



A Standards-Aligned Educator Guide for Grades PK-3

ONE DARK BIRD

Age Range: Baby - 8 years
Grade Level: Preschool - 3
Hardcover: 32 pages
Publisher: Beach Lane Books
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About the book:

One dark bird is perched up high, with a view of the town and a taste of the sky. Then she's joined by two more, then three, then four. Before long, there are hundreds of starlings dancing across the sky—and avoiding a hunting hawk with one of the most spectacular tricks in the animal kingdom. Then, when night comes, the starlings begin to depart, until finally there is just one dark bird perched way up high, with a view of the town and a taste of the sky.

About the author - Liz Garton Scanlon:

Liz Garton Scanlon is the author of numerous beloved books for young people, including the highly-acclaimed, Caldecott-honored picture book *All the World*, illustrated by Marla Frazee, and her debut novel for middle grade readers, *The Great Good Summer*, as well *Another Way to Climb a Tree*, *In the Canyon*, *Bob, Not Bob* (co-authored with Audrey Vernick), and several others. Ms. Scanlon serves on the faculty of the Vermont College of Fine Arts, and is a frequent and popular presenter at schools, libraries and conferences. She lives with her family in Austin, Texas.



About the illustrator - Frann Preston-Gannon:

Frann Preston - Gannon is an award winning illustrator and designer whose work has been published around the world. She has been fortunate to work with an array of publishers including Pavillion, Nosy Crow, Walker, Lonely Planet, Templar, Chronical Books, Wren and Rook, Beach Lane, Henry Holt and Harper Collins USA. In April 2011 she became the first UK recipient of the 'Sendak Fellowship' and spent the autumn of that year living with and learning from the great master of illustration, Maurice Sendak, at his home in Connecticut.



Pre-Reading Discussion:

Consider the illustration on the front cover:

- Identify the animal featured in the center of the illustration.
- Describe the parts of the bird. Predict how the bird feels in this illustration.
- Notice the buildings at the base of the illustration. Explain why only the rooftops of the buildings are depicted there.
- The title of the book is *One Dark Bird*, yet there are a few birds illustrated in the upper part of the illustration. Why is this so?
- Open the front cover of the book. Examine the illustration featured on the endpapers. If the book is titled *One Dark Bird*, predict

- why the endpapers are filled with illustrations of dark birds. What is happening in the endpaper illustration?
- What do you think this book is going to be about? One bird or many, many birds?



Post-Reading Discussion:

*I dark bird perched way up high
a view of town
a taste of sky*

- The word *calm* means peaceful, motionless, and serene. Consider the illustration featuring one solitary starling perched on a branch. Identify the details that suggest that the bird is in calm state.
- List reasons why the starling might decide to fly away.
- Notice that, as the story proceeds, the starlings join together to fly in a pattern together. Why do you think this is so?

*a rush, a murmur
out turns in
a dot-to-dot
a corkscrew spin*

- The gathering of starlings flying together in a spectacular flocked formation is called *murmuration*, which is when a large group of birds all fly and change direction together, almost like a dance. Scientists offer several reasons for this extraordinary sight. Take a moment to view some videos of murmurations on the internet and then consider some of the scientific reasons for the

fascinating occurrence below.

- Murmurations confuse predators. Do you see how the swirling flock would make it difficult for an enemy to focus on just one bird?
- Starlings exchange information, such as finding good feeding areas, when flying in a murmuration. Discuss how flying in a group might help the starlings in this way.
- Starlings create murmurations in daytime to discover places to perch high in the treetops. Predict how this might help to keep them safe.

*Hundreds here
and then, good night
they fly away
with evening's light*

- Murmurations help starlings stay warm and, together, discover calm, safe places to roost for the night. Show how this behavior is demonstrated in the book.
- Explore ways that these tiny, little birds become powerful and strong when they join together as a community to care for one another.
- The word *belonging* means friendship, loyalty, and inclusion. Examine how the murmurations serve to be expression of friendship, loyalty, and inclusion. Consider ways that humans might learn lessons about belonging from the tiny starling.

Parts of the Starling



Directions: Using scissors, trim around the borders of the labels below. Identify parts of the starling on the left by placing each label next to the correct corresponding part of the bird.

beak

breast

wing

tail

leg

head

foot

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS & NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:

Reading Literature: RL.1, RL.2, RL.3, RL.4, RL.7, RL.10 Speaking & Listening: SL.1, SL.2, SL.4, SL.5
Mathematics: K.CC.A.2, B.4, B.4.A, B.4.B, B.4.C Next Generation Science Standards: K-LSI-1, 1-LSI-2, K-ESS3



Guide created by Debbie Gonzales, MFA



Numeric Sequencing

- **Preparation:** Print starling strips and numeral cards featured below on cardstock. Use scissors to trim around the borders of each.
- **Step One:** Sequence the starling strips from the smallest to the largest. Match each numeral card to the corresponding starling strip. Reference the smallest to largest numeric sequencing featured in the beginning of *One Dark Bird*. Discuss the effect of the starlings congregating to establish a murmuration.
- **Step Two:** Sequence the starling strips from the largest to the smallest. Match each numeral card to the corresponding starling strip. Reference the largest to smallest numeric sequencing featured in the end of *One Dark Bird*. Discuss the effect of the murmuration gradually deconstructing.

