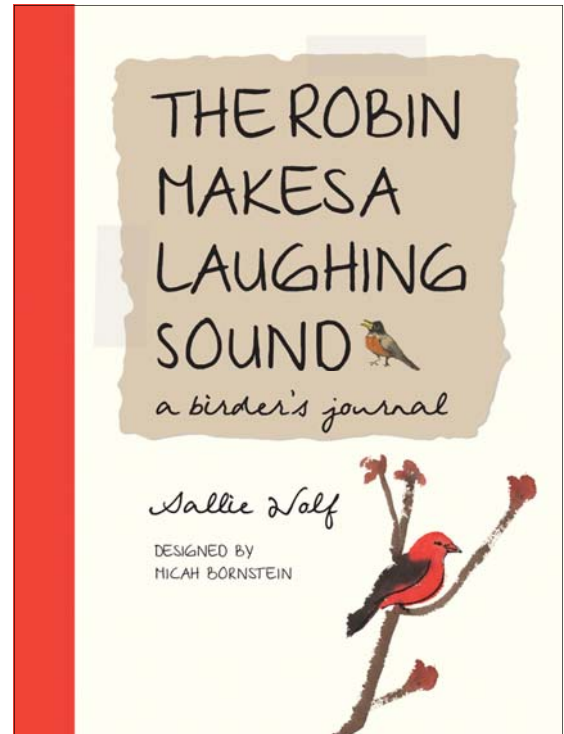


THE ROBIN MAKES A LAUGHING SOUND

A Discussion and Activity Guide
Developed by Sallie Wolf and Charlesbridge



At first glance this is a book about bird identification and behavior. But look more carefully: journaling helps us observe, think, evaluate, record, and create.



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DISCUSSION IDEAS



“Bird-watching” (p. 7). This poem tells about which birds the author sees in different seasons. Which birds stay all year in your neighborhood? Think of three birds that never visit your area. Research these birds: Where do they live? What do they eat? What sort of beaks do they have?



How to observe. How many of the birds in the book are found near your home? Do they come during the same season that the author saw them? What birds would be on your list that are not in this book?



Read Sallie Wolf’s Author’s Note. Discuss scientific observation and its methods. How did Sallie experiment with her observations? What did she learn? Just like Darwin, Sallie watched, waited, and recorded her findings. Do you study a particular thing regularly, like a bird-watcher? Do you keep a journal about what you’ve learned? What person, place, or thing can become your area of study for the sake of experiment?



What is a poem? Besides simple notes about the birds she’s seen, Sallie Wolf was inspired by the birds, plants, and weather that she observed. She fills her journals with poems about the beauty in her own backyard. Discuss what kinds of poems a writer can write: haiku,





sonnets, quatrains, etc. What kinds of poetry does Sallie Wolf use? Research other poets who are inspired by nature.



“Seagulls” (pg. 19). Do seagulls live in your area? Are you familiar with their behavior? What does this poem reveal about them? Are middle schoolers really like seagulls?



Journaling. Sallie Wolf journals every day. As a writer, she finds ideas for stories and books by exploring her thoughts. As an artist, her journal is a place where she can sketch objects, people, and animals of interest and incorporate them into her work. Do you journal? Look at Sallie Wolf’s journal. How is it arranged? What rules does she follow?

ACTIVITY IDEAS



Bird Lists (pp. 8, 16, 24, 32). There are four different bird lists throughout the book, one for each season. Make a graph or chart comparing the lists. Which list is the longest? Which list is the shortest? Why do you think this might be so? Do any birds appear only on one list? Do any birds appear on all four lists? Which birds did the author see most often? How can you tell?



Design your own page spread (A page spread is the left-hand page plus the right-hand page combined when a book is opened flat). Design a spread for a bird or animal which you are studying. Using at least three different kinds of media for your materials, combine a poem or paragraph about your chosen subject, notes from observation or research, and images. You can print some sources from the internet. You might find information in magazines or books which you could copy and/or cut out. And you can draw some images yourself. Create your page spread as a collage, overlapping and composing your words and pictures to create a balanced composition.



Keeping a journal. It takes time to develop the habit of writing a journal on a regular basis, and sometimes it is hard to know what to write. Author/illustrator Sallie Wolf explains: I always begin each day with the same pattern. That way I am already writing and my pen is already moving before I have to really think about what I’m going to write. I begin my entries by writing out the day, date, location where I am, the time, and the weather. I do not use abbreviations. This fills a line or two and I am off and writing. A sample entry might read, “Monday, January 25, 2010, Oak Park, 9:32 am, very gray sky, 32 degrees, snow in the air.”



Things to write about. Write about what you have done in the days since you last wrote; thoughts about the books you’re reading; what you have to do today; thoughts about projects you’re working on, plans you’re making for goals you want to achieve, some funny





incident or conversation, or what you are feeling and why you are feeling that way. Write about anything that is important to you. Writing is a way of having a conversation with yourself.



How to bind a simple journal:

- Take eight sheets of paper, all the same size. Fold each sheet in half and crease the fold with a your fingernail , popsicle stick, or bone folder. Nest each of the sheets, one inside the other so that they all open together with the same fold. This is called a signature.
- Find a piece of wallpaper, card stock, an empty cereal box, or an old calendar to use as a cover. It should be just slightly bigger than the unfolded paper you used to make your signature. Fold the cover and crease it and nest the signature inside the cover. The fold is called the spine of your book.
- Open the book and lay it flat. With an awl, the pointed end of a drawing compass, or a thin sharp nail, punch three holes through all the pages and the cover, one hole in the middle of the spine, and one about an inch from each edge, being careful to keep the holes right in the crease of the fold.
- Cut a piece of linen thread or raffia three or four times the length of the spine. Thread a darning needle with the thread. Beginning at the middle hole on the outside of your journal, push the needle all the way through the cover and the eight sheets of your signature. Pull the thread through leaving an eight inch tail on the outside of the journal.
- Next, stitch through the top hole from the inside to the outside and pull tight, leaving the eight-inch tail. Now push the needle from the outside to the inside of the third, bottom hole, making one long stitch along the outside of the spine. Again pull the thread tight, leaving the eight inch tail still hanging.
- Lastly, push the needle from the inside to the outside of the middle hole. Pull the thread tight. Arrange the two tails of the thread one on either side of the long stitch and tie them in a square knot. You can trim the tails, or you can leave them long and use them to tie your journal closed. Or you can decorate the tails with buttons or beads.



This kind of binding is called a simple pamphlet stitch and you can find more complete directions on the internet at this site and others:

<http://myhandboundbooks.blogspot.com/2007/06/alright-bookbinding-101.html>





SUGGESTED READING, WEBSITES, & VIEWING

- *Birds: Nature's Magnificent Flying Machines*
By Caroline Arnold. Charlesbridge, 2003.
- *Beaks!*
By Sneed B. Collard, III. Charlesbridge, 2002.
- *A Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern and Central North America*
By Roger Tory Peterson. Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
- *Birds*
By Scott Windensaul. National Audubon Society First Field Guides. Scholastic, 1998.
- *Wreck This Journal*
By Keri Smith. Perigee Trade, 2007.
- *How to Be an Explorer of the World: Portable Life Museum*
By Keri Smith. Perigee Trade, 2008.
- *The Cuckoo's Haiku*
By Michael J. Rosen. Illustrated by Stan Fellows. Candlewick, 2009.
- *Sketching and Drawing for Children*
By G. Vaughan-Jackson. Perigee Trade, 1990.
- All About Birds
Sponsored by the Cornell lab of Ornithology, one of the premier research centers for bird study.
[www. birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds)
- Bird Watching in the USA and Around the World
www.birding.com
- eNature: America's Wildlife Resource
<http://enature.com>
- *How to Start Birdwatching*
A 79-minute DVD course with Diane Porter.
- *Birding for Kids*
This DVD was produced in conjunction with the National Wildlife Federation.
- *Exploring Nature*
A 70-minute DVD of bird video and still photos. Includes tips on identifying birds and their songs.

