

A Storytime and Curriculum Guide for  
**When the Snow is Deeper  
than my Boots are Tall**

by Jean Reidy, illustrated by Joey Chou



WHEN THE SNOW IS DEEPER THAN MY BOOTS ARE TALL ©2019 by Jean Reidy; Art by Joey Chou  
Godwin Books/Henry Holt Books for Young Readers

*Praise for When the Snow is Deeper Than My Boots Are Tall*

"This celebration of the first day of snowy play hits the right notes."

~Kirkus Reviews

"Candy-bright digital illustrations with a retro-modern flair by Chou match the exuberance of Reidy's rhyming snow day story."

~Publishers Weekly

".. a joyful, rhythmic celebration of the wonders of the season."

~Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books



Learning activities align with CCSS (Common Core State Standards) and NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards) where applicable.

## Story Summary

*Find a frosty window. Watch the flakes fall. Look! The snow is deeper than my toes are tall.*

With young, rhyming verse and bright illustrations, Jean Reidy and Joey Chou capture the joy and excitement of a big snowfall. As the snow climbs over a boy's toes, ankles, shins, and boots, there's more and more fun to be had—snowmen, snowballs, snow angels, and, finally, a cup of hot cocoa by a warm fire.

## About the Author

**Jean Reidy's** fun, lively and award-winning picture books have earned their spots as favorites among readers and listeners of all ages and from all over the world. She is a frequent presenter on writing and reading and at schools and storytimes across the country. Jean is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and the Colorado Council International Reading Association, and she has served on the board of Reach Out and Read Colorado. She writes from her home in Colorado where she lives right across the street from her neighborhood library ... which she visits nearly every day. Learn more at [jeanreidy.com](http://jeanreidy.com).



## About the Illustrator



**Joey Chou** was born in Taiwan and moved to sunny California in his early teens. There, he received his BFA from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. Joey works by day as a visual development artist on feature animated films, and by night as a picture book illustrator. Joey has illustrated such books as *Ruby's Chinese New Year*, *Monster & Son*, and *Disney Parks Presents: It's a Small World*. Learn more at [joeyart.com](http://joeyart.com).

## Storytime Ideas

### READ A-LONG



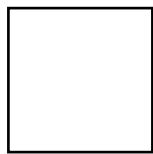
Show children these simple motions for the words and phrases below from the story. Allow them to practice a few times before you read the book. If necessary, have another adult or older child model the motions as you hold the book and read the story.

Say	Do
The snow...	Raise hands above head
... is deeper than my	Flutter fingers straight down and touch the floor
toes	touch toes
ankles	touch ankles
shins	touch mid-shins
boots	touch just below knees
...are tall!	Throw hands up overhead.
Let the flakes fall out my window	Raise hands above head
just fall, fall, fall...	Flutter fingers down swaying left and right
When my heart's so big...	Form a heart using both hands with thumbs touching and fingers touching
I never feel small.	Child hugs self

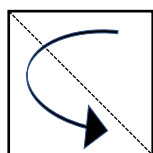
## SNOWFLAKES

Prior to storytime, invite children to make paper snowflakes:

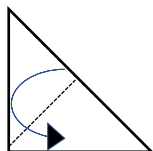
1. Start with a square-shaped piece of paper.



2. Fold the square in half diagonally to form a triangle.



3. Fold the triangle in half again and crease.



4. Older children can fold the triangle in half once more.



5. Snip shapes along the edges.

For preschoolers, use coffee filters, which are easier to cut than traditional paper. Fold filters in half three times before cutting.

6. Have children write their names on their snowflakes.

As you read the book, tell children to hold their snowflakes gently in their hands. Each time the word “snow” is read, children can toss their snowflakes in the air and watch them flutter back down.



## SNOWY SHIRTS

Children can make their own “Let it snow!” t-shirts! Using sponges cut into small, and large circles, children can dip the sponges into white fabric paint to build a snowperson. For snowflakes, show them how to dip the eraser-side of a pencil into the paint and dot the scene with falling snow. Use other colors of fabric paint to add a scarf, hat, eyes, mouth, stick arms, and a carrot nose. An adult can add the words “Let it snow!”

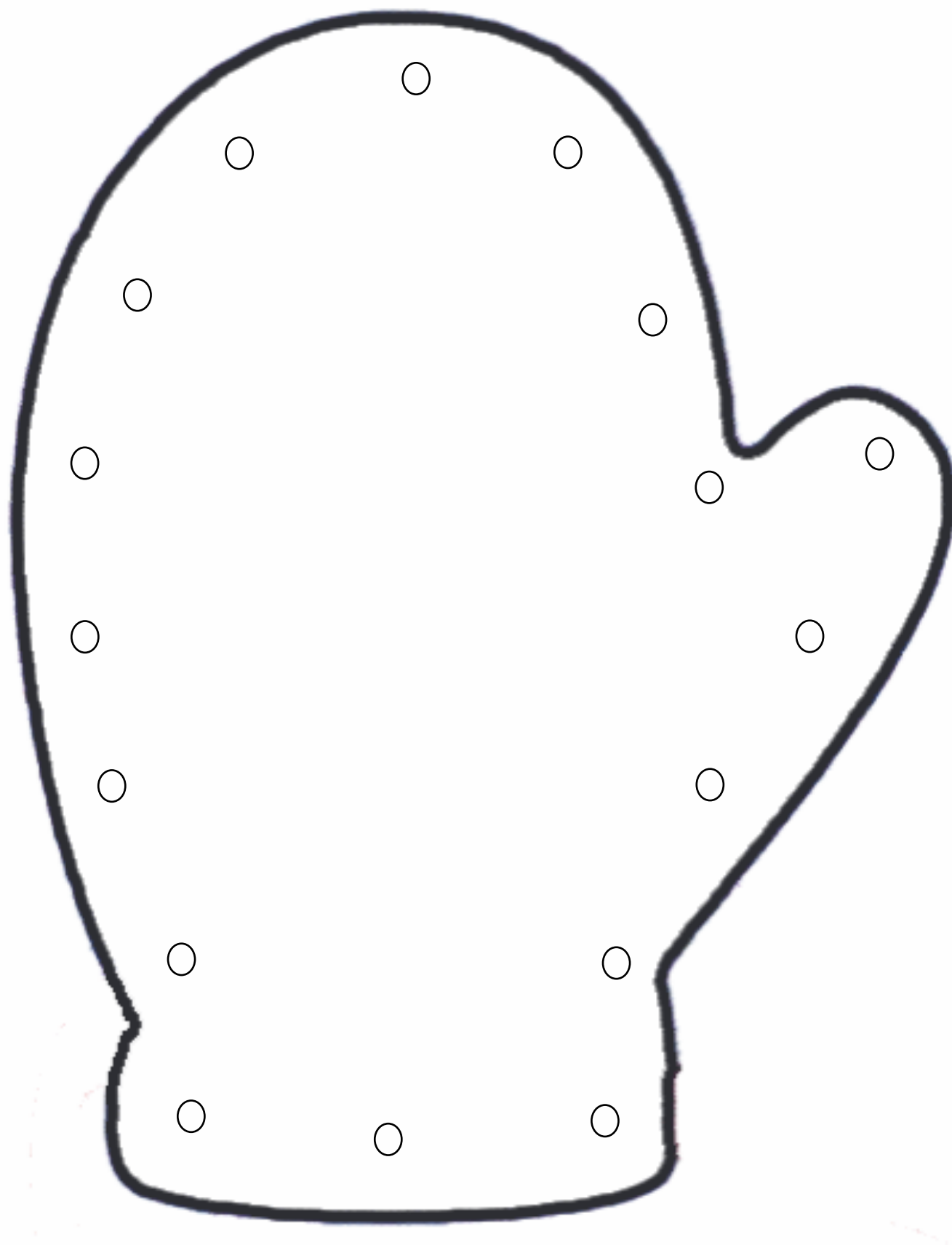


Photo by educator Stephanie Crump

## MAKING MITTENS

Make two copies of the mitten template on the following page on cardstock and punch holes around the edges as shown. Show children how to stitch the sides together with a shoelace or a piece of yarn with tape wrapped around one end and a knot at the other end.

Once their mittens are complete, children can draw their favorite part of the story on one side of the mitten and a picture of themselves in their favorite kind of weather on the other. Older children can illustrate the main character's problem on one side and the resolution on the other side.



## PAWPRINTS ON WINDOWS

Show children the following page spread where the main character has created a heart in the condensation on his window. (His dog and cat have added their pawprints, too!)



Give children pie plates or pieces of aluminum foil covered with a thin layer of whipped cream (check first for any dairy food allergies). Children can practice making shapes, letters, and numbers in the whipped cream.

## DRESS THE SNOW PERSON



Place winter clothing items such as hats, scarves, mittens, and boots in a bin. Just as the main character has added boots and a bow to his snowman, children can practice donning winter items themselves or helping friends with mittens and boots!

## SNUG AS A BEETLE BUG

Show children the page spread with the line:

Then I snuggle right in  
like a little beetle bug.



How do beetles survive the winter months? Ladybugs are one type of beetle that hibernates in the winter. Once a few of them find a suitable spot to hibernate, they give off a pheromone that attracts other ladybugs in order to increase the size of their hibernating group. This group is called a *loveliness of ladybugs*!

Have children create their own "loveliness of ladybugs" after the story. Ladybugs rely on their antennae to smell. Help children to make their own antennae with chenille stems attached to the sides of a headband (note that ladybugs' antennae are located on the sides of their heads, not on the top). Wearing their antennae, have one child start in the middle of the room and wave other children over with their "antennae" to join the group. Have children huddle up and remain still to simulate how ladybugs act when they hibernate.



## Pre-Reading

### ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

1. How does knowing the weather forecast help us to decide what to wear?
2. What are some articles of clothing that give us clues to the weather outside?
3. How do people dress when it's snowing? How do these articles of clothing protect us so that we can enjoy cold or snowy weather?
4. Talk about some ways to have fun with things that weather creates (snow, puddles, shadows, wind, etc.).
5. Tell about a time when you felt nervous or uncomfortable with the weather. What happened to make you feel better?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.4

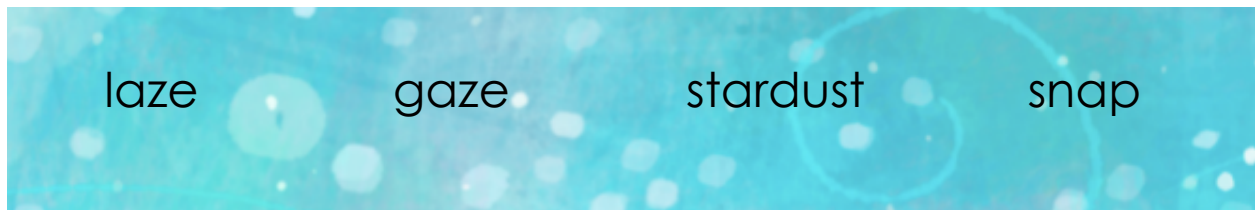
Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.4

Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

### WONDERFUL WORDS

The words below may be new to readers within the story's context. Help them to use pictures and context clues to build understanding of these terms.



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.4

Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7

Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

## TAKE A BOOK WALK

Introduce children to the story with a book walk:



1. Show the front cover. Read the title and the names of the author and illustrator. Ask what the author's and illustrator's jobs are in the making of a book.

2. Point out the adults' boots in the cover illustration, the child's boots, and the holes in the snow left by the child's boots. Ask what the title, *When the Snow is Deeper Than My Boots are Tall*, might mean.

3. Have students predict who the characters in the story are. Who might be the main character(s)? Why?

4. Ask the children what they do to have fun in the snow. Make a list of their answers. After reading, discuss which activities were shown in the story.

5. Show the back cover of the book. What is the child doing in this illustration? If "making snow angels" was not one of the ideas that children came up with previously, add it to the list.

6. Read the phrase "Celebrate the magic of snow!" found on the back cover and ask children what that might mean.

7. Starting at the beginning, flip through the pages, showing the pictures but not reading the text yet. Ask children to describe what is happening on each page spread and how the child might feel in each one. Stop on the page where the snow is finally deeper than the child's boots are tall. How does the child feel in this scene? Why? What might happen next? Go back to the start and read the story from beginning to end.



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.6

With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7

Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.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).

## After Reading

### DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy)

1. How does the main character measure the depth of the snow throughout the story? (Remember)
2. How does the child feel when snow first starts to fall? How does the child feel as the snow gets deeper and deeper? (Understand)
3. What are some ways you might measure how deep the snow is? How deep water is? The depth of a hole in the ground? (Apply)
4. Look at the page where the adults are standing in the snow with the child. When the child says the snow is deeper than his boots are tall, how would the adults describe the depth of the snow? How would the dog describe it? The cat? The house? (Analyze)
5. When the child seems nervous about the deep snow, how do the adults try to make him feel better? Does it work? Talk about a time when you felt nervous and someone made you feel better. What could you do to make others feel better about something that makes them nervous or uncomfortable? (Evaluate)
6. If the adults hadn't showed up to help, how might the child have solved the problem? Share an idea or a plan that the child might have carried out to resolve his problem. (Create)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.1

With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.9

With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.



## Learning Activities

### ONOMATOPOEIA

Show the page spreads where the child is making tracks and having a snowball fight with friends. Point out the sound words: *Stamp! Stomp! Splat! Splet! Splot!*



Ask what these words mean and why the author may have chosen to use these words in the story. Discuss how authors use onomatopoeia to help readers to imagine the sounds that characters hear.

Help children to brainstorm other weather-related onomatopoeia words. Start a graphic organizer chart like the ones on the following two pages where you and your students can add weather sound words throughout the seasons. Some of these words may be sounds heard during weather events, such as *pitter patter*, or *splat* for rain. They might also be sounds that are often heard on a particular type of day, such as birds chirping on a sunny day or the scrape of a snowplow on a snowy day. Students may find that some words fit into more than one category, such as a howling wind for the categories of *wind* and *snow*.

Once you've collected several words in each category, encourage students to write weather poems with onomatopoeia using their own copy of the templates on the following two pages.


CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.4

Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

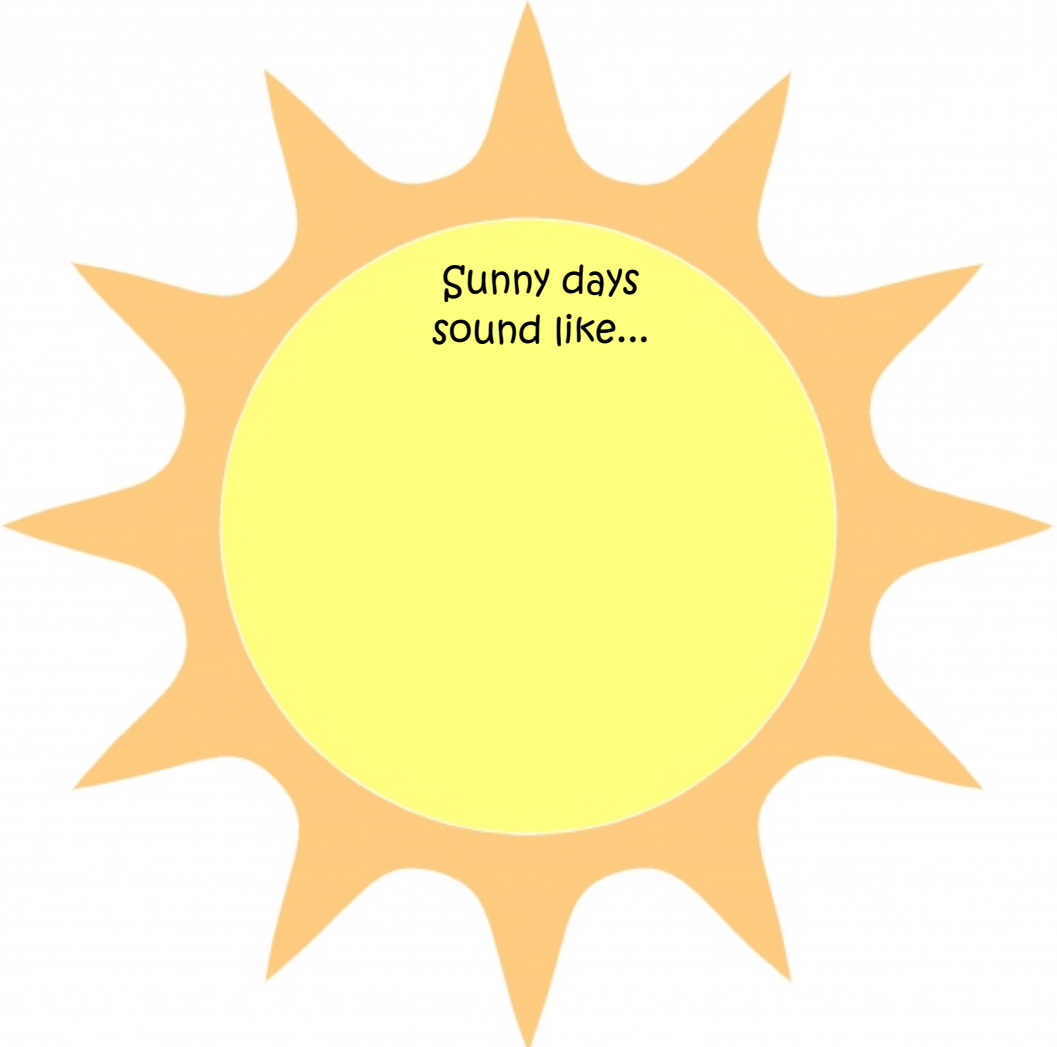
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.4

With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

## ONOMATOPOEIA POEMS

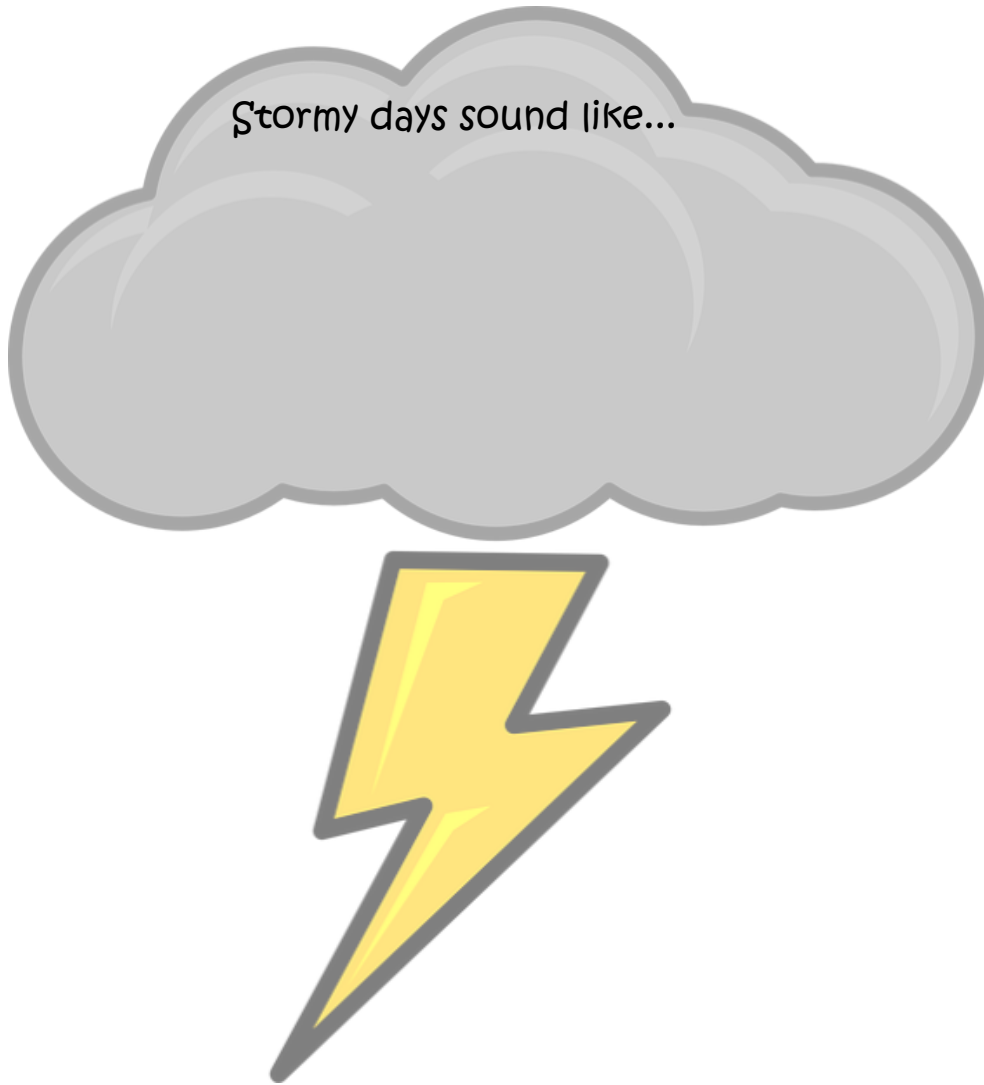


Rainy  
days  
sound  
like...

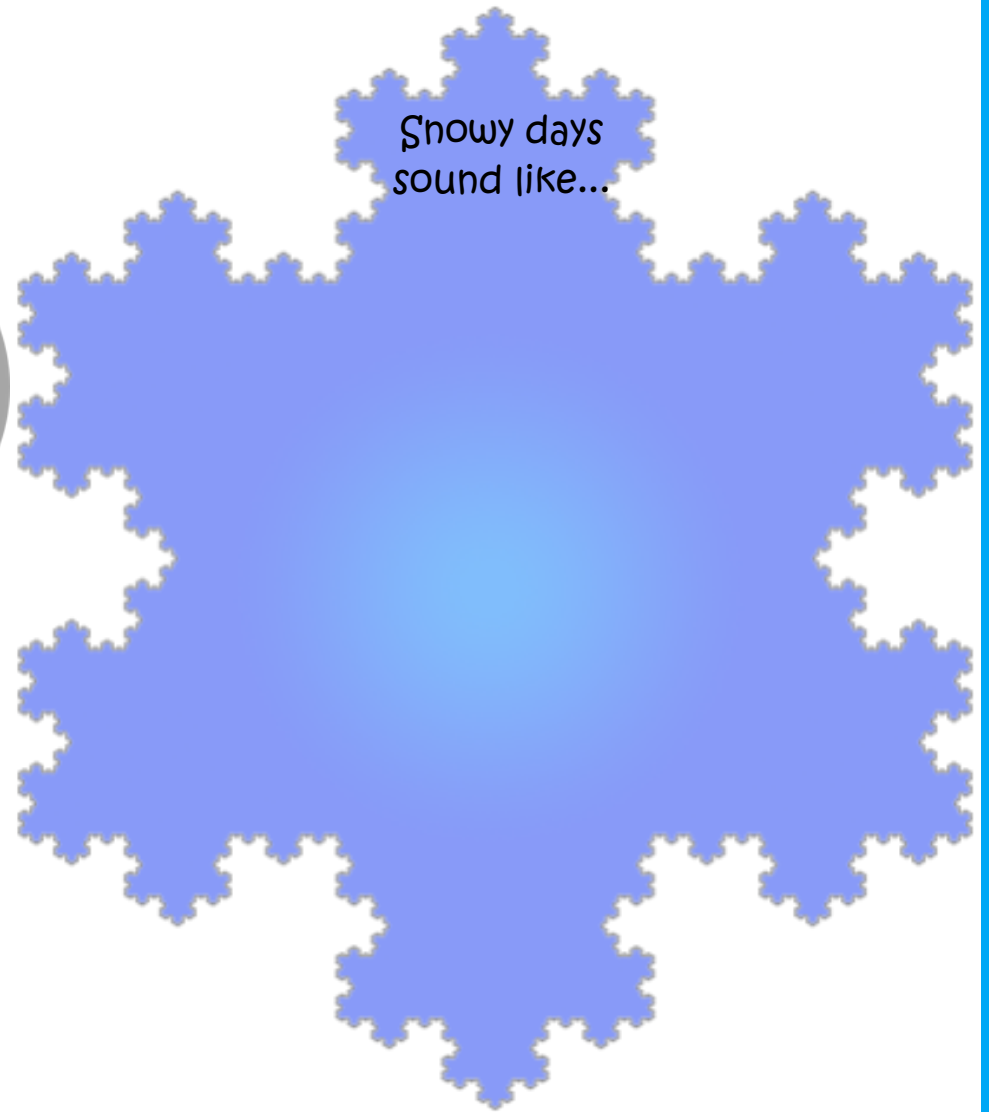


Sunny days  
sound like...

Stormy days sound like...



Snowy days  
sound like...



## RAIN STICKS

Help students understand that snow is another form of rain. How often does it rain in your location? How often does it snow? If it never snows where you live, how much colder would it need to be on average in order to snow? What are the weather patterns in your area?

Make your own onomatopoeia rain sticks with this idea inspired by [NASA](#):

### Materials:

- cardboard tube (Aluminum foil tubes are best, but paper towel tubes will work.)
- 2 sheets of aluminum foil 6" wide and 1½ times the length of the cardboard tube
- broomstick or other cylinder of similar size
- various sizes of dried beans, dried popcorn, dried rice, and/or small shapes of dried pasta
- packing or duct tape
- scissors
- funnel
- decorating materials as desired (markers, wrapping paper, stickers, etc.)

### Directions:

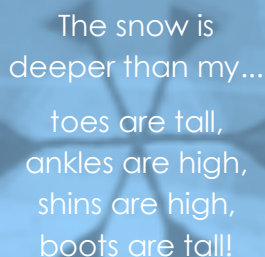
1. Crumple the sheets of foil lengthwise into long, rope-like shapes. Coil the crumpled foil strips around a broomstick handle or another cylinder of similar size to shape it into a spiral. Place the foil coils inside of the tube.
2. Wrap paper around one end of the tube and tape it shut.
3. Using a funnel, fill the tube about one-tenth of the way with a variety of dried beans, popcorn, rice, and/or small pieces of pasta.
4. Seal the other end with paper and tape.
5. If desired, wrap the tube in decorative paper, or decorate the outside using markers or stickers. Tie colorful yarn around the ends of the tube as streamers.

When children tip the rain stick upside down and back again, ask them to describe the sounds they hear.

K-ESS2-1

Use and share observations of local weather conditions to describe patterns over time.

## HOW TALL?



The snow is  
deeper than my...  
toes are tall,  
ankles are high,  
shins are high,  
boots are tall!

Challenge readers to measure the height of their toes, ankles, shins and knees as the snow in the story gets deeper and deeper. Use classroom objects (Unifix® cubes, blocks, etc.) for non-standard units of measure, or print and cut out the snowflakes on page 18 to use as units of measure. When measuring the height of children's toes, introduce the idea of less than one, or the fractions  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

The chart on the following page can be used to record their measurements, with space to measure the distance between other body parts and the ground (hips, stomach, shoulders, etc.). After each measurement, challenge students to estimate the next thing on the list before applying their measurement skills. When their chart is complete, cut the rows into strips for students to order their measurements from least to greatest, or greatest to least.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.MD.A.1

Describe measurable attributes of objects, such as length or weight. Describe several measurable attributes of a single object.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.MD.A.2


Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has "more of"/"less of" the attribute, and describe the difference.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.1.MD.A.1

Order three objects by length; compare the lengths of two objects indirectly by using a third object.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.1.MD.A.2

Express the length of an object as a whole number of length units, by laying multiple copies of a shorter object (the length unit) end to end; understand that the length measurement of an object is the number of same-size length units that span it with no gaps or overlaps.

<p><b>How high are my...</b></p>	
<p>toes</p>	
<p>ankles</p>	
<p>shins</p>	
<p>knees</p>	



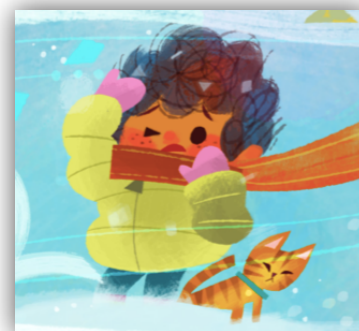


## WHICH WEATHER?



Using the bar graph template on the following page, poll students to find out their favorite types of weather, and compare the results. Which type of weather was chosen the most often? Which was chosen the least? Are there any with equal results? Use the bar graph to compare data and extend mathematical thinking. For example, when comparing two data points, ask how many more/fewer people chose one type of weather over another.

After analyzing the bar graph data, help students to dig deeper about different kinds of weather by recording their thoughts on the t-chart on page 21. Ask students about the pluses, minuses, and interesting aspects of each weather type. For example, a plus for snowy weather could be sledding, a minus could be the icy conditions, and something interesting might be that snow is white—not good or bad, per se; just interesting. Some students' answers could fall into more than one category—cold weather might be a plus for some and a minus for others.









CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.7

Participate in shared research and writing projects

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.8

Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

## Which weather is your favorite?

# Weather T-Chart



Plus

Minus

Interesting



## FIND A FROSTY WINDOW...

Find a frosty window.  
Watch the flakes fall.  
Look! The snow is deeper  
Than my toes are tall.



Children can watch as frost is being formed with this simple science experiment!

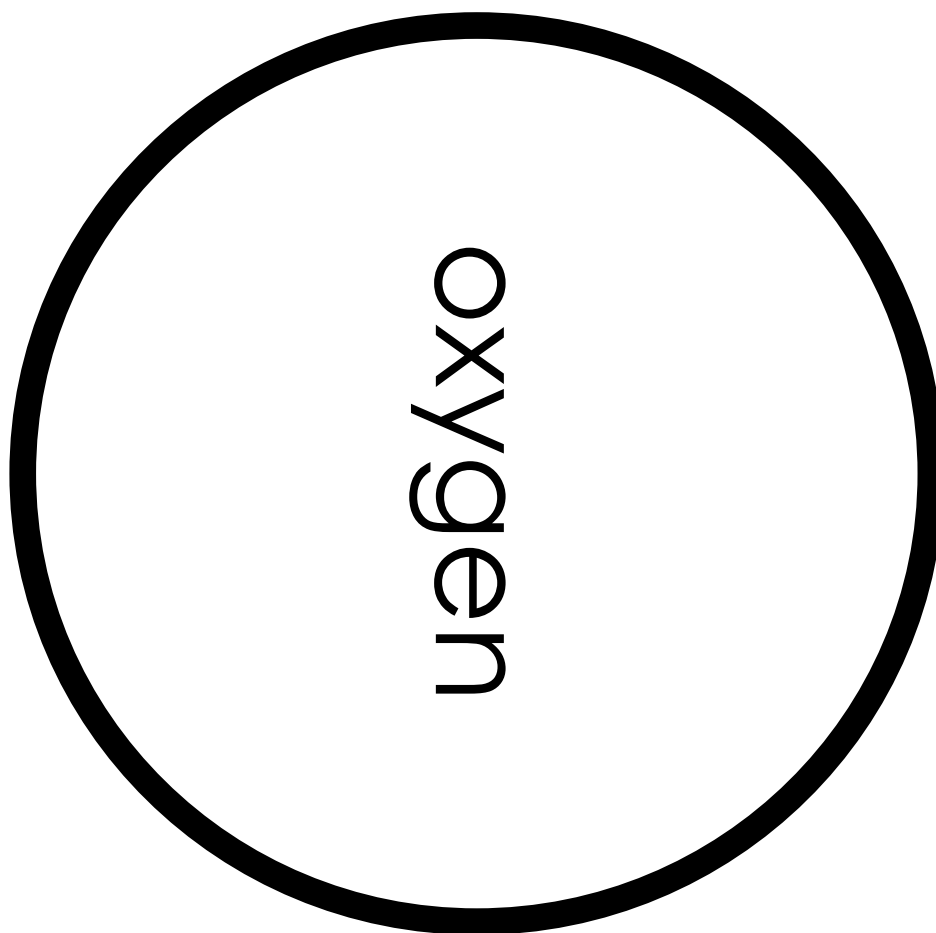
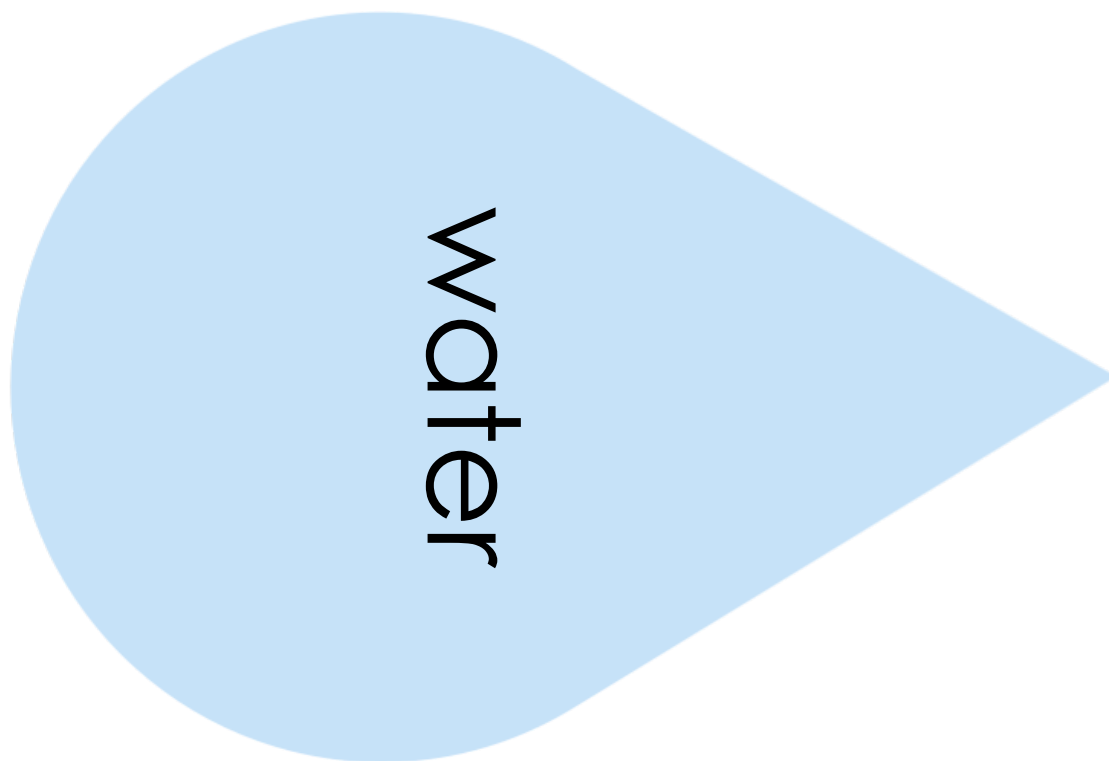
1. Tape a tin can's rim with masking tape to cover any sharp edges, and then fill the can  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the way with water.
2. Add 4 tablespoons of table salt or rock salt to the can.
3. Fill the rest of the can with crushed ice and stir.

The ice will start to melt as the salt absorbs the water, lowering the temperature inside of the can. Frost forms when the water in the air comes into contact with the outside of the can. If the humidity level in your room is low, place the tin can on a wet paper towel. Once frost has formed, children can use their fingertips to make designs in the frost like the child in the story does on his windows at home.

Repeat the experiment without the salt; condensation will form on the outside of the can. Ask which variable was changed this time? (The salt was missing.)

To illustrate how water behaves in cold vs. warm temperatures, copy and cut out the templates on the following page. Give each child either a water or an oxygen cut-out (children can hold them or attach them to strips of paper and fasten around their heads like crowns). Have children with oxygen circles link arms and form a tight circle. Ask students with the water drops to stand in a wider circle around the "cold air" group. Explain that the molecules in cold air are compact, leaving little space for water. Children holding oxygen circles can slowly spread out and invite those with water drops to link arms with "oxygen" students, modeling warm, humid air. Next, have the "oxygen" students move back into a tight circle, leaving those with water drops on the outside. Explain that when the warm air in the room comes into contact with the cold tin of the can, condensation forms, just as students with water drops are now on the outside of the oxygen circle.

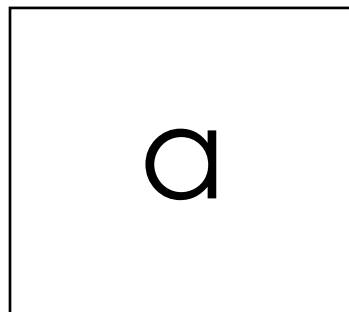
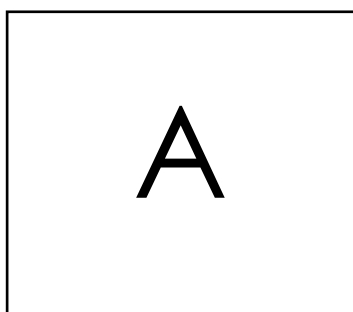
2-PS1-1. Plan and conduct an investigation to describe and classify different kinds of materials by their observable properties.



## SNOWBALL "FIGHT"



Show the page spread with the snowball fight. Tell children that you will be having a paper snowball fight in class! Prepare pairs of text or images ahead of time on separate pieces of paper. For example, one piece of paper might have a capital letter A, and another paper a lowercase a.



Other options might be pairing images of opposite words, such as *hot* and *cold*, or text with synonym pairs such as *big* and *large*. Give each student a piece of paper with an image, letter, or word. Have them crumple the paper and launch it into the air. On your cue, children can pick up one paper "snowball," open it, and view the image, letter, or word on the paper. They should then find the person with the paper that pairs with their own. Once they've all found their pairs, they can repeat the process to pair with another classmate.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.1.B

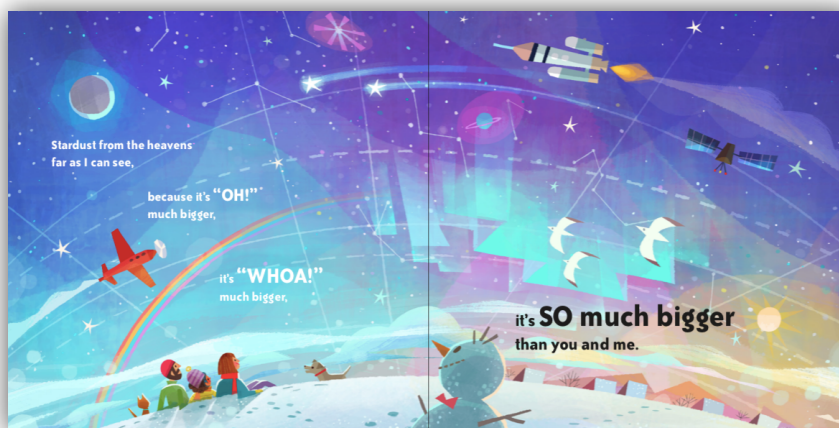
Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1.B

Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.

## CONNECTING THE STARS

Show children this page spread of the night sky.



Look at the constellations in this picture and point out how the illustrator has “connected the dots” with some of the stars. Go to the NASA site ([nasa.gov](http://nasa.gov)) to search for images of the night sky. Ask students what they notice about the stars in the photos (some might notice that they are different sizes and have varying degrees of brightness). On the NASA website, search for “picture dictionary,” find the page for the letter c and click on *constellation*. Show students the illustration of the constellations shown, pointing out that Capricorn is shaped like a goat, Sagittarius like an archer, Scorpius like a scorpion, Aquila like an eagle, Scutum like a shield, Libra like a balance scale, and Ophiuchus like a man holding a snake (with *Serpens* meaning *snake*).

Roll out a piece of dark (black or blue) bulletin board paper at least 6 feet long. Allow children to place white sticker dots on the paper, encouraging them to place them all over the paper (not in clumps). Using a white crayon, show them how to connect their dots to make their own shapes. Give them white crayons to create their own shapes. When they’ve finished, discuss the names of the shapes they see. Introduce the term “polygon” for closed shapes with straight sides.

Alternatively, give each student a piece of blue or black construction paper and have them create their own night sky.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.G.B.5

Model shapes in the world by building shapes from components and drawing shapes.



## AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR JEAN REIDY



### **How did you get the idea for *When the Snow Is Deeper Than My Boots Are Tall*?**

I love winter. And I love snow. And in Colorado, we often get a lot of it. So, one very snowy day, I was out shoveling my front walk. It was beautiful and sunny and very, very quiet. That quiet allowed me to really notice the rhythm of the crunch and scrape and swoosh of my shoveling. It reminded me of another snowy day long ago, when my

youngest daughter was clearly outsized by the drifts. And, so, the rhythm of that shoveling combined with that long-ago memory evolved into the refrain and title of the book.

### **Once the idea came to you, what happened next?**

Well, I finished shoveling the walk ... and the driveway too! Then, with that primary rhythm and premise in place, I began to flesh out additional verses, alternating rhythms and themes. I played with point of view and finally settled on first person ... it felt the most playful.

### **What is your favorite snowy memory as a child?**

Oh, I have so many, it's hard to choose. I grew up in Chicago where the winters lasted for months. And it seemed that some of our biggest snowstorms would fall on my birthday – at the end of January. I remember many a blizzardy birthday when school was cancelled and I got to spend the day building snow forts, ice skating and sipping hot cocoa. Bliss!

### **What is your writing process?**

When a spark for a story comes to me – whether through inspiration or imagination – I immediately write it down – maybe in an e-mail, maybe in an old notebook (I keep them everywhere), maybe in a Word document. And I do a bit of an initial brain dump of everything that might have presented with that idea – phrases, themes, words, images – which often isn't much.

Over time – like maybe weeks, or even months – if that idea won't leave me alone, if my mind and my imagination keep going back to it, then I give it time

and space to grow. I scribble down words and phrases and thoughts and images and endings without the constraints of a story structure. I give myself the freedom to play, to make a mess, to make mistakes. Because I know that once I start titling and formatting and formulizing, it's often hard to go back to that play state – when my brain is most rich with ideas and most open to experimenting. And as I cross out and fill in and keep the process as free as I possibly can, the structure begins to form organically.

When I do finally have a story-worthy structure, I play with it in manuscript form. Picture books are like poetry. So, I play with breath spaces and line spaces and word choices and lots and lots of white space. I also read it out loud – over and over again – to make sure that the story sings. After all, picture books are meant to be read out loud. And after I've read it out loud about a million times, then I might let someone else read it, to get some fresh eyes on it. Those usually come from my amazing critique partners who offer me brilliant revision suggestions. Then I read, revise and repeat until my trusted readers tell me it's ready.

### **What advice do you have for young writers?**

Whether you love to write or hate to write, my advice is the same: First, read, read, read. Read a lot. Read often. Comic books, magazines, cereal boxes, funny books, sad books, adventures, fantasies, poetry – whatever you like ... and some things you don't. Reading can be the best teacher of writing. I actually schedule reading time into my workday.

Then write. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of the blank page or the blank computer screen. Don't be afraid of sounding stupid. Don't worry about perfection. Just do it. Get it down. Write fast. Really fast. Write when you're not expecting to write. There are a million different ways to write. Start with something you enjoy. You might make lists, doodle, rant, rap, write poems, scribble wacky stories, compose diary entries. But just write. And if you want to, you can always go back and revise or get feedback from your own trusted readers. The more you write, the easier it becomes, AND the better writer you will be.

And finally, get out there! See new sights, hear new sounds, think new thoughts and have the courage to create. Because there's a writer or an artist or both, in each and every one of you.

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

Traveling to see my mom, kids, and grandkids (they all live far from me) – I'm a huge fan of trains and road trips. Hiking, biking and skiing in these beautiful Rocky Mountains. Reading – yes! Books. Magazines. Fiction. Non-Fiction. But especially Children's Books. Playing cards ... or just about any games for that matter. Supporting a fabulous non-profit called Reach Out and Read – which essentially makes reading and books part of medical care. A no-brainer, right? Visiting schools. Yes, I love visiting schools. And finally, working alongside amazingly selfless and generous people at a refuge for the homeless here in Denver. My co-workers and our guests fill my well with compassion on a weekly basis. Oh, and I almost forgot – chatting with other writers about writing, of course!