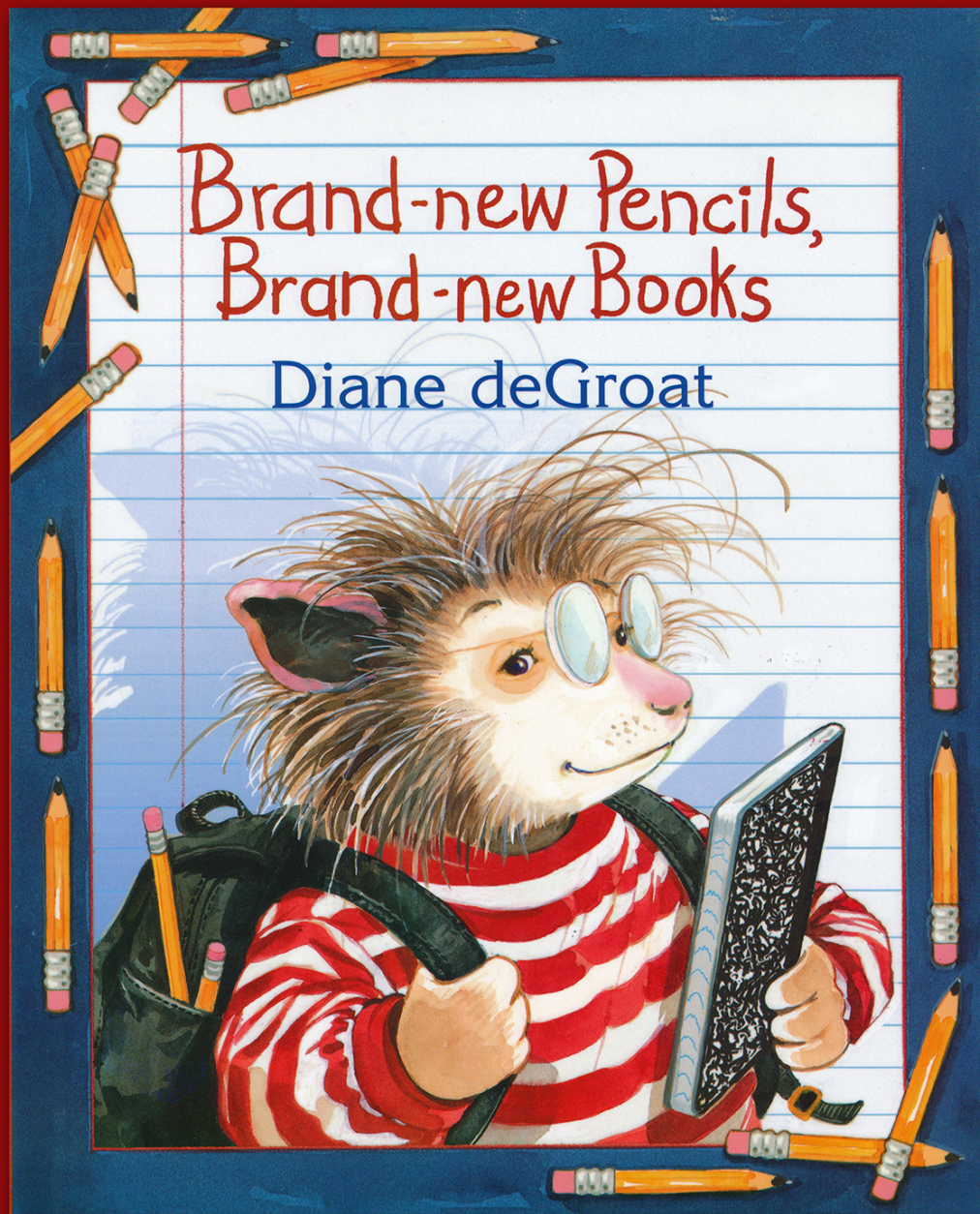


# Curriculum Guide and Activity Kit

Aligns with Common Core State Standards



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

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ISBN-13: 978-0060726164

The author convincingly exposes her hero's emotions, which here are in tune with those experienced by any fledgling first grader.  
—PW

# Brand-new Pencils, Brand-new Books

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:

Gilbert is excited about the first day of first grade. But he's also nervous. Will his teacher be nice? Will the classwork be too hard? Will Patti still be his best friend this year? Gilbert's fears are eased when he meets his teacher, Mrs. Byrd, and makes a new friend. He begins to understand that everyone has things they are good at and no so good at. This story celebrates each student's individuality and creates a sense of security in knowing that old friends are always there. Children can relate to Gilbert's apprehension in this humorous, yet realistic, story about first grade friends.

## 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).

*Brand-new Pencils, Brand-new Books* has won the following award:  
IRA-Children's Book Council Children's Choice

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.

- In this book Gilbert is an opossum who is starting first grade. How do you think he feels? How did you feel on your first day of school? What does it mean to have “butterflies in your stomach”?
- Have you ever been nervous about something? What was it? How did you feel after the situation was over? Did your feelings change?
- Look at the cover of this book and predict what it will be about. Do you think this story will be fiction or non-fiction? Why?

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

- What were some fears that Gilbert had in this story? Did Gilbert's first day of school turn out the way he thought it would?
- Discuss some of the friends that Gilbert made in his new class. What were they like?
- Why did Patti say that Gilbert was her old friend? What is special about an old friend? Do you have an old friend?
- Gilbert was sitting alone in the cafeteria. How do you think he felt when Frank sat next to him and he saw they had the same Martian Space Pilot lunch box?
- Think of an example from the story that shows that Gilbert liked school at the end of his first day.
- Turn and talk with a friend. Describe Gilbert's day. Compare Gilbert's first day of school to your first day of school.

RL1, RL2, RL3, RL5, RL7, SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4, SL5, SL6, L1, L5, L6

## Activities

### **Writing:** (grades K-1) RL3, W2, W8, SL1, L1, L2

Discuss with the students how the animals in Gilbert's class had special talents, or something that they were good at. Ask the children if they can recall these abilities. For example, Philip was a good reader, Lewis was a good climber, and Patti used her manners. Ask children about their own talents leading them to discover that each person is good at something.

Ask students to write a sentence telling what they do well on a strip of paper. Children may need a sentence starter on the board that reads *I can.....* or use the strips on page 4. As an option, you may use a large sentence strip for whole group. Place their sentence in an old coffee can or empty breadcrumb can labeled "I Can" on the front. After all the children place their sentence in the can, the teacher selects a strip of paper from the can and reads only the name of the child that wrote the sentence. That child will act out the sentence using no words, just motion. For example, if a student wrote a sentence that says, "I can swim," then he would pantomime swimming, and his classmates would guess his talent. If another child wrote, "I can do a cartwheel," then she would show her action, and her friends would guess her talent. This is a wonderful introduction for the first day of school to get to know students' names and their gifts, as well as a beginning lesson on verbs.

As an extension, ask the students to think of something they might want to learn. For example, Lewis was a good climber, but not good at painting. Philip was a good reader, but not great at climbing. Children who are ready to expand their writing can write about something they would like to learn how to do or something they might need to practice. For example, a child might write: *I want to learn how to ride my bike without training wheels.*

### **Writing:** (grades 2-3) RL3, W8, SL1, L1, L2

Talk to the students about Gilbert's biggest fear about school. Guide children to the fact that Gilbert was afraid that his teacher might not be nice. Ask students if they have ever felt that way. Talk to students and remind them that at the end of the story Gilbert was happy to find that Mrs. Byrd was kind. One nice thing she did was to include all the students when making the class rules.

Tell students that they are going to help to compose a list of rules for their classroom. Pair students up and ask them to create a poster of rules for the classroom. The poster must include between 5 and 8 rules and must be positive statements that will be followed. For example, instead of saying, "Don't yell in class," we might say, "We will use quiet voices." Once children are finished they will present their posters to their classmates. Compare the posters to see if many students listed similar rules. These rules can be consolidated and compiled into one list that will be hung in the classroom. Children can then sign the poster as a contract that they will do their best to follow the rules each day.

**I can \_\_\_\_\_.**

**I can \_\_\_\_\_.**

**I can \_\_\_\_\_.**

**I can \_\_\_\_\_.**



**Math:** (grades K-1) 1.0A, 1.NBT

Show students the illustration of Gilbert filling his backpack. Ask the children to notice how many pencils he has. Tell the class that Mrs. Byrd sent out a list of school supplies that each student needs for the first day of school.

Here is the list:

**2** pencils

**5** erasers

**3** notebooks

**8** crayons

How many items did Gilbert pack in all? Ask children to explain their thought process in figuring out this problem. What were some strategies that the students used and are they able to articulate their method? Some ways to solve the problem may include: using a number line, using base ten blocks, stacking up unifix cubes, using mental math, drawing a picture, making tally marks, or writing out an equation with multiple addends. Call on various children to show how they worked through the problem.

**Math:** (grades 2-3) 2.MD, 2.OA

Discuss Gilbert's confusion about the nametags on the desks. Ask students to pretend that their own nametag is worth money. Tell them to use the code (page 6) to find out how much their names are worth. For example, GILBERT would add his letters to show (G) \$0.07 + (I) \$0.09 + (L) \$0.12 + (B) \$0.02 + (E) \$0.05 + (R) \$0.18 + (T) \$0.20 for a total of \$0.73. Next, ask them to compare their name with 5 other students in the room. Ask the students if the length of their name matters or if it's the specific letters? Would *Zane* be worth more than *Abigail* for example?

**These are the letters in my name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

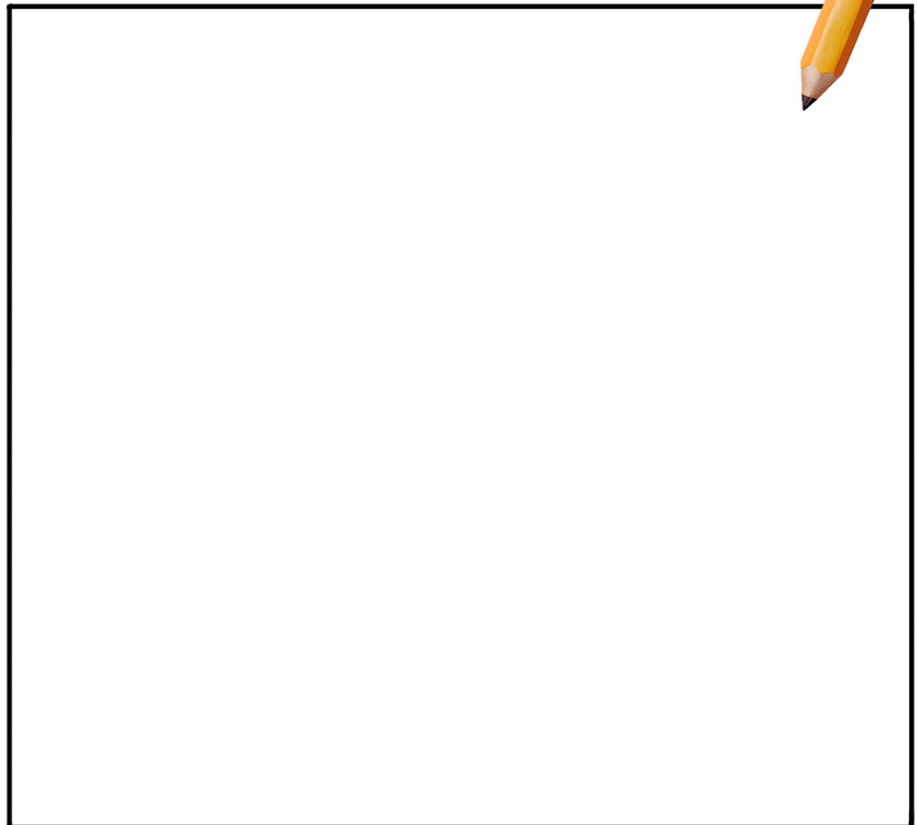
**A** —\$0.01  
**B** —\$0.02  
**C** —\$0.03  
**D** —\$0.04  
**E** —\$0.05  
**F** —\$0.06  
**G** —\$0.07  
**H** —\$0.08  
**I** —\$0.09  
**J** —\$0.10  
**K** —\$0.11  
**L** —\$0.12  
**M** —\$0.13  
**N** —\$0.14  
**O** —\$0.15  
**P** —\$0.16  
**Q** —\$0.17  
**R** —\$0.18  
**S** —\$0.19  
**T** —\$0.20  
**U** —\$0.21  
**V** —\$0.22  
**W** —\$0.23  
**X** —\$0.24  
**Y** —\$0.25  
**Z** —\$0.26

Using the code, figure out how much your name is worth. Use the workbox at the bottom of the paper to do your work. You may use real coins.

**My name is worth** \_\_\_\_\_

**The value of my name is worth more than this classmate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The value of my name is worth less than this classmate:** \_\_\_\_\_





**Science:** (grades K-1) W2, W3, SL1

Ask the children to retell the story of Gilbert's first day of school. How did his day end? Who did Gilbert see at the ice cream shop? What did Gilbert think about his principal after he saw him eating ice cream with sprinkles? Ask children to think about the process of making ice cream. Have children predict the ingredients that are needed. Tell the children they are going to make ice cream. Each child can help to shake the bag as they pass it around the room saying "Shake, shake, ice cream make!"

**What you'll need:**

- 1 pint size Ziploc bag
- 1 gallon size Ziploc bag
- Ice cubes (enough to fill the gallon size bag about half full)
- 2 cups half and half
- 1 cup salt (The bigger the granules the better. Kosher or rock salt works best, but table salt is fine)
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Your favorite mix-ins such as chocolate chips, fresh fruit, or crushed cookies.

(continued on page 8)

### **How to make it:**

1. Combine the sugar, half and half, and vanilla extract in the pint size bag and seal it tightly.
2. Place the salt and ice in the gallon size bag. Then place the sealed smaller bag inside as well. Seal the larger bag and shake the bag until the mixture hardens, about 5 minutes. Feel the bag to determine when it's done.
3. Take the smaller bag out of the larger one, add your mix-ins, and enjoy!

After the ice cream is done and children have had a taste, ask them to talk about the process of making ice cream, using transitional words. Model appropriate sequencing for children such as, "First, we.... Then, we.... Next, we.... Finally, we...." Write the series of steps on chart paper for children to see



### **Science:** (grades 2-3) W3, SL1, SL4, L1, L2

Older students will also enjoy the process of making ice cream. Lead them through a similar series of steps, engaging them in a discussion about the ingredients used to make ice cream and why each one is important. For example, what is the purpose of salt? When the ice cream is done the students can write the recipe down including the sequence of steps taken to make the delicious treat. Children can share the recipe with parents and try to make it at home! Worksheet on page 8.


**Today we made \_\_\_\_\_ at school!**

These were the ingredients we used:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

These were the steps we followed:

- 1.** \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.** \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.** \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.** \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.** \_\_\_\_\_

This is a picture of me enjoying the snack we made 

**Art:** (grades K-1) RF1, SL4, SL6, L1

Names are important to children. Their names identify them to others and to themselves. Gilbert had trouble finding his nametag on his desk on the first day of school. Talk to the children about why nametags are important and why we use them. Tell the class that they are going to practice writing the letters in their names and that they will make their own nametags. Setting up 4 different stations will be ideal for this activity.

**Station #1:** Students will be practicing the formation of the letters in their names using a sand or salt tray. Having an adult oversee this station is helpful because incorrect letter formation will reinforce bad habits in penmanship. Remind the child where to begin each letter. It is important that letters never start from the bottom and go up.

**Station #2:** Students will be using shaving cream on tables or desks to practice forming the letters in their names. The activities at stations 1 and 2 are both tactile experiences that will help form good habits and will create a foundation for accurate letter formation. It is also a quick assessment for the teacher to check which children may have weak fine motor skills or need more assistance in letter formation.

**Station #3:** Each student will create a large nametag using Bingo daubers. Children will be able to choose their color or colors and dab out their names on a big piece of 12x18 construction paper. Allow the nametags to dry.

**Station #4:** Students can cut out pictures from magazines that show something about them. For example, a child may cut out a bowl of ice cream if they love ice cream. A student that swims may cut out a picture of a beach. Ask the children to glue these pictures around their nametag that they just created at station 3. Children can then tell about themselves.

“My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I like \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Art:** (grades 2-3) SL1, SL5

Discuss with children how Gilbert felt when he wasn't aware of the nametags and found himself sitting at the wrong desk. Talk to students about the purpose of nametags. Show the following materials and tell the students that they are going to make their own nametags to hang up. (Sample steps on page 12.)

12 x18 white construction paper

Pencil

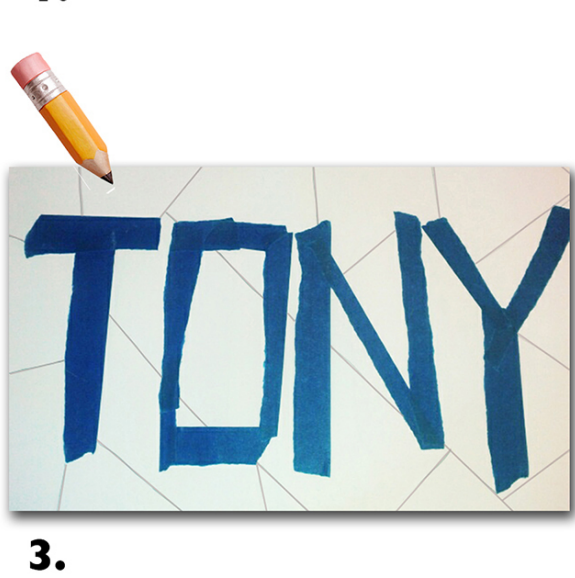
Colored chalk

Ruler

Masking tape

Give each child a piece of large white construction paper. Instruct the children on how to write out their names using block letters made of simple lines; rulers may be helpful. Be sure to check and make sure the names aren't too small. Once the names are complete, give each child strips of masking tape and show them how to cover their letters completely. Next, use a pencil to show students how to divide their paper into sections and allow them to create different shapes around their names that will cover their entire paper. Then, use brightly colored chalk to outline each section. Encourage children to use different colors to outline all sections and then put the chalk away. Instruct children on how to use their fingers to smudge each color from the outline inward to fill up the whole inside space. Allow students to smudge all the colors until the entire sheet is covered, except for the tape. Show the students how to peel away the masking tape. Underneath the tape the students will see the stark white contrast of their names. Finally, ask the students to erase the light pencil markings they first created in step one.

Ask students to leave their nametags on their desks. Children can then get up and walk around to look at the various nametags their new classmates have made while also learning their names. During this icebreaking activity children will begin to engage in conversation and get to know one another.



## CHALK ART NAMETAG

This song introduces the main characters in Diane deGroat's Gilbert and Friends series. Please note that not all characters listed in the song are included in every book. Feel free to use just the verses that pertain to the book you are using. As an option, sing the whole song and let your students know they will be meeting these characters in future Gilbert books!

Use the images on pages 15 - 17 to make paper bag puppets or popsicle stick puppets. It will help the children remember who each character is.

## GILBERT AND FRIENDS

Sung to the tune of *Yankee Doodle*.

Gilbert is a possum boy  
Who learns a lot in grade one  
Sometimes he makes a silly mistake  
But in the end he has fun

Mrs. Byrd's their favorite teacher  
And she is a quail  
She teaches them to do their best  
So they will never fail

Margaret is a badger girl  
She sometimes likes to tease  
But when she gets to know someone  
She'll try her best to please

Philip is a tattling duck  
He loves to read and spell  
Every time he takes a test  
He always does so well

Lola is his little sister  
She can be a big pest  
But she thinks that Gilbert is  
the coolest and the best

Patty is a sweet hedgehog  
With bright and smiley eyes  
She's Gilbert's friend at home and school  
She's thoughtful, kind, and wise

Lewis is a big woodchuck  
Who's bossy to his friends  
He likes to tweak on Gilbert's nose  
He can't wait 'til school ends

Frank is Gilbert's raccoon friend  
He sometimes lends his mitt  
He'll be his friend until the end  
What a perfect fit

Kenny is a wise owl  
Who never misses school  
Does what's right and never fights  
And follows every rule



## Author's Note

Although *Brand-new Pencils, Brand-new Books* (2005) is about the first day of school, it was the twelfth book I wrote for the Gilbert and Friends series. I knew Gilbert pretty well by then, but I wanted to write a backstory to explore how it all began. Having Gilbert start a new grade with Mrs. Byrd meant that I would have to decide which grade that was. The stories were not written in calendar order, so most books you read in the series will not mention how old Gilbert is, or what grade he's in. I wanted readers to think that maybe he was their age. Before this book was published, some students I asked were sure he was a first grader, some said second grader, and some were even positive he was a third grader. But now it was time to decide once and for all.

Based on the valentines he had written in *Roses Are Pink, Your Feet Really Stink* (1996), I placed him in first grade. It's been a while since I was a first grader myself—a long while—but I could still remember the anxiety of the first day of school. The unpredictability. The what-if's. But as soon as I saw those art supplies in Mrs. I-Forget-Her-Name's classroom, I was in heaven. (Notice how I remember the art supplies, but not the teacher's name.) Manila paper (I heard it as "vanilla" paper), HUGE newsprint paper, poster paints—all at my disposal. How did this teacher know that I loved art? And that I didn't have this stuff at home? And why didn't she understand that I wasn't the least bit interested in learning to read or do addition? At some point I learned to read and at another point I learned math, but I never lost my passion for painting and drawing. Like Gilbert, I discovered that we each have our own special talents. Mine wasn't math.

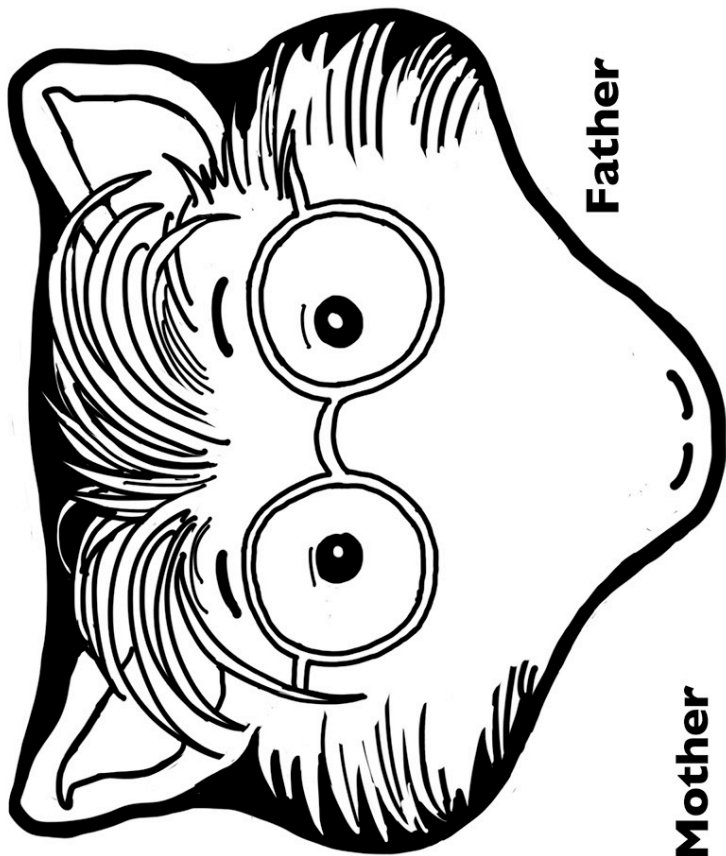
The original title I had written for this book was *Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho, It's Off to School We Go*. Unfortunately it was too close to copyright infringement with the Disney song that the dwarves sing in the movie, *Snow White*. So at the last minute, before going to press, my editor and I changed the title to match the next book that was already in progress—*No More Pencils, No More Books, No More Teachers Dirty Looks!*

The art for this book was done partially in Photoshop, printed out, and painted with Windsor Newton watercolor paint on Arches 140 lb. hot press watercolor paper. But I still miss the smell of a brand-new sheet of vanilla paper in Mrs. What's-Her-Name's class. Non-sequitur alert: Please ignore the fact that Patti is spelled with an "i" in this book, and with a "y" in others. Long story.

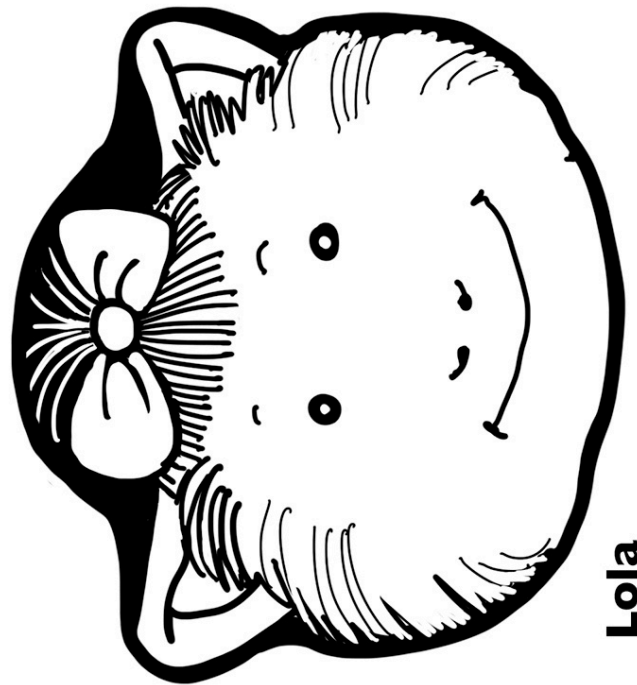
—Diane deGroat



photo: Shelley Rotner

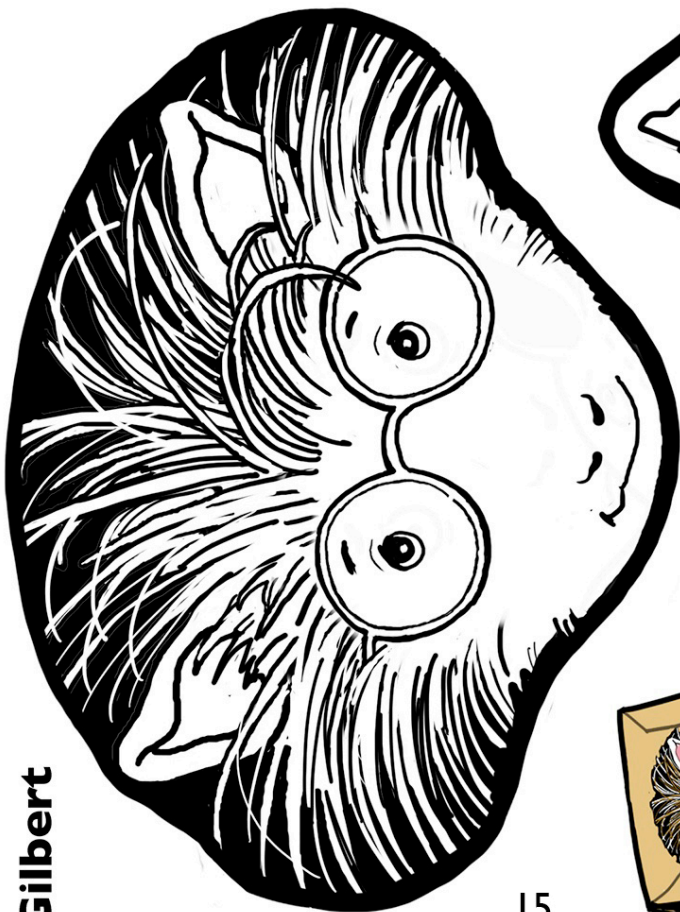
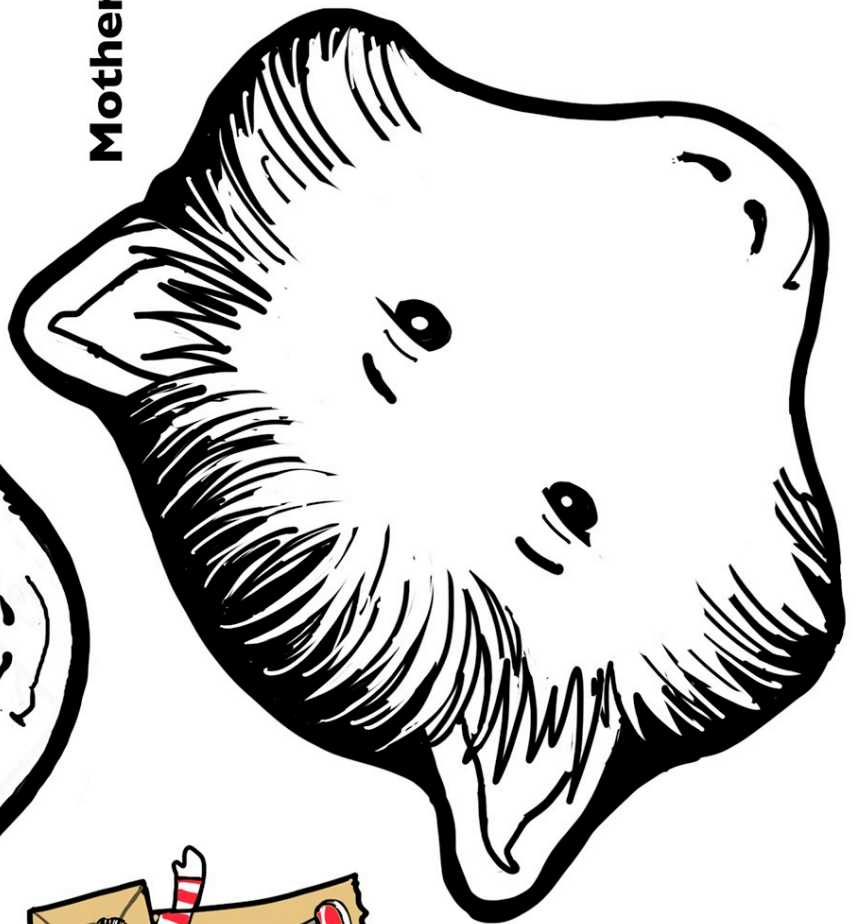


Father



Lola

Mother



Gilbert



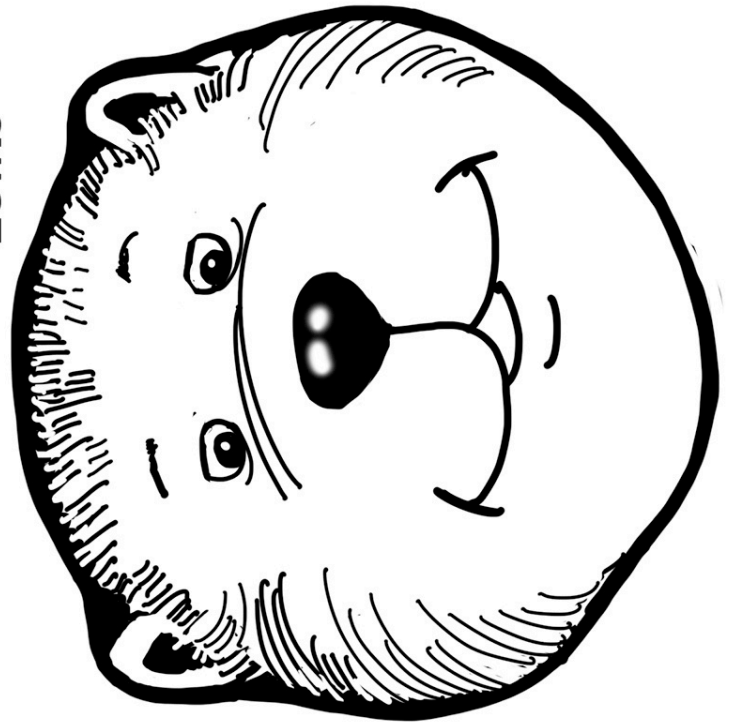
### PAPER BAG PUPPETS

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

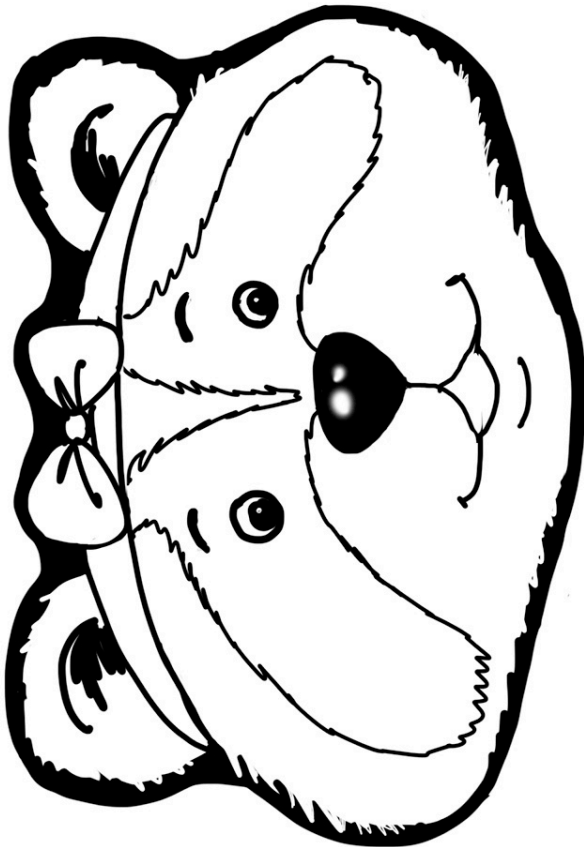
**Patty**



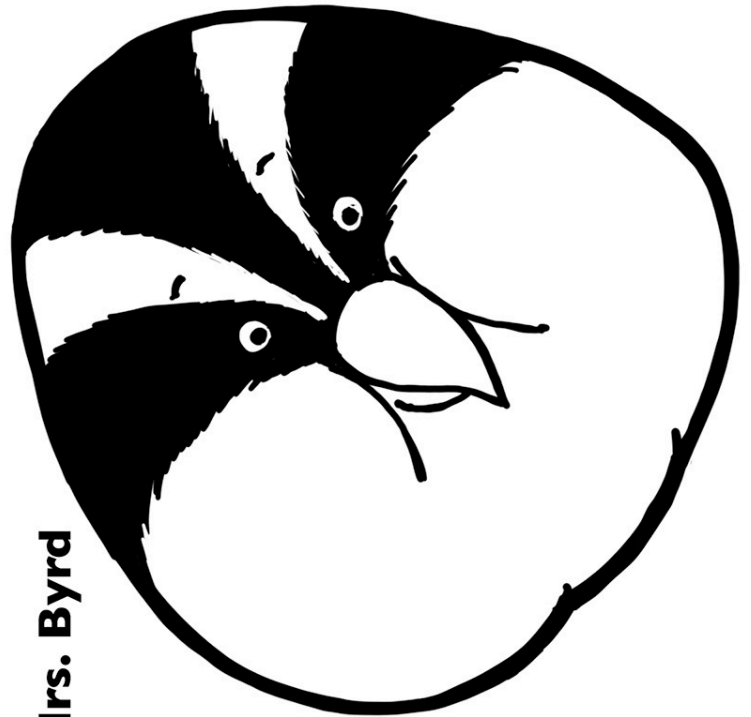
**Lewis**



**Margaret**



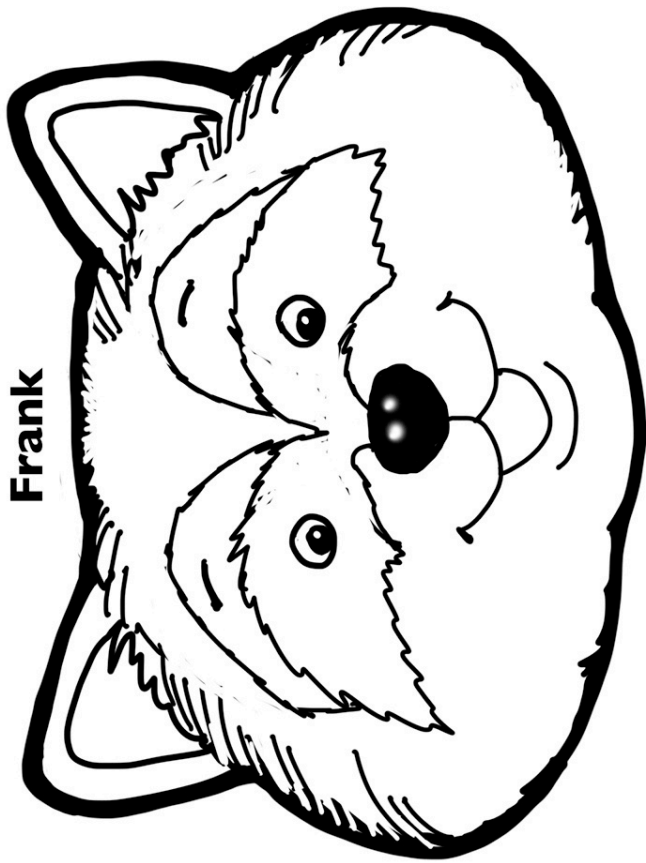
**Mrs. Byrd**



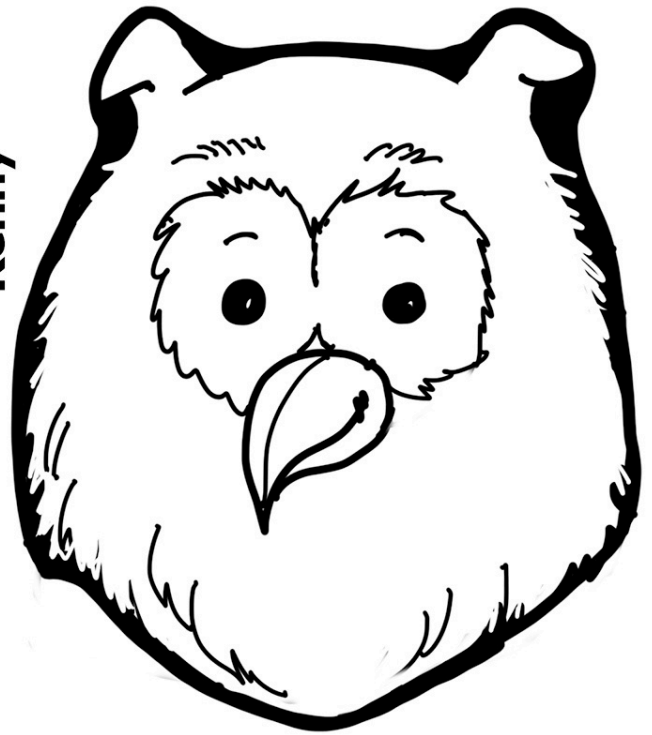
**Paper Bag Puppets**

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

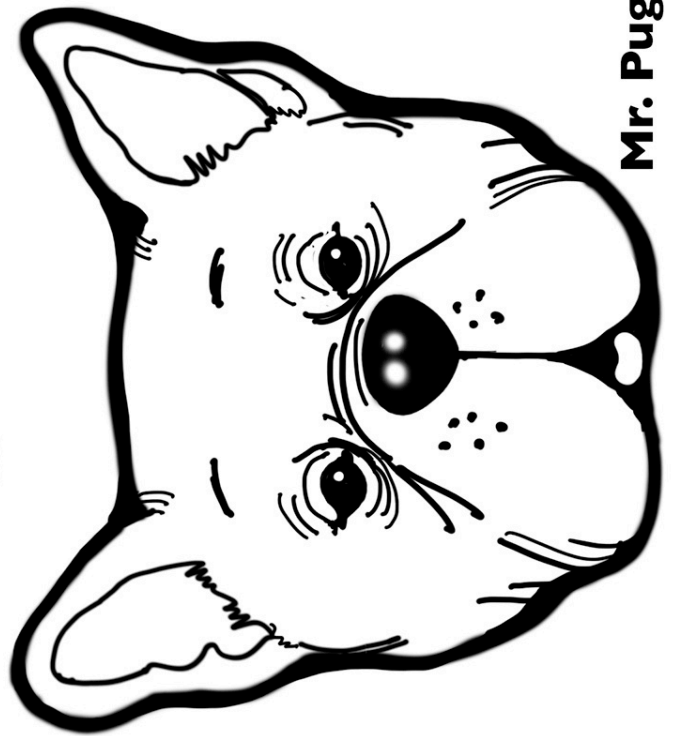
**Frank**



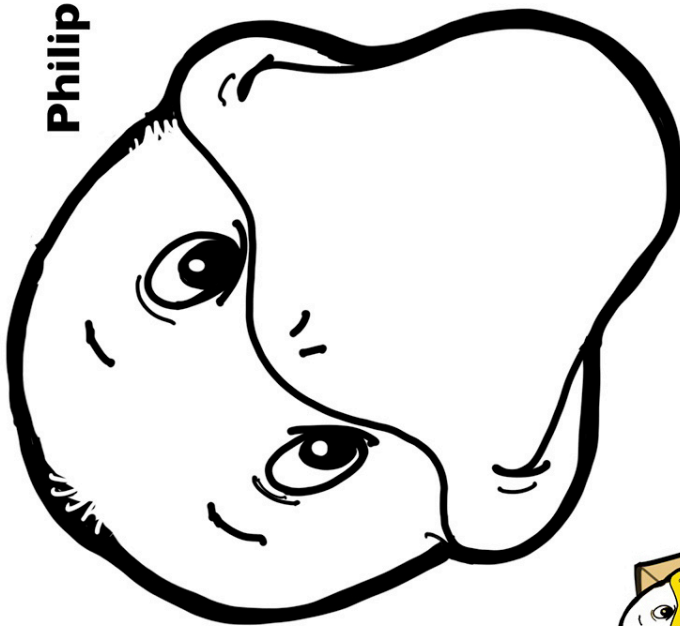
**Kenny**



**Mr. Pug**



**Philip**



**Paper Bag Puppets**

Cut out a face and glue to the bottom of a lunch bag.

Draw on a body, Optional: glue arms.

# Read.

