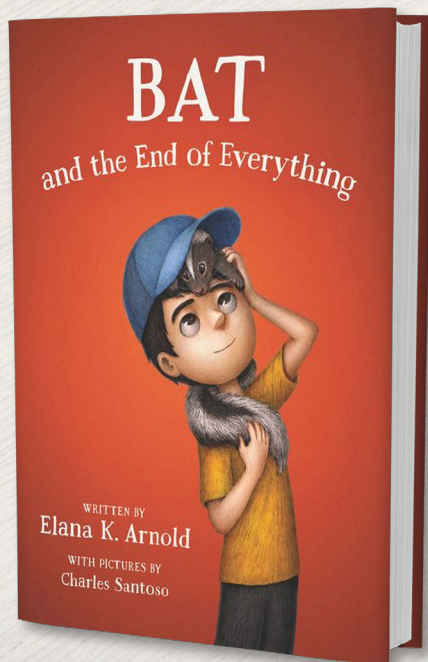
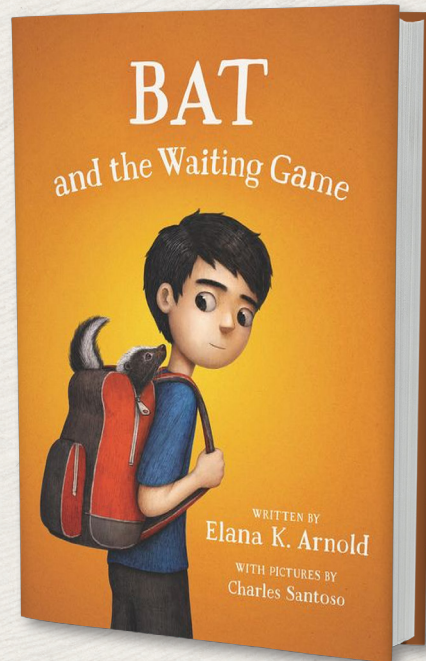
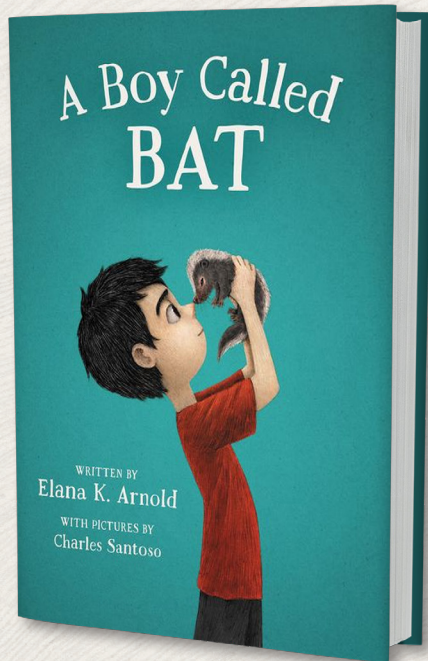


# The BAT Series

## Educator's Guide



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CLARION BOOKS

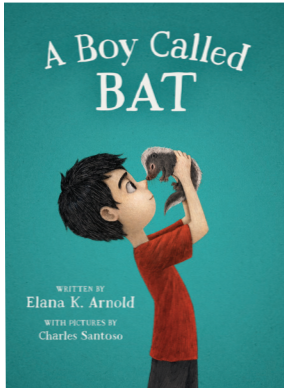
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# A BOY CALLED BAT

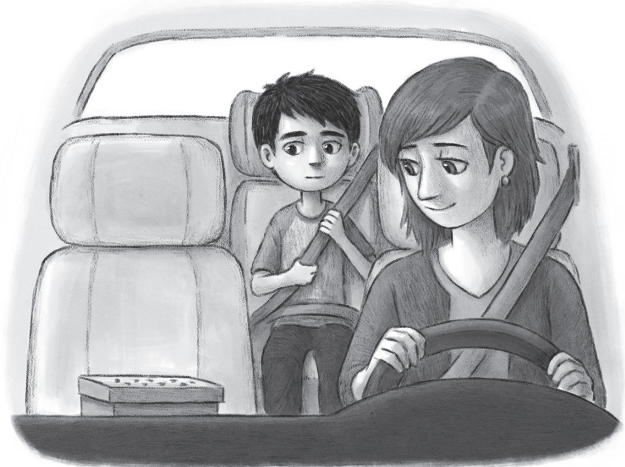
## About the Book



For Bixby Alexander Tam (nicknamed Bat), life tends to be full of surprises—some of them good, some of them not so good. Today, though, is a good surprise day. Bat’s mom, a veterinarian, has brought home a stray baby skunk, which she needs to take care of until she can hand him over to a wild animal shelter. But the minute Bat meets the kit, he knows they belong together. And he’s got one month to show his mom that a baby skunk just might make a pretty terrific pet. Written by acclaimed author Elana K. Arnold and filled with drawings by Charles Santoso, *A Boy Called Bat* is a story of first friendship—the first book in a new series starring an authentic, unforgettable autistic character.

## Discussion Questions

1. At the beginning of the book, it is established that “Bat’s room was his favorite place in the whole world. In his room, Bat felt completely comfortable” (p. 6). What room are you completely comfortable in? Why?
2. Bat’s teacher Mr. Grayson has an “open-door Babycakes policy” in his classroom. What does that mean? How does Bat feel about Babycakes?
3. Think about your five senses. What are some things that Bat likes? What are things Bat does not like? Do you think some of Bat’s senses are more sensitive than yours? Less sensitive? The same?
4. How does Bat feel about experiencing the sights, sounds, and smells of the clinic compared to when he is at school? Why do you think it is easier for Bat to be at the clinic than at school?
5. Although Bat has difficulty understanding the emotion in a facial expression, he understands other body language well. The book states, “Bat didn’t know much about eyes. But he knew about hands. . . . Israel’s hands told Bat that Thor would be safe” (p. 186–187). How does he know he can trust Israel with Thor?
6. Even though Bat and Israel don’t understand how to interact with each other well, they eventually become friends. How does their shared interest in animals help? How does Mr. Grayson help?

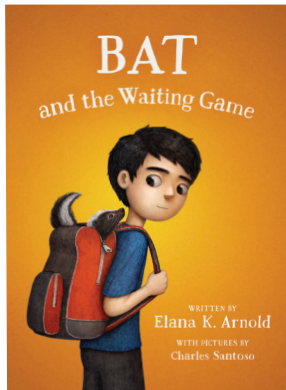


This Educator’s Guide was created by Sara Hoagland Hunter, Ed.D. She is the author of ten books for children, including the award-winning *Every Turtle Counts* about the rescue of a rare sea turtle by a seven-year-old on the autism spectrum. Find her online at [sarahunterproductions.com](http://sarahunterproductions.com).

This Educator’s Guide was reviewed by Elizabeth Bartmess, a writer and autistic advocate. Find her online at [elizabethbartmess.com](http://elizabethbartmess.com).

# BAT AND THE WAITING GAME

## About the Book



For Bixby Alexander Tam (nicknamed Bat), life is pretty great. He's the caretaker of the best baby skunk in the world—even Janie, his older sister, is warming up to Thor. But when Janie gets a part in the school play, it means some big changes. Someone else has to take care of the skunk kit in the afternoons and Bat has to go to a new place after school. Why can't everything just stay the same? Bat can't wait for Janie's play to be over!

Acclaimed author Elana K. Arnold follows her popular first book, *A Boy Called Bat*, with the second book in this delightful series about a boy who loves animals, his family, and having a best friend but who struggles with everyday challenges. Bat's autism makes learning facts easier than making friends. As famed animal scientist and autistic advocate Temple Grandin once put it, "Autism made school and social life hard, but made animals easy."

Through the support of his parents, teacher, and best friend, Bat is learning to see the world through the eyes of others. The lessons along the way, punctuated by the charming pictures of Charles Santoso, are tender and true.

## Discussion Questions

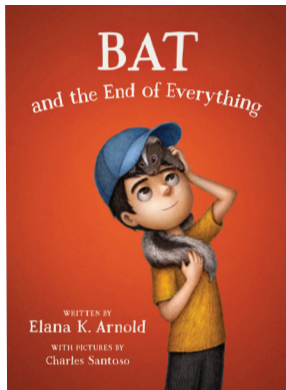
1. When Bat visits Israel's house for the first time, he gets anxious because the tastes, sights, sounds, and smells of a new place are too much for him to take in all at once. Israel brings Bat to his mom's pottery studio when he sees Bat is upset. Do you think this will make Bat feel better? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever felt overwhelmed after going somewhere new? If so, describe what happened and how you reacted. Did you find a good way to make yourself calm?
3. During a baseball game, "[Bat] looked out across the field, not trying to keep track of the players or the score. Instead he tried to melt a little, like the cotton candy, and just be happy to be right there at the game with his dad" (p. 88). When Bat's father explains what he loves about baseball games, Bat relaxes for the first time that evening. He no longer feels impatient. What does he learn?
4. Janie's point of view is shown when Bat makes the decision to bring Thor to her performance in a musical at school. Think about this situation from Janie's point of view. Write a journal entry as if you were Janie after her big moment was spoiled by Bat's decision to bring Thor to the play.
5. Bat learns to put aside some of his own wishes in order to be a better friend and kinder family member. What are some other scenes where Bat shows his social and emotional skills? Describe and discuss.
6. At the beginning of the book, Israel gives Bat a clay sculpture of Thor. Why is this little lumpy clay skunk so special to Bat? What is an object that is special to you?

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# BAT AND THE END OF EVERYTHING

## About the Book



Bixby Alexander Tam (nicknamed Bat) has been the caretaker for Thor, the best skunk kit in the world, but the last day of third grade is quickly approaching, and Thor is almost ready to be released into the wild.

The end of school also means that Bat has to say goodbye to his favorite teacher, and he worries about the summer care of Babycakes, their adorable class pet. Not only that, but his best friend is leaving for a long vacation in Canada. Summer promises good things, too, like working with his mom at the vet clinic and hanging out with his sister, Janie. But Bat can't help but feel that everything is coming to an end.

## Discussion Questions

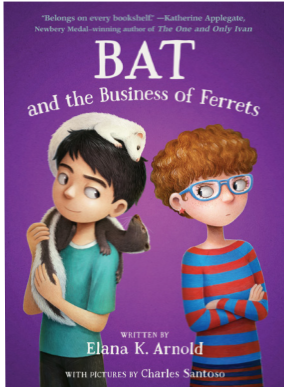
1. Bat and Janie have very different reactions to meeting Dad's friend Suzette, who Janie understands to be their father's new girlfriend. These different reactions illustrate their different points of view. Why is Bat so confused by Janie's reaction?
2. Throughout the novel, Janie is angry with Dad for inviting Suzette along for their time together, and Bat is confused and unhappy as well. One big part of emotional intelligence is sharing those feelings to solve problems, rather than stomping off. Another is being able to apologize when you've done something wrong. How does talking about her feelings help Janie? Why is it important for Dad to apologize?
3. How do Bat, Janie, and Dad come to an agreement at the end about their Every-Other-Weekend and Suzette? Do you think that's a fair agreement for everyone? Why or why not?
4. When Jenny and her grandmother bring a sick Babycakes to the veterinary clinic in the summer, Bat first thinks that it wasn't a good idea to let Jenny take the rabbit home for the summer. Read pages 100 and 101 and find three pieces of evidence that Jenny is taking good care of Babycakes. How does this evidence change Bat's mind about Jenny and Babycakes?



This Educator's Guide was created by Lyn Miller-Lachmann, MLIS, MFA, an author, translator, and teacher who writes books about young people on the autism spectrum.

# BAT AND THE BUSINESS OF FERRETS

## About the Book



Third grade is over for Bixby Alexander Tam (nicknamed Bat), and he's starting a new school year. His fourth grade teacher, Mr. Peña, is nothing like Mr. Grayson. His desks are arranged in groups of four rather than rows . . . and he has no class pet! There's no furry animal friend for Bat to hold, as he did in his third grade class whenever he was upset.

When Bat's veterinarian mother receives a box with ferrets, Bat thinks the deaf white ferret, Ghost, is the perfect class pet. But Mr. Peña won't budge and classmate Lucca is taking the teacher's side!

*Bat and the Business of Ferrets* is the long-awaited fourth Bat book from Elana K. Arnold about an unforgettable animal-loving boy on the autism spectrum.

## Pre-Reading Questions

1. New school years usually mean new teachers and classrooms set up in different ways. How does your teacher this year do things differently from your teacher last year?
2. Many classrooms have class pets. What are some class pets that you've seen? What are some good reasons for a classroom to have a pet? Why might a class pet be a problem for a classroom?
3. A group of ferrets is called a "business." What would you think this book is about if you didn't have that prior knowledge? Why do you think ferrets as a group have been given the name "business"?
4. Bat tries to convince his classmates and teacher to get a class pet. How have you tried to convince someone—a family member, teacher, classmate, or friend—to do something you'd like to do? What ways of persuading others have worked well, and what ways didn't work so well?



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# BAT AND THE BUSINESS OF FERRETS

## Discussion Questions

1. Both Bat and his older sister, Janie, are starting a new school year. This means big changes for both of them. What are the changes that each one is facing? Why does Bat think his changes are a bigger deal? Who do you think is facing the biggest change and why?
2. When Bat goes to Mr. Grayson's room to see Babycakes on the first day of school, he notices that Mr. Grayson is "wearing a new ring, a silver band on his thumb" (p. 18). Why doesn't he ask Mr. Grayson about the ring or how his summer went? How do you think this makes Mr. Grayson feel?
3. When Bat's classmate Lucca arrives, he tells her she can't sit in the seat that has her name on it. Do you find it hard to believe that he doesn't recognize her? Why or why not?
4. Both Bat and Janie have had hard first days at school. Why do you think Bat wants to talk about what went wrong, while Janie doesn't? What would you be most likely to do if you had a bad day?
5. On page 82, Bat tells Israel and his father, "Animals who are predators are way friendlier than prey animals . . . and more playful, too." Why is that the case? How do we see those differences in the ways Thor and Babycakes behave? Do you agree with Bat's statement based on animals you have observed?
6. Why does Bat think Ghost being deaf would make her an especially good class pet? Why would an animal with white fur and deafness have an especially hard time surviving in the wild where Bat lives? Where might a white-coated animal have an easier time surviving in the wild and why?
7. Israel suggests that Bat make up a petition for the entire class to sign, stating that they want to adopt a class pet. What is a petition, and why is it a good way for a person or group to convince someone to do something that they want?
8. According to Bat, why does Lucca keep refusing to sign the petition for the class pet? Why, in fact, does Lucca not want the class to get a pet? Who do you agree with more on the class pet question, Bat or Lucca? Why?
9. At dinner one night, Janie tells Bat, "Don't be such a try-hard" (p. 134). How are both Bat and Janie acting like try-hards in the story? Why does Bat think being a try-hard is a good thing? According to Janie, why is being a try-hard a bad thing? Using examples from your own life, who do you agree with most, and why?
10. Mr. Grayson says that Bat and Lucca have a lot in common. He also tells Bat, "Sometimes it's easy to miss the ways people are alike, when you're focused too closely on the things that are different" (p. 144–145). How are Bat and Lucca alike? How does Bat first attempt to use that knowledge to approach Lucca? Why does that first attempt fail, and what does he do differently in order to succeed? Have you ever made friends with someone because you noticed that they were like you?

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# ACTIVITIES

## Animal Groups and Their Names

Bat was a fan of the names given to different groups of animals. Some of his favorite animal group names included: a shrewdness of apes; a conspiracy of lemurs; and, of course, a cauldron of bats. There was one group name he really didn't care for: a stench of skunks (p. 49–50).

Research each of the animals in the above selection and the meaning of their names. In a sentence or two, explain why each name may have been chosen. Find the group name for another animal that you think is interesting and describes that animal as well. In another sentence or two, explain your choice.

## Badgered

On page 87, Israel tells Bat, “But people don't really like being badgered into doing things.” The word “badgered” is drawn from the animal world. Find out what this word means and what it has to do with the badger. Then choose another action word that is drawn from the name of an animal. Write the definition of the word, explain what it has to do with the animal, and use the word in your own sentence.



## About the Author

Elana K. Arnold is the award-winning author of many books for children and teens, including the Sydney Taylor and National Jewish Book Award winner *The Blood Years*, the Printz Honor winner *Damsel*, the National Book Award finalist *What Girls Are Made Of*, and the Global Read Aloud selection *A Boy Called Bat*. She is a member of the faculty in Hamline University's MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults program and lives in Long Beach, California, with her husband, two children, and a menagerie of animals. You can find her online at [elanakarnold.com](http://elanakarnold.com).

## The Animals' Stories

Bat and Lucca imagine a family of goldfinches talking to each other. Together, they make up a story from the birds' point of view:

Here came the mother bird, with more seeds. The chicks got loud and bossy-sounding again, as if they were saying, “Hurry up, hurry up, what took you so long?” It wasn't a pretty-sounding song. . . .

Then, in a funny, high-pitched voice, Lucca said, “Feed me first! You fed him last time!”

She was doing a bird voice! “No fair!” Bat said, making his voice squeaky. “I'm hungrier than she is! You should give those seeds to me!” (p. 184–185)

Alone or with a partner, observe some animals doing things with each other. Imagine what they are saying to each other. Write a story using the animals you have watched as the main characters.

## Advice for Bat

Bat needs your help! It seems that every time he tries to talk to someone, he makes that person angry or upset. It's not just Lucca. There's also Janie, Dad, Mr. Peña, and even Israel. Write a letter to Bat giving him advice on how he can solve his conflict with either Janie, Dad, Mr. Peña, or Israel. How can he make that other person “feel understood” (p. 190)?

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