

# THE NOCTURNALS EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

## Grow & Read Early Reader Program



### COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:

*The Nocturnals* series provides young readers with opportunities to explore meaningful stories that support comprehension skills, accelerated vocabulary, and themes of friendship aligned to character development. While posing questions in this guide, please prompt children to support their responses with evidence from the books (phrases, dialogue, and illustrations) to enhance their access to the complex texts.

This educator's guide incorporates text-dependent questions and activities grounded in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Reading: Literature, Writing, Foundational Skills, and Speaking and Listening. **For more information on the Common Core, visit [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org).**

### SERIES OVERVIEW

*The Nocturnals* series features three unlikely friends: Dawn, a serious fox; Tobin, a sweet pangolin; and Bismark, a loudmouthed, pint-sized sugar glider. The stories all play out in their nighttime world with teamwork, friendship, and humor in every adventure. Each book has bonus content that includes fun facts about *The Nocturnals*!

### ABOUT GROW & READ

The Grow & Read book program was developed under the supervision of reading specialists to develop kids' reading skills while emphasizing the delight of storytelling. Visit [nocturnalsworld.com](http://nocturnalsworld.com) to download additional resources and printable activities including the Nocturnals Kindness Game, Maker Space crafts, STEM connections, and more.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tracey Hecht is a writer who has written, directed, and produced for film. She created a Nocturnals Read Aloud Writing Program in partnership with the New York Public Library that has expanded nationwide. Tracey splits her time between Oquossoc, Maine, and New York City.



This guide was written by Dawn Jacobs Martin, PhD, an Assistant Clinical Professor of Education at University of Maryland, College Park. She works to improve the academic outcomes for students with disabilities through teacher development, instructional design, and research in the areas of response to intervention, social support, and parent involvement.

# Grow & Read Early Reader Program Benefits!

**GROW & READ**  
Developing Confidence for Success in Reading

**1**  
GROW & READ  
**Level 1: Starting to Read (Preschool-Grade 1)**  
Simple sentences and easy sight words for growing confidence

**2**  
GROW & READ  
**Level 2: Reading with Help (Grades 1-2)**  
Longer text, problem solving and growing vocabulary

**3**  
GROW & READ  
**Level 3: Reading Independently (Grades 2-3)**  
More complex plots, feeding imagination and growing information skills

- The Grow & Read book program was developed under the supervision of reading specialists to develop kids' reading skills while emphasizing the delight of storytelling.
- To compliment the narrative, each book has captivating illustrations that strengthen the understanding of the story for new readers.
- The series can help children enjoy learning to read and is perfect for shared reading and reading aloud.
- The series features unusual animals and plants that invite kids to learn more about science.
- Our Grow & Read levels will help you choose the best book for every reader. Each book will have Lexile and Fountas & Pinnell guided reading levels and grade level equivalents.

“*The Nocturnals* does not disappoint...this tale uses plenty of important vocabulary words, easily decipherable within context.” —*Booklist*

“Hecht successfully set the stage for more adventurous outings down the road.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“Beginning readers will enjoy this tale and will cheer on the threesome who defeat a bully by using their words.” —*School Library Journal*

“Especially and unreservedly recommended for family, elementary school, and community library collections.” —*Midwest Book Review*

# I. Pre-Reading & Listening Activities



1 Prior to reading, ask learners to define the word “nocturnal” in their own words. Then, provide photographs of different types of animals (e.g., fox, bear, pangolin, sugar glider, snake, rooster, squirrel, possum). Encourage learners to (a) name each animal and (b) complete the picture-sorting activity of “nocturnal” and “not nocturnal” animals using a graphic organizer.

2 Before reading each text, allow children to explore the title, pictures, and overall organization of the text. As participants turn the pages, explain that the book is organized by chapter numbers. Challenge learners to think about how each chapter might differ. Then, ask children to make a prediction about one or two important events that will take place in the story (picture walk). Have each child support the prediction with specific details from the illustrations.

3 Tell the children that stories can be “fiction” (make believe) or “nonfiction” (real). Pose the following questions: *Do the animals in the story act like real animals? Do real animals talk? How are these animals different than real animals? How would animals act in a nonfiction book? Have you read a nonfiction book about an animal? What did you learn?*

4 Learner understanding of the author and illustrator is an important foundational skill. Ask: *Who is the author of the book? What is the author’s job? Who is the illustrator? What is the illustrator’s job? Why are both roles important?*

5 Define alliteration for participants using a simple explanation, such as: *a sentence or phrase with words that have the same letter or sound.* Display the title of the book to the learners. Ask: *Why*



*is this title an example of alliteration? Can you find more examples of alliteration as you read?* Use a graphic organizer like the one below to keep track of the phrases identified by students while reading.

Letter or Sound	M	
Words from the Book	Moonlight Meeting	

Questions and activities aligned to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Key Ideas and Details RL.K-2.1,2; Craft and Structure RL.1-2.5,6; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL.K-2.7; Production and Distribution of Writing W.K-2.5; Comprehension and Collaboration SL.K-2.1,2; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL.K-2.4,6

# II. Curriculum Connections: Reading & Listening Activities



Some of the exercises below work together with a story map and character map activity sheet, which you can find on pages 11 and 12 and share with your students.

1 Ask students to describe the characters in the story. For a robust discussion, encourage students to think about the characters’ physical traits, actions, words, thoughts, and feelings. Pose the following questions: *How does each character act when faced with a problem? How are the characters similar? How are they different?* Have students use examples from the story to support their answers.

2 There are many examples of friendship throughout *The Nocturnals* series. Ask learners: *What does it mean to be a friend? How should friends treat one another? What makes someone a good friend? What are examples of friendship from each book?* Have learners find words and illustrations from the story to support their answers.



3 Explain to students that sometimes it is not easy to make a new friend. Ask: *Can you think about a time you made a new friend? Was it easy or hard? Why? How do the characters in the story feel as they meet one another or new animals? Are the animals always kind to others? What does it mean to bully someone? What should you do if someone treats you unkindly?*



7 Guide children as they read the final section of the book, *The Nocturnals: Fun Facts*. Ask: *What new information did you learn about each of the animals? How are the facts similar to and/or different from what you read in the story? Have you previously read about these animals in a nonfiction text? What did you learn about them?* Have students cite evidence from all related books.

4 In many of the books the characters work together to solve challenges that arise. Ask: *Why is teamwork important? How do the characters use teamwork to solve their problems? What are examples from each book that show the characters using teamwork to solve problems? Can you think about a time you have been part of a team or used teamwork? What did you accomplish?*

5 Challenge readers to (a) explain the sequence of events in the story and (b) retell the main events from each chapter of the book. Ask: *What are the important character actions or conversations in the story? What is funny about the book? What surprising things happened? How does the chapter or event make you feel?* Encourage students to support their responses with textual evidence.

6 Discuss problems and solutions with students. Have students share a problem they faced and how they solved the problem. Then, remind students that each story has a problem that the characters must solve. Ask: *What is the problem in the story? How does each character feel about the problem? How do the characters identify a solution?* Have students use examples from the book to support their answers. Then, have students select one problem and solution and, using the graphic organizer on page 9, describe it using illustrations and writing.



8 It is important for young learners to explore both text and illustrations to comprehend a complex text. Ask: *What is your favorite illustration from the story? Why? How does the picture provide more information about the character(s) or event(s)?* Encourage students to use details from the story to support their responses.

9 Below are additional questions for each book.

**The Best Burp:** In Chapter 1, what loud sound does Tobin hear as he is walking? Then, what causes Bink and Bismark to disagree? Do you think a *burp-off* is a good idea? Why or why not? In Chapter 3, what action suggests that Bink and Bismark are blaming one another? What does it mean to be your *best self*? How is Dawn her best self at the end of the story? What is something you can do to be your *best self*?

**The Tasty Treat:** Who is Dawn looking for in the forest? Why? Who does Dawn find? Describe each friend who appears in the story. Why does Tobin's *tummy rumble* (p. 17)? What does Bismark bring to his friends? What actions suggest that the animals are good friends? Can you remember a time you looked for your friends or shared something special? Explain.

**The Moonlight Meeting:** How do the animals share in the story? What happens after they share? What does it mean to be a "brigade"? Why is it important to share with others? How can sharing help you be a better friend? What things should we share? What things should we not share?

**The Peculiar Possum:** How is the new possum friend in the story different? Which of the possum's actions seem strange? How do the animals treat the possum? Why is it important to be kind to people who are different from ourselves? What can we learn from this difference?

**The Slithery Shakedown:** How do the animals demonstrate bravery in the story? Can you think of a time you had to help a friend? How did you feel? What happened? Why is it important to help friends when they are facing a problem?

**The Chestnut Challenge:** How do Bismark, Tobin, and Chandler approach competition? What are the similarities and differences (e.g., sportsmanship, playing for fun)? What does Dawn discover about Chandler? What is her advice to Chandler? Do you agree or disagree? Why? Can you think about a time that you won or lost a competition? How did you feel?

**The Kooky Kinkajou:** Why is Bismark feeling bored? What types of activities do Dawn, Tobin, and Bismark do at night? Have you ever *stargazed*? What did you find in the stars? When the Brigade meets Karina the kooky kinkajou, what does she enjoy doing for fun? How do Dawn, Tobin, and Bismark respond differently to the kinkajou's game? Have you ever played *pretend* or used your *imagination* to create a fun game? Explain what made your game exciting.

**The Weeping Wombat:** At the beginning of the story, how does Walter the Wombat feel? Provide examples. Can you act out how Walter looks and sounds? *Empathy* is when you try to understand how someone else is feeling. How does the brigade show *empathy* to Walter? In Chapter 3, what information does Walter share with the brigade about his feelings? What is bothering Walter? In Chapter 4, how does Walter's view of himself change? Do you agree with Dawn when she says, "*Sometimes weeping can make you feel better*" (p. 43). Why or why not? How does Walter's weeping at the end of the story differ from his weeping at the beginning of the book?



from context. In addition to reading the words fluently, students should consider the meaning of the vocabulary words.

In addition, ask children to name the types of animal while looking at the illustrations.

Such words may include:

**The Best Burp**

Best, Idea, Blaming, Natural, Burp, Rumble, Thunder

Can you name things that rumble? Thunder? Describe or imitate the sound (e.g., loud, crackling, clapping).

**The Tasty Treat**

Tasty, Friend, Nocturnal, Scales, Fancy, Bold, Pomelo

New Animals: Fox, Pangolin, Sugar Glider

**The Moonlight Meeting**

Moonlight, Delicious, Creature, Thief, Kind, Embarrassed, Decision, Prowler, Nocturnal, Brigade

**The Peculiar Possum**

Peculiar, Presence, Prowler, Vanished, Appeared, Perplexed, Pleasant, Hairless, Unique, Pride

**The Slithery Shakedown**

Scrunched, Admired, Suddenly, Shimmery, Scurried, Summoned, Sputtered, Brave, Declared, Uniform

**The Chestnut Challenge**

Champion, Captured, Failure, Challenge, Serious, Boastful, Competition, Confused, Cheeky, Cheating, Cheerful

**The Kooky Kinkajou**

Bored, Kooky, Imagination, Sparkle, Flickered, Spectacular, Declared, Balanced, Far-Fetched, Scrunched, Agreed

**The Weeping Wombat**

Weeping, Care, Terrible, Sagged, Wimp, Weary, Wavered, Woebegone, Wail, Exclaimed

10 There is great dialogue between the characters throughout each of the books. As students read, encourage them to focus on giving the characters the appropriate tone and expression based upon the situation occurring. Also, there may be unfamiliar words in the stories, including words with two syllables, prefixes, suffixes, and long vowel sounds. Encourage students to try to define these words by taking clues

Questions and activities aligned to Common Core Language Arts Standards: Key Ideas and Details RL.K-2.1,2,3; Craft and Structure RL.1-2.4,5; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL.K-2.7; Foundational Skills: FS.K-2.3,4; Text Types and Purpose W.K-2.3; Comprehension and Collaboration SL.K-2.1,2; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL.K-2.4,5

### III. Post-Reading Activities

- 1 What is the central theme (important message) of each book? Why are these lessons important for readers? What is the central theme that a reader can learn from the entire series? Use evidence from the books to support your response. If you could add a book to the series, what central theme (important lesson) would you want to teach readers through the animals?
- 2 Encourage learners to get support from an adult and research one of the animals from the story using online and text-based resources. Then, learners can choose from two options to demonstrate understanding: (a) create a poster presentation that provides a description of the animal with details such as habitat, food, predators, and prey, or (b) create a diorama that displays important details about the animal's habitat and survival skills.
- 3 Many children enjoy creative writing opportunities aligned to interesting topics. Ask students to design a new adventure for *The Nocturnals* characters with a title that includes alliteration. The story should introduce a new animal to the Nocturnal Brigade and should include at least two detailed events, sequence words (e.g., first, second, third), and a conclusion. Note: If students require an extension activity, challenge them to incorporate examples of alliteration throughout the story as well.
- 4 A key component of the Common Core Foundational Skills is reading fluency. To build students' fluency skills, select a *Nocturnals* text for learners to reenact as a play through Readers Theatre. Facilitate the play by assigning roles, selecting important scenes, and practicing character lines using the dialogue from the text. All participants should focus on saying the lines with accuracy, prosody, and an appropriate rate to enhance fluency outcomes.
- 5 The animals in the stories give insight into many dynamics of friendship. Engage children in a discussion about the importance of friendship, kind deeds, and positive words for others. Then, pass out papers and ask students to write an idea for one kind act. Following the activity, read the ideas aloud and pick one kind act to implement as a group.

- 6 It is important to give participants creative ways to apply the lessons they learn from the *Nocturnals* series. Each book illustrates how the Brigade navigates challenges, new situations, and different personalities. Engage learners in a discussion about the lessons the Brigade teaches. Then, ask children to design a how-to guide or list of tips others can use. The list or guide could be titled as follows:
  - **The Best Burp: How to Get Better at \_\_\_\_\_ (Insert Activity)**
  - **The Tasty Treat: How to Be a Good Friend**
  - **The Moonlight Meeting: How to Share**
  - **The Peculiar Possum: How to Treat Others Kindly**
  - **The Slithery Shakedown: How to Help Friends**
  - **The Chestnut Challenge: How to Demonstrate Sportsmanship**
  - **The Kooky Kinkajou: How to Use Your Imagination**
  - **The Weeping Wombat: How to Show Empathy or Cheer Up a Friend**

- 7 The series is a great way to introduce children to complex emotions and engage in meaningful discussions about feelings. In the story *The Weeping Wombat*, a major theme is *empathy*. Explain to readers that *empathy is when you try to understand how someone else is feeling*. Ask readers to explore any of the books in the *Nocturnals* series and explain how empathy can help the characters solve the problem. Also, encourage participants to discuss a time they received or showed empathy.

**Questions and activities aligned to Common Core Language Arts Standards:** Key Ideas and Details RL.K-2.1,2; Craft and Structure RL.1-2.5; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL.K-2.7,9; Foundational Skills: FS.K-2.4; Text Types and Purpose W.K-2.2,3; Production and Distribution of Writing W.K-2.6; Research and Presentation of Ideas W.K-2.8; Comprehension and Collaboration SL.K-2.1,2; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL.K-3.4,5



## Identify a Problem in *The Nocturnals*

What is the problem? How does each character feel about the problem? How do the characters identify a solution? Use the graphic organizer below to use illustrations and writing to describe a problem and its solution from *The Nocturnals*. Use examples from the book to support your answers.



### PROBLEM What went wrong?

### SOLUTION How was the issue fixed?

(Create an Illustration)

(Create an Illustration)



(Describe a Problem)

(Describe a Solution)

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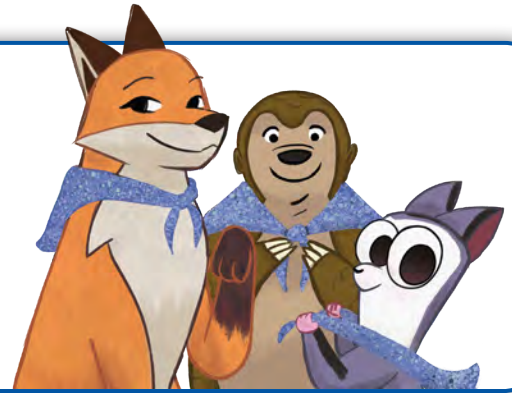
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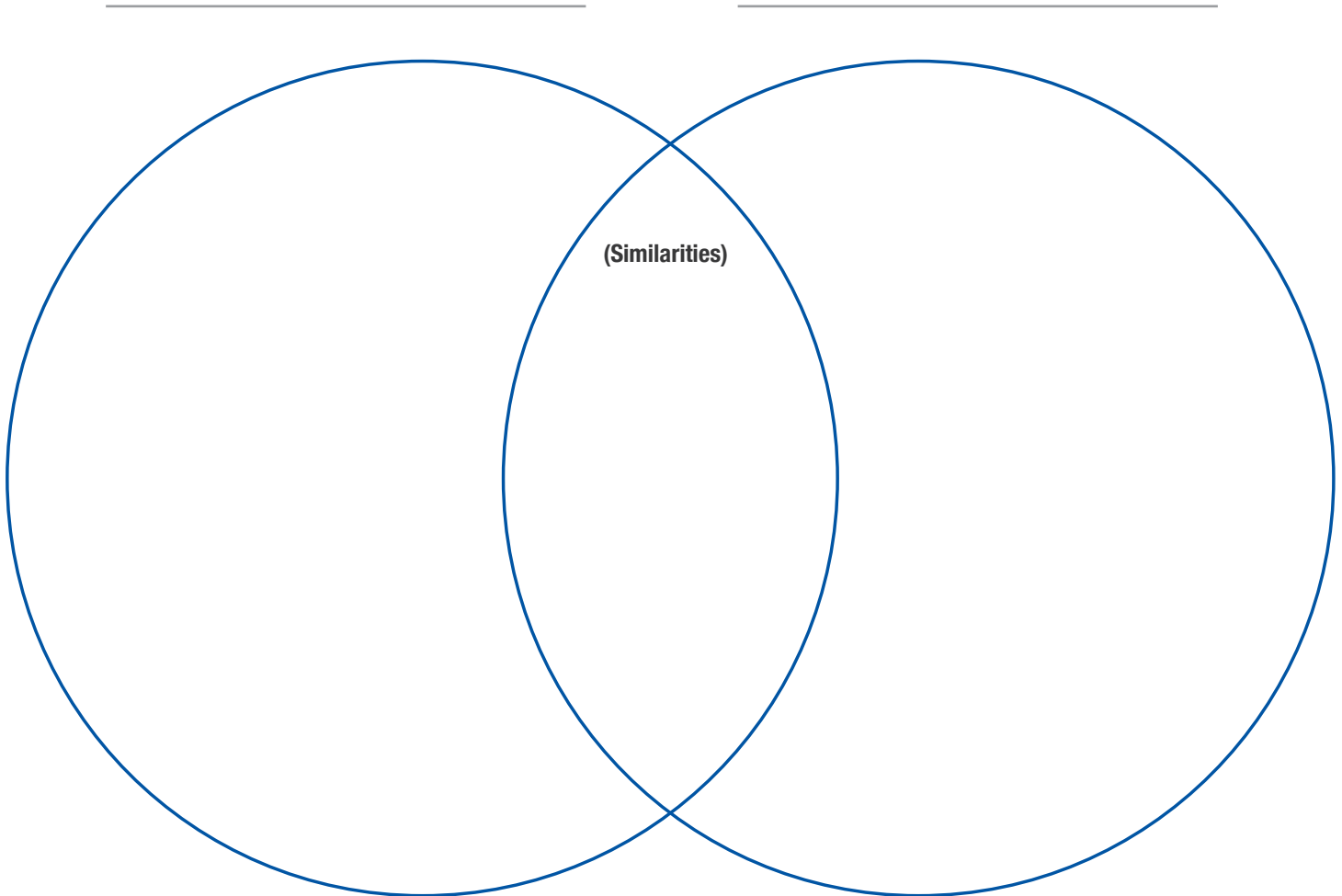
**Compare and Contrast Venn Diagram**

Pick two *Nocturnals* books. Compare and contrast the stories using the Venn diagram below. *How are the stories similar? Different? What is the theme or central message in each book? What can the reader learn from the characters or events?* Use examples from the books to support your answers.



**Book Title**

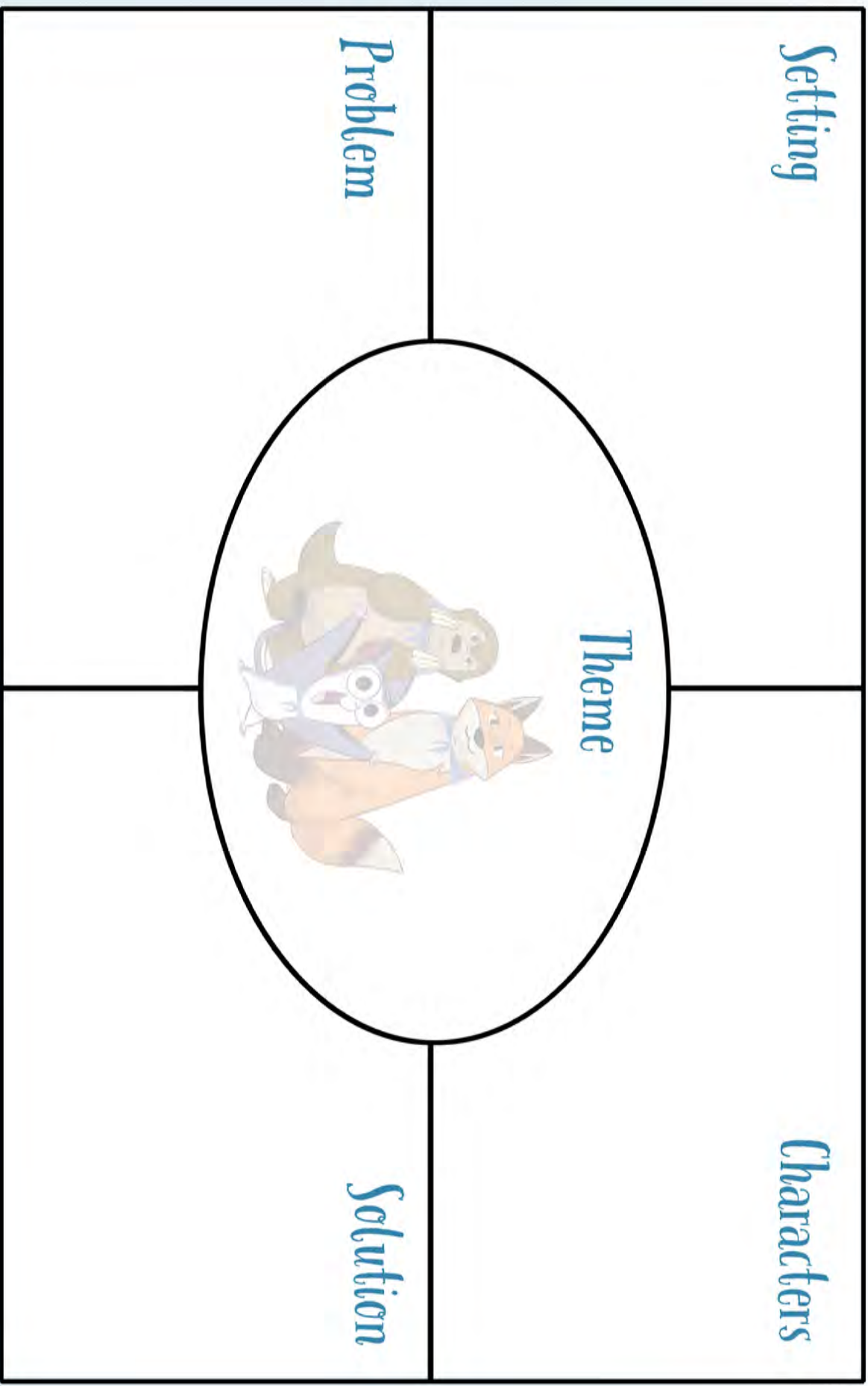
**Book Title**





# STORY MAP

# NOCTURNALS



For more information:  
[www.nocturnalsworld.com](http://www.nocturnalsworld.com)

**FABLED FILMS PRESS**  
NEW YORK CITY  
[www.fabledfilms.com](http://www.fabledfilms.com)

Write one character trait in each of the ovals. Write one supporting detail in each of the rectangles.

# CHARACTER MAP



# Nocturnal

**Animal Type** .....

**Appearance** .....

**Hero or Villain** .....

**Personification** (How does this animal seem like a person?) .....

**Actions** (What is the character doing?) .....

**Photo or Drawing** .....



# The Nocturnals Grow & Read Early Reader Books Support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum

Available  
as eBooks



## The Best Burp

**SEL Themes: Respect for Others, Honesty**

Bismark and a bat named Bink are playing a game—who can make the loudest burp? Tobin thinks both burps are good! Dawn hears the burps and asks who is burping. Bismark and Bink blame Tobin! Dawn tells them that burps are natural and that blaming others isn't how to be your best self.

Grow & Read Level 1  
Lexile Ranking 380L  
Fountas & Pinnell K  
Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-944020-32-3  
Paperback ISBN: 978-1-944020-31-6  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-944020-45-3  
**Professional Reviews:**  
Booklist 5/2020 Online  
SLJ 10/2/2020 Online



## The Tasty Treat

**SEL Themes: Problem Solving, Sharing**

Dawn can't find her friends! Where is Tobin, her scaly pangolin friend? And Bismark, the silly sugar glider? One by one, Dawn's friends appear, as does a juicy pomelo fruit from a tree above, which the three friends share.

Grow & Read Level 1  
Lexile Ranking 380L  
Fountas & Pinnell L  
Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-944020-29-3  
Paperback ISBN: 978-1-944020-30-9  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-944020-44-6  
**Professional Reviews:**  
SLJ 9/20/2019 Online  
Kirkus Recommended Continuing Series List 9/15/2019 Print



## The Moonlight Meeting

**SEL Themes: Friendship, Sharing**

Tobin finds a tasty pomelo that Bismark thinks he stole from his pomelo tree. Dawn meets both animals as they are discussing who should get the pomelo. She convinces Bismark and Tobin to share the pomelo, and a friendship is formed.

Grow & Read Level 2  
Lexile Ranking 480L  
Fountas & Pinnell L  
Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-944020-15-6  
Paperback ISBN: 978-1-944020-14-9  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-944020-39-2  
**Professional Reviews:**  
Booklist 9/14/2019 Online  
PW 9/25/2017 Print



## The Peculiar Possum

**SEL Themes: Accepting Differences, Empathy, Kindness**

Dawn, Tobin, and Bismark encounter strange sounds and smells in the valley. When an unfamiliar animal appears, Bismark is not pleased! But soon Bismark and the Brigade learn that being peculiar is also a reason to be proud.

Grow & Read Level 2  
Lexile Ranking 470L  
Fountas & Pinnell P  
Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-944020-19-4  
Paperback ISBN: 978-1-944020-20-0  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-944020-41-5  
**Professional Reviews:**  
Booklist 11/29/2018 Online  
Kirkus 9/1/2018 Print

Paper Over Board \$12.99

Paperback \$5.99

eBook: \$4.99

All books include Bonus Nocturnals Fun Facts

Trim: 6 x 9"

Level 1 Page Count: 40

Level 2 & 3 Page Count: 64

Four-Color Illustrations Throughout

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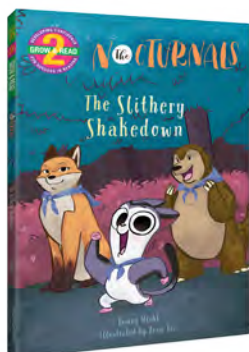
www.NocturnalsWorld.com





# The Nocturnals Grow & Read Early Reader Books Support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum

Available  
as eBooks



## The Slithery Shakedown

**SEL Themes: Bullying Prevention, Bravery, Teamwork**

The Brigade comes across a big bully snake who wants to eat Bismark for breakfast! Bismark is frightened, but he, Tobin, and Dawn use their words to stand up to the big bully snake. In the process, they find themselves some spec-tac-u-lar snakeskin capes!

Grow & Read Level 2  
Lexile Ranking 440L  
Fountas & Pinnell M  
Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-944020-17-0  
Paperback ISBN: 978-1-944020-16-3  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-944020-40-8  
**Professional Reviews:**  
Booklist 3/15/2018 Online  
SLJ Xpress Reviews 5/2018

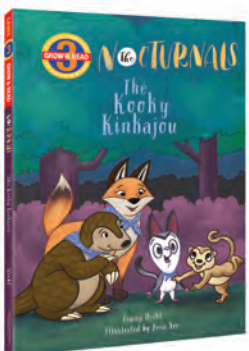


## The Chestnut Challenge

**SEL Themes: Good Sportsmanship, Playing Games for Fun, Forgiveness**

The Brigade is playing a game of Chestnuts when Chandler, a conniving chinchilla, challenges Tobin for the title of Chestnut Champion. However, after a series of strange distractions, the Brigade begins to suspect that something is not quite right. Chandler is a competitive chinchilla . . . but could he also be a cheater?

Grow & Read Level 3  
Lexile Ranking 520L  
Fountas & Pinnell N  
Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-944020-22-4  
Paperback ISBN: 9781944020-23-1  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-944020-42-2  
**Professional Reviews:**  
SLJ 4/1/2019 Online  
Kirkus Recommended Continuing Series List 4/15/2019 Print



## The Kooky Kinkajou

**SEL Themes: Using Your Imagination, Accepting New Ideas**

Bismark's bored! The sugar glider complains to his friends—Dawn and Tobin—that there's nothing to do! So when Karina the kinkajou comes along, Bismark and the rest of the Nocturnal Brigade get a lesson on using their imaginations. Soon the three nocturnal friends are following Karina and a "sparkle sprite"—a.k.a. a firefly—over rivers, under waterfalls, and to a rainbow.

Grow & Read Level 3  
Lexile Ranking 500L  
Fountas & Pinnell L  
Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-944020-25-5  
Paperback ISBN: 978-1-944020-24-8  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-944020-43-9  
**Professional Reviews:**  
Booklist 11/1/2019 Online  
Kirkus 6/15/2019 Print  
SLJ 9/20/2019 Online



## The Weeping Wombat

**SEL Themes: Expressing Feelings and Emotions, Empathy**

Walter the wombat is whimpering under a willow tree. Walter tells the Nocturnal Brigade that the other wombats call him a wimp because he weeps. The Nocturnal Brigade tell Walter that weeping is just another way of expressing how we feel and that, like a good laugh, a good weep can feel great.

Grow & Read Level 3  
Lexile Ranking 490L  
Fountas & Pinnell M  
Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-944020-34-7  
Paperback ISBN: 978-1-944020-33-0  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-944020-46-0  
**Professional Reviews:**  
SLJ 6/19/2020 Online

Paper Over Board \$12.99  
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