

# Curriculum Guide and Activity Kit

Aligns with Common Core State Standards



[www.dianedegroat.com](http://www.dianedegroat.com)

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*deGroat continues to show that she has a keen sense of classroom dynamics and the ability to connect with readers.*  
—SLJ

# April Fool! Watch Out at School!

Written and illustrated by Diane deGroat

Teacher friendly and ready to use, this guide aligns with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and is appropriate for kindergarten through grade three. It includes discussion questions, fun multidisciplinary activities, and printable sheets. It is a perfect tool to use for your Diane deGroat author study. Your students will be meaningfully engaged and ask for more books about their favorite opossum, Gilbert.

Guides for other Gilbert and Friends books can be found at [www.dianedegroat.com](http://www.dianedegroat.com).

## About this Book:

Watch out! It's April Fools' Day! Gilbert thinks he will be the one pulling all the pranks at school, but he soon finds out that his friends, his teacher, and even his mother have some tricks up their sleeves. Gilbert becomes discouraged when he learns that classmate Lewis has chosen Gilbert to be his April Fool target. By the end of the day Gilbert finally gets to beat Lewis at his own game. But watch out again—the author is playing practical jokes on the reader with tricks hidden in the illustrations!

## About the Author:

Diane deGroat didn't like to read when she was growing up. She only wanted to draw and paint. As a first grade student, she would often rush through her classwork to get to the painting corner of her classroom. It wasn't until many years later, when Diane wanted to become a writer, that she discovered her big mistake. In order to be a writer, one must first be a reader. She did become an avid reader, and eventually an author. Along with writing and illustrating the 19 books in the Gilbert series, she has illustrated over 130 books for other authors. A perfect day for Diane might include sleeping late, digging in her garden, riding her bike, and of course, writing and illustrating more books. She lives in Amherst, Massachusetts. Learn more about Diane deGroat and her books at [www.dianedegroat.com](http://www.dianedegroat.com).

This guide may be downloaded for home and classroom use. Not for resale.

Curriculum written by Kristy Graves, a first-grade teacher and a contributor to the Common Core curriculum for the Spencer-Brookfield School District in Spencer, Massachusetts.



### **Pre-reading Discussion Questions:**

Before reading this book, launch a discussion with students and invite them to engage in the story's theme.

- It's April Fools' Day at Gilbert's school. Look what is in his lunch! How do you think that got there?
- What do people do on April Fools' Day?
- What does it mean when you play a prank on someone?
- Has anyone ever played a prank on you? How did it make you feel?
- What kind of prank isn't funny?
- Think about the characters in Diane deGroat's books. Which character do you think would be the most likely to play tricks on classmates?
- Diane deGroat played some tricks on her readers when she drew the illustrations for this book. On each page there is something silly that will make us laugh. Let's see if you can find them as we read the story, *April Fool! Watch Out at School!*

### **Post-reading Discussion Questions:**

- What were some of the tricks that were played on Gilbert in this story? Who tricked Gilbert?
- What happened when Gilbert played kickball? Why didn't he listen to Philip when he told Gilbert to watch out?
- What was the trick that Gilbert played on Lewis? Do you think it was the best trick ever? Why?

RL1, RL2, RL3, RL4, RL5, RL7, SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4, SL6, L1, L5, L6

**Writing:** (grades K-1) RF1, RF3, RF4, W3, SL3, SL6, L1, L2

Discuss how Principal Pug was talking to Gilbert and Patty when they arrived at school on April Fools' Day. Reread that page to the class to show how he greeted the students by saying phrases such as, "Morning good," and "Day nice a have!" Ask the class what the principal was doing with his words. Allow the children to figure out that he was reversing his words to make silly sentences. Write out the principal's words on index cards and place them on a magnetic board or in a pocket chart. Take the index cards and move them around to show the students that switching words around can change the meaning of a sentence or make the sentence sound silly. This exercise will help students see that word order (syntax) is indeed important in a sentence.

Model writing some simple sentences on index cards or sentence strips. Some examples could be:

*The cat likes to sleep in the sun.*

*The apple has a worm.*

*I have a big red car.*

*My mom plays the drums.*

*The boy plays with the blocks.*

Read the first sentence with the students encouraging them to chime in and read along. Next, move the words around to make a silly sentence such as: *sun the sleep in The likes to cat.*

Ask a student to rearrange the words in the sentence again so that it makes sense. Discuss how the capital letter is a clue that the word will come first in the sentence and the end mark (period, question mark, exclamation point) will be found at the end of the sentence. Repeat these steps for a few other sentences playing with word order and rearranging the words to make sense again.

Next, give each student one long sentence strip or a series of index cards. Ask each child to write a simple sentence with one word on each card. If the child is using a sentence strip have her write the sentence and cut it apart in between words. Have each child give the cut up sentence (or shuffled words on index cards) to a partner and ask the partner to arrange the words so the sentence makes sense. As an extension, the children can copy the sentence onto a piece of paper and illustrate.

**Writing:** (grades 2-3) RF3, RF4, W3, SL2, SL4, SL5, L1, L2, L3

Reread the page in the story where Gilbert was asked to read out loud. Talk about Mrs. Byrd's lesson on punctuation marks and how she asked the students to use onomatopoeia words within the story to demonstrate an understanding of punctuation marks. When Gilbert read aloud he was asked to say, 'POP,' at a period, 'PHFFT,' at quotation marks, 'HUH?' at a question mark, and 'BOING,' at an exclamation mark.

Ask students to practice using Mrs. Byrd's technique with a partner. Each pair of students will choose a book from the classroom library. They will take turns partner reading to one another, utilizing the silly words as they encounter each punctuation mark.

Tell students that they are now going to be the authors of their own piece of fiction. Provide some guidelines for the students for their writing depending on the level of the students. For example, the class may be required to write a paragraph about two characters having a conversation. The finished product must include at least one of all punctuation marks mentioned above such as periods, quotation marks, question marks, and exclamation points. When they are finished with their pieces, the students will present their stories. They will read aloud to the class in an Authors' Circle. Of course when they read they will utilize the onomatopoeias provided by Mrs. Byrd. What a silly way to share creative stories!



**Math:** (grades K-I) 1.OA1, 1.OA5, 1.OA7, 1.OA8

Ask the class if they think other countries celebrate April Fools' Day. They will be surprised to find that in France the day is called "Poisson d'Avril" or April Fish. Children in France tape a picture of a paper fish on someone's back. When the prank is discovered, they shout "*Poisson d'Avril!*" For this activity the students will have fun using the fish to learn about numbers. This activity would be best for a small group of students or could be used at a learning center with a teacher. Gather the children together in a small group, about 4-8 children.

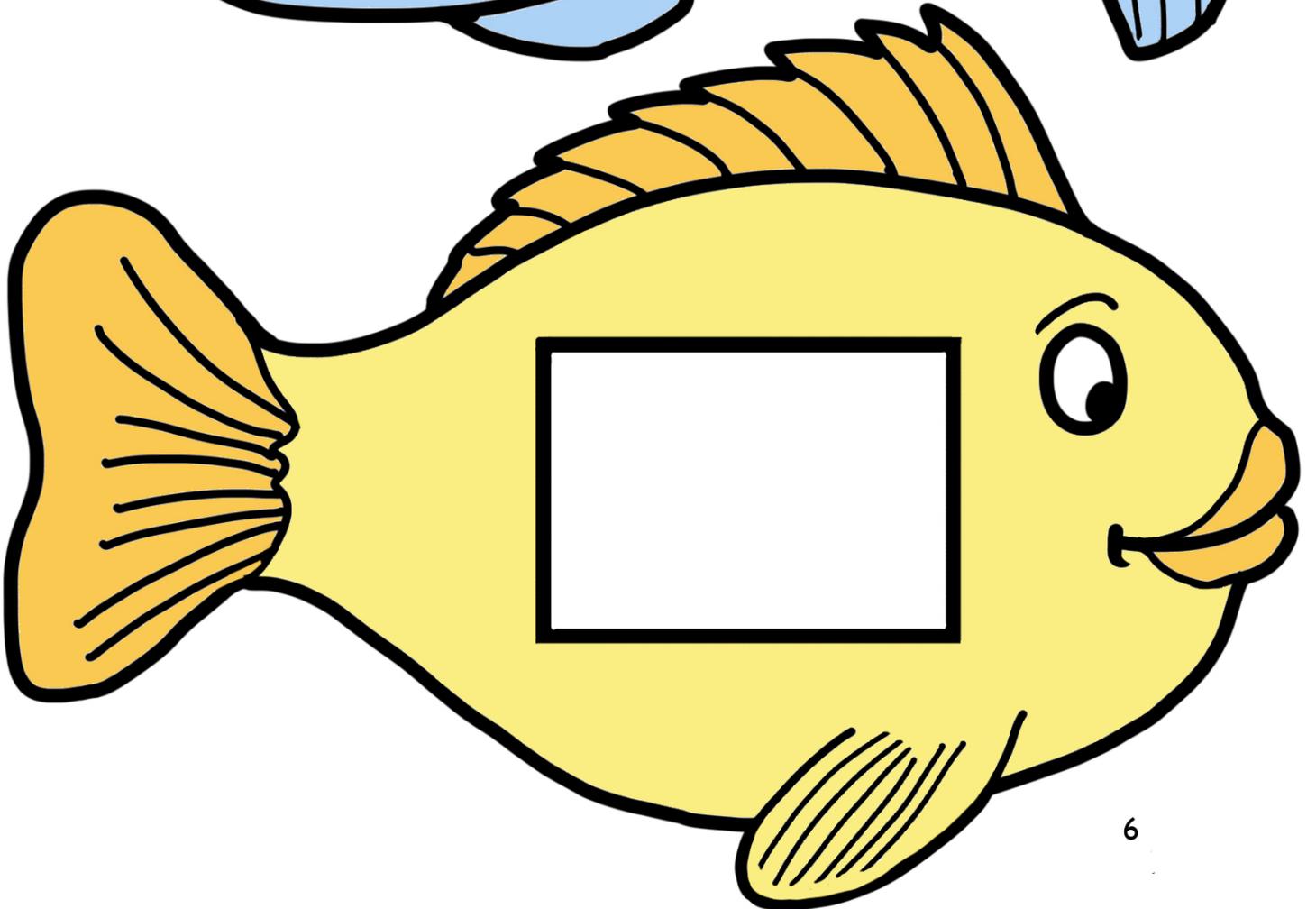
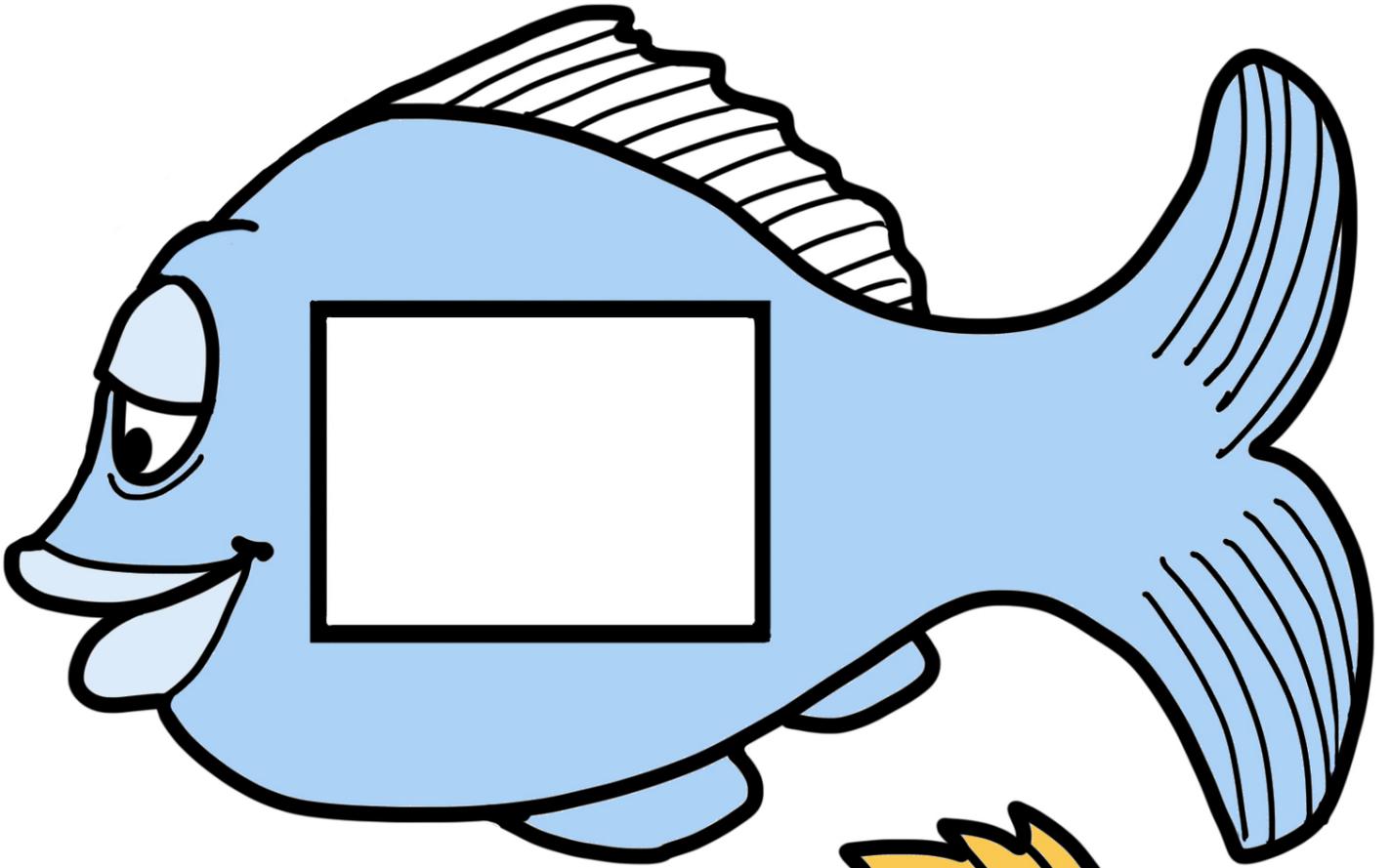
Before the activity begins, prepare a pile of paper fish with a number on each one. You may choose to use the templates on page 6, or you may cut simple fish shapes from construction paper. The activity would work well with 10 fish, but the teacher can decide what fits best with the group. Ten fish would have a number 1-10 written on each. If the group is in need of a challenge this activity could be done with higher numbers such as double-digit numbers.

The teacher will select one child to pick out a fish randomly. This child will place the fish on someone's back sitting in the group. The fish can be fastened to a classmate by using tape, or the fish can be made of colored sticky paper. The teacher could even carefully safety pin the fish to the child's back.

Next, the child with the fish on his back will stand up and turn around showing the fish to the group. The child will not know what number is on his back, and the other children should not tell.

The children in the group will have a piece of paper in front of them. Every child, except the one standing up wearing the fish, will write or draw one way to represent that number. For example, a child may show the number 7 by writing  $6+1$  or draw 3 dots and 4 dots. A child may show the number 10 by drawing a base ten block, writing  $5+5$  or  $11-1$ , or even by drawing a dime.

When everyone has written something down, the child turns around and listens as the group reads off their ideas. The child with the fish on his back will need to guess what number was on his back. The game is repeated so that each child has a turn to wear a fish and guess.



**Math:** (grades 2-3) 2.OA1, 2.NBT5

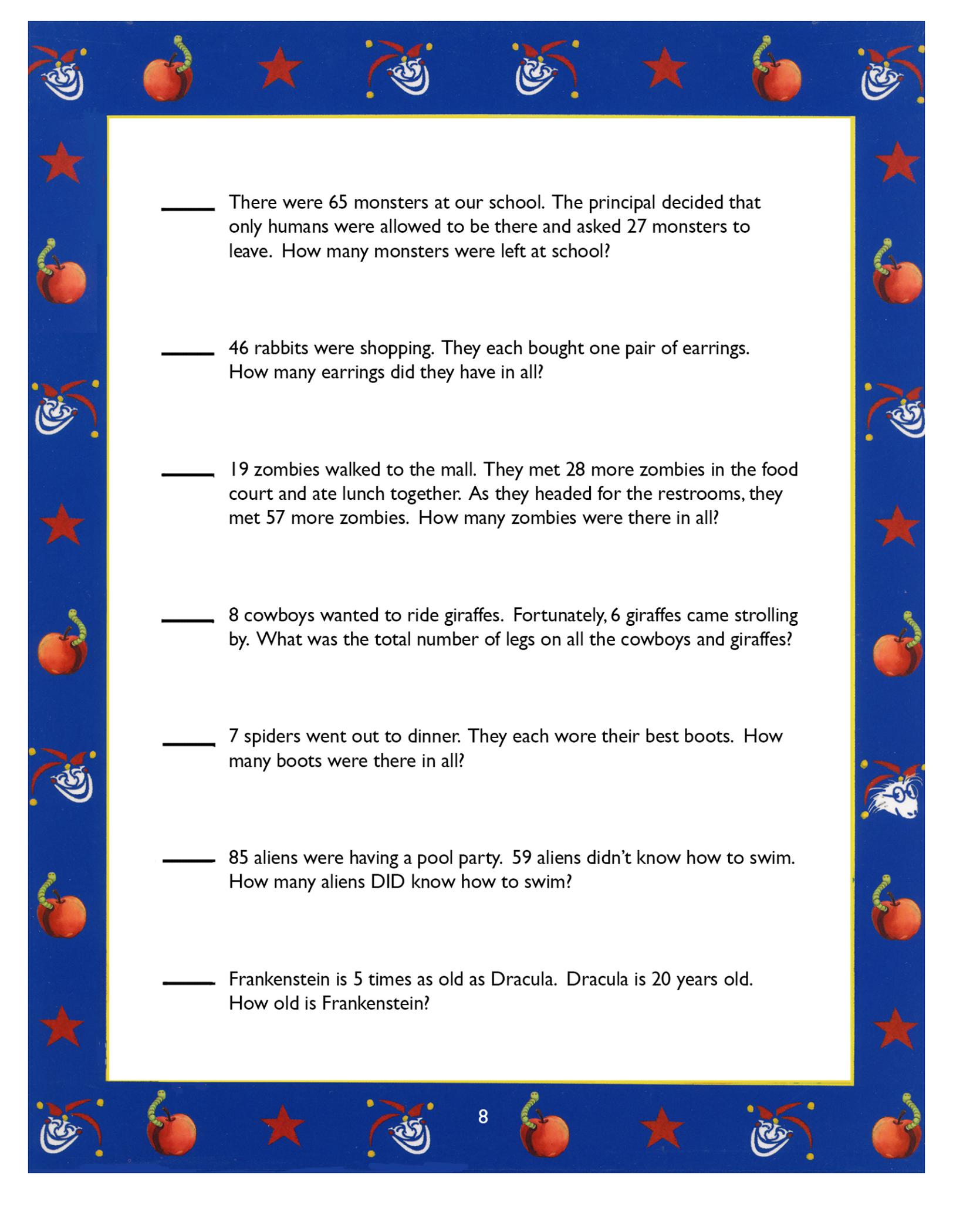
April Fools' Day is filled with fun and jokes. For this math activity encourage children to be creative and silly. Prepare a few word problems that children will need to solve as a class, or use the graphic on page 8. Write them out on chart paper or have a few slides prepared ahead of time on an interactive white board.

Solve a few of these math problems with the students as a group. Talk about key words in mathematics. For example, **in all** would mean the student would add, whereas **are left** would mean the student would subtract. Remind children that there are patterns in math, such as counting by 2's or 5's. Model solving these problems and ask students to talk about their own method of solving a problem. Emphasize that there are many ways in which to tackle a math word problem. Show students that most problems can be solved with a drawing. Above all, let children know that they can keep trying to solve a math problem even if it is challenging. As a follow up activity allow students to write their own silly word problem for a partner to solve.

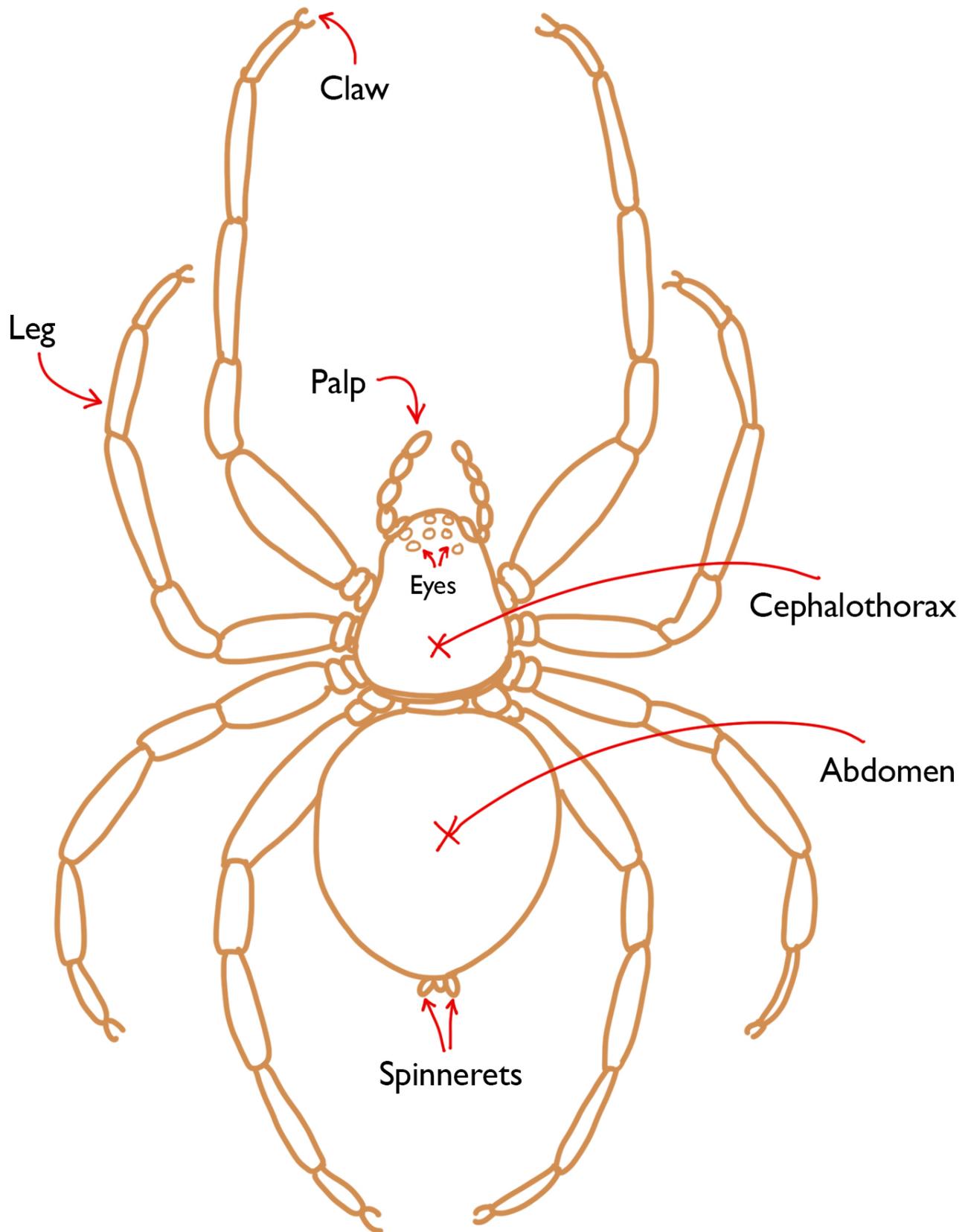
**Science:** (grades K-I) RI1, RI2, RI4, RI6, RI7, SL1, SL2, SL3, SL5, SL6

In the book, Lewis tried to frighten Gilbert with a fake spider on his desk. Using a rubber spider is a classic joke on April Fools' Day. Create a KWL graphic about spiders on large chart paper. **K:** Ask children what they *know* about spiders. Record answers. **W:** Ask children what they *want* to know about spiders. Record answers. Read some non-fiction books about spiders. Some suggestions might be *Spiders* by Gail Gibbons, *National Geographic Readers: Spiders* by Laura Marsh, *Spiders* by Sian Smith, and *Insect or Spider?* by Melissa Stewart. The website <http://www.kidzone.ws> is another good resource for facts. **L:** Ask children what they *learned* about spiders.

Tell students that they are going to use what they learned about spiders to create their own realistic spider model out of clay. Give each child a paper plate and a lump of clay. Ask the students how many body parts their spiders should have. Demonstrate making a spider with 2 body parts. To challenge students ask them to label the two main body parts on the paper plate, or make labels attached to toothpicks. Write the words **cephalothorax** (the spider's front section) and **abdomen** (the back section) on the board for students to copy. Allow children to finish constructing their own spiders, adding legs and other parts as per the diagram on page 9. Be sure to review the number of legs on a spider (8) versus on an insect (6).

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- \_\_\_\_\_ There were 65 monsters at our school. The principal decided that only humans were allowed to be there and asked 27 monsters to leave. How many monsters were left at school?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 46 rabbits were shopping. They each bought one pair of earrings. How many earrings did they have in all?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19 zombies walked to the mall. They met 28 more zombies in the food court and ate lunch together. As they headed for the restrooms, they met 57 more zombies. How many zombies were there in all?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8 cowboys wanted to ride giraffes. Fortunately, 6 giraffes came strolling by. What was the total number of legs on all the cowboys and giraffes?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7 spiders went out to dinner. They each wore their best boots. How many boots were there in all?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 85 aliens were having a pool party. 59 aliens didn't know how to swim. How many aliens DID know how to swim?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Frankenstein is 5 times as old as Dracula. Dracula is 20 years old. How old is Frankenstein?

# PARTS of a SPIDER

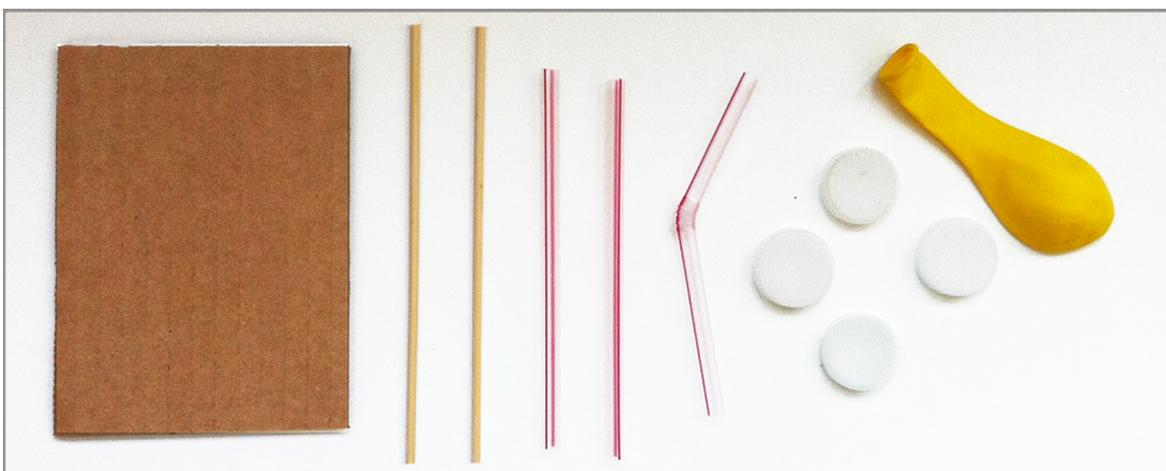


**Science:** (grades 2-3) SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4, L1

Talk to the children about the whoopee cushion that Lewis brought to school and how he tricked Gilbert. Tell the students about the history of the whoopee cushion. Some think the whoopee cushion originated in medieval times with jesters creating them to make people laugh. The rubber whoopee cushion was first manufactured in Canada in the 1930s. Since then the toy has changed from green to pink and no longer has a wooden mouthpiece, but it still makes people laugh! If possible, bring a whoopee cushion to class. Discuss how it makes its sound. Allow the students to figure out that when air rushes out of the bag, it forces the flaps to slap together creating a funny sound. Discuss the many practical functions of air, rather than its humorous uses. For example, activities such as kite flying, inflating tires, blowing up balloons, sailing, running windmills, and spreading seeds all require moving air, or wind. Ask students if they think it is possible to construct a car powered by the air forced out of a balloon.

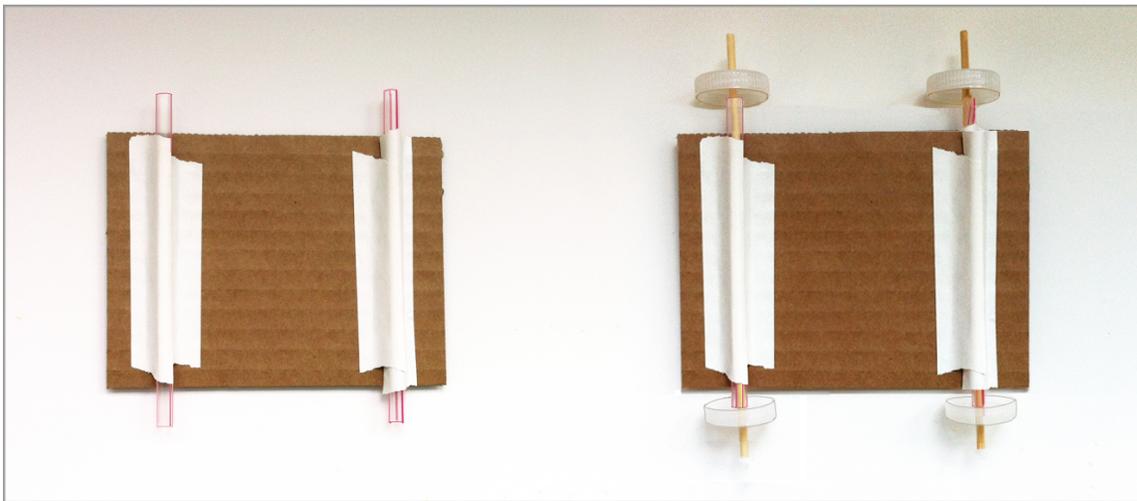
Show the students the following materials:

- 1 piece of cardboard 4 inches x 6 inches
- 1 round balloon (not inflated)
- 2 wooden skewers, cut to about 6 ½ inches long
- 2 straight straws, cut to 5 inches
- 1 bendable straw, cut in half
- 4 bottle tops (plastic soda caps or water bottle caps)
- scissors
- 1 rubber band
- tape
- hammer and nail



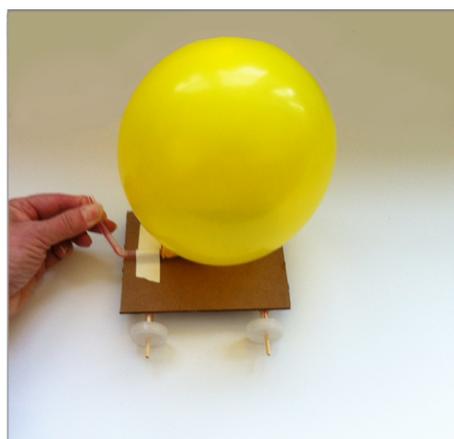
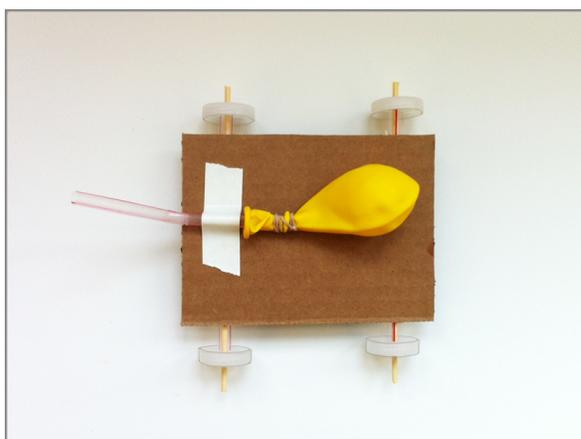
Discuss how these materials could possibly be put together to make a car. What would the wheels be made of? What is the use of the straws? How would the balloon be powering the car? Let the children talk about how this vehicle could be assembled. Then, guide the students in the following process asking for volunteers along the way.

1. Take the piece of cardboard and place the 2 straight straws near the short ends. Tape them down. Some of the straw will be hanging over the sides.
2. Take each bottle cap and make a small hole in the center of each one using a nail and a hammer.
3. Place a wooden skewer through the hole in one of the caps. Caution: wooden skewers are pointy and dangerous. Children should not be able to assist during these steps.
4. Put the skewer through the straw and then place another bottle cap onto the opposite end, creating an axle with 2 wheels.
5. Repeat steps 2-4 on the other end of the cardboard using the remaining wheels and skewer.



6. Use the elastic to secure the balloon onto one end of the bendable straw. You should be able to blow up the balloon without it coming apart from the straw.

7. Tape the straw to the top of the car so that the balloon is in the middle of the cardboard. The bendable end of the straw should be overhanging the cardboard so you will be able to blow into it.
8. Once you blow up the balloon, be sure to pinch the straw so that the air can't come out until the car is ready to roll.



Before testing the car, ask students to predict how far the car will travel. Give students a piece of masking tape and ask each child to write his or her name on it. Allow students to place their tape on the floor to show where they believe the car will come to a halt. Begin the test and record answers.

After the first race ask the children some questions about how the car worked. Discuss how the balloon worked to power the car. Talk about how it could have been designed differently.

If possible, have more materials available so that the children can think of some variations on the model. Perhaps they can have a race of two different types of cars. Using a different sized balloon or a different base other than the cardboard may have an affect on the way the car races.



**Art:** (grades K-1) 1.GA1

Ask children if they know what a jester is and what was the purpose of a jester in medieval times. Historically, jesters were entertainers that would amuse the people of the court with storytelling, acrobatics, juggling, and music. Discuss what jesters would have worn to make people laugh, such as brightly colored clothes. One such article of clothing would have been the jester's hat. Tell the children that they will be making their own colorful jester hat.

Give each child 6 construction paper triangles of various colors to cut out. Each triangle will measure approximately 4 inches at each base and 10 inches long to the point.

Then, give each child a band of construction paper about 3 inches in width and 2 to 3 feet long. This will be the headband part of the hat. Have the child put a line of glue on the bottom of each triangle and stick it to the top of the flat headband so that the 6 triangles are pointing up like a crown. Reinforcing the glue with clear Scotch tape might be a good idea so the points don't fall off.

Then, have each child glue a circle shape at the end of each triangle to look like bells or decorations hanging off the end of each point. This can be construction paper, golden shiny sticky paper, or foam shapes. Children can also add decorations to the band. Next, fold down the triangles so that they flop down over the headband. Finally, measure each child for the appropriate headband size and staple the ends together to complete the jester hat.



**Art:** (grades 2-3) SL1, SL2, SL3

After reading the story, go back through the illustrations and have the children find all the tricks. Explain to the children that sometimes illustrators will play tricks on the reader (especially in an April Fools' Day story) or give clues in the pictures as to what will happen next. Tell the children that they are going to create their own scene with tricks too.

Show the class a large idea web and model the following process aloud. Ask them to think of a place or a scene that might not be so funny—something ordinary that you might see every day. Encourage children to give ideas and write these ideas on the large web in front of the class. Some examples might be a birthday party, a restaurant, a classroom, or a beach. Let's say, for example, the students selected a library scene. Talk about what would be included in that scene such as a librarian, shelves filled with books, tables, people reading, etc.

Then, ask the children to think of some things that would be out of the ordinary that they could add to this scene. (After all, April Fools' Day is about making people laugh!) Ask the students to think of things they would never see in a library. Write these crazy ideas on the second idea web making sure all answers are appropriate.

Next, ask the students to create their own April Fool scenes on a piece of drawing paper. They should choose an ordinary place and decide what silly objects to put into it. Encourage the children to be clever in where they place their objects in the picture—they shouldn't make them too obvious to the viewer. Refer back to the book to see how the illustrator accomplished this.

As an extension, students can make a list of the silly things in the picture for a partner to find.



## Author's Note

Since this was an April Fools' Day book, it was my chance to fool the reader with tricks in the art—adding things that don't belong, using wrong colors, and altering objects in a funny way. I'm so clever, I told myself. This potential fun is suggested on the flap copy, and all the tricks are listed on the copyright page. Still, some readers didn't know about the tricks. Not everyone reads flap copy, I learned. And often the paper dust jacket is removed for library processing before the patron even sees it. As a result, some readers had no clue that it was an interactive book. But didn't they wonder what the alien was doing in the cafeteria? Or what about the (literal) elephant in the art room? So the concept flopped big time. I guess the joke was on me!

When writing this book, I had to bear in mind that many children might try to duplicate the pranks mentioned, so I had to carefully weigh the impact of my words. While the rubber-band-on-the-faucet-spray may be hilarious to some, it might be seen as horrific to others. Hot pepper on a sandwich could be more painful than funny. And so many others tricks have that ewwww factor that I'd rather not be remembered for. So hopefully Gilbert and his friends execute tricks that are silly, clever, and ultimately the best tricks ever, without disgracing my good name. My favorite scene is the phonetic pronunciation forced upon Gilbert by Mrs. Byrd. I admit it was inspired by the infamous Victor Borge skits from 1950's TV. Google it and enjoy!

—Diane deGroat

P.S.—Take a close look at the George Washington painting. It's me.

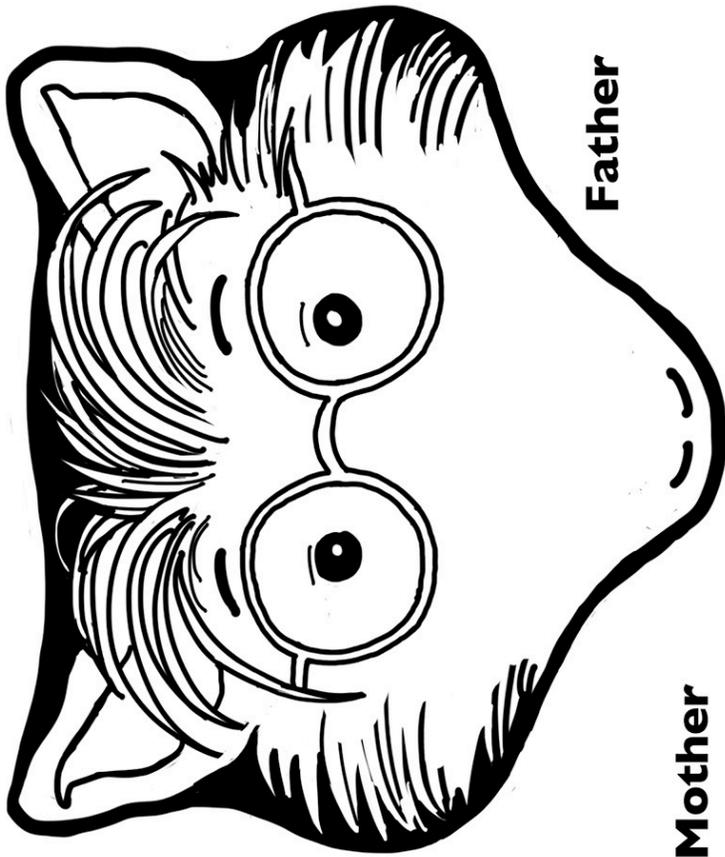


# Make a silly face!

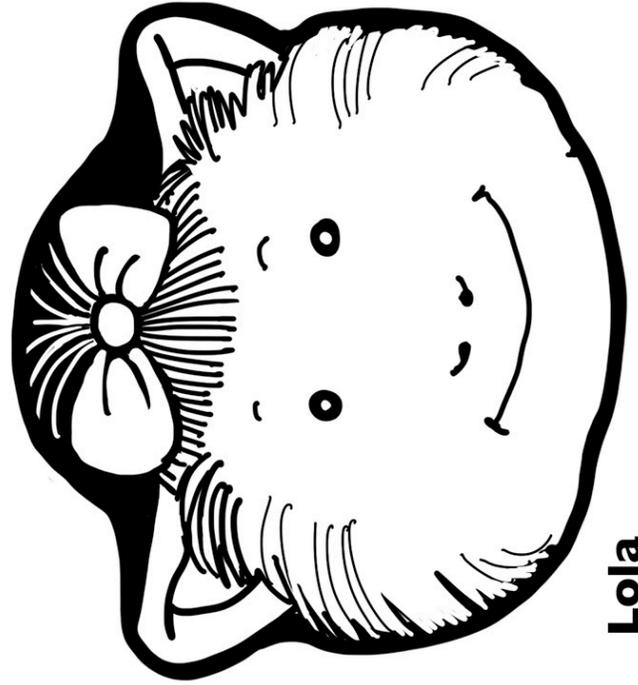


1. Print this page onto cardstock.
2. Cut out the eyeholes and the small blue holes.
3. Tie a string or ribbon to the small holes.
4. Tie the silly face onto a silly person.

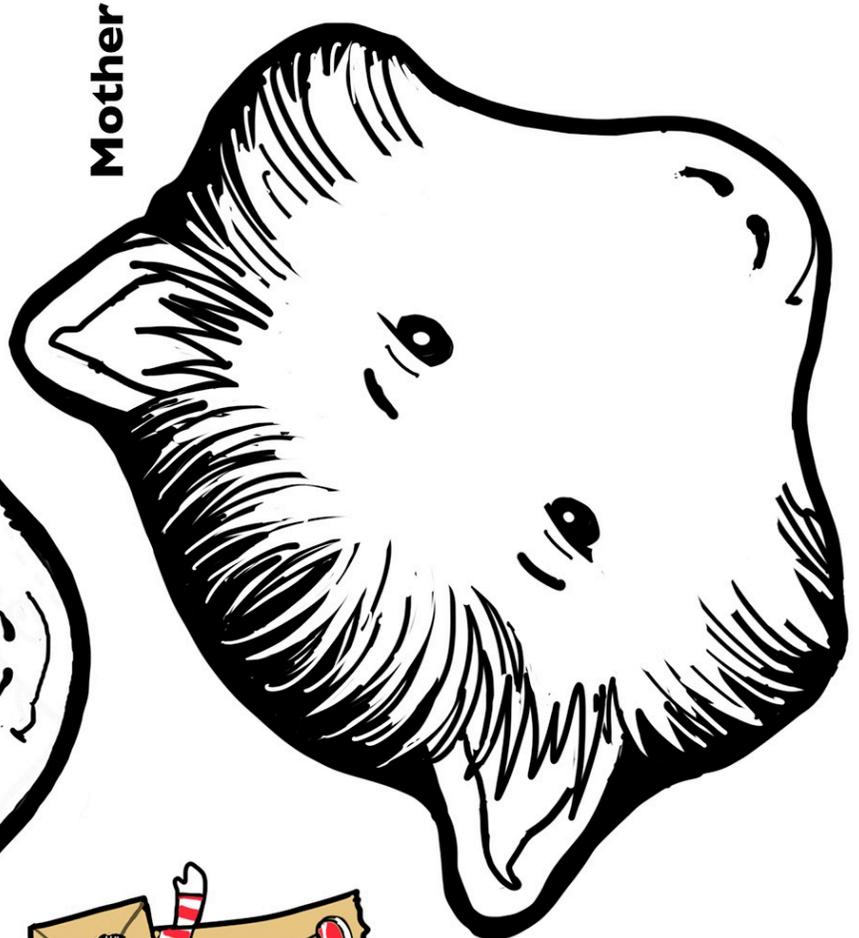




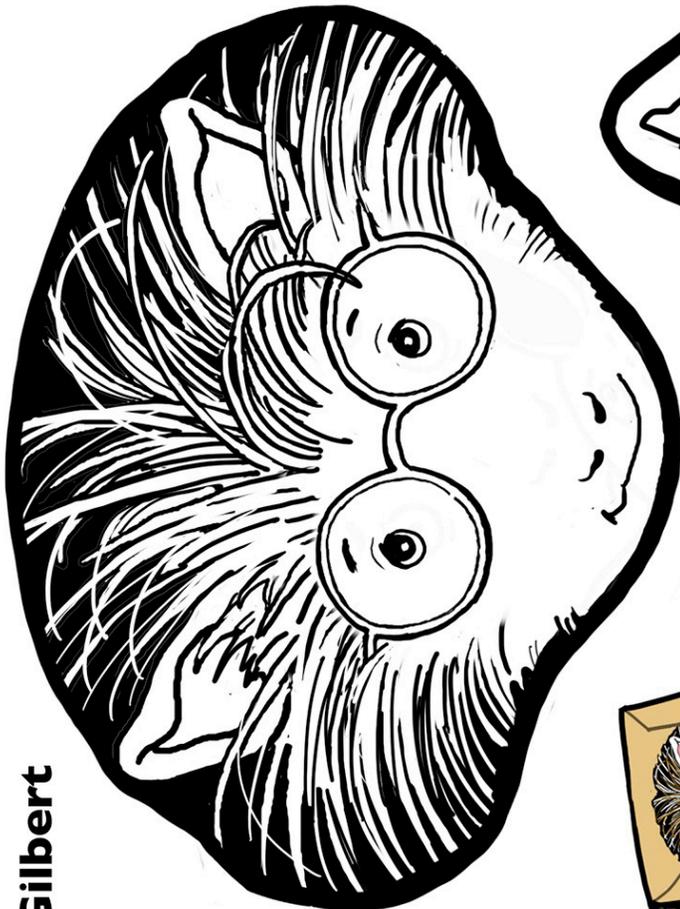
Father



Lola



Mother



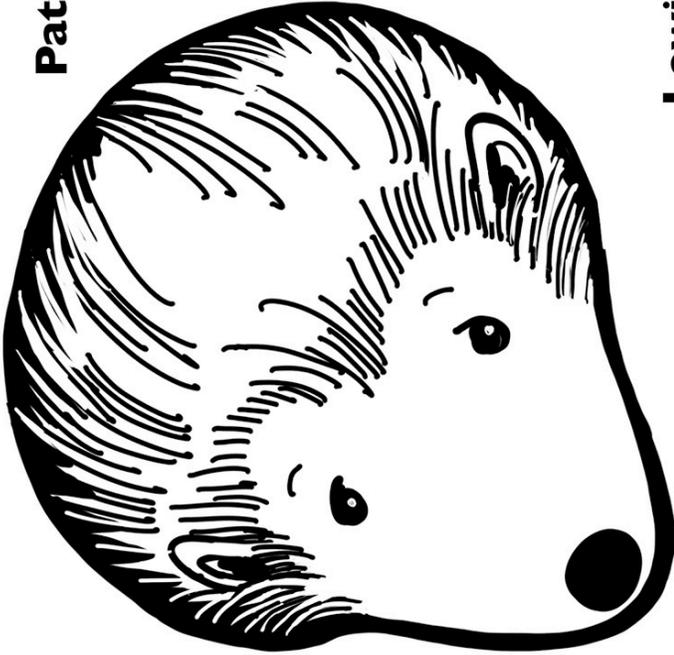
Gilbert



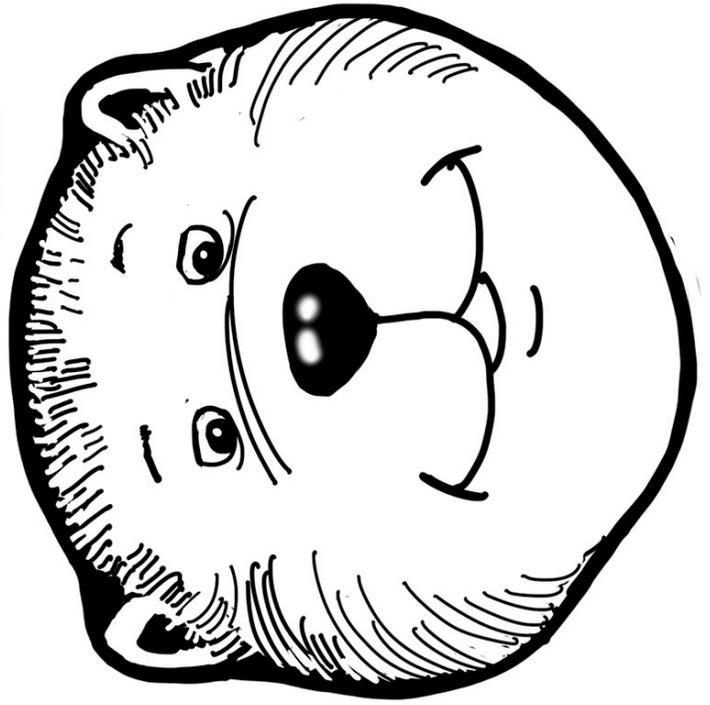
**PAPER BAG PUPPETS**

Cut out a face and glue it to the bottom of a lunch bag. Draw a body. Optional: add arms.

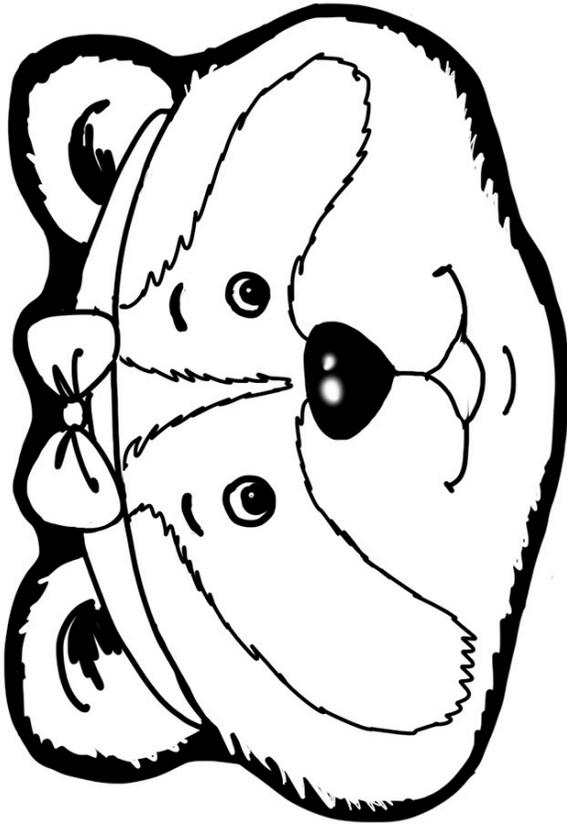
Patty



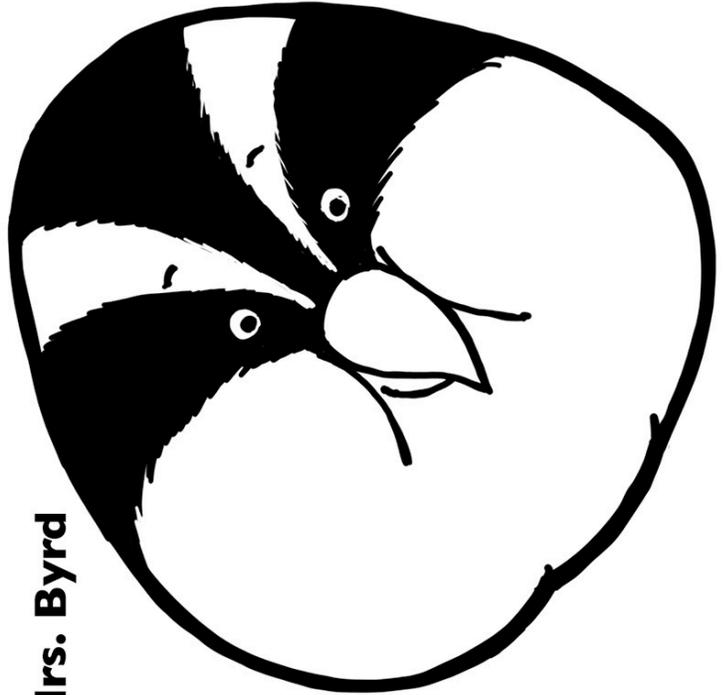
Lewis



Margaret



Mrs. Byrd



**Paper Bag Puppets**

Cut out a face and glue to the bottom of a lunch bag. Draw on a body, Optional: glue arms.