids site to learn more about Noodle's earthworm kin:

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/animals/creaturefeature/earthworms/>.

Make a chart of facts that show how earthworms help the natural world.

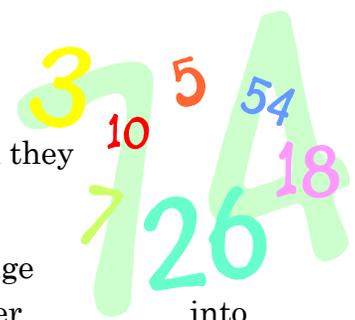
Explain to students that persuasive writing is when you try and convince someone to do something or to think in a certain way. Write a class letter to Noodle that will convince him that earthworms are important!

- *Write texts to communicate ideas to specific audiences for specific purposes.*
- *Write short letters that put ideas in logical sequence and use appropriate conventions (e.g., date, salutation, closing).*
- *Ask questions about organisms in the natural world.*
- *Analyze and record examples of interdependence.*
- *Investigate how the external characteristics of an animal are related to where it lives, how it moves, and what it eats.*

Wiggly Math

According to National Geographic for Kids, earthworms are usually 7 or 8 centimeters (a little over 3 inches) long, although they can grow to a length of 35 centimeters (14 inches).

Help students measure strips of paper that represent the average and maximum lengths of earthworms. Let them divide the paper segments and add googly eyes. Now let them compare the “worms.” How many “average” worms does it take to approximate the length of one giant worm?



Lead children on a classroom hunt for other objects that are close in length to both types of worms. At first, children may tend to choose objects that are similar in both length *and* shape to the paper worms, such as pencils, crayons, markers, and straws. Encourage children to find objects that have similar lengths yet different shapes as the worms, such as a book, box, or ball.

Use the paper worms to measure objects around your room or school. How many earthworms wide is the door or table? How many earthworms tall is a child? A teacher? Discuss when and why it would be best to use smaller worms vs. larger worms when measuring length or distance.

- *Compare the attributes of length and use comparative language to solve problems and answer questions.*



Mirror, Mirror

Give each child a piece of paper with the words “Seeing _____ through his/her Best Buddies’ Eyes” across the top. For pre-literate students, add a digital photo. Have each child write his or her name in the blank, like this:

Seeing Ana Through Her Best Buddies’ Eyes

Collect the papers. Now model the next step by writing the same sentence on chart paper and filling in the name of a helpful adult at your school—a teacher, instructional assistant, librarian, parent volunteer, custodian, secretary, principal, etc. Ask students which words might describe this person’s positive attributes. If needed, draw a basic picture next to each word to help students to decode these words later on.

Once you have generated a list, give each student another classmate’s paper. Tell students to think of a positive attribute that describes the person whose name is on the paper. Once they have written one word, have students pass the paper to their neighbor. Students should now look at the name or photo on the new paper and add a word to describe that person. Keep going until everyone has written something kind on each page (even their own!). Young children may do this activity in small groups over a few days, or dictate their adjectives to you.

Give students a template shaped like a hand-held mirror and help them trace and cut them out. Give students an oval-shaped piece of smooth aluminum foil to glue in the center of their “mirrors.” Around the edge of the foil and down the handle of the

mirror, let children write the positive attributes that their classmates listed about them. To ease readability, encourage students to use a different color for each word. Display the mirrors on a bulletin board with the title:

Seeing Ourselves Through Our Best Buddies' Eyes

Inspired By NOODLE & LOU

Written by Liz Garton Scanlon, Illustrated by Arthur Howard)

- *Generate ideas for writing (e.g., drawing, sharing ideas, listing key ideas).*
- *Publish and share writing with others.*
- *Create artworks based on personal observations and experiences.*
- *Increase manipulative skills, using a variety of materials to produce drawings.*

Feelings Forecast

At the beginning of the story, “Noodle woke up with a rain-cloudy heart.” Brainstorm a list of weather words that could be metaphors for feelings. You might include words like: sunny, rainy, cloudy, snowy, foggy, windy, thunder, and lightening. Ask how these weather words might be combined, as in “rain-cloudy.”



Make a weather dial of emotions. Begin by cutting a circle from a large piece of poster board. Add lines that divide the circle into even sections. Attach a cardboard arrow in the center secured with a brad. Have students add a symbol that represents a different type of weather in each section. Take digital photos of the students making facial expressions and using body language that match their emotions elicited by the weather in each section. Have students glue their photos in the appropriate places on the circle. Allow students to use the Feelings Forecaster throughout the year to talk about their emotions in different situations.

- *Tell how weather affects individual health.*
- *List unique ways that individuals use to communicate such as using body language and gestures.*

Creating Movement



Have students illustrate an outdoor scene, beginning by coloring clouds with white crayon. Next, have them “wash” over the clouds with watercolor paint. Once the paint is dry, let them add the ground and trees, flowers, insects, etc. Take students outside and ask them to observe movement—wind through leaves, swaying grass, flying bugs, passing clouds.

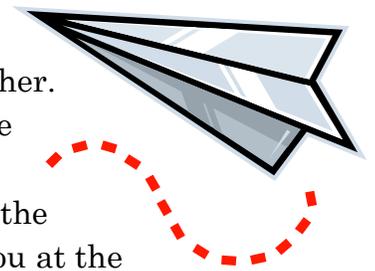
How does illustrator Arthur Howard show movement throughout *Noodle & Lou*? Ask students to look for the kinds of lines Howard uses for falling raindrops, flying bugs, a hug, swooping birds, and Noodle sliding down Lou’s tail feathers.

Encourage students to add lines of “movement” to their landscapes. While they work, listen to music inspired by nature, such as Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*. Ask them to reflect on how the music makes them feel as they work on their projects.

- *Express ideas and feelings in artworks, using a variety of colors, forms, and lines.*
- *Identify simple relationships between music and other subjects.*

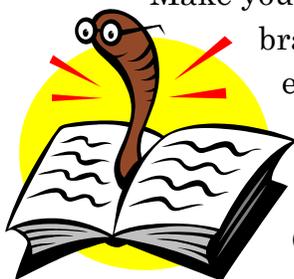
Fly-Away Friends

Turn to the last page where Noodle and Lou are flying away together. Show students how to make paper airplanes and let them decorate their planes to look like Lou. Add a “Noodle” paper-clipped to different parts of the plane and observe how its placement affects the plane’s ability to fly. Where is Noodle seated when he flies with Lou at the end of the story? Is this the best spot for him to sit? Why or why not?



- *Compare patterns of movement of objects.*
- *Describe, plan, and implement simple experimental investigations testing one variable.*

Class Book



Make your own class version of *Noodle & Lou*’s story. Help children brainstorm other unlikely animal pairs (cat/mouse, elephant/butterfly, alligator/pink flamingo, etc.). Once they’ve chosen a pair, let them name the animals. Which one will start out sad, like Noodle? Which one will be steadfast, like Lou?

Go back through the book and invite children’s suggestions for

modifying the text to fit the new characters. For example, how could the line, “The grass grew much greener in other worms rows” be changed to incorporate the new characters’ habitat? What characteristics does the new “Noodle” have that might be problematic?

When the text is ready, let students add the illustrations for each new page. Discuss the scene on the cover of NOODLE & LOU. Why is that scene important in the story? (It shows the resolution.) Ask students which scene in their class book is the turning point for their “Noodle” character. Let them illustrate their cover showing this scene.

- *Plan a first draft by generating ideas for writing through class discussion.*
- *Dictate or write sentences to tell a story and put the sentences in chronological sequence.*
- *Describe the plot (problem and solution).*
- *Describe the interaction of characters including their relationships and the changes they undergo.*



Growing a Friendship Garden

Create a classroom garden of friendship with kind words and actions.

Give each child a long piece of construction paper (about 10”x5”). Fold at the top and let children design a flower that fills the square. If desired, use a flower template like the ones found on First Palette:

http://www.firstpalette.com/tool_box/printables/flowers.html. Make

sure at least one part of the flower touches the fold. Cut out the flowers, making sure not to cut the fold. If children are cutting the flowers, slip a paper clip onto the fold to remind them not to cut that part. When finished, the flower should open like a greeting card. On the inside, help children brainstorm and write kind phrases that they use when talking to friends. Add digital photos of children showing friendship—sharing, working together, giving hugs, etc.

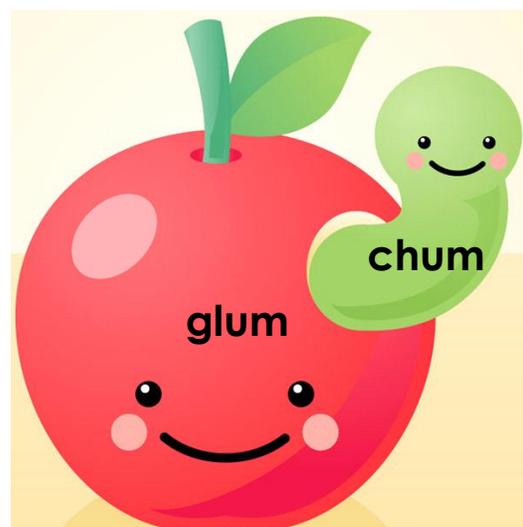
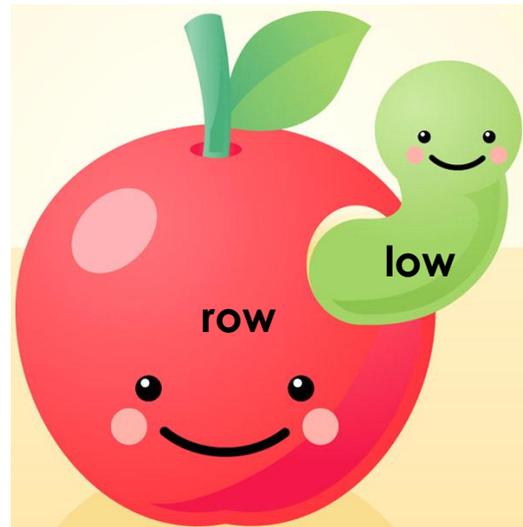
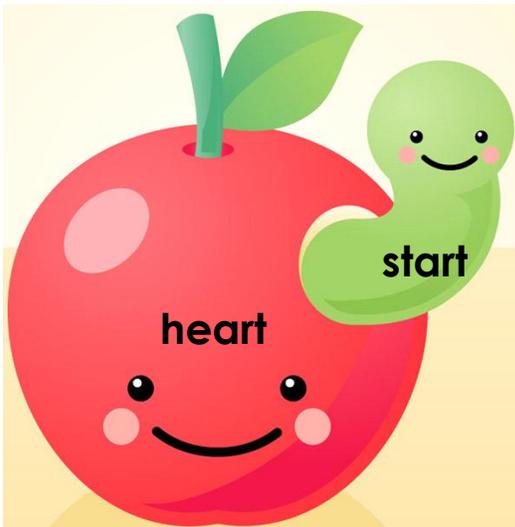
Glue the flowers onto green craft stick stems and “plant” them in paper cups filled with pebbles or other heavy objects.

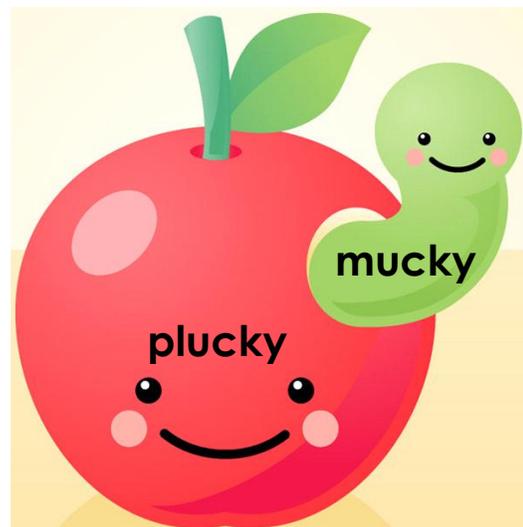
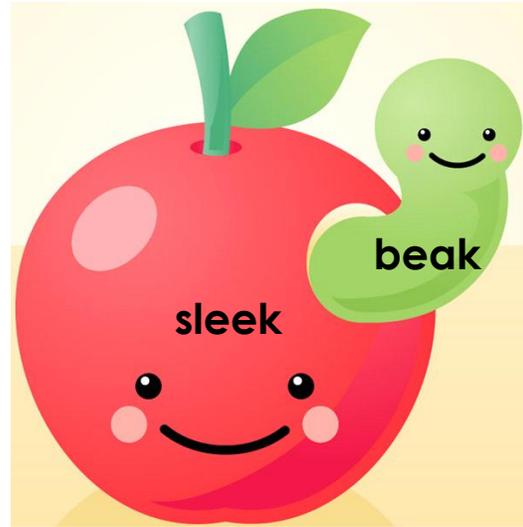
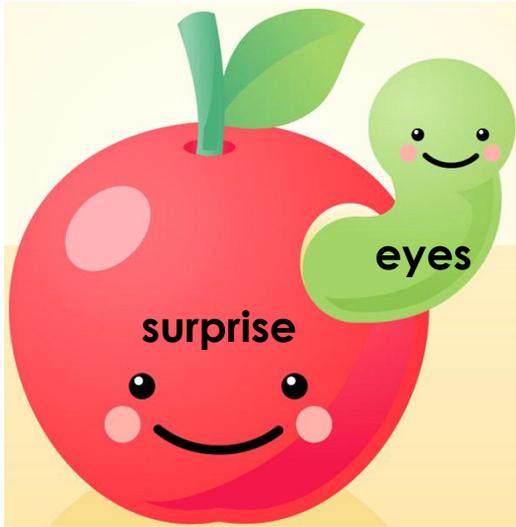
- *Describe ways to build and maintain friendships.*
- *Describe the qualities of a good friend.*
- *Create artworks based on personal observations and experiences.*

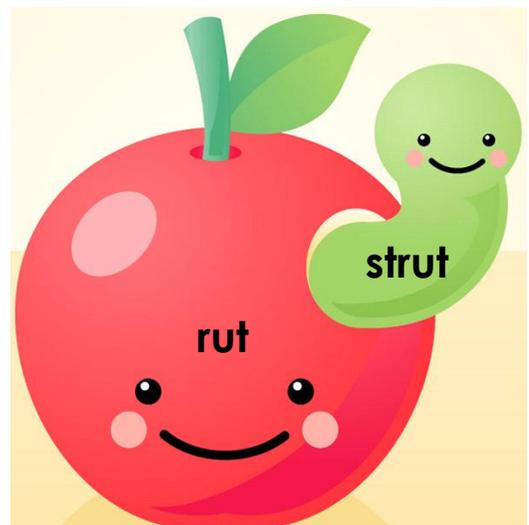
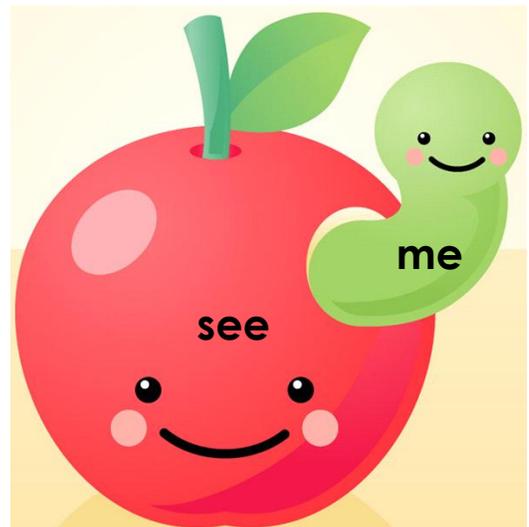
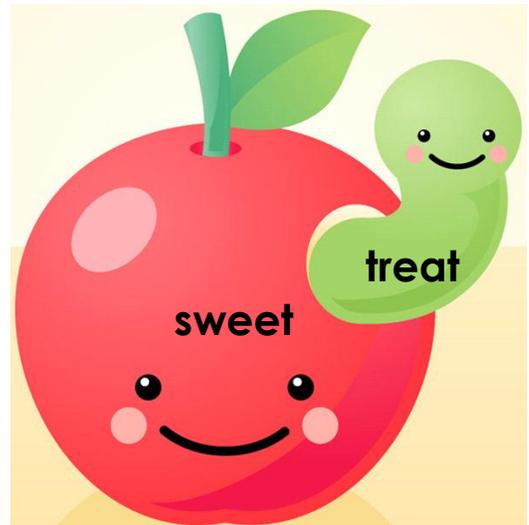
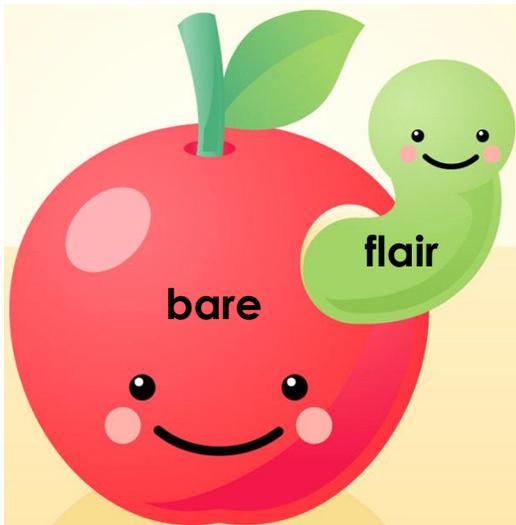
Rhyme Time

Print out the following cards with rhyming pairs on card stock (or use regular paper and laminate). Cut the worms from the apples and make separate piles of each. Help children to match the worms with the correct apples by pairing the words that rhyme together. Blank sets are included for children or teachers to add their own rhyming pairs.

- *Distinguish orally presented rhyming pairs of words from non-rhyming pairs.*











An Interview with Author Liz Garton Scanlon

1. When did you know you wanted to become a writer?

When I was little I wrote for fun, the way some kids kicked a soccer ball around. When I was in college, I started writing seriously. I majored in journalism. I wrote a lot of poetry. And then I spent years dipping my feet into textbook work, corporate marketing and teaching. But it was when I became a mother that I made the happy discovery that writing for children was what I truly loved.

2. What kind of training does a writer need?

A writer needs a solid understanding of the elements of craft – language, structure, grammar, all the nuts and bolts. But equally important, writers learn by being avid readers – through apprenticeship and example. There are many academic degrees that can help a student on the way to being a writer but there's not a particular one that's required. Writers write.

3. How did you get the idea for *Noodle & Lou*?

The idea for *Noodle & Lou* came from a real worm, crawling in the muck under shrubs near our house after a rain storm. *Worms are so important*, I thought. And then I laughed. Because they are, but they're also just skinny, slimy, silent, beige little creatures. Not a lot going for them at first glance. Once I started writing, I thought, *Who better to notice the attributes of a worm than a bird?* Odd couples make for good stories because of how their attributes (and quirks) stand out in contrast to each other.

4. Once the idea came to you, what happened next?

I wrote a first draft right away, and it was terrible! I didn't know it was terrible at the time, because I liked the *idea* of it so much, but looking back, it was really, really bad. I sent it to my editor anyway. And she did not say yes. Not for months and months. But she didn't say no, either, which apparently was all the encouragement I needed to keep working and tweaking and cutting and adding, until finally she said yes! After which I worked and tweaked and cut some more.

5. What was the most challenging part of writing this book? The most rewarding?

The toughest part of writing this book was the ending. It had to mean something, and although I loved Noodle and Lou, it took me a long time to tease out the real significance of their interactions. There are a lot of versions saved on my hard drive! But when I finally got there, I knew it would become a book. The biggest reward, in this book and most others, was the collaborative editorial process. I love when someone else will go into my work with me and help me see the dark and light spots until I get them right.

6. How did the illustrations come about?

My editor invited Arthur Howard to do the art for this book, and he said yes! I was delighted. I spent many happy hours reading the *Mr. Putter and Tabby* books to my daughters when they were young, so to have Arthur's art grace my words seemed almost too good to be true. I love what he did with these characters, and I love Noodle's hat most especially.

7. Do you have a writing routine?

I do, but it varies, according to what I'm working on and what time of year it is and other factors. Writing and revising lead me into different routines, for example, as does my kids' summer vacation. In general, I work from about 9:00 am-2:00 pm, but I have also gotten some of the best ideas in the middle of the night. When that happens, I get up and work!

8. What's the best piece of writing advice you've ever received?

"Omit needless words" – from Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*. A huge amount of my daily effort goes into trying to distill something down to its most essential form. I guess that's why my books are so short!

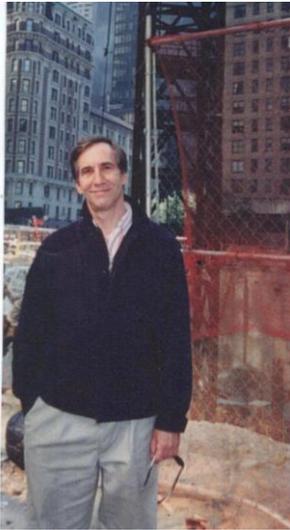
9. What advice do you have for young writers?

Read. Read. Read. There is no better instructor in the art of writing than a good book.

10. When you aren't writing, what are some of your favorite things to do?

Mostly I love hanging out with my husband and daughters – hiking, cooking, traveling, playing cards. I also love running half -marathons, reading good books, and practicing yoga.

An Interview with Illustrator Arthur Howard



1. When did you begin to think of yourself as an artist?

Pretty early on. When I was growing up both of my parents painted and sometimes I'd go out with them to sketch scenes. At home I drew dinosaurs, space ships, clipper ships, castles and all kinds of animals (rhinos were my favorite). I liked to make up maps, too.

2. How did you break into the illustrating profession?

My first book was a cat cartoon book. After that, I did a few more cartoon books and one of them became a humor column in *Glamour* magazine. I liked working on the column, but I really wanted to do children's books and one lucky day I showed my portfolio to an editor who was looking for someone to illustrate a new series of easy readers. The series was called Mr. Putter and Tabby.

I just finished my 20th Mr. Putter and Tabby book.

3. What type of media do you like working with the most, and why?

I mainly use watercolor and pencil. Sometimes I sneak in pastel and acrylic. India ink, too. Mustard, once, but not on purpose. I'm pretty fussy about the paper I use. I like really nice paper.

4. How long did it take to illustrate NOODLE & LOU?

It's hard to say because I kept stopping and starting. I'd focus on Noodle & Lou then decide I wasn't going in the right direction. So I'd put it aside for awhile and come back to it later with fresh eyes.

5. What was the most challenging thing about this project? The most rewarding?

Noodle gave me some trouble. Or maybe I gave Noodle trouble. At first I thought he had to have eyes. How can a main character not have eyes? But a worm with eyes didn't really look like a worm. So then I tried putting little dots over Noodle's

head—sort of cartoon eyes. But that didn't work either. I bought earthworm books. I Googled worms. I visited friends in the country and looked at worms in their garden. I wasn't sure what to do. Then one day I was just doodling and drew a little worm wearing a baseball cap a few sizes too big and I decided that's Noodle.

My favorite kind of picture book writer leaves room for the illustrations to help tell the story...*Noodle & Lou* is like that. Coming up with images that could depict in some active way the growing self assurance of Noodle; pictures that through facial expression and body language showed Lou's personality: capturing the whole unlikely but wonderful friendship of the two characters Liz created, it was all a challenge--this might be the most challenging book I've worked on--but I had a great time doing it.

6. Did you collaborate with the author as you did the illustrations?

Not exactly. Or not directly anyway. First of all, an editor, not the writer, chooses the illustrator. And then any questions the illustrator has about the story are discussed not with the author but again, with the editor. The idea being that illustrators do their best, most imaginative work when they rely on their own response to a story rather than being directed by the writer. I don't mean that the writer is cut out of the process. With every project the first thing I work on is a dummy (a mock-up of the book with rough sketches) and the editor shows the dummy to the writer to see what she thinks. Sometimes I do more than one dummy. With *Noodle & Lou* I think I did three.

7. In addition to illustrating, you have also written several books for children. How does your process differ when you're illustrating your own words vs. someone else's prose?

It feels so different when I illustrate a story that I wrote and I don't know why. It should be easier because generally as I write a story I'm already thinking about how I would illustrate it. Also, if I need to, I can change the text in any way I want. But it's not easier. Maybe it's harder to be clear sighted about one of my own stories; to figure out what's needed... I'm not sure.

8. Are any of your characters or aspects of the setting modeled on real-life people and places?

I was visiting my mother in New England the end of May last year and I decided that's when the story would take place. Violets (both blue and white) were in bloom, dandelions were just about reaching their peak. I noticed a wild flower called

Solomon seal. I also noticed lots of bugs on the ground and I thought if I were a worm I bet I'd always be bumping into bugs. So I decided to put bugs in the book. Lots of them.

9. Pablo Picasso once said, "All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." Do you agree?

There's another story about Picasso. A friend, a complete beginner, showed Picasso a portrait she had done...the worst part of the portrait was the hands. She couldn't draw hands. She had struggled and struggled with the hands, but they were a disaster. Picasso looked at the portrait and pointed at the hands and said, "That's the most interesting part of the picture. You have something there." I think it's true all children are artists. Amazing artists, And I think sometimes they give up being artists because they become too critical of what they've drawn.