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# Song for Papa Crow

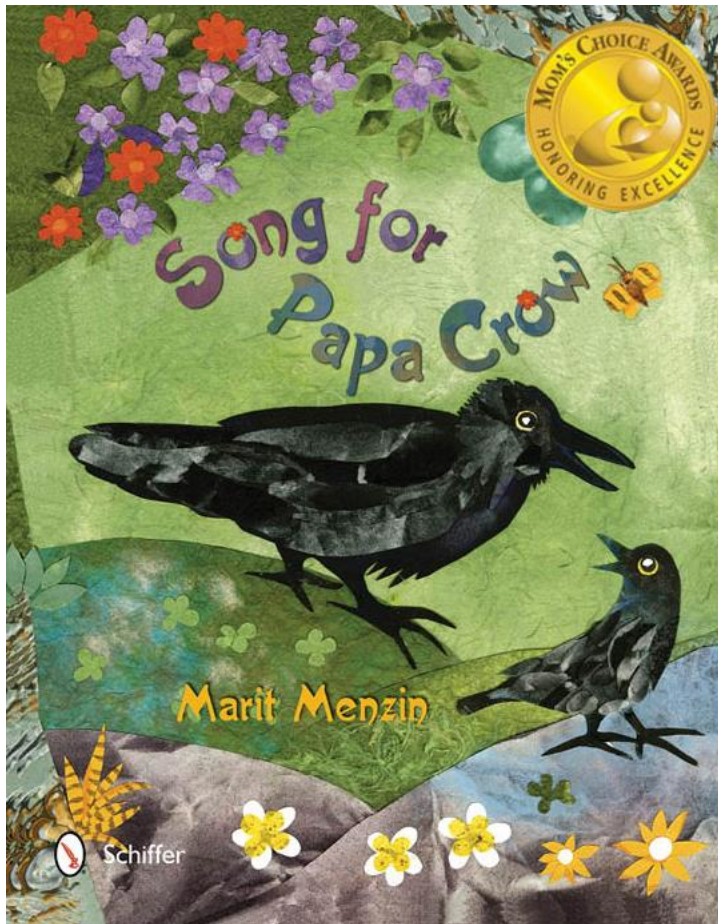
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a teacher's guide

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Created by marcie colleen

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**Marit Menzin, Author & Illustrator**

***Song for Papa Crow***

***Mom's Choice Award Gold Honor***

Marit Menzin's award-winning collages have been seen in galleries and magazines. She has loved art since childhood, and this, her first picture book, combines her love of nature and art. Marit has a B.Sc. in chemistry. She continued to study chemistry as well as biology and education, before completing her graduate studies and becoming a certified chemistry teacher. Marit lives with her family near Boston, Massachusetts.

Visit her at [www.maritmenzin.com](http://www.maritmenzin.com).

**Marcie Colleen, Curriculum Writer**

Marcie is a former teacher with a bachelor's degree in English Education from Oswego State and a master's degree in Educational Theater from New York University. Even though she lives in New York City, Marcie loves to listen to the birds in her Brooklyn neighborhood.

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## **How to Use This Guide**

This classroom guide for *Song for Papa Crow* is designed for students in preschool through second grade.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *Song for Papa Crow* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as a teaching tool throughout the guide.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama.

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# English Language Arts

## **Reading Comprehension**

Before reading *Song for Papa Crow*,

Help students identify the basic parts of a picture book: jacket, front cover, back cover, title page, spine, end papers, and jacket flap.

The Front Cover ~

- Who do you think the two crows are?
- Can you guess what the story might be about? What are some clues you can find in the title and cover illustration?
- Can you guess how the illustration was made?
- Explain that Marit Menzin is the Author-Illustrator of *Song for Papa Crow*. What does an author do? What does an illustrator do? What does it mean if there is an Author-Illustrator?

Now read or listen to the book.

Help students summarize in their own words what the book was about.

- Who is the main character? What does he love to do? What is the conflict or problem?
- What are some of the reasons the other birds give for not wanting Little Crow to sing?
- Why does Papa Crow like it when Little Crow sings?
- What is Mockingbird's special talent?
- What does Little Crow ask Mockingbird for? Why?
- What happens once Little Crow has the whistling seed?
- Who warns the others that Hawk is coming? What happens to Little Crow?
- At first, why doesn't Papa Crow come save Little Crow?
- Once Little Crow spits out the whistling seed what happens?
- What do you think the lesson is that Little Crow learns?

Take a close look at the illustration in the following spread.

“The Mockingbird concert”

- How many different birds do you see? Can you name and identify them?
- Can you see all of the different types of paper that were cut to create the collage illustrations? Describe some of the paper. Can you find shiny paper? How about fuzzy paper?

As a class, read *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes.

- Why does Chrysanthemum decide she does not like her name?
- How is her problem similar to Little Crow’s problem?
- How does Chrysanthemum feel about her name at the end of the story? And why?
- Have you ever felt like Chrysanthemum or Little Crow and not liked something about yourself? If so, what and why?

### **Onomatopoeia**

"Caw! Caw!" "Per-CHIC-o-ree!" "What-CHEER!" "Fee-beee" "Hoot" "Too-loo"

Onomatopoeia is an imitation of a sound in words. In *Song for Papa Crow*, the songs of the various birds are onomatopoeia.

*Mr. Brown Can Moo! Can You?* by Dr. Seuss, *The Listening Walk* by Paul Showers, and *Listen, Listen* by Phillis Gershator and Alison Jay are other books to help introduce onomatopoeia to your students.

- Discuss why someone might choose to use onomatopoeia when writing about animals.
- Listen to bird call recordings. Can you hear the onomatopoeia? If not, how would you imitate the sound in words?
- Create a list of onomatopoeia for other animals or things found in nature.

### **Create a Soundscape**

When all of the birds are in the big old maple tree, just think about how wonderful it must sound!

As a class, create the sounds of all of the birds in the maple tree.

Assign some students to be goldfinches, others to be Phoebe Flycatcher, some should be cardinals, and so on.

The teacher, or a small group of students, can be the crows. Once they “Caw” the others must be silent until the crows are quiet once again.

For continued onomatopoeia exploration, students can create soundscapes for the zoo, a barnyard, the city, the beach, etc.

## **Writing Activities**

### **Dear Little Crow...**

Poor Little Crow is teased by the other birds. Have students write letters to Little Crow giving him suggestions on how to handle the situation. For younger children this can be done as a group with the teacher writing down the ideas given by the students and having the children draw pictures to accompany the letter.

### **To the Birds in the Big Old Maple Tree**

Have students write a letter to the other birds, telling them what he or she is doing that they don't like, why they don't like it, and how they wish the bird would behave instead.

### **“Tune to Little Crow”**

Marit Menzin wrote a song called “Tune to Little Crow” which is a musical re-telling of *Song for Papa Crow*. You can listen to it at [www.maritmenzin.com](http://www.maritmenzin.com).

- A song is basically a poem, set to music. Help students identify the stanzas and the refrain. Read the lyrics aloud and have the students chime in with the refrain.
- Have students write their own short poems about someone in their life who “sticks up for them.” It can be as short as two lines and can, but does not have to, rhyme. Place these poems in a card and give it to that someone special.
- As a class, listen to the song. The song includes a repeated refrain, “Here comes Little Crow! Oh, no! We got to go!” Have students re-write this line of the song so that the other birds are including Little Crow and treating him like a friend.
- Have students physically, without words, act out the story of *Song for Papa Crow* to the song “Tune to Little Crow”. (The lyrics to the song can be found in the Appendix of this guide).
- Divide the class into 4 groups and give each group a stanza to illustrate on large pieces of paper. Hang the finished illustrations around the room as a mural.

## Math

**Word Problems** *For younger students, the use of pictures or props might be needed to figure out word problems.*

- 1) When Little Crow lands in the big old maple tree there are 4 birds in the tree. 3 birds fly away. How many birds are in the tree with Little Crow?
- 2) Phoebe Flycatcher eats 2 flies. She then eats 5 more. How many flies does Phoebe Flycatcher eat?
- 3) Blue Jay scares away the eagles and hawks. "Too-loo." He scares away 1 eagle. He then scares away 1 hawk. How many birds does Blue Jay scare away?
- 4) 6 crows fly to help Little Crow. 3 more crows join them. How many crows fly to help Little Crow?
- 5) Mockingbird has 3 whistling seeds. She gives 1 to Little Crow. How many whistling seeds does Mockingbird have?

## **The Shape of Art**

The beautiful artwork illustrations in *Song for Papa Crow* are collage, which is the layering of many shapes of colored paper to create pictures.

Study the collage illustrations of *Song for Papa Crow* carefully. How many shapes can the students identify? What shapes are needed to create a bird?

### Make a Tree Collage using Geometric Shapes

A simple shape collage can be a great way to explore math concepts (shape recognition and the part-to-whole relationship) and learn about the artistic process.

For this activity, students will use rectangles, squares, and triangles to collage a tree trunk and branches. Next, they will attach tissue paper in many shapes and colors to complete their tree collage.

### What You Need:

- Construction paper rectangles, squares and triangles (in browns)



- Tissue paper shapes (in fall colors such as red, yellow, dark green, brown, and orange)
- Glue

### What You Do:

1. Start with a blank sheet of paper. Glue the different shapes in a variety of patterns to create a trunk and branches.
2. Then choose several shapes for leaves from the tissue paper. For added Math, ask students to choose a set number of each shape (i.e. 5 triangles, 3 rectangles, 7 squares, etc). Older students can cut the shapes themselves out of the tissue paper.
3. Glue the tissue leaves onto the tree branches.

Older students may want to experiment with more detailed collages of birds or nature scenes.

### **"What Time is it, Mr. Jay?" Game**

*"What time is it Mr. Jay?", also known as "What time is it Mr. Fox?", is a classic version of tag that helps kids work on listening skills, counting skills and coordination required for running while also enjoying being outside and playing with friends.*

Select one person to be Mr. Jay to start off the game. This person needs to stand, facing away from the group, at either the other end of a small field or a cleared area suitable to run around. Determine the size of the playing area based on the age and ability of the kids playing.

Line all the other children up at the other end of the area. Make sure there is a distinct line or markers to note the starting place.

Call out as a group "What time is it Mr. Jay?"

Have Mr. Jay respond with a random time, such as "five o'clock" or "eleven o'clock."

Step forward, with the kids, as many spaces as Mr. Jay said it was time. So if Mr. Jay said it was three o'clock step forward three spaces.

Repeat this asking, answering and stepping pattern.

Beware that at any time Mr. Jay can answer "Too-loo," when asked the time. When this happens, the child playing Mr. Jay will become Mr. Hawk, face the other children, and chase them back to the original start line.

Become the next Mr. Jay if you were the first person tagged before returning back to the original starting line.

# Science

## **Who's Calling?**

*Song for Papa Crow* introduces students to many different birds of North America and their "calls". A summary of these birds and their calls, as well as other interesting information can be found in the FUN FACTS section at the back of the book.

Ask students why they think birds sing. Some possible answers are:

- to find a mate,
- to establish a nesting territory,
- to warn of danger,
- to communicate with young and to confuse predators.

Using bird call recordings, introduce students to the actual calls of the birds in *Song for Papa Crow*. Do they sound like they imagined they would? Can they imitate the calls?

Additionally, introduce students to the calls of birds they might hear in their own area. (*It might be helpful to explore the schoolyard for birds prior to bringing this lesson to the students*).

The birdcalls that are easiest to pick out include:

- mourning dove,
- robin,
- cardinal,
- blue jay,
- flicker,
- downy woodpecker,
- chickadee
- Other birdcalls that may be heard depending on the environment include redwing blackbird, Canada goose, mallard duck, nuthatch, tufted titmouse, red-bellied woodpecker, wood thrush, vireo, oriole, goldfinch, pigeon, song sparrow and house sparrow.

After the students have learned some of the bird calls, head out to a spot in the schoolyard that lends itself to listening for bird calls.

Have students sit or stand for 3-5 minutes, keeping track of the number of different bird calls they hear. After at least five minutes of listening, call the group back together.

When the whole group is assembled, discuss the birdcalls they heard. Did they hear any of the ones they just learned? Did they hear any new calls? What pictures, words or sounds could be used to describe the new calls?

## **Find a Mate Game**

For this activity you will need a large, unobstructed area.

Assign a "bird call" to each student. (For younger students you can start with words, if the calls are hard to mimic.)

Explain that they are going to pretend to be birds using calls to find the other birds like them.

The students will then have to find their mate by making their call, and listening for their partner with the same call and then walk slowly towards where the sound is coming from.

Tell the class that the game will begin when you give the crow warning call "Caw, caw!" and if they hear the call again during the game they should freeze in their tracks.

The activity is over when every student has found his or her "mate." Once the students find their mates they should stop making their noise and sit off to the side together.

After everyone is matched up, discuss what it was like for the students to use their ears to find their way around instead of their eyes.

Many animals rely on senses other than sight. Can they think of any other senses that animals use? An example would be the sense of smell, which is used extensively by dogs and bears. Ants, bees and moths are another example, they use their antennae to detect scents and vibrations in their environment.

Further Challenge? Blindfold the students. But only if the space is large enough to move around and you have lots of adult assistance.

## **Feathered Facts Research Project**

There are 11 birds mentioned in the Fun Facts section of *Song for Papa Crow*. However, there are many other birds worth researching.

Assign each student or pairs of students a bird to research on the Internet.

Information to be gather must include:

- Type of bird
- What it eats
- Where it lives
- Draw a picture of the bird
- Write 3 words that describe your bird

- Interesting fact #1
- Interesting fact #2
- Interesting fact #3

Once all of the needed research is done, students must create a poster visual with all of the necessary information and present their findings to the class.

OR

Make a book. Students will chose their favorite birds, cut and paste or draw them, and include the facts they have researched.

### **North American Birds Matching Game**

A birds matching game allows students to practice their visual and memorization skills.

- Use clip art or search on the Internet for bird pictures. Print two copies.
- Glue pictures on two separate index cards. Laminate cards.
- Students shuffle the "deck" and lay the cards face down. Players take turns flipping over two cards at a time searching for a match.
- A variation involves matching the bird to the bird call.

### **Dads of the Animal Kingdom**

Little Crow and Papa Crow have a very special relationship. In fact, father crows take care of their offspring longer than any other animals besides humans. This is rare in the animal kingdom where mothers often take care of the babies alone; or some insects, fish, amphibians and reptiles hatch from fertilized eggs and face life completely alone.

However, there are some animal dads that are exceptional.

- Sea catfish
- Cockroach
- Ruddy duck
- Darwin frog
- Marmoset
- Emperor penguin
- Rhea
- Sand grouse
- Sea horse
- Siamese fighting fish

- Wolf

As a class, research these animals and what makes the fathers so incredible.

Then, pretend it is Father's Day in the animal kingdom! Create Father's Day cards for one of the animals listed above. Let them know what they do that is so special.

## Social Studies

### **Our Community Tree**

Little Crow is saved from the hawk by his loyal group of crows, called a "murder" and Papa Crow. All of these crows are Little Crow's community and they look out for each other.

Discuss with the class different kinds of communities they have in their lives. Examples could include, but are not limited to:

- Family
- Sports team or extracurricular activity
- Church group
- School

As a class, create a giant Community Tree (like a Family Tree) of the school or classroom. Who are the people in the school community? How do they help or look out for each other? Who are they closest to within the community?

Around the tree, students should hang statements about where they fit into the school/classroom community. (i.e. "I am part of this community because I \_\_\_\_\_.")

If possible, include photographs.

### **Bullying**

Ask the class if they have ever been "bullied"? What happened? What did they do? What could they have done differently? Perhaps have students draw pictures of their situation to share with the class.

### **The Swarm**

*This activity allows children to explore ways to diffuse a bully situation.*

A child is chosen to "become" the hawk in *Song for Papa Crow*.

The child will act out what the hawk looks, sounds and feels like.

Another child is asked to play Little Crow who is being bullied by the Hawk. (NOTE: *no physical contact should be allowed during this activity*).

The rest of the class are the "murder of crows".

Once the bullying begins, ask the murder if they want to swarm over and rescue the victim. Ask, "Swarm?"

Gather the group together like they are a swarm of crows coming from a tree. Walk towards the victim and take his or her hand or lock arms and pull them into the swarm. Leave with them and pull them away from the bully situation. Move to another part of the room. The surprise element will defuse the situation.

Then if they want, the group can do a Second Swarm. Ask, "Second Swarm?"

If they agree, go back in a group to the Hawk and catch him or her up in the swarm! And several say, "No more of that stuff, get it?" or something to let them know that mean behavior is not acceptable.

*It is best to continue this practice until everyone has had the opportunity to be the Hawk and Little Crow.*

This is group power making a statement that people are to be treated with respect.

It's the group energy of the swarm that scatters the bullying behavior. People who try to intimidate others by mean words or actions fall apart when they face a force bigger than their own. Band together to make the school a safer place to be!

## Appendix

### Lyrics: Tune to Little Crow by Marit Menzin

Here comes Little Crow! Oh, no! We got to go!

Little Crow, just ignore, they are only teasing.

Your whole family thinks your voice sounds so pleasing.

When they hear your sweet caw they will find you wherever you go.

Here comes Little Crow! Oh, no! We got to go!

When you sing someone's song, don't forget your own one.

Will your papa be able to find his sweet son?

Is it really important to be like the rest of the birds?

Where is Little Crow? Oh, no! I just don't know!

When a hawk does attack, who will come to help you?

Will it be your new pals, who'll rush to your rescue?

Will they risk their own feathers, and lift you and chase him away?

Who cares, it's Little Crow, Swish-swoosh, and off we go!

Don't despair, little one, you should cry your old tune,

and your Papa will come with your family soon.

Is there anything better than having their love and support?

Here is my Little Crow? I love you! You should know!!