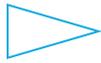


Grades pre-K-K-2



Your Teacher's Guide

from Blue Dot Kids Press



Wide Open Spaces, written by Robyn McGrath and illustrated by Polina Gortman
Pub Date May 12, 2026 | ISBN 9798989858842 | Ages 3–7



We intentionally leave this page blank so our guides can be printed like a book.

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Pre-Reading

Make Inferences.

- What do you think this book is about?
- The main character is holding a shell. What might this tell us about the story?
- Where do you think the story takes place based on the cover of the book?
- If your book has a book jacket, lift the book jacket to reveal the alternate cover. What clues does this give us about the story?
- Who is the author of the book? What do authors do?
- Who is the illustrator of the book? What do illustrators do?
- Do you think this story is fiction or nonfiction?

During Reading

- What do you think will happen next?
- Identify problems and solutions.
- What feelings do you notice from the characters? (For example, are they happy, bored, sad, sick, frustrated, annoyed?)

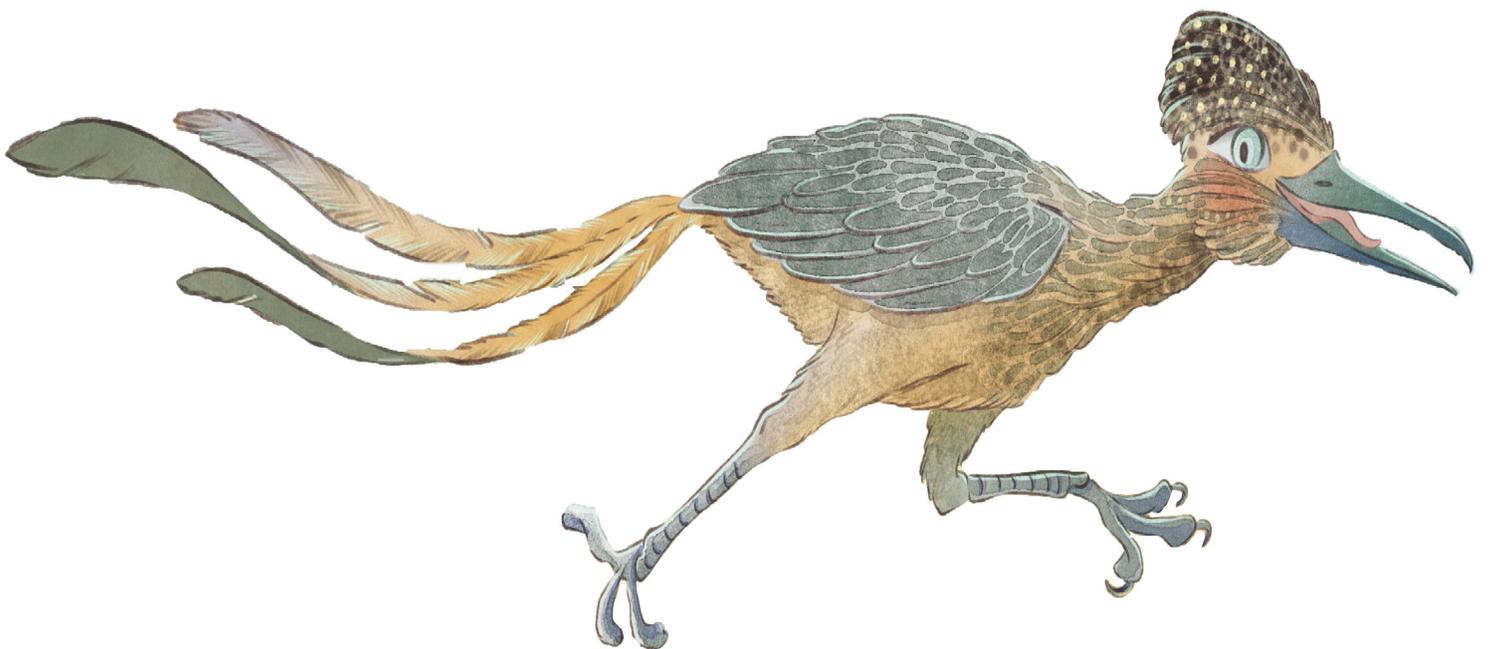


Post-Reading

- **Summary**
 - What was the main idea of the story?
 - Retell the story in 3–5 sentences with a beginning, middle, and end.
- **Comprehension**
 - Where did the character travel?
 - What were some challenges the characters encountered?
 - How were the problems/challenges solved?
- **Compare and Contrast**
 - What did you notice about what was happening in the car and outside of the car?

Activity

Create a story map with characters, settings, problems, and solutions.



Writing

Discussion

1. Think of a favorite place you recently visited or would like to visit.
2. What did you enjoy?
3. What were some of the challenges?

Activity

- Write a poem or story about that adventure.
- Add sensory details. What did you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel?

Feelings

The family experienced a variety of feelings during the drive.

Discussion

1. How did the main character feel during the trip?
2. What helped them feel calm or happy?
3. What do you do when you feel stressed or bored?
4. How does the setting affect the character's feelings?

Activity

- Create a "Feelings Timeline" showing how emotions changed during the story.

Geography

The character and her family visited different regions of the country.

Discussion

1. Identify the regions her family explored (desert, mountains, plains, rivers, coast).
2. Can you trace their journey on a map?
3. Identify landforms, climate, and plants/animals of the region.

Activity

Plan your own road trip:

- Where would you start and end?
- What landmarks would you visit?
- How long would the trip take?



Art and Drama

The main character uses animals to practice mindfulness.

Discussion

1. List the animals or insects from the story

Activity

- Partner up and act them out using movement and sounds.
- Draw the animals in their natural habitat.
- Draw an animal that represents freedom or calm to you.
- Make a mini mindfulness poster with a short positive message. Example: “Take 3 deep breaths,” “Be calm,” or “Breathe.” You might choose to include a simple visual that represents calm. Example: a cloud, a tree, or an emoji. Your poster is a gentle reminder to pause and find calm when you are feeling stressed.

Language

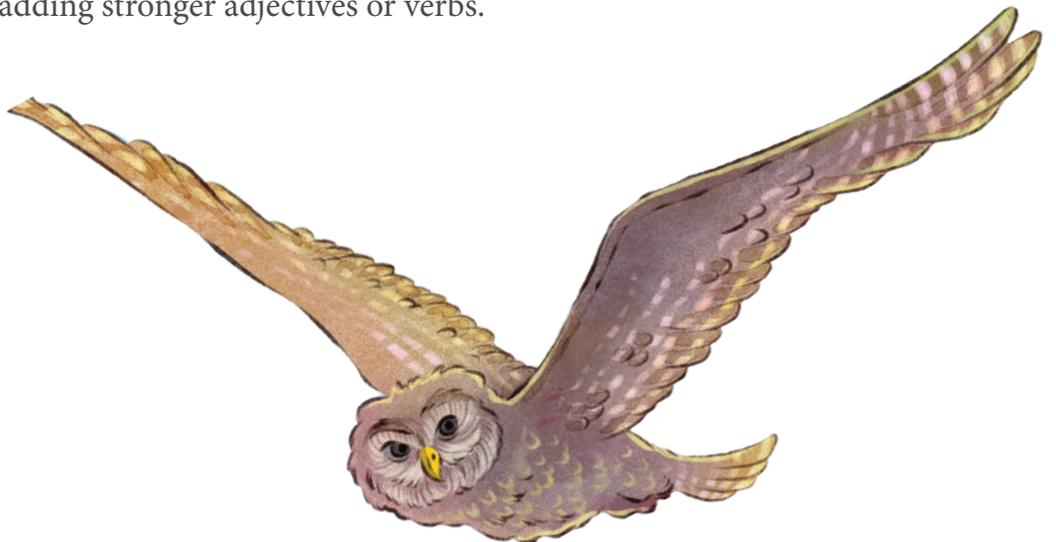
Discussion

1. Create a class word wall.
 - Find describing words (adjectives) in the text.
 - Find action words (verbs).
 - Find sensory words

 - Identify similes and metaphors in the text

Activity

- Play “Verb Charades” using actions from the story.
- Illustrate a figurative phrase
- Rewrite a sentence by adding stronger adjectives or verbs.



Mindfulness

The main character uses mindfulness to manage all the feelings during the ride.

Discussion

1. What is mindfulness?
2. How did the character use imagination and mindfulness to cope with stress?

Activity

Lizard Mindfulness – “Find Your Sunny Spot”

- Find a spot to lay flat on your back.
- Allow your legs to rest naturally and keep arms soft by your side.
- You may choose to close your eyes or leave them open.
- Imagine you are a lizard lying on a warm rock.
- Notice the weight of your body settling into the floor.
- Feel the ground under your head, shoulders, back, and legs.
- Picture the sun warming your face and spreading across your arms and legs.
- Take a breath in through your nose and notice your chest and belly rise.
- Exhale through your nose, feeling your body sink deeper into the floor.
- Repeat the breaths 4x.

Owl Breath – “Be Calm and Aware”

- Sit up straight against a wall, in a chair, or on the floor.
- Imagine that you are an owl perched on a branch at dusk.
- Close your eyes and become very still.
- Inhale slowly through your nose for 4 counts.
- Hold for 2 counts.
- Exhale softly through your mouth making a “whoooooo” sound.
- Repeat the breaths 4x.

Cloud Visualization – “Watch Your Thoughts”

- You may sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Imagine you are outside in the grass looking up at the blue sky.
- Watch as the clouds float by you. Notice if they are big or small. Do they move fast or slow?
- Each time a thought pops into your head, imagine placing it on the cloud and letting it float away.
- Watch as the thought moves across the sky.
- If another thought pops up, put it on a cloud too.
- Take big, slow breaths, filling up your belly, and let them go.
- Repeat the breaths 4x.



[Blue Dot Kids Press](#) inspires curiosity with beautifully crafted stories that connect us to each other and the planet we share. Written and illustrated by impassioned storytellers and artists from around the world, our books engage young readers' innate sense of wonder and empathy, connecting them to our global community and the pale blue dot we call home.

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