



RedRover Readers Program and Forest School Partnership

GRADE(S): PRE-K-3

SEL ALIGNMENT: Responsible decision-making;
Self-Awareness; Social Awareness

TEACHING GUIDE

BIRD BOY

Written by Matthew Burgess | Illustrated by Shahrzad Maydani

TIME: 35 minutes (reading and discussion - 15; activity - 10)

MATERIALS: Bird Boy book, bird coloring page

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Noticing our emotions.
- Feeling nervous, lonely, and like we belong.
- Responding to an unkindness of “name-calling” by transforming it into a positive.
- How do we feel when we are in nature?

Land acknowledgment: You may want to do a land acknowledgment before this reading and lesson to determine what land you are on. [Native-land.ca](https://native-land.ca) is an app to help map Indigenous territories, treaties, and languages.

BEFORE READING: As a group, discuss the following topics.

- How many of you have ever seen a bird before?
- Let’s talk about a few words first. What does the word “nervous” mean? (worried about something) Have you ever felt nervous before? Maybe when you started at a new school?
- What does it mean to be “lonely”? (alone, not having friends)
- What does it mean to “belong”? (to feel like you are part of a group and accepted for who you are)

DURING READING:

- On the page where the boy is looking at the ants, ask what the boy is doing in this picture. Why?
- How did Nicco become known as Bird Boy? How did he feel about being called Bird Boy? Have your feelings ever been hurt by something that someone said?
- What happened after Nicco decided to make the best of the kids calling him Bird Boy?
- On the page where Nicco is pretending to be a pelican with wide-open wings. Ask: How do you think he feels in this picture? How can you tell? What about his face tells you he is (happy, feeling peaceful, one with nature, etc.)?
- On the page where Nicco is on the swing, ask, why does Nicco not feel nervous anymore? What has changed since the beginning of the story?
- How does Nicco feel when he is in nature and with the birds?
- Where does he feel like he belongs? Where does he feel connected? How do you feel when you are in nature?



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AFTER READING:

- What does Nicco imagine during the story? (he was an eagle, pelican, macaw, penguin, hummingbird)
- What does it mean that he can be “completely, and delightfully himself?”
- Tell the children: now let’s go back to when the kids on the playground called him Bird Boy. Why do you think they called him that? (Possible responses from the children: they were trying to be rude or mean.) Ask, what would you say if you were on the playground with them and saw another child acting like a bird? Tell the children that sometimes we try to name things and we don’t understand how our words can affect others. Remember when Nicco chose to not let it bother him? He made something good out of something rude and unkind, didn’t he? We are in control of our emotions. We get to choose how to react when someone calls us a name. Nicco decided to welcome the name and let his true, bird-loving self, soar. What happened when Nicco was himself and liked the name Bird Boy? (One friend started playing with him then another...) Ask: Why do you think this happened?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Imagine you are a bird (gross motor movement). Nicco imagined he was several different birds in the story. Flap your arms and pretend you are different birds from the story. Then stand like a statue like Nicco did and see if any birds come and visit you.
- Coloring activity. Visit justcolor.net/kids/coloring-pages-of-animals/birds and print out coloring pages for the kids to color. This is a helpful activity for when you are waiting for everyone to arrive and get settled before the reading.
- Choose a bird that was mentioned in the story or another bird you know of and learn more about them. Where do they live? What do they like to eat? What do they look like?
- Observing nature. Invite the children to sit very still and observe their surroundings. What do they hear? What do they see? Are there any tiny ants crawling around like Nicco sat and observed in the story? Choose one thing in nature to observe and watch it for two whole minutes without talking. What did you notice? What happened first, second, and third? (sequencing, observing, self-control, stillness, social, and self-awareness)
- Connecting and belonging in nature. Invite the children to think about where they feel comfortable. Where do you feel like they belong? How do you feel when you look at nature? What do you notice about your body and emotions when you are in places where you feel like you belong? Where do you feel curious to explore? What parts of the land have you visited and what parts are still a mystery to you?



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AT THE END OF THE LESSON: Ask students to reflect on these questions.

- How did you feel about today's book and discussion?
- What did you learn that you didn't already know?

DON'T FORGET TO REPORT YOUR READING:

RedRover.org/reportreadings