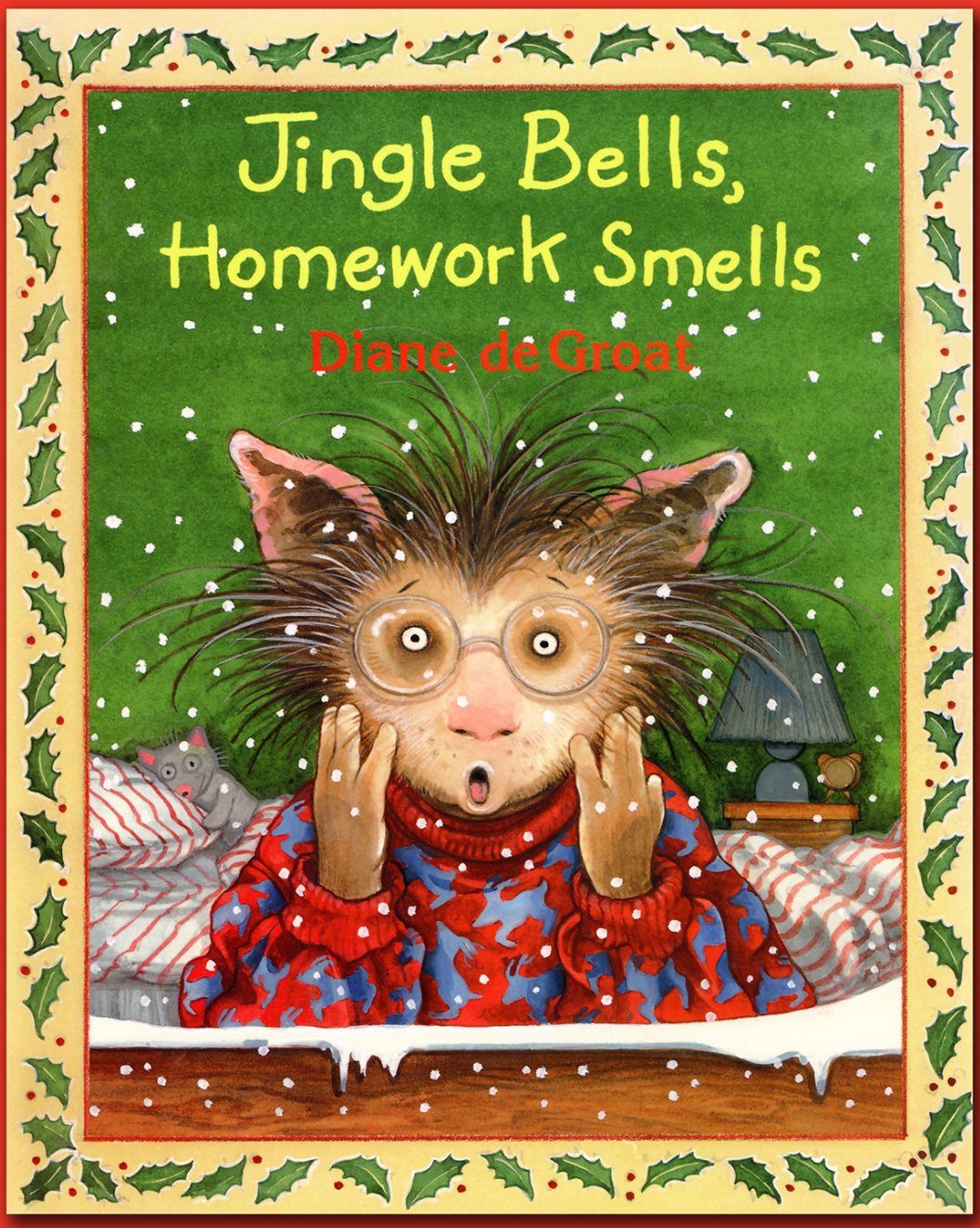
# Curriculum Guide and Activity Kit

## Aligns with Common Core State Standards

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Children old enough to have homework will see themselves in Gilbert as he procrastinates.
—*Booklist*

# Jingle Bells, Homework Smells

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.

## About this Book:

It's almost Christmas and Gilbert can't seem to concentrate on his school work. He learns just how hectic the holiday season can be when Mrs. Byrd assigns homework over a busy weekend. There are so many things to do: ice skating, baking cookies, trimming a tree, and watching holiday specials on TV. Will Gilbert be able to complete his assignment by Monday when there are so many distractions? This story teaches us all a lesson about procrastination while celebrating the magic of the holiday season.

## 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 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.

*Jingle Bells, Homework Smells* has won the following awards:
IRA/CBC Children's Choice, Delaware Diamonds Award


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.

- Have you ever heard the word *procrastinate*? What does it mean?
- Have you ever put something off when you should have done it earlier? Tell about it. How did it make you feel?
- The title of this book is *Jingle Bells, Homework Smells*. Can you guess what it will be about?
- Let's take a picture walk and predict what you think this story will be about. Are any of the characters in this book familiar to you?

## Post-reading Discussion Questions:

- What was the problem in this story?
- What were the fun activities that Gilbert did at home instead of his homework?
- Why did Gilbert's stomach hurt when he woke up on Monday morning?
- Why did his mother send him to school?
- Was Gilbert actually sick in this story?
- What was Gilbert's creative way to try to complete his homework before school started?
- Why did Mrs. Byrd say she was surprised when Gilbert didn't pass in his homework? Why wasn't she surprised when Lewis didn't pass in his homework?
- How did Gilbert and Lewis feel when they earned half a smiley face sticker?
- Was there a way that Gilbert could have finished his homework and also enjoyed his wintery weekend?
- Did Gilbert learn a lesson in this story? Can you make a text-to-self connection between your life and Gilbert's situation?

RL1, RL2, RL3, RL5, RL6, RL7, SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4, SL6, L1, L6

# Activities

**Writing:** (grades K-1) W1, SL1, SL5, L1, L2

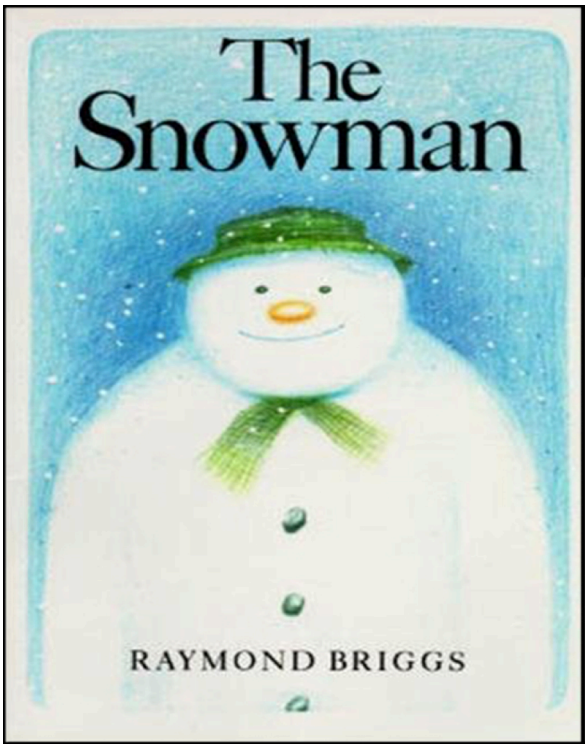
Remind the students of the homework assignment that Mrs. Byrd gave to Gilbert and his friends in the story. (She asked the children to draw a picture of a character from their favorite book.) Brainstorm a list of book characters with the class. Write all ideas on chart paper and pull out any books from the classroom library that will add to students' understanding. Many children will need visual prompting, especially those who have not had much experience with literacy. Including well known literature will tap into students' prior knowledge. For example, when young children see the bear from *Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?* most students will recognize the book and recall having the story read aloud.

Ask the students to design an original cover of a book that includes their favorite literary character. One approach would be to have the character in a scenario that may be silly. For example, a student might draw the Very Hungry Caterpillar making a pizza or Clifford the Big Red Dog on a trip to the moon. Using the graphic on page 4, the children will complete the sentence starter by using their character's name in their book title. Example: Clifford Goes to the Moon.

This unique collection of book jackets will make a creative display for an open house at school or a bulletin board that celebrates our favorite literary characters.

My book title is

**Writing:** (grades 2-3) W3, W5, L1, L2, L3



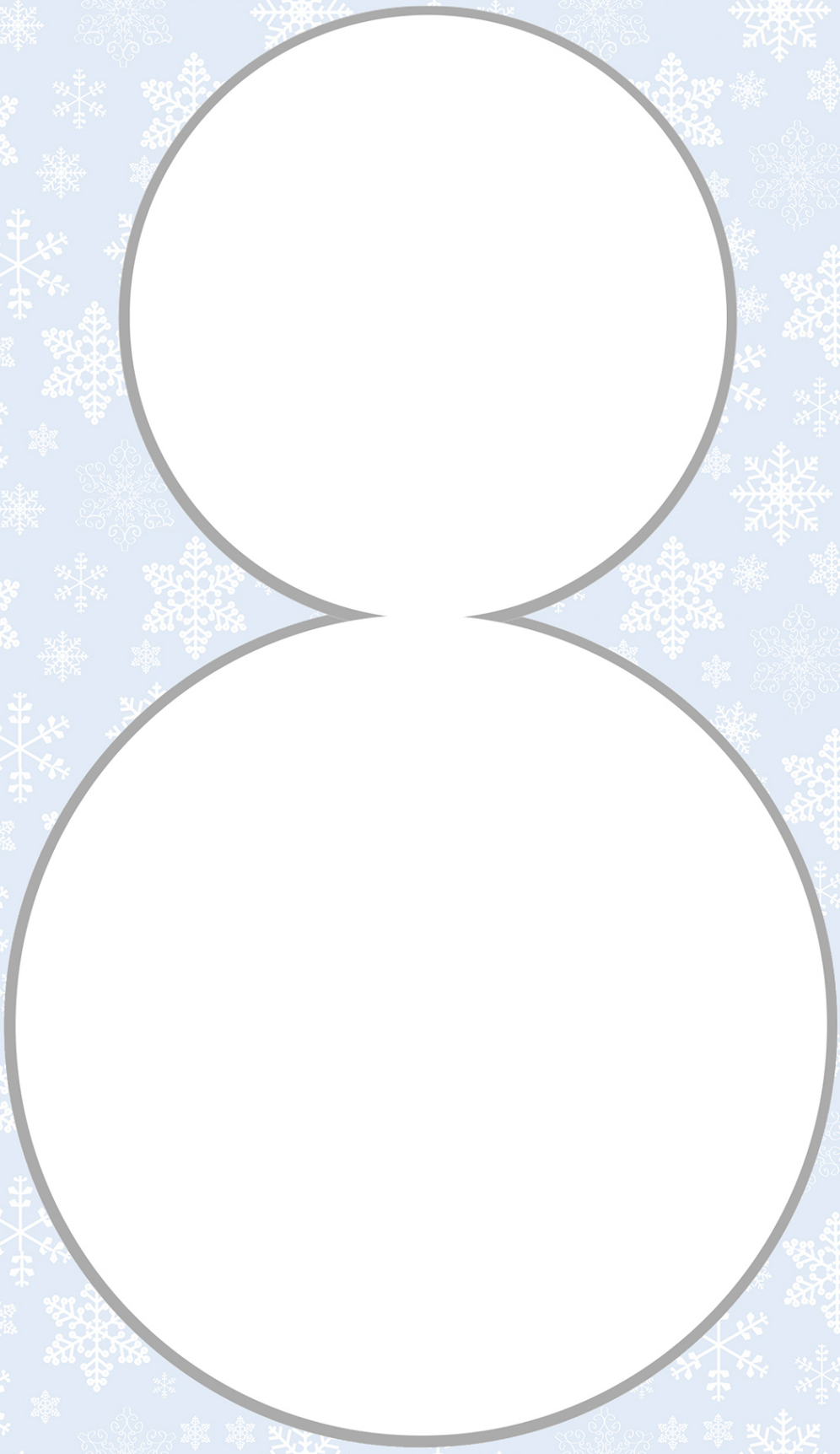

Ask the children to recall what book Mrs. Byrd was reading to Gilbert's class. Many children will be familiar with *The Snowman* story by Raymond Briggs. Show the beautiful book to the class and, if possible, allow the students to watch the movie.

In the art activity for grades 2-3 the students will follow directions to make a snowman out of a sock. As a follow-up writing assignment, invite the students to imagine that these snowmen came to life just as in Raymond Briggs' story. Ask each child to write creatively about a day with his or her snowman.

Have each student give his or her snowman a name, describe what the snowman looks like, create the setting of the story, and tell three things they did together on their adventure.

**Math:** (grades K-1) 1.G

Pattern blocks are a fun way for children to create objects using geometry. This activity allows children to decorate a snowman just like Gilbert did in the story, only using shapes. Obtain several sets of pattern blocks for children to share. Review the included shapes in the set: red trapezoids, orange squares, green triangles, yellow hexagons, blue rhombuses, and thin tan rhombuses. Distribute the snowman template found on page 6. Allow students to add pattern blocks to the page to make eyes, hands, hats, etc. Children can trace the blocks and then remove them, leaving the shape behind. While students are working on this activity, walk around and talk to them about what blocks they are using. Informally assess whether or not children are able to identify each geometric shape. When children are finished with their snowmen, distribute the graphic on page 7 and ask each child to record how many of each shape they used.



# I used these pattern blocks:

_____ red trapezoids 

_____ orange squares 

_____ green triangles 

_____ yellow hexagons 

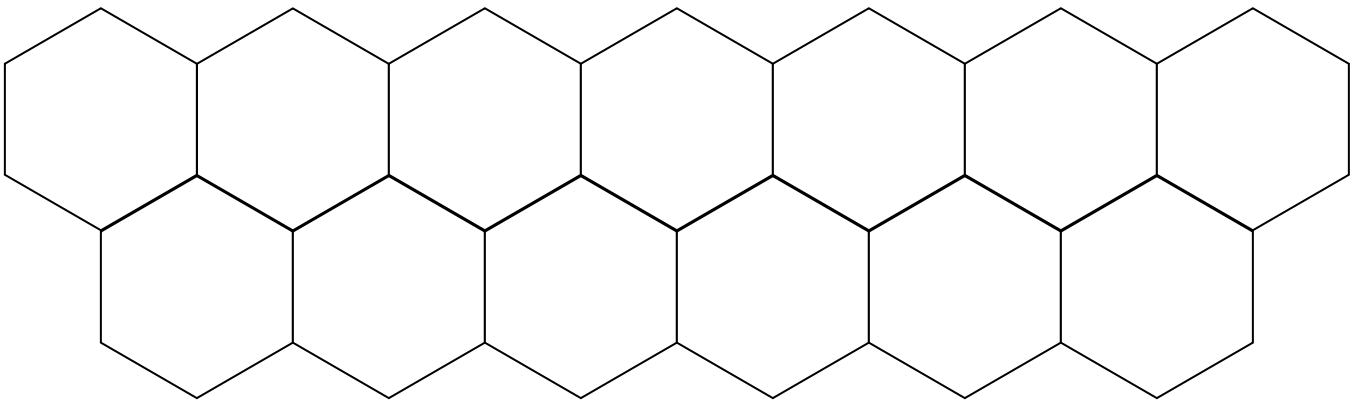
_____ blue rhombuses 

_____ tan rhombuses 

**Math:** (grades 2-3) 2.G, 3.NF

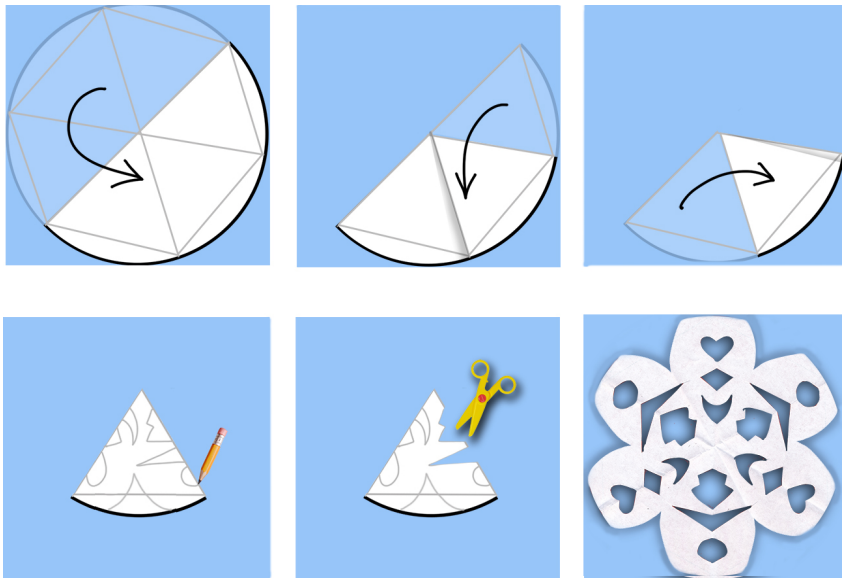
Snowflakes are an example of geometry found in nature. Tell the children that they are going to make snowflakes like those found on Gilbert's classroom window. This math activity is the perfect follow up to the science snowflake lesson (page 11) where the students have gathered information on snowflakes. Children have discovered from their research that snowflakes are unique. They are six sided figures, hexagonal in shape. This is due to the molecular structure of ice. As water freezes, the molecules form a repeating pattern of hexagons, a hexagonal lattice that becomes the basis for the six-sided snowflakes.

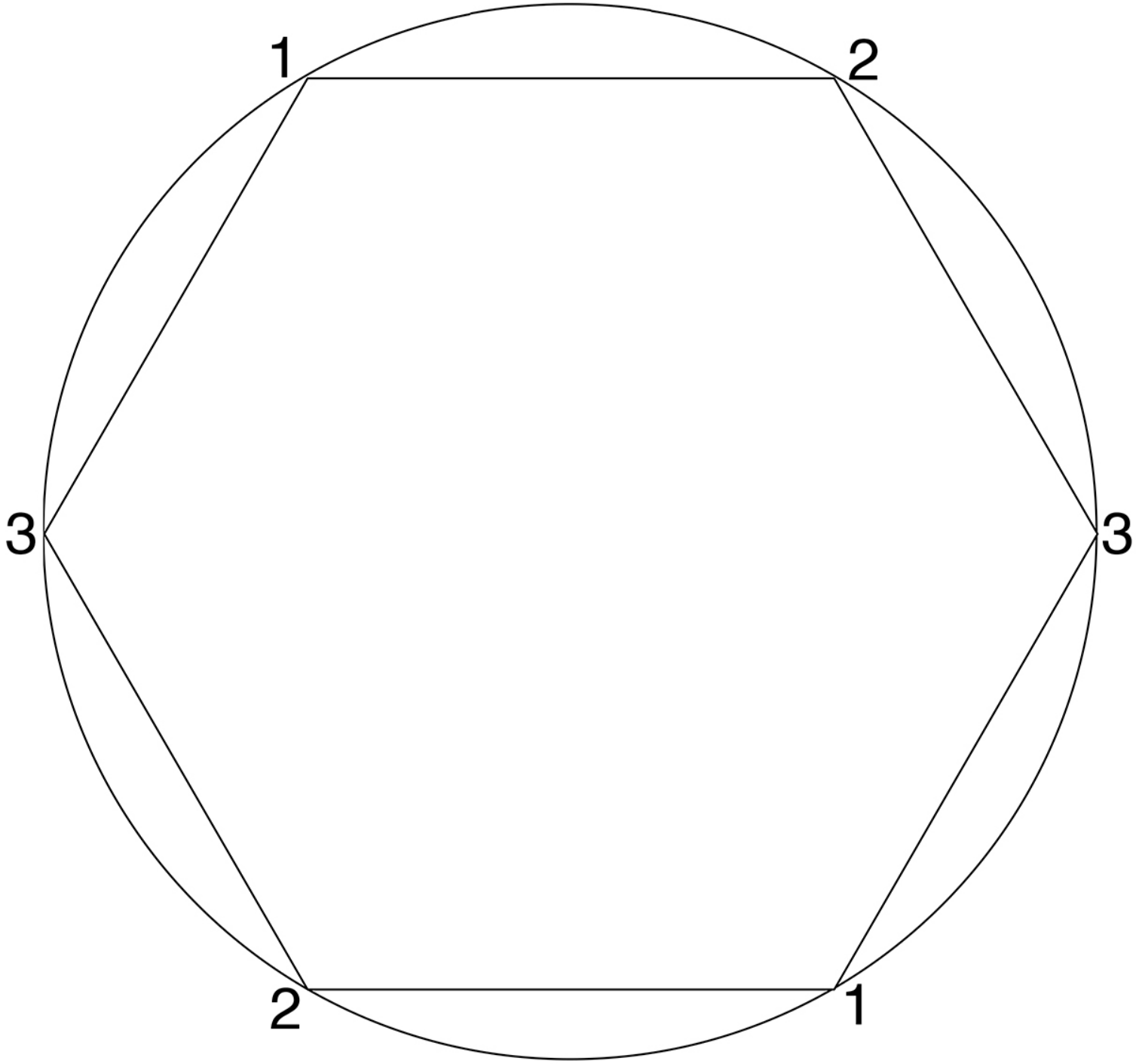
Give each pair of students a handful of pattern block hexagons and ask them to create a series of lines to visually illustrate the formation of ice crystals. Copy and hand out this template as an example:



Tell the children that they are going to create their own snowflake to hang up. Students will find that this activity actually ties in fractions as well as symmetry. Give each child a circle pattern (page 10) and a ruler.

1. Ask the students to draw a line from the number 1 to the opposite number 1. Ask students what shape was created when they drew a line dividing the hexagon in half (a trapezoid) and lead them to discover that 2 trapezoids make a hexagon.
2. Repeat the directions for the numbers 2 and 3 by drawing a line to match each number. Ask students to notice what shapes they see (triangles) and lead them to discover that 3 equilateral triangles make a trapezoid and 6 equilateral triangles make a hexagon.
3. Ask the students to cut out the circle pattern.
4. Guide the students to fold their circle in half on one of the lines. It's important to mention that the lines should show on the outside of the fold. Then fold inward on the two other lines. This will create a small triangle.
5. Remind students to think about what they know about symmetry. In order to create a symmetrical shape, we can draw half of a shape on the fold of a piece of paper. Model drawing half of a shape such as a heart, circle, or triangle on a fold line. You may also use non-geometric shapes. Then cut it out and open the paper to reveal the whole shape.
6. Tell students that the process of cutting out the shapes on their snowflake triangle is going to be a challenge because the paper is folded in sixths and it is thick. Model drawing and cutting out shapes on the side folds. Cutting shapes from the rounded edge of the triangle will help define the snowflake's "points."
7. Allow students to draw and cut out shapes. Assist as needed. Once students are finished cutting they will be able to open up their paper to reveal beautiful original snowflakes.




1
2
3
3
2
1

## **Science:** (grades K-1) SL1, SL3, SL6

In this story Gilbert was ice skating with his friends. Ask students if they have ever been ice skating before. Talk about how ice is formed. If possible take out a thermometer and talk about the freezing point being 32 degrees Fahrenheit. To prepare for this experiment, fill 3 pie pans halfway with water and freeze. Show the pans to the students and ask the children how the ice was formed. Then ask the class what would make the ice turn back into water. Create this chart for the class on large chart paper:

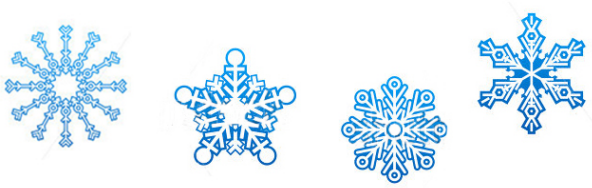
**What will melt the ice fastest?**

| Salt | Water | Salt and Water |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

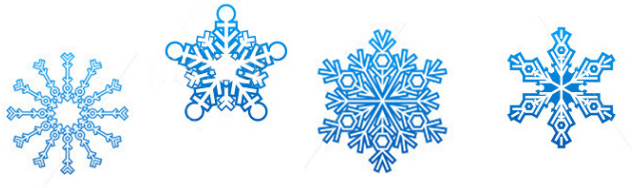
Ask each student to predict what will make the ice melt the fastest: salt, water, or both. Have each child predict and then write his or her name on the chart in the appropriate column. To conduct the experiment, sprinkle 1/8 cup of salt onto the first pan of ice. Then pour 1/4 cup of water on the second pan of ice. Next, mix 1/4 of a cup of water with 1/8 cup of salt and pour on the third pan of ice. Start a timer and observe. After the experiment is over ask the children what happened. Inquire about the results. Asking open-ended questions will lead to a thought provoking discussion. Allow children to come to their own conclusions about the results.

## **Science:** (grades 2-3) W7, SL1, SL3, SL6, RI1, RI10, L1, L2

Discuss why Gilbert was so happy to see the snow falling on Monday morning. Ask children what information they already know about snowflakes. Encourage the students to talk about what they **know** about snowflakes and what do they **want** to know about snowflakes. Have a group discussion and then ask children to complete the first two pieces of the KWL chart on page 12 with a partner. Next, present information on the topic of snow, either through Internet sources or by reading non-fiction books about snowflakes such as *Snowflake Bentley*, by Jaqueline Briggs Martin or *Snow*, by Ann Herriges. Encourage students to research snow at home by talking to adults, reading books, or researching via the Internet. Ask children to then fill in the last piece of their KWL chart with their partner and report on their findings.



# SNOWFLAKES



| What do you know? | What do you want to know? | What did you learn? |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | | |

## **Art:** (grades K-1) W2

Ask the students to think about why Gilbert couldn't focus in class. Ask what Gilbert wanted the most for Christmas—a Red Racer Speed Sled. Invite children to close their eyes and visualize the thing they want the most for Christmas. Allow students to think, pair, and share their ideas.

Distribute a large piece of white paper in the shape of a stocking to each child.

Ask each student to draw the thing that they are wishing for inside the stocking and write what it is near the picture. Have the children glue their stocking onto a larger sheet of red construction paper. They will then cut out the stocking shape, leaving a red border around it. Have the children write their name in pencil on a white rectangle (wider than the stocking). They can trace their name with Elmer's glue and sprinkle with glitter, or they can color it with crayons or markers. Glue the name tag to the top of the stocking. Hang the stockings on a bulletin board to create a fireplace scene at Christmastime.

**Art:** (grades 2-3) W3

Talk to the class about the way that Gilbert and Lewis tried to quickly finish their homework on the way to school by making a snowman outside. Tell students that they will be making a snowman inside the classroom. Parent volunteers may be helpful to have on hand during this fun and frosty project.

For each child you will need:

1 white sock
about 2 cups of uncooked rice (amount depends on size of sock)
2 pieces of yarn
craft glue
various art supplies to decorate (strips of felt, buttons, pompoms, wiggle eyes, pipe cleaners, craft paper, or pieces of twigs)

Give each child a sock to fill nearly half with rice. With adult assistance, have each child tightly tie a piece of yarn around the sock just above the rice, creating a rounded bottom to the snowman. Fill the next section of snowman with slightly less rice. This will be the snowman's head. Again, tie off with yarn. Roll or fold the top of the sock down so that it looks like the cuff of a hat. Glue a pompom to the top of the hat. Wrap a piece of felt around the bottom piece of yarn so that the snowman has a scarf. Now have students glue on eyes, nose, buttons, and arms to complete the snowman. Have children use this project as inspiration for the grades 2-3 writing assignment.

# Author's Note

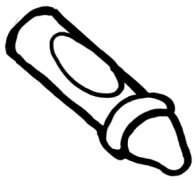
When I was young and still believed in Santa, my siblings and I would keep a sharp watch on the night sky before going to bed on Christmas Eve. And every year, a blinking red plane light was proclaimed to be Rudolph's nose. As much as we wanted to stay awake to confirm that Santa *was* real, we, of course, always fell asleep. Our family tradition was for the children to be awakened at midnight and brought downstairs in a sleepy stupor to find gifts under the tree and my parents making merry with visiting relatives. We opened our gifts, and after hot chocolate and sandwiches, we were marched back upstairs and back to sleep. I'm not sure where this tradition came from, but it was probably so my parents wouldn't be assaulted by five impatient children on Christmas morning. Instead, we quietly played with our new gifts while they slept. My gift was usually new art supplies. Santa was so smart.

After *Jingle Bells, Homework Smells* was published, I was asked why there is no Hanukkah or Kwanza book for Gilbert. For me, it's a matter of logic. Although Gilbert acts like he's human, he's still an opossum. While some authors use animals in books to help children understand their faith or culture, I'm not comfortable with that role. My story is simply based on believing in Santa Claus and the anticipation of the holiday season. I did so to appeal to the largest audience and also to stay within the parameters of my (animal) characters' attributes. Besides religion, I would have difficulty giving an animal a nationality. Would Lewis the groundhog's grandparents be from Slovakia? Is Frank the raccoon a first generation Italian-American? Personally, I think it's a stretch. That's why there's no St. Patrick's Day book for Gilbert, either. He'll not be tracing his Irish roots any time soon.

The theme of this story is procrastination, and it ends with Gilbert and Lewis hurriedly building a snowman together to fulfill a homework assignment for Mrs. Byrd. Growing up in the Northeast gave me many opportunities to build my own snowmen as a kid. But being an artist also meant that I built igloos with snow furniture and shelves for frozen M & M's. As an adult I made snow dogs and snow ducks for my daughter to climb on. Once, after shoveling two feet of snow, I carved out a snow dragon's head and body that ran the whole length of the driveway. I even made a life-sized snow sculpture of myself, shown in the photo below. Nowadays I prefer to watch the snow from inside my cozy studio. And I pay someone else to plow the driveway. But when the grandkids visit this winter, they might just talk me into making snow dogs for them to climb on.

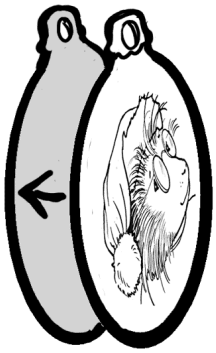
—Diane deGroat

1. Color.

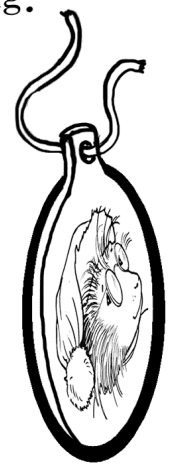


2. Cut out.

3. Paste back to back.

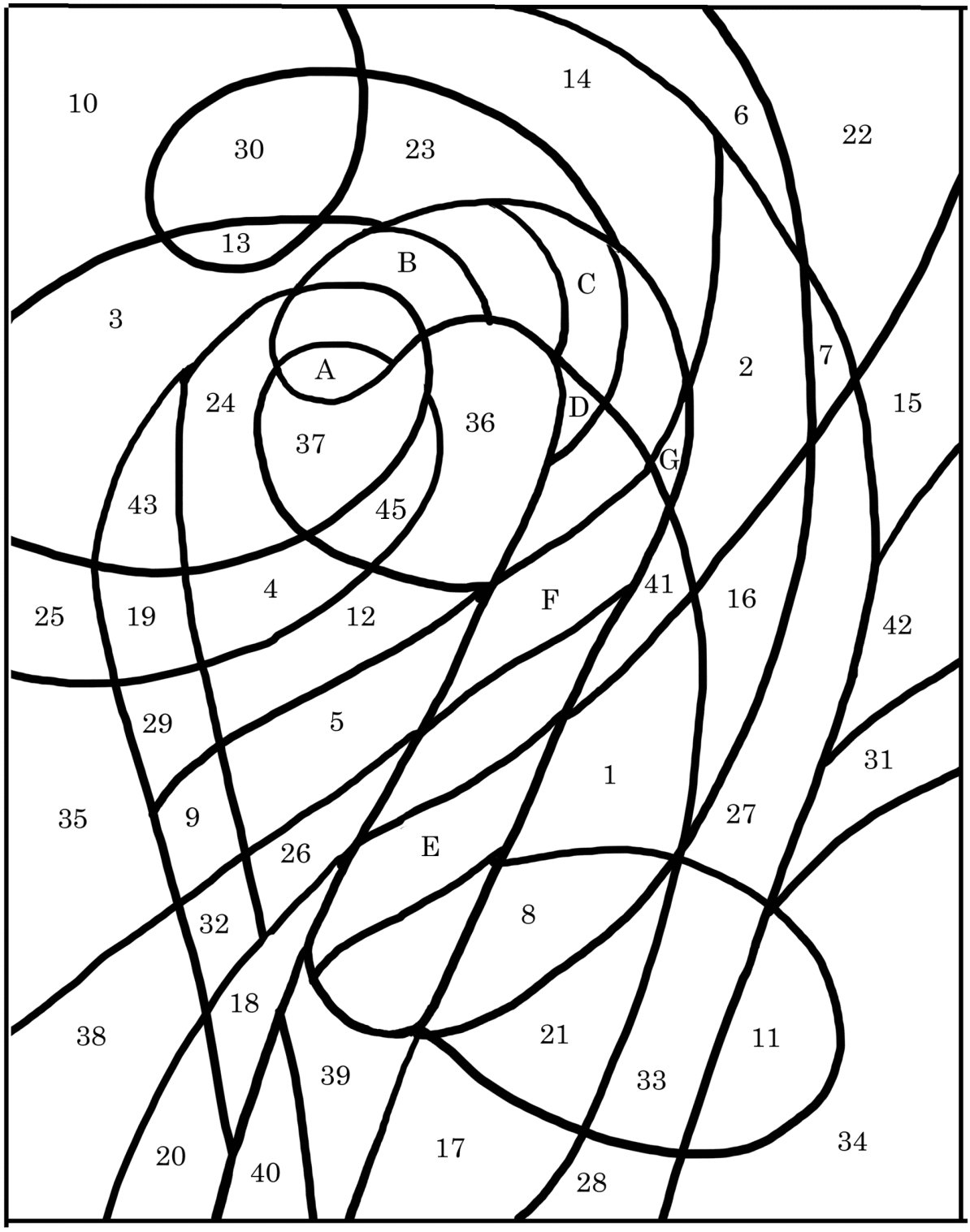


4. hang.



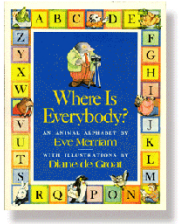

# A Christmas Surprise

Color the number spaces green.
Color the letter spaces red.
Leave the unmarked spaces white.




# Sheep is dreaming about Christmas.

## Can you find all the things that begin with "S?"




From *Where is Everybody?* by Eve Merriam



sign, snowflake, snowman, skates, shovel, snow, slush, sale, sheep, stroller, Santa, seatbelt/strap, scarf, smile, snowsuit, stars, sneakers, stripes, shoes