

A WEB

by Isabelle Simler

Common Core Teaching Guide



ABOUT THE BOOK

Look closely as a spider—both a collector and an artist—skillfully crafts a masterpiece from all that falls into her path. Patient and observant, she takes in all the wonders that make up her landscape—from ferns and feathers, to bugs and butterflies. Readers will linger over the luscious and intricate illustrations, soaking up all of the delicate details created by *New York Times* Best Illustrated Children’s Book artist Isabelle Simler.

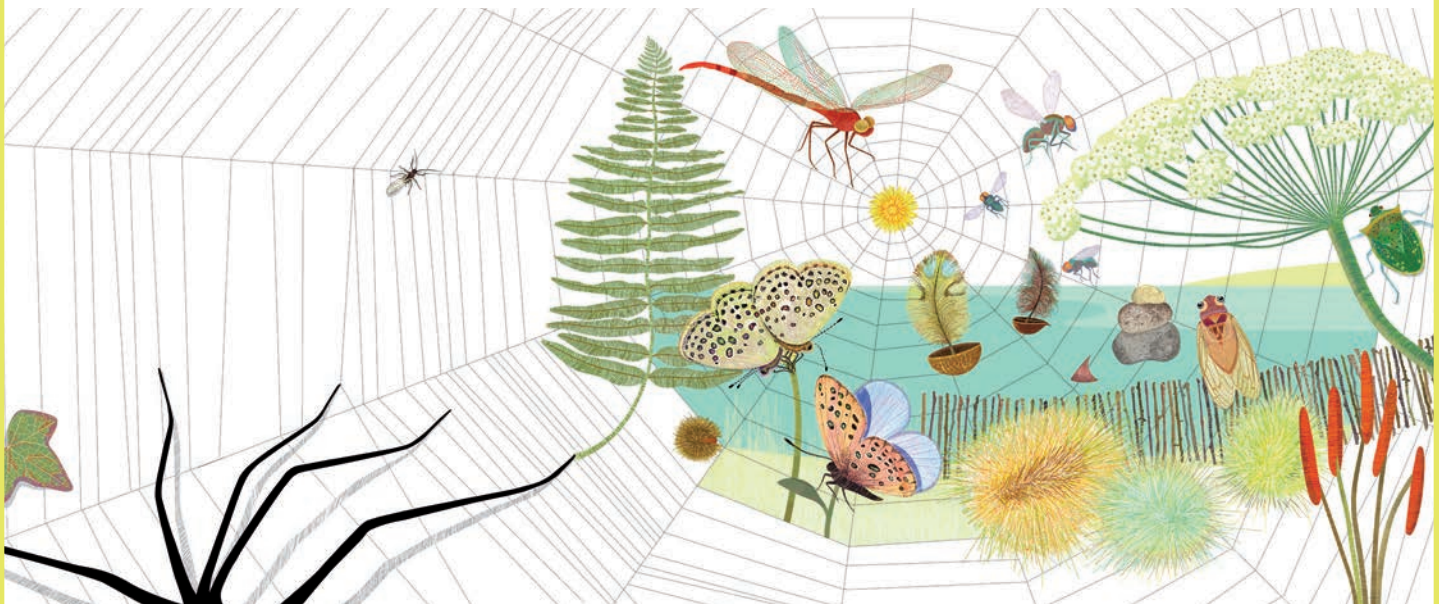
INTRODUCTION

Dear Teacher,

In *A Web*, readers are invited to observe and explore the world of a spider as it moves slowly through the pages and the work of this spider as it gathers items for its web. What will the spider do with its collection?

A Web asks readers to look closely . . . and through those observations, opens up an opportunity for literary and scientific discussions about the interdependent relationships in the natural world and the use of illustrations to evoke feelings and tell a story with minimal text. This is a book that will be revisited often, with new and exciting discoveries at each page turn and re-read.

It also allows students to meet many Common Core Reading Literature, Speaking and Listening, Writing and Next Generation Science Standards. And if you and your students have time to spare for some creative art, you can use the book as inspiration for two imaginative art/science activities.



This guide was prepared by Michelle Gajda, an elementary school reading specialist, adjunct college professor and recipient of a Massachusetts Reading Association Sylvia D. Brown Scholarship for action research in the field of literacy.

Let's Talk About It: Before, During and After Reading

PRESCHOOL, KINDERGARTEN, GRADE ONE, GRADE TWO:

At the appropriate place in the story, prompt and challenge the students to answer the following questions about details in the text.

BEFORE READING:

- *Discuss the title A Web:*
 - What animal(s) make(s) a web? What purpose does the web serve for those animals?
 - Investigate and build student's background knowledge about spiders and webs.
- *Take a picture walk through the book:*
 - How do the pictures make you feel? Why?
 - Based on the illustrations, do you think this is going to be a quiet story or a loud and active story? What makes you think that or feel that way?
- The finely detailed illustrations and limited text make this book a wonderful resource for rich discussion. For a first read, go through the book simply reading and noticing the illustrations (with no discussion). During the second or third read, look carefully at each illustration. What is happening in each picture? What story is unfolding that the words aren't saying?

DURING READING:

- *Observe the "hints" of the spider's appearance in each illustration:*
 - What parts are shared with the reader throughout the book? Pose questions about what students think the spider is doing in each illustration.
 - Make predictions about why the spider is collecting the items.

AFTER READING:

- *A Web* is an invitation to all readers to pay attention to the details in their world through careful observation:
 - Show the last two illustrations of the book side by side (ideally, on a projector so all students can clearly see them). Pose questions about the differences and similarities they observe between the two illustrations.
 - Take a walk outside or around the school. Look closely for spider webs or other signs of tiny, insect life. Take time to observe and notice what they are seeing.
- *The spider is called "a skillful, watchful artist."*
 - Ask students whether they feel the spider is an artist?
 - Do they feel it is watchful? Why or why not? What is it watching for?



Fiction or Non-Fiction or a Little of Both?

GRADE ONE, GRADE TWO:

Students in primary grades are often under the impression that fiction books are stories that are completely “made up” and imaginary and that non-fiction books must have real photographs and only list facts about a certain topic.

After reading and discussing *A Web* aloud, ask the students to help you record any facts that they learn about spiders, insects, plants or webs either through the text or illustrations. Next, provide students with a variety of informational texts and websites to explore. Ask them to record important facts that they find out about spiders, insects plants or webs. Are there any facts that they find in the informational text that “match” what they discovered in *A Web*? Can they find facts about the various insects and plants illustrated? Discuss how fiction stories can weave facts into the story.

Some examples of facts found in the text and illustrations:

- Spiders have 8 eyes and 8 legs.
- Spiders capture their prey in their webs.
- Insects can camouflage themselves to look like leaves and plants.
- Some insects can fly.

Where Do I Belong? Categorizing the Spider’s Collection

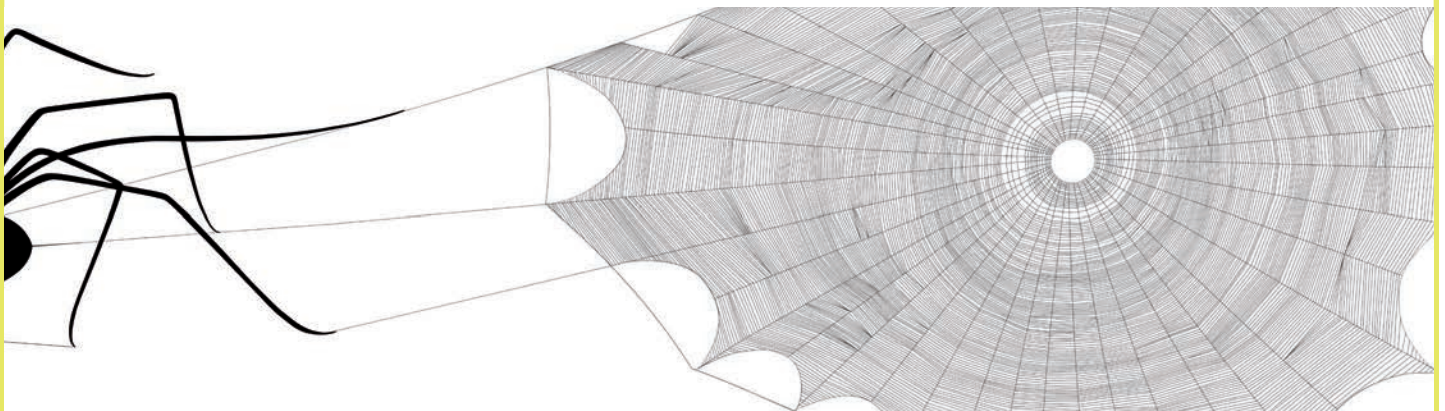
PRESCHOOL, KINDERGARTEN, GRADE ONE, GRADE TWO:

Make a list of all of the items from nature that the spider collects for its web. Ideally, have colored pictures with labels of the items listed that the spider collects or have the students make them on index cards. Next, categorize the list/index cards into “Living” or “Non-Living”. Prompt students to discuss whether the spider needs all of the items to survive? What does the spider need them for? To further this activity, categorize the items into: Insects, Plants, Nuts/Seeds, Organic Matter.

Writing: Building Spider Sentences

GRADE ONE, GRADE TWO:

The text in *A Web* consists of one very short sentence and one very long sentence. After reading and discussing *A Web* and taking special notice of the two sentences, challenge students to complete the sentence starters on the following page. This activity can be done as a whole group, small group, or individually using the **Building Spider Sentences** handout. Scaffold the amount of support as necessary. Have individual students or groups share their sentences. Encourage them to create their own “Because, So, But” sentences.



BUILDING SPIDER SENTENCES

The spider builds a web **because** _____

The spider builds a web **so** _____

The spider builds a web **but** _____

The spider collects things **because** _____

The spider collects things **so** _____

The spider collects things **but** _____

The author wrote this book **because** _____

The author wrote this book **so** _____

The author wrote this book **but** _____



I Am Like A Spider

PRESCHOOL, KINDERGARTEN, GRADE ONE:

Students are much like spiders: artistic collectors who, when given the opportunity and time, can carefully observe and notice the world around them. Give students the writing prompt from the **I Am Like a Spider** handout (either used as a group activity, or individually) on the following page. Scribe for students who are emerging writers. Allow time for students to illustrate their writing.

Art Extension Activities

OUR OWN SPIDER WEB

PRESCHOOL, KINDERGARTEN, GRADE ONE, GRADE TWO:

Students can either draw a spider web on paper or a web can be created out of string or yarn on a large floor area. Have students gather items from nature that a spider would collect for its web. Have students “weave” or attach the items to the web. Discuss why spiders would need each item.

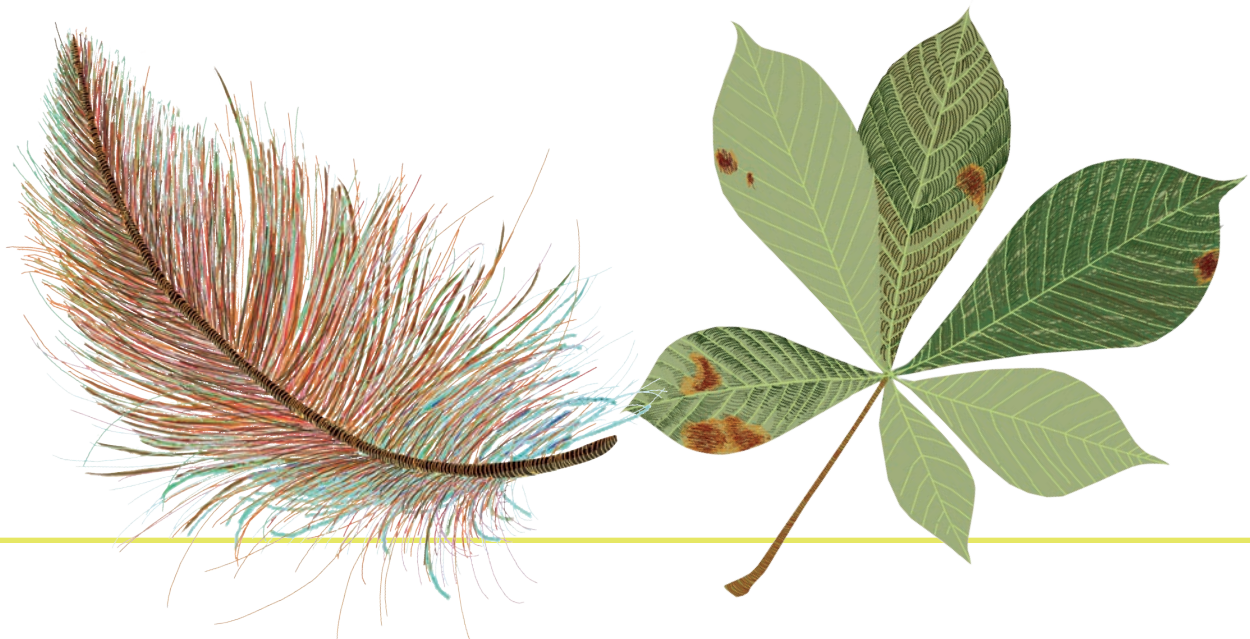
I AM AN ILLUSTRATOR

PRESCHOOL, KINDERGARTEN, GRADE ONE, GRADE TWO:

The fine line work used to create the illustrations in *A Web* add to the softness and details of the story being told. By using the handle tip of a small paintbrush, students can recreate some of the flower, feather or leaf illustrations from the book.

For a flower or leaf: Place a small circle of paint in the desired location on a piece of art/construction paper. Using the handle tip of the brush, have students quickly “flick” their wrists (NOT the paint!) in a motion that will move a small line of the paint from the center outward. This motion should create a narrow, wispy line. Continue that motion all the way around the circle of paint several times. To add new colored lines, dip the paint brush handle into a different colored paint and continue the same motion.

For a feather: Lay paint in a line and create wispy lines using the same motion as described above; drawing the paint from the line and flicking outward. Continue on both sides of the line.



I AM LIKE A SPIDER

I am like a spider because I collect _____

_____.

I can make _____ with my collection.

I like to sit and watch _____

_____.

It makes me feel _____

Common Core Standards Met in this Guide

READING LITERATURE STANDARD 1

RL K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in text.

RL 1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RL 2.1 Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

RL 3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as a basis for the answers.

READING LITERATURE STANDARD 4

RL 1.4 Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

READING LITERATURE STANDARD 7

RL 1.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting or events.

RL 2.7 Use information gained from illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting or plot.

RL 3.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT STANDARD 3

RI 2.3 Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARD 2

SL 2.2 Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARD 5

SL K.5 Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.

WRITING STANDARD 1

W K.1 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell the reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book (e.g., *My favorite book is . . .*).

WRITING STANDARD 2

W K.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

WRITING STANDARD 7

W K.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them.)

W 1.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of "how-to" books on a given topic and use them to write a sequence of instructions.)

W 2.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations.)

WRITING STANDARD 8

W 2.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Next Generation Science Standards Met in this Guide

FROM MOLECULES TO ORGANISMS: STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES

K-LS1-1 Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.

1-LS1-1A Use materials to design a solution to a human problem by mimicking how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow and meet their needs. All animals have external parts. Different animals use their body parts in different ways to see, hear, grasp objects, protect themselves, move from place to place, and seek, find and take in food, water, and air.

EARTH'S SYSTEMS

K-ESS2-2 Construct an argument supported by evidence for how plants and animals (including humans) can change the environment to meet their needs.

EARTH AND HUMAN ACTIVITY

K-ESS3-1 Use a model to represent the relationship between the needs of different plants or animals (including humans) and the places they live.

MATTER AND ITS INTERACTIONS

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

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR



ISABELLE SIMLER graduated from the Graduate School of Decorative Arts in Strasbourg, France. She is the author and illustrator of several children's picture books, including *Plume*, which was selected by the *New York Times* as one of the Best Illustrated Children's Books of 2017. She lives and works in Paris. Learn more about her at www.isabellesimler.com.

