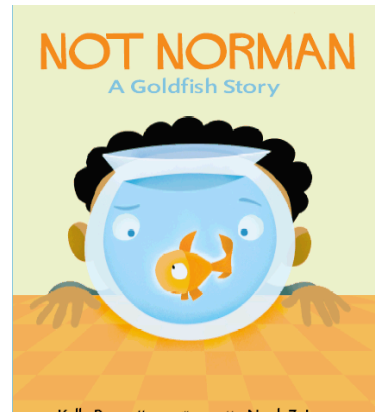


NOT NORMAN a Goldfish Story
by Kelly Bennett
illustrated by Noah Z. Jones



About the book:

Norman the goldfish wasn't exactly what this boy had in mind. He wanted a different kind of pet- one that could run and catch, or chase strings and climb trees, a soft furry pet to sleep on his bed at night. Not Norman. But when he tries to trade Norman he comes to realize he may be a better friend than he thought.



Kelly Bennett talks about NOT NORMAN:

Did you ever receive a gift that you didn't want? Well I have, although I'll never tell who gave it to me... (Hi, Mom!)

It's really tough because you appreciate the gift and the person who gave it to you, so you try to like it. Well, I thought to myself, what if the gift was something you couldn't just hide in the back of your closet and forget? What if that gift was alive?

So I set about writing a story about a boy who received a pet he didn't want. For the story to work, my character had to be unable to interact with this pet in any physical way. I eliminated every pet my character could pet, sleep with, exercise, tease or play with. That meant no dogs, cats, lizards, snakes, rodents or bugs.

What was left? Fish! Which was perfect because I love fish. Fish are funny, loveable and fun in spite of the fact that you can't really play with them. Just watching fish make me laugh, however, the moment I try to touch my fish they scatter. And if you want to feel unwanted, try swimming with your pet goldfish--they'll hide for hours after. The perfect pet for Not Norman.

Do I have a goldfish named Norman? Of course. He was named after my daughter Lexi's cat. In fact, I bought my first goldfish just to tease the cat. That Norman the goldfish lived in a glass percolator on top of my stove. He'd swim around and around and around the glass percolator stem and I'd watch and laugh. One day I came home and my cat was laying on top of the stove with his arm draped around my goldfish's coffee pot--that's when I decided needed a new home. So my son Max and I created a fish pond in our back yard. Max dug the pond. I built the waterfall and filter system. And about two weeks later Norman the Goldfish had a new home. Ever since then, I have had a goldfish pond. I have one now in my home in Jakarta.

This is an excerpt from an author interview on Cynsations. To read the complete interview visit: <http://cynthialeitichsmith.blogspot.com/2005/09/author-interview-kelly-bennett-on-not.html>

Before Reading:

If you could have any pet you wanted what would it be? What would you and your pet do together? What kind of care would your pet need?

Questions to consider:

1. Describe the kind of pet the boy would like to have.
2. Why does Norman need more water for his bowl?
3. Explain what happened during show and tell.
4. Why does the boy have to stay for extra music practice?
5. What happens during the night?
6. What's the best part of having a pet? What's the hardest part?
7. Which part of the book is your favorite? Why?
8. Have you ever changed your mind about something or someone? When? Why?
9. Norman listens when others don't. When you're scared who do you talk to?
10. What do pets do for us? What do we do for our pets?

More to think about--From a pet's eye-view:

1. If your pet, or imaginary pet, could speak to you, what would it say?
2. If your pet could play an instrument which would it be and why?
3. What is your pet's favorite song?
4. What if animals got to pick their humans, instead of the other way around?
- 5.

Projects Across the Curriculum:

Language Arts:

Describe your pet in at least five complete sentences. Try to use as many of your senses as you can in your work. For example: My pet smells like lavender shampoo. For a challenge: do not tell us what type of pet you have in your sentences. Also don't use any of these words in your description: bark, purr, or fur!

Write the story of how you came to own your pet (real or imaginary).

Show and Tell: Since most schools won't allow pets in for visitation, create posters about your pets. If you don't have one, can create an imaginary one (anybody want a dragon?) or highlight a family or friends pet that they love. Include such information as the pet's birthday, favorite food, height, weight, and favorite game. Introduce the pet posters to each other.

Art:

Study the shapes that make up Norman. Using orange construction paper cut out a Norman without drawing the shapes first. Don't forget to add his eye! Was this easy to do?

Use a paper plate to create Norman's fish bowl. Then, attach the Norman created above onto the plate and cover with wax paper, clear contact paper, or overhead film.

Given the three primary colors, experiment with mixing colors until the color of Norman is discovered. Paint a large paper and then practice cutting Norman (or another animal) out again.

Use the same shape techniques to create a paper-cut portrait of your own pet.

Music:

Sing this song (and then practice it in a round) to the tune "row, row, row your boat"

Love, love, love
your pets
love them every day.
Give them food, water and baths
then let them
run and play.

"Bom bom bom baaaa Ba ba boooo Bo bobo beee" is the sound the boy's tuba makes. Create sounds for the other instruments in an orchestra: trumpet, French horn, clarinet, flute, violin, drum.

Science:

Because fish need to be in a neutral environment, introduce the concept of acids and bases to students by having them test various familiar liquids with litmus strips. Some liquids you might test: bottled water, perfume, lemonade, soda, coffee and milk. Let students make a hypothesis about each liquid and then record their results.

Math: See graph on following page

