

| TEACHERS' GUIDE

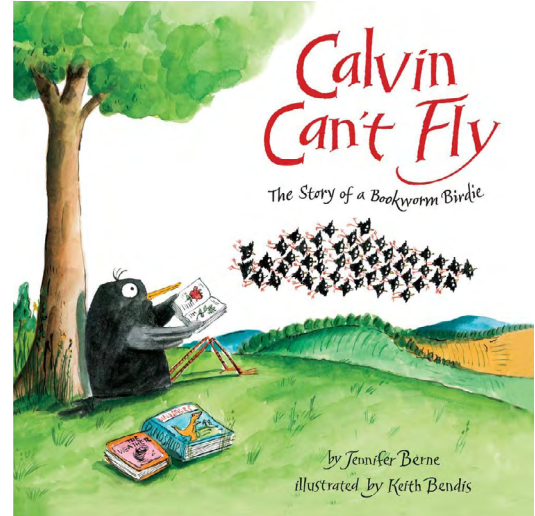
Calvin Can't Fly: *The Story of a Bookworm Birdie*

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 2nd - 4th |



SYNOPSIS

Calvin is one unusual starling! While his siblings and cousins learn to fly, this rare bird lets his imagination soar while reading about pirates, dinosaurs, and other fascinating things. The other birds call him "geeky beaky," but Calvin just ruffles his feathers and buries his beak in a book. Yet, when it comes time to migrate, poor Calvin suddenly realizes he can't fly! His sisters, brothers, and cousins carry him into the air. But on their way south, the winds blow hard, the trees bend, and the air starts to smell strange. It's a hurricane, and only Calvin can save the day--because he has read all about it! Witty illustrations, an endearing hero, and a delightful story make this a true celebration of the pleasures (and importance) of reading!



THEMES IN THE STORY

- Value of reading and knowledge
- Courage and resourcefulness
- Community
- Kindness
- Teamwork



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Illustrated by: Keith Bendis
Published by: Union Square Kids
Read by: Jonathan Pryce
Suggested grade level: 2nd - 4th

ELA COMMON CORE STANDARD

Reading Literature: Students read and respond to works of literature with emphasis on comprehension, and making connections among ideas and between texts with a focus on textual evidence.

Standards listed below are for 3rd grade, but can be adapted to 2nd or 4th grade standards.

BEFORE VIEWING

Standard: *CCSS.SL.3.1*

Objective: Tap into prior knowledge and build background to prepare for viewing the story.

Procedure: Build background with students by discussing the following points. This may be done on the carpet with A/B partners or at their desks.

- What do you think this story is about based on the cover and title?
- Have you ever felt different than those in your family?
- Is there anything that your family or friends do better than you? If so, what?
- Is there anything that you are better at than your family or friends? If so, what?

DURING VIEWING

Standard: *CCSS.SL.3.2*

Objective: Watch the story and answer the following questions.

Procedure: Stop the video at the noted times to ask questions or pose prompts from the suggested list below:

- What clues do the author and illustrator provide at the beginning of the story of what might happen? (01:11)
- How does Calvin feel about books? How do you know? (02:50)
- Why is Calvin sad when his friends are leaving for migration? How do you know? (04:16)
- How did Calvin help all of the other starlings? (06:40)
- How does Calvin feel about flying at the end of the story? How do you know? (07:59)

AFTER VIEWING

Standard: *CCSS.RL.3.1*

Objective: Students will ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

AFTER VIEWING – CONTINUED

Procedure: Students will discuss the following questions with their carpet or desk partners:

- How did Calvin’s discoveries differ from the other young starlings?
- What are some of the realities of being unique?
- How did being unique impact Calvin?
- How did being unique benefit Calvin?
- How did Calvin being unique benefit the other starlings?
- How did the other starlings react to Calvin being unique?

READING RESPONSE

Standard: *CCSS.RL.3.1*

Objective: Answer the reading prompt using details from the text to support the response.

Materials:

- Reading response journal
- Pencils

Procedure:

1. Give students the following prompt to write about:

After viewing the story of *Calvin Can't Fly*, what was the problem in the story? How was it solved?

2. Allow time for the group to discuss the prompt.
3. Have students write their responses answering the above prompt in their reading response journals.

Note: Younger students may use sentence stems to help them with their responses.

For example:

I think the problem in the story was _____ and it was solved by _____.

WRITING – PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Standard: *CCSS.W.3.3*

Objective: Students will write a short personal narrative about something they are not good at **yet** and describe the steps they will take to improve, using descriptive details and clear sequencing.

WRITING – CONTINUED

Materials:

- Writing paper or journals
- Pencils
- Optional: Growth Mindset Word Bank (page 9)

Procedure:

1. Begin by asking students to think of something they have tried that was tricky or hard. Have them share with a partner and model with your own example, such as learning to ride a bike.
2. Brainstorm as a class some activities kids might not be good at yet, then have each student choose one skill to write about. Examples include dribbling a basketball, spelling big words, drawing, or playing an instrument.
3. Students will plan their writing using three parts: **describe the skill and how it feels**, **list at least three steps to improve** and **explain how it will feel once they get better**.
4. Using their plan, students write a narrative with a beginning, middle, and end. They should use descriptive details and transition words like *first*, *next*, *then* and *finally*.
5. Have students share their writing with a partner, small group, or the class, and give one compliment to a peer about their story.

Extension Activity: Have students add illustrations of themselves before and after learning the skill.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) TEAM BUILDER AND ART

Objective: Students will design a unique bird that represents their personality, strengths and goals while exploring personal interests, questions and curiosity through art. This activity encourages self-awareness and self-management as students reflect on their individuality, while also fostering social awareness, empathy, and relationship skills through sharing and discussion. By connecting creativity with responsible decision-making and conflict resolution, students practice both artistic expression and important SEL skills in a meaningful, hands-on way.

Materials:

- Starling Bird Coloring Page (*page 10*)
- Crayons, markers and colored pencils
- Optional: Scissors to cut out birds

Procedure:

1. Instruct students to begin coloring **the beak** of the bird first. Tell them to choose a beak color based on their favorite subject, using the color key (e.g., Orange = Reading/Writing, Yellow = Recess/PE, Red = Art/Music, Blue = Math, Green = Science, Purple = Social Studies).
2. On **the wings**, have students draw or write things they are good at.
3. Then, students should color **the bird's body** in their favorite color.
4. Optionally, students may also draw a book in the corner of the page and write a skill they want to improve on the book's cover or inside the book.
5. When finished, students can take a gallery walk around the classroom to view and learn about classmates' birds or have a bulletin board display where birds are posted together to create a ***Class Flock***.

Extension Activity: Have students pair up to share one similarity and one difference between their birds.

MATH – PLACE VALUE GAME

Standard: *CCSS.3.NBT.A.1* Use place value understanding to round whole numbers to the nearest 10 or 100. *CCSS.4.NBT.A.2* Read and write multi-digit whole numbers using base-ten numerals, number names, and expanded form.

Objective: Students will correctly build and read multi-digit numbers by applying their understanding of place value. To do this, they will learn that numbers are read from left to right, starting with the largest place value and moving to the smallest. Whole numbers are grouped in threes (thousands, millions, etc.) and each digit is pronounced according to its place, reinforcing both accurate number construction and reading skills.

Materials:

- Place Value Mat (*page 11*)
- Digit cards (*page 12*) (0–9, shuffled face down) printed on cardstock
- 1 die for each pair of students
- Optional: Base 10 blocks and Base 10 mat

MATH – CONTINUED

Procedure:

1. Each pair of students needs one **Place Value Mat**, a stack of digit cards (0–9, shuffled face down) and one die. Place the mat in the center of the pair of students, the digit cards in a face-down pile and the die nearby.
2. Choose who will go first.
3. The first player rolls the die. The number rolled tells how many digit cards to draw. Example: If you roll a three, draw 3 cards.
4. Place the first card in the 'ones' place. Then continue placing each card into the next highest place value on the mat — (tens, hundreds, thousands, etc.)
 - Roll a 1 → ones place only
 - Roll a 2 → tens and ones
 - Roll a 3 → hundreds, tens, ones
 - Roll a 4 → thousands through ones
 - Roll a 5 → ten thousands through ones
 - Roll a 6 → hundred thousands through ones

Example: If you roll a four, draw 4 cards and place them in the ones, tens, hundreds and thousands places. If you draw the numbers 6, 4, 2 and 1, your entire number is 6,421.
5. Students should read the entire number out loud using correct place value language. Example: “Six thousand, four hundred twenty-one.”
6. The partner should listen carefully. If the number is read correctly, they confirm it. If there is a mistake, help correct it.
7. Switch turns. The second player rolls the die, draws the correct number of cards, places them on the mat and reads the entire number aloud.
8. Continue taking turns until time is up or the teacher ends the game.

Optional Extension Activities:

- After reading the number, write it in word form and expanded form.
- Rearrange your digit cards to make the largest possible number.
- Use Base 10 blocks to build your number physically.
- Compare your number with your partner’s — who has the greater number?

SCIENCE – STARLING RESEARCH & WRITING

Standard: *CCSS.3.W.2* Write informative/explanatory texts with facts, definitions and details.

Objective: Students will research and write a short informational piece about starlings.

Materials:

- **Animal Research Report** (*page 13*) / **Teacher Answer Key** (*page 14*)
- Pencils
- Books or online kid-friendly research sites
- Coloring supplies

SCIENCE – CONTINUED

Procedure:

1. Have students research starlings using books or approved kid-friendly websites.
2. Students will complete the research report individually or with a partner.
3. Instruct students to write a short report (2–5 sentences, depending on grade level) in their own words, using facts from their research.
4. Students will illustrate and color their bird, and its habitat, to go along with their report.
5. Have students share their work with the class on a ***Bird Habitat Wall***, or have them participate in a pair-and-share, where they present one fact to a partner.

Extension Activity: After completing their starling research, have students compare what makes starlings unique as a species. Just like Calvin was different from the other starlings, and used his special interests and knowledge to help the flock, students can reflect on how their unique strengths, talents and interests make them valuable members of their community.

GROWTH MINDSET WORD BANK

Try

Improve

Learn

Believe

Grow

Focus

Brave

Kind

Strong

Share

Effort

Listen

Practice

Ideas

Yet

Teamwork

Goal

Challenge

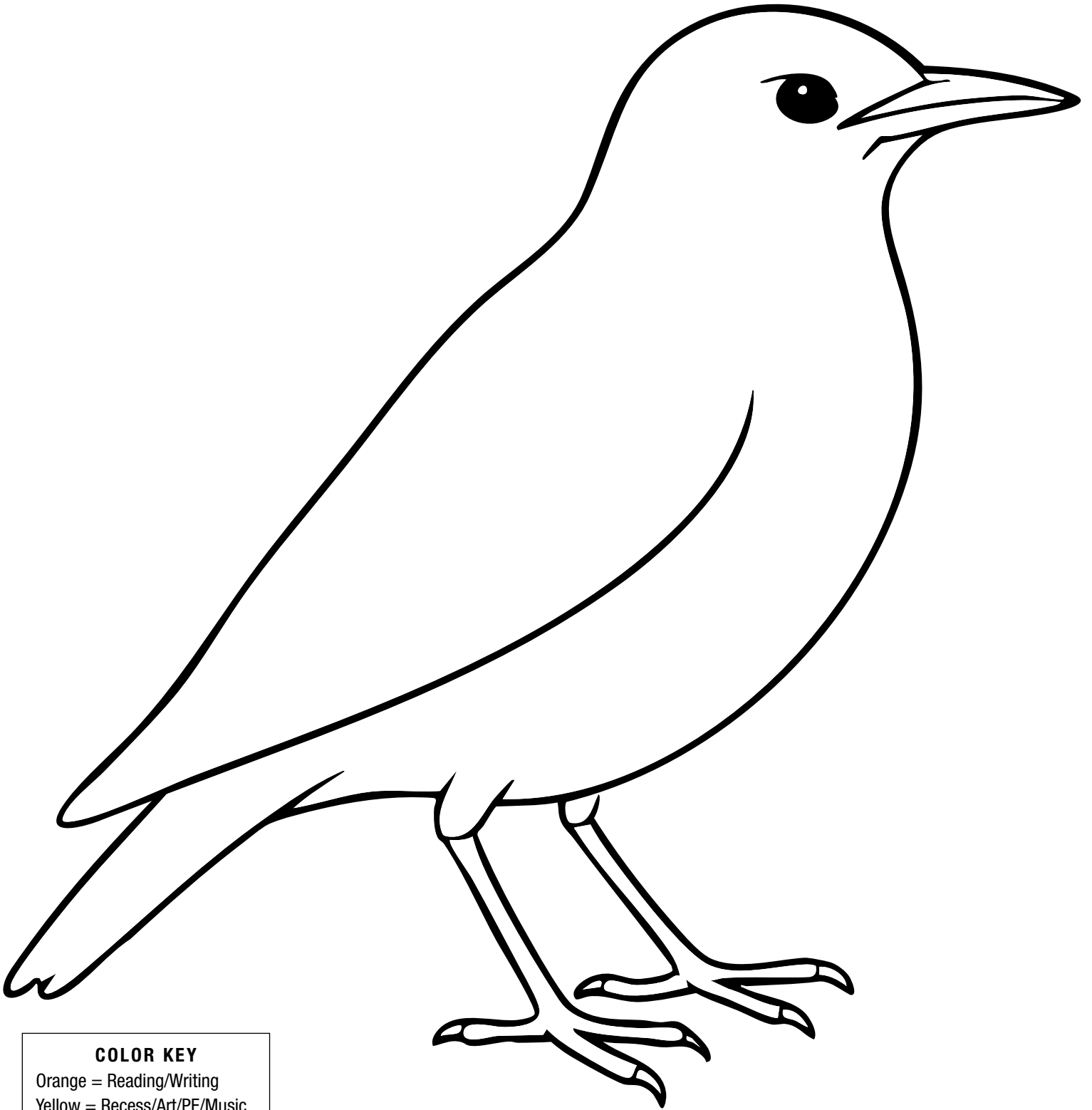
Help

Success

Name: _____

Date: _____

STARLING BIRD COLORING PAGE



COLOR KEY

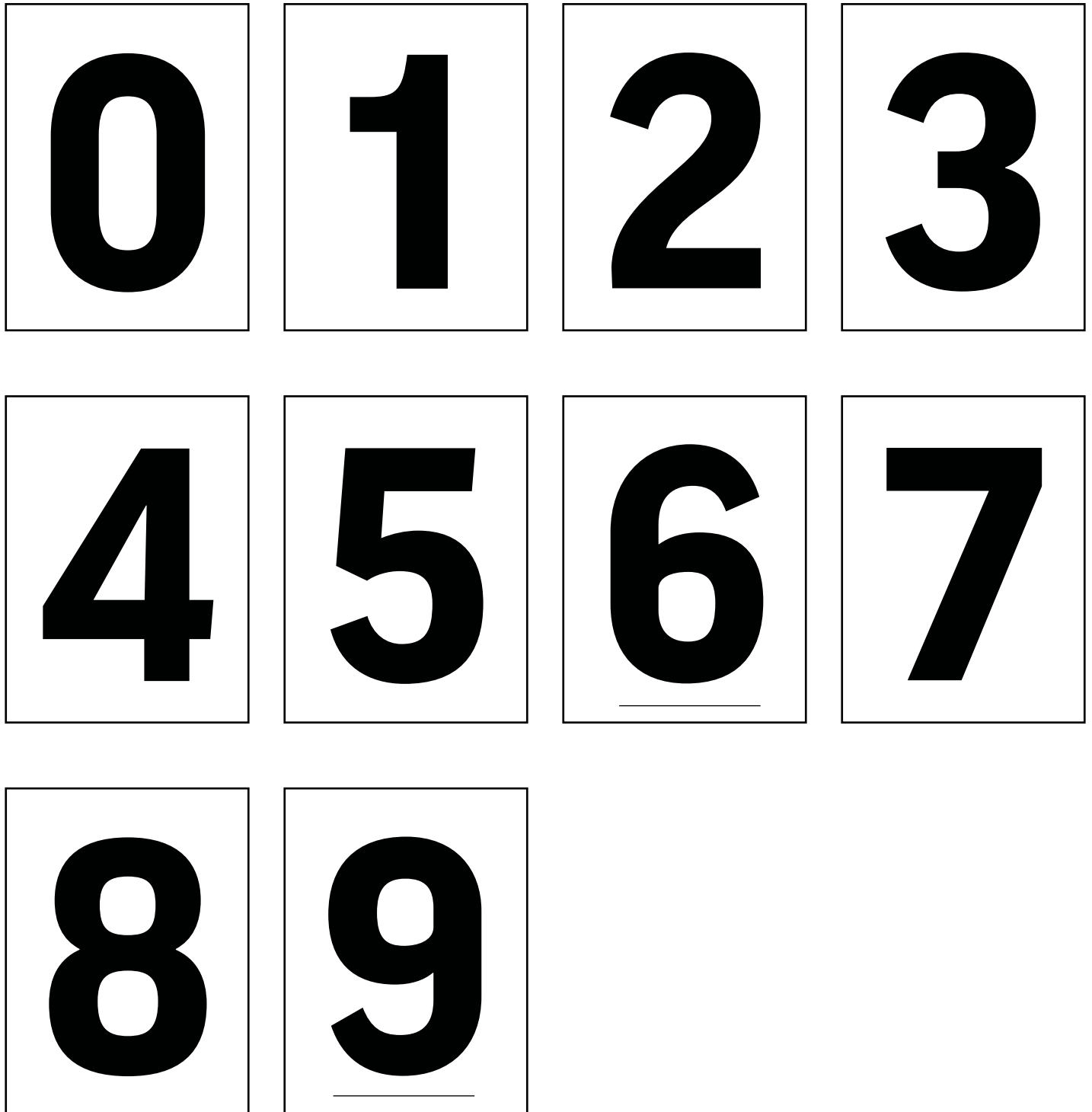
Orange = Reading/Writing
Yellow = Recess/Art/PE/Music
Red = Art/Music
Blue = Math
Green = Science
Purple = Social Studies

PLACE VALUE MAT

HUNDRED THOUSANDS	TEN THOUSANDS	THOUSANDS	HUNDREDS	TENS	ONES

DIGIT CARDS

Print on cardstock or laminate. Cut out and give each pair of students one set of 0-9 cards.



ANIMAL RESEARCH REPORT BY _____

Animal Name: _____ This animal is a: ☐ Amphibian ☐ Bird ☐ Fish ☐ Insect ☐ Mammal ☐ Reptile

MY ANIMAL'S FACTS

Height/Size: _____

Weight: _____

Color: _____

It has: _____

What it eats: _____

Where it lives: _____

Predators: _____

Lifespan: _____

Here is a picture of my animal:

An Interesting Fact About My Animal:

Why They Matter in Nature:

My animal's habitat is...

ANIMAL RESEARCH REPORT ANSWER KEY

Animal Name: European Starling / Starling / or have students give them a name

This animal is a: ☐Amphibian ☒Bird ☐Fish ☐Insect ☐Mammal ☐Reptile

My Animal's Facts

Height/Size: 7-9 inches long, wingspan about 12-17 inches

Weight: 2-3.5 ounces

Color: Shiny black with purple and green iridescence, speckled white in winter

It has: Feathers

What it eats: Insects, worms, fruits, seeds, grains

Where it lives: Grasslands, cities, farms, and open woodlands (nests in cavities like tree holes or buildings)

Predators: Hawks, falcons, cats, snakes

Lifespan: 2-5 years in the wild

An Interesting Fact About My Animal:

1. Starlings can mimic the sounds of other birds, animals, and even people.
2. They often fly in huge groups called murmurations that twist and turn in the sky together.
3. Starlings were brought to North America in the 1890s and now live almost everywhere in the U.S.

Why They Matter in Nature:

Starlings help control insect populations by eating pests like beetles and caterpillars. They also spread seeds when they eat fruits, which helps plants grow in new places.

Here is a picture of my animal:

(drawing of a starling – shiny black feathers with purple/green iridescence and light speckles)

My animal's habitat is... :

Starlings live in open fields, farmlands, city parks, and suburban areas. They like places with trees or buildings to nest in and open areas for feeding.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide enhances the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum by providing supplemental learning opportunities alongside quality children’s literature, engaging students as they listen to expressive read-alouds.

Suggested story related activities in this guide are aligned with ELA Common Core Standards.