

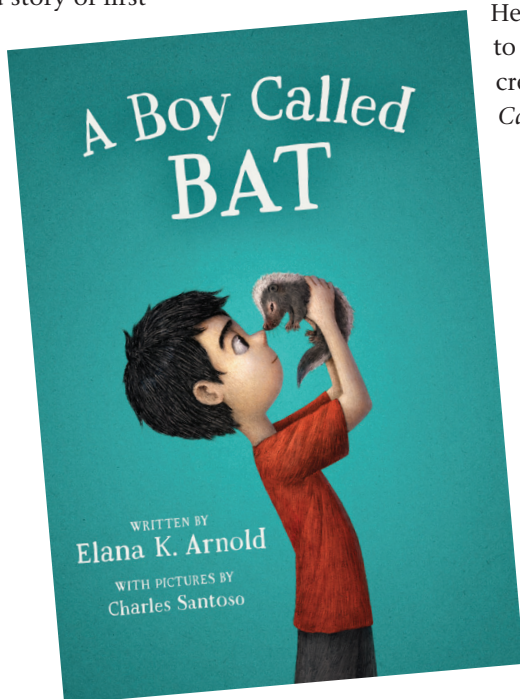
A BOY CALLED BAT EDUCATOR'S RESOURCE

About the Book

For Bixby Alexander Tam (nicknamed Bat), life tends to be full of surprises—some of them good, some of them not so good. Today, though, is a good surprise day. Bat's mom, a veterinarian, has brought home a stray baby skunk, which she needs to take care of until she can hand him over to a wild-animal shelter.

But the minute Bat meets the kit, he knows they belong together. And he's got one month to show his mom that a baby skunk just might make a pretty terrific pet.

Written by acclaimed author Elana K. Arnold and filled with drawings by Charles Santoso, *A Boy Called Bat* is a story of first friendship—the first book in a new series starring an authentic, unforgettable autistic character.



About the Author

Elana K. Arnold grew up in California, where she was lucky enough to have her own perfect pet—a gorgeous mare named Rainbow—and a family who let her read as many books as she wanted. She is the author of picture books, middle grade novels, and books for teens. She lives in Huntington Beach, California, with her husband, two children, and a menagerie of animals. This is her first book with Walden Pond Press.

Here is what Elana has to say about the creation of *A Boy Called Bat*:



The lie I most often tell myself when I am working is that I am writing fiction. It's all made up, I whisper; it's just pretend.

But the truth is, it is all truth.

The truth is, I love an autistic kid. The truth is, I know the pain of sibling rivalry. The truth is, I understand how it feels to want something so much, so fiercely, that I become consumed by it, the way this boy called Bat wants to keep and care for a baby skunk kit. Writers like to talk about "the book of their heart." This book, this smallish story about a boy and the skunk he loves, is that book for me.

A Boy Called Bat is a story about an autistic kid. It's also a book that says what I truly believe about people: that we can learn to see things from one another's points of view. That it is worthwhile to speak clearly about what you need, and to ask for what you want. That we can help one another, and that we are made better by doing so. That children are whole people already, and that autistic kids are not broken.

I love Bat, and I love this book. I hope you will love it, too, and I hope you will help me share it with young readers and their families. I want to thank you in advance for holding my book, for turning its pages to see Charles Santoso's wonderful illustrations, and for passing *A Boy Called Bat* into the hands of kids.

With a Grateful Heart,

Elana K. Arnold

A Note to Educators:

A Boy Called Bat features as its main character Bixby Alexander Tam (Bat for short), an autistic boy. Author Elana K. Arnold presents Bat's neurodiversity through his actions and perceptions, set within the context of an engaging and tender plot. This book will be a welcome addition to middle grade classrooms thanks to its broad appeal, its seamless fit with inclusive educational practices, and its potential as a tool for Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The lessons Bat learns about empathy and divergent perspectives are beneficial for all students, whether neurodiverse or neurotypical.

As every classroom teacher knows, each student is an individual with a unique set of needs—whether documented and supported by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or not. For example, some students may have sensory or physical disabilities, others may have emotional challenges, and still others may have difficulty learning to read or write. Some needs are openly acknowledged by parents and guardians. Some are not. Some students are comfortable speaking openly about strengths, weaknesses, abilities, and disabilities. Others are not.

Besides being an engaging story, *A Boy Called Bat* will be a valuable classroom resource because of the sensitive way its literature-based lessons are inclusive of all students. Bat is an individual with identifiable strengths and weaknesses, as are other kids and as is his older sister Janie.

To ensure inclusion for all, teachers adapt curriculum to meet the needs of every student. In this atmosphere, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), co-founded by Dr. David Rose of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, has flourished. UDL supports flexible learning methods

to accommodate a wide range of student needs. The principle of UDL is that many gateways should be provided to students in order for them to access lesson goals. The classroom activities that accompany *A Boy Called Bat* are designed according to the principles of UDL.

Some additional notes for specific activities that educators might find useful:

“THE FIVE SENSES” ACTIVITY

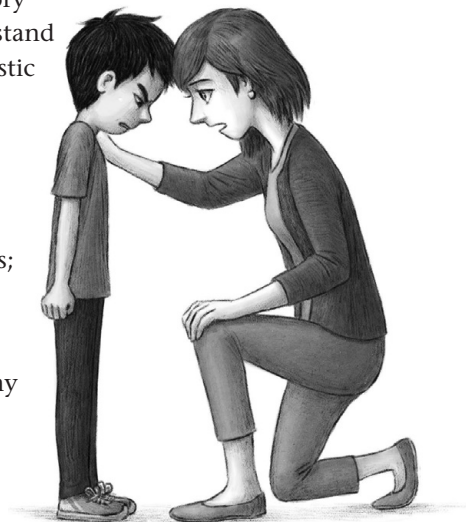
Some readers may have sensory sensitivities, like Bat. Whether or not senses are too intense can depend on the specific sense. Bat only has the oversensitivities mentioned in the activity, but some readers might have oversensitivities for some senses and undersensitivities for others.

This touches on something really important and common for autistic people: Sometimes, other situational demands may affect the autistic

person's ability to deal with sensory input. People don't always understand this, and sometimes pressure autistic people to function the same way in different situations.

Possible answers for Part 1 of this activity: a) Janie's shampoo; b) vanilla yogurt; c) Thor; d) animals; e) Mom's car coming.

Possible answers for Part 2 of this activity: a) onions; b) chili; c) itchy clothes; d) crowds; e) loud noises.



BAT VISITS HIS MOM'S CLINIC

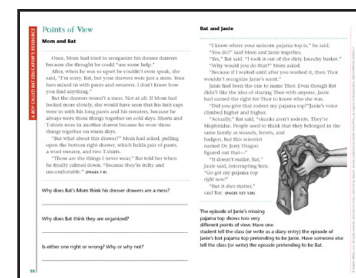
Answers to the question “Why you think it is easier for Bat to be at the clinic than at school?” will vary.

Some possible responses: he doesn't have to deal with other kids there; being around animals is comforting for him; he doesn't have to pay attention to teachers there; even if the sounds and smells are as loud and strong as the ones at school, the clinic is a more comfortable place for him.



POINTS OF VIEW: BAT AND JANIE

The episode of Janie's missing pajama tops on pp 127-128 shows two very different points of view. It might be helpful to point out to students that in this excerpt, Janie seems to win the argument by yelling at Bat. But with the final line, Bat asserts that his own perspective is also important.



Books and Websites about Autism Spectrum Disorder

BOOKS:

Why the Wild Things Are: Animals in the Lives of Children, by Gail F. Melson. Harvard University Press, 2005.

The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a Thirteen-Year-Old Boy with Autism, by Naoki Higashida and K.A. Yoshida, translated by David Mitchell. Random House, 2016.

Thinking in Pictures: My Life with Autism, by Temple Grandin with an introduction by Oliver Sacks. Vintage, 2006.

Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior, by Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson. Harcourt, 2006.

ONLINE:

Thinking Person's Guide to Autism

What you need to know: from autistic people, professionals, and parents.

Paginated Thoughts

Autism resources.

Disability in Kidlit

Disability in Kidlit is dedicated to discussing the portrayal of disability in middle grade and young adult literature, publishing articles, reviews, interviews, and discussions examining this topic from various angles—and always from the disabled perspective.

UDL Resources

BOOKS:

Universal Design for Learning: Theory and Practice, by Anne Meyer, David H. Rose, David Gordon. CAST Professional Publishing, 2016.

Your UDL Lesson Planner: The Step-by-Step Guide for Teaching All Learners, by Patti Ralabate. Brookes Publishing, 2016.

ONLINE:

CAST

A non-profit company producing learning tools with access points for all learning styles. Developers of the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Do-IT

The Center for Universal Design in Education at the University of Washington in Seattle, WA.

Universal Design for Learning: Meeting the Needs of All Students by Patti Ralabate. Published in the Journal of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Resources about Animals for Kids

BOOKS:

Wild Animals of the North, by Dieter Braun. The first in a pair of illustrated books covering the animals of the world, *Wild Animals of the North* features Dieter Braun's beautiful drawings of northern animals accompanied by fun facts and clever descriptions. Published by Flying Eye Books, 2016.

National Geographic Animal Encyclopedia: 2,500 Animals with Photos, Maps, and More!, by Lucy Spelman. Featuring 2,500 species and packed with stunning color photographs, amazing animal facts, maps, and more. Published by National Geographic, 2012.

Curiositree: Natural World: A Visual Compendium of Wonders from Nature, by AJ Wood and Mike Jolley. A first introduction to the natural world that looks at the myriad ways in which plants and animals have adapted to give themselves the best chance of survival. Published by Wide Eyed Editions, 2016.

ONLINE:

"Is That Skunk?" (Documentary)

Dr. Jerry Dragoo is a real person, who is a real skunk expert. To find out what he has to say about skunk care, and to watch his documentary "Is That Skunk?" go to www.dragoo.org

This Educator's Resource was created by Sara Hoagland Hunter, Ed.D. She is the author of ten books for children, including the award-winning Every Turtle Counts about the rescue of a rare sea turtle by a seven-year-old on the autism spectrum. Find her online at sarahunterproductions.com

This Educator's Resource was reviewed by Elizabeth Bartmess, a writer and autistic advocate. Find her online at elizabethbartmess.com

Classroom Read-Aloud Suggestion

The Real Boy, by Anne Ursu

"I think if you'll look around, my boy," he said gently, "you'll find that no one is quite right. But we all do the best we can." —*The Real Boy*, **PAGE 215**

On an island on the edge of an immense sea there is a city, a forest, and a boy. The city is called Asteri, a perfect city saved by the magic woven into its walls when a devastating plague swept through the world years before. The forest is called the Barrow, a vast wood of ancient trees that encircles the city and feeds the earth with magic. And the boy is called Oscar, a shop boy for the most powerful magician in the Barrow, who spends his days in the dark cellar of his master's shop grinding herbs and dreaming of the wizards who once lived on the island. Oscar's world is small, but he likes it that way. The real world is vast, strange, and unpredictable. And Oscar does not quite fit in it. In this National Book Award Longlist finalist, a young boy becomes a hero against all odds.



(For an in-depth review visit: <http://disabilityinkidlit.com/2015/04/13/review-the-real-boy-by-anne-ursu/>)

Published by Walden Pond Press.

Other Recommended Titles

MIDDLE GRADE

A Wizard Alone: The Sixth Book in the Young Wizards Series, by Diane Duane.

While Nita grieves over her mother's death, Kit tackles a challenge as dangerous as it is strange: to rescue a young wizard who has vanished on his first assignment. This new wizard is unlike any other—he's autistic and he's a magical prodigy. His power is enormous. Now Kit and his dog, Ponch, must track down the missing young wizard before the Lone Power finds him. Published by HMH Books for Young Readers.

Anything but Typical, by Nora Raleigh Baskin. Jason Blake is an autistic 12-year-old living in a neurotypical world. Most days it's just a matter of time before something goes wrong. But Jason finds a glimmer of understanding when he comes across PhoenixBird, who posts stories to the same online site as he does. Jason can be himself when he writes and he thinks that PhoenixBird—her name is Rebecca—could be his first real friend. But as desperate as Jason is to meet her, he's terrified that if they do meet, Rebecca will only see his autism and not who Jason really is. By acclaimed writer Nora Raleigh Baskin, this is not only the breathtaking description of an autistic boy's struggles, it is also a story for anyone who has ever worried about fitting in. Published by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

YOUNG ADULT

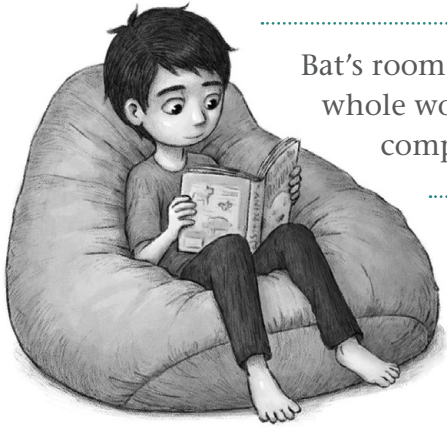
Rogue, by Lyn Miller-Lachman.

Kiara has Asperger's syndrome, and it's hard for her to make friends. So whenever her world doesn't make sense—which is often—she relies on Mr. Internet for answers. But there are some questions he can't answer, like why she always gets into

trouble, and how do kids with Asperger's syndrome make friends? Kiara has a difficult time with other kids. They taunt her and she fights back. Now she's been kicked out of school. She wishes she could be like her hero Rogue—a misunderstood X-Men mutant who used to hurt anyone she touched until she learned how to control her special power. When Chad moves in across the street, Kiara hopes that, for once, she'll be able to make a friendship stick. When she learns his secret, she's so determined to keep Chad as a friend that she agrees not to tell. But being a true friend is more complicated than Mr. Internet could ever explain, and it might be just the thing that leads Kiara to find her own special power. Published by Nancy Paulsen Books.

On the Edge of Gone, by Corinne Duyvis. January 29, 2035. That's the day the comet is scheduled to hit—the big one. Denise and her mother and sister, Iris, have been assigned to a temporary shelter outside their hometown of Amsterdam to wait out the blast, but Iris is nowhere to be found, and at the rate Denise's drug-addicted mother is going, they'll never reach the shelter in time. A last-minute meeting leads them to something better than a temporary shelter—a generation ship, scheduled to leave Earth behind to colonize new worlds after the comet hits. But everyone on the ship has been chosen because of their usefulness. Denise is autistic and fears that she'll never be allowed to stay. Can she obtain a spot before the ship takes flight? What about her mother and sister? When the future of the human race is at stake, whose lives matter most? Published by Harry N. Abrams.

A Favorite Room



Bat's room was his favorite place in the whole world. In his room, Bat felt completely comfortable. **(PAGE 6)**

Write about, draw or photograph a room where you are completely comfortable.

[Bat's room had] a roll-down bamboo window shade and a fine closet full of shelves and a pullout trundle in case someday a friend came to spend the night. It had a ceiling fan and a reading lamp and a rug with a picture of a train track printed on it. **(PAGE 9)**

What are your six favorite things in your favorite room? Make a list, draw pictures or take photographs of your favorite things.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

A Classroom Pal

Bat's teacher Mr. Grayson has an "open-door Babycakes policy" in his classroom. What does that mean? How does Bat feel about Babycakes?



Bat's Five Senses

Write about a smell, taste, touch, sight, and sound Bat likes.

- Bat likes to smell _____
- Bat likes to taste _____
- Bat likes to touch _____
- Bat likes to see _____
- Bat likes to hear _____

Write about a smell, taste, touch, sight, and sound Bat does not like.

- Bat does not like to smell _____
- Bat does not like to taste _____
- Bat does not like to touch _____
- Bat does not like to see _____
- Bat does not like to hear _____

Write about a smell, taste, touch, sight, or sound you like.

Write about a smell, taste, touch, sight, or sound you do not like.

Bat Visits His Mom's Clinic

When he pulled open the heavy glass door at the front of the brick building, Bat was overwhelmed by smells and sounds. The lavender-peppermint spray they used to clean up pet accidents. The wet-dog scent of shampooing going on in the back room. Barking, barking, barking. A phone ringing. People talking. A cat's yowl.

If there were this much ruckus at school or the playground or anywhere else at all, Bat would definitely need his earmuffs. But here, the sounds and the smells didn't bother him. Even the flickering fluorescent light didn't irritate him very much. (PAGE 105)



How does Bat feel about experiencing the sights, sounds, and smells of the clinic compared to when he is at school?

Why do you think it is easier for Bat to be at the clinic than at school?

Do you think some of Bat's senses are more sensitive than yours? Less sensitive? The same?



Bat Reads Body Language

Bat at dinner with Janie and Mom (and Thor in the sling):

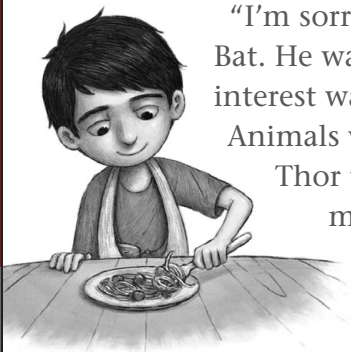
"That's stupid," said Bat. Because it was.

"Bat," said Mom in her warning voice. Deep and serious, with her eyebrows pointed toward her nose.

"I'm sorry I said your interest is stupid," said Bat. He wasn't actually sorry, because Janie's interest was stupid. Theater was pretend.

Animals were real. But Mom had let him bring Thor to the dinner table, so Bat turned his mouth up in a smile and added, "Will you forgive me?"

Mom liked it when he remembered to say that. (PAGES 119-120)



Bat at the candy store with his dad and Janie:

Bat started bouncing on the balls of his feet. He clutched his plastic candy bag in his fist. It crinkled in a way that bothered his ears, so he loosened his fingers and let it go. Blue and green M&M's bounced and rolled across the floor of the Sugar Shack.

"Sport, you've got to be more careful," Dad said, his eyebrows pointing in at his nose.

Bat felt tears welling up in his eyes. He swiped at his face with the arm of his shirt and turned toward the door. Under the sole of his shoe, he felt the crunchsquish of a flattened M&M. (PAGES 146-148)

What emotion is both Bat's mom and dad feeling? Draw (or choose on the computer) an emoticon that illustrates their faces.

Israel Meets Thor

Then he looked at Israel's hands, the way they were cupped together to form a safe little nest. He saw how Israel had overlapped his palms so that there was no way Thor could slip between them.

Bat didn't know much about eyes. But he knew about hands.... Israel's hands told Bat that Thor would be safe. So Bat placed the kit into them. He didn't even make Israel sit on the floor.

(PAGES 186-187)



Although Bat has difficulty understanding the emotion in a facial expression, he understands other body language well. How does he know he can trust Israel with Thor?

Figures of Speech and What They Mean

People sometimes use expressions that they do not mean to be taken literally. These are called "figures of speech." Because Bat takes most things people say literally, he can have trouble understanding the meaning of figures of speech. For example, in the passage below, Mr. Grayson says "I'm all ears," when what he means is "I'm paying all my attention to you."

"Mr. Grayson," Bat said. "I need your help."

Mr. Grayson put the cap on his pen and set it down.

"I'm all ears," he said.

That was a funny expression, and for a second Bat pictured Mr. Grayson made entirely of ears, with ears for eyes and an ear for a nose and two tiny rows of little ears for teeth. **(PAGE 98)**

Why does Bat find this figure of speech funny?

In the passage below, Bat's dad says "you sure inherited my sweet tooth," but what he means is "you sure inherited my liking for sweets."

"You sure inherited my sweet tooth," Dad said, loading up his own plastic bag with jelly beans.

"Actually," Bat said, "teeth have nothing to do with it. People taste with their tongues and their noses." **(PAGE 146)**

Why might Bat think his dad is talking about teeth?

Points of View

Mom and Bat

Once, Mom had tried to reorganize his dresser drawers because she thought he could “use some help.”

After, when he was so upset he couldn't even speak, she said, “I'm sorry, Bat, but your drawers were just a mess. Your hats mixed in with pants and sweaters. I don't know how you find anything.”

But the drawers weren't a mess. Not at all. If Mom had looked more closely, she would have seen that his knit caps were in with his long pants and his sweaters, because he always wore those things together on cold days. Shorts and T-shirts were in another drawer because he wore those things together on warm days.

“But what about this drawer?” Mom had asked, pulling open the bottom right drawer, which held a pair of pants, a wool sweater, and two T-shirts.

“Those are the things I never wear,” Bat told her when he finally calmed down. “Because they're itchy and uncomfortable.” (PAGES 7-8)

Why does Bat's mom think his dresser drawers are a mess?

Why does Bat think they are organized?

Is either one right or wrong? Why or why not?

Bat and Janie

“I know where your unicorn pajama top is,” he said.

“You do?” said Mom and Janie together.

“Yes,” Bat said. “I took it out of the dirty laundry basket.”

“Why would you do that?” Mom asked.

“Because if I waited until after you washed it, then Thor wouldn't recognize Janie's scent.”

Janie had been the one to name Thor. Even though Bat didn't like the idea of sharing Thor with anyone, Janie had earned the right for Thor to know who she was.

“Did you give that rodent my pajama top?” Janie's voice climbed higher and higher.

“Actually,” Bat said, “skunks aren't rodents. They're Mephitidae. People used to think that they belonged in the same family as weasels, ferrets, and badgers, but this scientist named Dr. Jerry Dragoo figured out that—”

“It doesn't *matter*, Bat,” Janie said, interrupting him. “Go get my pajama top *right now!*”

“But it *does* matter,” said Bat. (PAGES 127-128)



The episode of Janie's missing pajama top shows two very different points of view. Have one student tell the class (or write as a diary entry) the episode of Janie's lost pajama top pretending to be Janie. Have someone else tell the class (or write) the episode pretending to be Bat.

Exploring Interests

An old lady, old like a grandmother, sat on the bench in the waiting room. She held a box on her lap.

Bat stopped in front of her. "What kind of animal do you have in that box?"

"It's my cat, Pickles," the lady said. "He's not feeling one hundred percent."

"What are his symptoms?" Bat asked.

"Are you the veterinarian?" the lady asked.

"No," said Bat. "Not yet." (PAGE 106)

What is Bat's main interest?

What kinds of books does Bat read to pursue his interest?

What is Bat's career goal?

Describe your main interest.

Write the name of a book you could read to pursue your interest.

Animal Knowledge

A baby skunk is called a kit. Draw lines to match these animal adult names with their baby animal name:



aardvark	cygnet
alligator	spat
ape	poult
bat	joey
bee	baby
elephant	maggot
deer	squab
fly	chick
hummingbird	calf
kangaroo	pup
oyster	hatchling
pigeon	fawn
swan	cub
turkey	larva

A Blessing of Unicorns

"I'm glad people don't sleep like skunks," Janie said. Her hair was damp from the shower, and she was wearing her favorite pajamas, the ones with all the unicorns. Each unicorn was doing something different; one rocked out with a guitar, another was reading a book, another wore a chef's hat and was flipping eggs in a pan. The only thing they had in common was that they were all unicorns.

"Janie, did you know that a herd of unicorns is called a blessing?" Bat asked.

"Yes, Bat, of course I know that. Every time I wear these pajamas you tell me that."

"I didn't know if you remembered," Bat said. (PAGES 86-87)



Match these singular animal names with their group name:

bats	crash
bees	parliament
buffalo	mess
dolphins	cloud
eels	array
geese	swarm
grasshoppers	pod
iguanas	pride
hedgehogs	bed
lions	herd
owls	gaggle
rhinoceroses	colony

