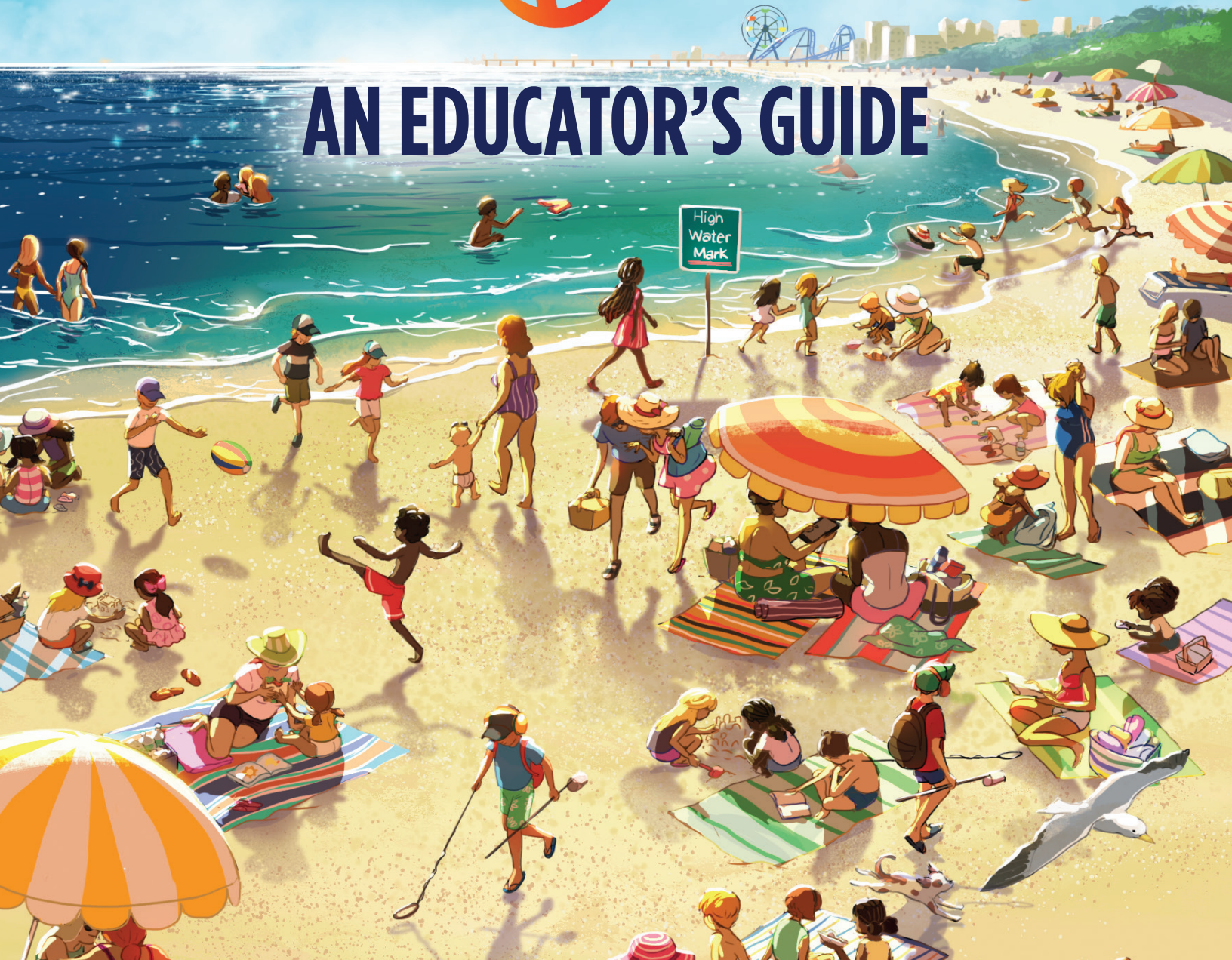


A Day at the Beach

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



ABOUT THE BOOK



In *A Day at the Beach* by Gary D. Schmidt and Ron Koertge, school is out and different beachgoers all enjoy the same summer day at Rockcastle Beach, New Jersey! From boldly learning to bodysurf to building perfect sandcastles, and even facing fears of swimming in the ocean, it's a day for realizing what it means to live in the present without worrying about tomorrow. Told through emotional and hilarious interconnected stories, readers will learn about the importance of family, friendships, new experiences, and what it means to belong. At the beach, nothing else matters but the promise of what today's adventures might bring!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Gary D. Schmidt is the bestselling author of *The Labors of Hercules Beal*, *Just Like That*, National Book Award finalist *Okay for Now*, *Pay Attention*, *Carter Jones*, *Orbiting Jupiter*, the Newbery Honor and Printz Honor Book *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy*, and the Newbery Honor Book *The Wednesday Wars*. He is also a contributor to and coeditor of, with Leah Henderson, the acclaimed short story collection *A Little Bit Super*. He lives in rural Michigan.



Ron Koertge is the author of many acclaimed novels for young people, including *Stoner & Spaz* and *Shakespeare Bats Cleanup*. A two-time winner of the PEN Award, Ron lives in South Pasadena, California, where he is currently the city's poet laureate.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In *A Day at the Beach*, characters find themselves trying new things, meeting new people, and taking risks. Whether you are playing a new sport or talking to someone new, it can be scary to try new things. Do you relate to any of the new experiences that characters have in the book? Why do you think it's important to try things that you fear? What motivates you to take risks and face your fears of enjoying something new?
2. If you could spend a day at the beach with one of the characters, who would you choose and what would you do together? How do you think they would make your beach day special or different, and what would be the biggest thing that you'd learn from them? What do you think they'd learn from spending the day with you? Give examples with your response.
3. Amiyah Lal's morning at the beach becomes a turning point for her life in the book. At first, she feels nostalgic and misses her home, where she shared simple joys with her seventeen cousins and her Nani, like the apricot trees behind her Nani's house or the laughter-filled moments sipping peach juice together. Being new to the United States, Amiyah feels lonely and sees the country as "cold." Yet, everything changes when she meets a girl and her brothers who invite her to play with them. How does this moment shift Amiyah's perspective and help her feel more at home? Have you ever been in a situation where someone's kindness helped you feel included or less lonely? How did it change your experience?
4. In Chapter 9, Eileen Ahlberg, grieving the loss of her lifelong companion Beasley, vows never to love another dog again. Meanwhile, Milo, a lonely stray, searches for scraps and hope under the boardwalk at Rockcastle Beach. When Eileen notices Milo's "broken heart," she takes him home despite her initial hesitations. What does this story teach us about second chances and courage? Reflect on your own experiences: What brings you comfort in tough times? Like Eileen, have you ever felt a special connection with an animal? How has that bond shaped you?
5. From sharing your lunch to cheering up a friend with a funny joke, it's important to be kind to others. Find a moment in the book where a small act of kindness made a big difference in someone's day. How did that moment make you feel? How have you shown kindness to someone else recently?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

6. As Jackie and Simon take a nighttime run on the firm sands of the beach, surrounded by the glow of carnival lights and the quiet of a closed shoreline, they reflect on their transitions ahead—Jackie entering high school and Simon facing his last year of middle school. This story captures the bittersweet nature of summer’s end and the promise of new beginnings. What does Jackie and Simon’s conversation teach us about embracing change and looking forward with optimism? Describe a time you have experienced a bittersweet transition.
7. Each part of the day explored in the book brings a unique atmosphere and sense of change, influencing the characters’ emotions and actions. How do these times—from morning to night—mirror the emotional journeys of the characters and the themes of change and growth? What might the authors be saying about the passage of time and its ability to shape our experiences? Reflect on how the transitions between these times add to the overarching message of hope and transformation. How does this structure deepen the meaning of the stories and tie them together?
8. Many characters in *A Day at the Beach* make new friends and find themselves growing as people through these relationships. Have you ever made a friend that changed your life or helped you discover something new about yourself? What do you think it takes to build a strong friendship?
9. Pick a character who faced a challenge or had a misunderstanding while at the beach. Describe what happened. How did the character overcome these challenges? Would you have handled the situation differently? What does this moment teach us about dealing with problems in real life?
10. Summer is an essential element to the setting of *A Day at the Beach*. What does summer mean to you? Is there something you look forward to or is there a summer that has been particularly memorable for you? Do you have a certain place, like the beach in the book, that you enjoy visiting during the summer? Why is this place important to you?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

MY BEST DAY EVER: A MEMORY JOURNAL

Create a journal or scrapbook to depict your perfect day, inspired by the characters in *A Day at the Beach*. Use materials such as notebooks, magazines, markers, and stickers. Title your journal or scrapbook and describe what makes this day special to you. Afterwards, pair with a classmate to compare your perfect days, exchange ideas, and prepare for a class discussion. Write a sentence describing other perfect days that interested you and what you learned from your classmates. How were your days different? Were there any similarities or descriptions that came up multiple times?

A MUSIC PLAYLIST FOR YOUR BEST DAY EVER

Create a playlist of five songs that capture the mood of your favorite place, such as the beach or park. Pick songs that inspire you, as well as help you visualize positive memories or experiences that have made you stronger. Write down why each of these songs are meaningful to you and select your favorite lyrics. Then share your work with a peer and collaborate to identify how your playlists connect to moments in *A Day at the Beach*. Present your playlist and findings to the class.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POWERFUL CONNECTIONS: A SHORT PLAY

In groups, write and perform a short play inspired by *A Day at the Beach*. Your short play may highlight lessons about relationships, examples of how miscommunication could lead to unexpected problems, or how you can gain inspiration from others. Use props and visual aids to enhance your performance. These can include posters, colorful drawings, and even props created in class using clay or other materials that are available. After each play is performed, participate in a class discussion about character dynamics and storytelling. Why are these things important to create great and engaging stories?

BUILD YOUR FAVORITE PLACE: A 3D EXPERIENCE

Create a 3D representation of your favorite location, like the beach, using materials such as cardboard, colored paper, clay, or craft supplies. On an index card, write down at least five reasons why this place is special. For example, this might be a place where you feel you can relax, a place where you have lots of fun, or a place that reminds you of something positive. Then, write down some ways your favorite place connects to themes from *A Day at the Beach*. Using your index card to guide you, you will then present your model to the class. Make sure to take notes on other students' presentations, as you will discuss as a class what you learned about each other and how you are all connected.

Guide created by Aurora Dominguez, born and raised in Puerto Rico, and based in South Florida. Dominguez is an educator, journalist, and professor who currently teaches at Boca Raton Community High School. She holds a master's degree from Florida International University in Mass Communications and Journalism and a certificate in English Studies, focusing on the works of Shakespeare and Jane Austen from Oxford University. www.auroradominguez.com