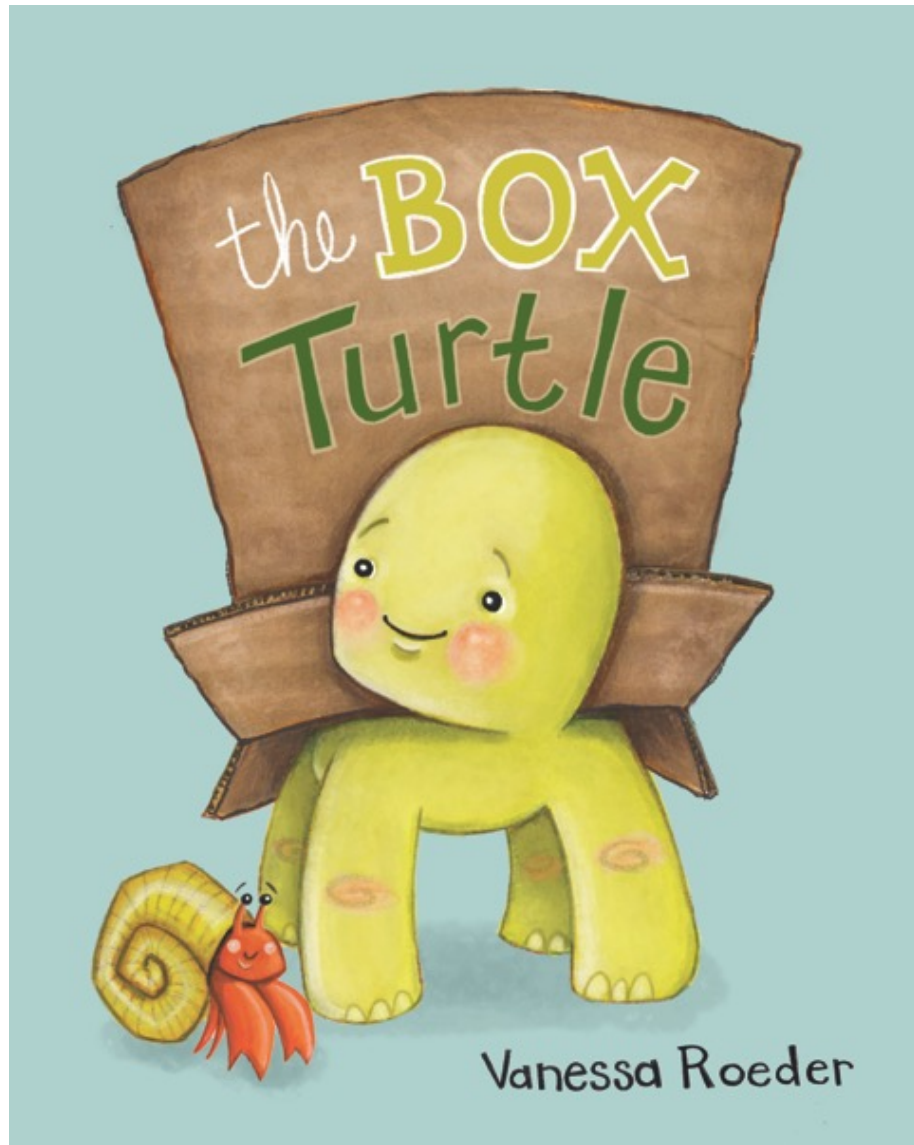


# The Box Turtle

A teacher's guide created by Marcie Colleen  
based upon the picture book  
written and illustrated by Vanessa Roeder



Published by  
Dial Books,  
an imprint of Penguin Group USA

**Vanessa Roeder, Author and Illustrator, *The Box Turtle***

Vanessa Roeder (but people call her Nessa Dee) is an illustrator, a painter, and a crafty mess-maker. A former muralist, she now spends her time making art for magazines, children’s books, and homes around the world. Her work is created with layers of paper, acrylic paint, colored pencils, thread, and trinkets.

In addition to making art, she loves teaching art to imaginative children, writing stories, acting in plays, and hanging out with the awesome ladies from her critique group, the Girllustrators. She lives in Austin, Texas with her husband, three kids, and two hairy dogs who continually feed her ideas for her next story.



Visit Vanessa at [vanessaroder.com](http://vanessaroder.com).

**Marcie Colleen  
Curriculum Writer**

This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a BA in English Education from Oswego State and a MA in Educational Theater from NYU. In addition to creating curriculum guides, Marcie can often be found writing books of her own at home in San Diego, California. Visit her at [www.thisismarciecolleen.com](http://www.thisismarciecolleen.com).

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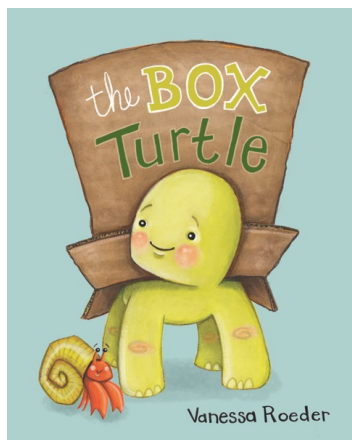
## How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *The Box Turtle* is designed for students in kindergarten through second grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *The Box Turtle* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as teaching tools throughout the guide.

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

### Book Information



#### **The Box Turtle**

**Age Range: 3 – 5 years**

**Grade Level: Preschool – 2**

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**An irresistibly cute story about finding the confidence to be yourself, starring a turtle in search of the perfect shell.**

Terrance the turtle was born without a shell, so he uses a cardboard box instead.

Terrance loves his box. It keeps him dry on soggy days, safe from snooping strangers, and is big enough to coo up with a friend. But when another turtle points out that Terrance's shell is, well, weird, he begins to wonder where there might be a better shell out there...

Eventually, and through much trial and error, Terrance learns that there's nothing wrong with being different—especially when it comes to being yourself.

"In Roeder's skillful hands, the little box turtle offers an inarguable message about the power of friendship and the importance of working with what one has."

– *Publisher's Weekly*

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# **English Language Arts**

## **Reading Comprehension**

Before reading *The Box Turtle*,

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

- Look at the cover illustration. Describe what you see.
- How would you describe the turtle?
- Who else do you see in the cover illustration?
- How do you think the turtle and the crab feel about each other? What makes you think that?
- Mimic what turtle is doing. How does it make you feel?
- Look at the illustration on the copyright/dedication page. Describe what you see.
- Can you guess what the story might be about? What are some clues you can find in the cover and copyright/dedication illustrations?

Now read or listen to the book.

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

- What is different about Terrance when he is born?
- At first, Terrance is ok with being different. But what changes his thoughts about himself?
- Terrance tries several different “shells.” Fill in the chart below with the kind of box Terrance tries and what the result is.

<b>Shell #</b>	<b>What kind of box/shell</b>	<b>The result</b>
1	mailbox	It's embarrassing when the mail carrier puts mail in his backside.
2		
3		
4		
5		

- Just when it seems like Terrance is never going to find the perfect box, what happens?

## Who is Terrance? ~ Character Study

How a character acts and what a character says can tell readers a lot about who the character is.

Read *The Box Turtle* paying close attention to the character of Terrance. Scene by scene, record your thoughts, in a chart like the one below.



What he does	Why do you think he does what he does?	How would you describe him?	What might he say?
Example: Searches for the perfect box.	Someone called his box weird and now he is self-conscious.		

After gathering information regarding Terrance's character, use the scenarios below to write a new scene for *The Box Turtle*. What would Terrance do and say in one of the following situations?

- On a camping trip.
- At the beach.
- At a birthday party.

### Critical Thinking

In fiction stories, a character usually changes in some way. Do you think Terrance changed in the story? How? (*analyzing, inferring, giving support to an idea*)

How would the story be different if Terrance had not let the bully make him feel badly about his box? (*predicting, cause and effect*)

What do you think is the message of this story? (*empathy, kindness, friendship, being ok to be different*)

## Writing Activities

### More Than Just a Shell ~ Point of View

Either as a class or individually, explore each scene in *The Box Turtle* from the point of view of the hermit crab. What is he thinking and doing in each illustration? How does he feel? What would he say to Terrance?

Advanced classes will be able to write *The Box Turtle* from the hermit crab's point of view. However, classes can also create captions and thought-bubbles.

## Language Activities

### Show, Don't Tell

Good writing does not *tell* the reader how the character is feeling, but *shows* the reader through the character's dialogue, actions, or body language. This allows the reader to conclude how the character is feeling or thinking on their own. How do you know how Terrance feels throughout the book? How does Vanessa Roeder show how he feels through illustration?

Examples of telling would be:

- A) Peter was shy.
- B) Mary was excited.
- C) Simon was upset.

Showing would be:

- A) Peter looked down at his feet.
- B) Mary jumped up and down, clapping.
- C) A tear rolled down Simon's cheek.

Rewrite the following *telling* examples, to be *showing* instead. Students can also stand up and act out how they would feel to get ideas for *showing*.

- 1) Turtle was sleepy.
- 2) Hermit Crab was nervous.
- 3) Raccoon was hungry.



- 4) Turtle was sad.
- 5) Hermit Crab was happy.

## **Speaking and Listening Activities**

Picture books are written to be read aloud. Here are some other ways to bring *The Box Turtle* to life in your classroom and have fun with speaking and listening skills!

### **Talking About Feelings**

We all feel various feelings at different times. It is ok to feel happy or sad or angry.

Post the names of feelings in different colors for everyone to see. Have children choose a feeling to make a sentence about that feeling.

“Today I feel excited because we have pizza for lunch.”

“Last week I felt lonely because my brother went away.”

“Yesterday I felt worried because I lost my jacket.”

### **Mime/Charades**

Mime a feeling with gestures and facial expressions. Then have others try to guess that feeling. For a variation, have children draw the feeling from a “hat”—a basket/box/bag.

### **Mirroring**

Have students stand in pairs. One person will be the actor. The other will be the mirror. The actor will make different movements slowly; the mirror must try to do the exact same movements at the same time as the actor—just like a mirror. Then switch places. Discuss the experience. Then change partners. Was the experience the same? different? How?

### **Drama**

Create a TV commercial to encourage people to read *The Box Turtle*.



# **Math**

## **Word Problems**

*For younger students, the use of pictures or props can be helpful in figuring out word problems. Note to teachers: Use the word problems below as inspiration to write your own, based on the illustrations in The Box Turtle or any other book of study.*

The "Fancy Hats" illustration:

- 1) How many hat boxes are outside the shop?

On a piece of paper, draw 4 fancy hat boxes..

Draw 2 more fancy hat boxes.

How many fancy hat boxes are there now?

Write the equation:  $\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$

What if three fancy hat boxes were put away? How many fancy hat boxes would be left?

Write the equation:  $\underline{\quad} - \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$

The "Buzz Buzz Bumblebees" illustration:

- 2) How many bumblebees do you see?

On a piece of paper, 11 bumblebees.

Draw 3 more bumblebees.

How many bumblebees do you have?

Write the equation:  $\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$

What if 5 bumblebees flew away? How many bumblebees would be left?

Write the equation:  $\underline{\quad} - \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$



## **A Box Scavenger Hunt**

This scavenger hunt will help students sharpen observational and counting skills.

- Create several copies of the paper cut-outs of different shapes that represent different kinds of boxes.

- Mailbox
  - Hat box
  - Litter box
  - Jack-in-the-box
- Number each different shape set from 1-5.
  - Hide these cut-outs around the room.
  - Assign students a certain kind of box.
  - Ask students to find their set of boxes numbered 1-5. If a student sees a type of box they are NOT collecting, he/she must leave it for another student to find.
  - The first student to find a box 1-5 sequence, wins.
  - Additional activity: This same game can be played with a set pattern of colors or pictures to teach sequencing.



## **Science**

### **Terrance Research Project**

How much do you know about box turtles? It's time to research them.

Information to be gather must include:

- How can you tell a box turtle from another kind of turtle?
- What box turtles eat.
- Where box turtles live.
- How do box turtles show how they feel?
- Draw a picture of a box turtle.
- Write 3 words that describe a box turtle.
- Interesting fact #1
- Interesting fact #2
- Interesting fact #3

Students may use the internet or the library to complete their research. Once all the needed research is done, students must create a poster visual with all the necessary information and present their findings to the class.

BONUS: Some students can continue by researching hermit crabs, raccoons, and other types of turtles.

### **A Shell for Hermit Crab**

Although its not often that a turtle doesn't have a shell, it is true that hermit crabs live within "found" shells from other animals. And in some cases, they get pretty creative.

A Google image search for "creative hermit crab shells" will turn up some fun photographs of crabs living in broken glass bottles, bottle caps and even some man-made shells from Lego and hand-blown glass.

Research what kinds of shells are best for hermit crabs and design your own using what you learn. Get creative!

- Provide the students with several craft items (rulers, paper, cardboard tubing, empty boxes, tape, glue, etc.). Check the recycling for other ideas of materials.
- Each group must create a shell for a hermit crab. (Be sure to find out how big hermit crabs are!)

Offer up awards to increase the competition.

- Most Attractive Shell
- Most Materials Shell
- Least Materials Shell

*Extra Challenge:* Present all of the class shells to an actual hermit crab and see which one he picks!



# Social Studies

## **In Someone Else's Shell Discussion**

- Have you ever felt like you didn't fit in like Terrance?
- What makes you feel better?
- If you were Terrance, what would you use for a shell?
- Why did Hermit Crab offer his own shell?
  
- How is Hedgehog different from his friends?
- What makes you different from your friends or classmates?
- What makes you the same as your friends or classmates?
- Do you ever treat people differently because they look or act different than you? Why?
- Have you been treated differently because you look different than other people? Was this treatment positive or negative?
- How do you want to be treated by your classmates, friends and family?
- How should we act towards others?
- In what situations is it necessary to treat others differently than the way you want to be treated? (*others sometimes have different preferences than you*)
  
- Who do you think Terrance's best friend is?
- Tell about your best friend.
- What makes you a good friend?
- What do you look for in a friend?
- What kinds of things do you do for your friends?
- Are you only kind to your friends?
- Do you help others even when they are not your friends?
- Provide an example of when you helped someone you didn't know. Did this make you feel good?
- How do you expect others to respond when you complete an act of kindness for them?
- What obligation do you have to help others?



## **What Makes a Good Friend?**

Discuss what makes a good friend. Draw upon examples from their own friendships and create a list describing what makes a good friend.

Example: Good friends...

- Are reliable.
- Do kind things for one another and use kind language.
- Help out when a friend is sad or has a problem.
- Like to spend time together.
- Have fun with one another.

Look closely at *The Box Turtle*. Which animals act like friends to Terrance? Which do not?

As a class, create an action plan on how to be a good friend.

### **Finding Commonalities/Uniqueness**

Terrance is different from the other turtles – he doesn't have a shell.

Finding what you have in common with other people is a good way to start a meaningful relationship. Here is a way to learn what you have in common with your classmates, while also celebrating what makes each of you unique.

Materials: A pen and two pieces of paper.

- This activity can be done as a whole class or in pairs.
- On one sheet of paper, you will have ten minutes to come up with a list of things in common. Completely obvious answers such as "we both have hair" or "we are both in \_\_\_\_\_ class" are not allowed!
- After ten minutes, switch to the other paper. You now have ten minutes to come up with a list of things that are unique to only one person.
- Share both lists with the class when finished.

### **More Than My Shell**

Just like Terrance, we are more than what we look like on the outside.

The Project:

- Have each student lay down on a large piece of paper while someone traces their body with a pencil.
- Once the student has the silhouette of their body, write words that describe who they are on the inside of the outline. Examples can be likes and dislikes, what they want to be when they grow up, what makes them smile, etc.
- Finished silhouettes can be displayed with the title "More Than My Shell."