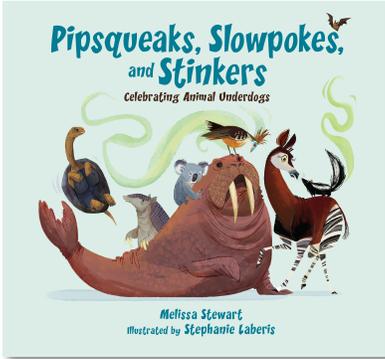




PEACHTREE

READERS THEATER



Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs

Written by Melissa Stewart | Illustrated by Stephanie Laberis

HC: 978-1-56145-936-0 | PB: 978-1-68263-202-4

Ages 4–8
AR • Lexile • F&P • GRL P; Gr 4

ABOUT THE BOOK

Everyone admires animals that are big and fast and strong. But this book isn't about them. It's about the unsung underdogs of the animal world. Don't you think it's time someone paid attention to them?

Written in a humorous, conversational voice, *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* offers a lighthearted look at a parade of critters that are small, slow, stinky, lazy, clumsy, shy, and more. These traits might seem like weaknesses, but they're actually strengths. They help the animals survive in an eat-or-be-eaten world. After reading this book, you might think twice before making quick judgments about the animals around us.

GETTING STARTED

Many readers theater scripts have just ten or twelve parts, but this script has twice as many roles! It includes twenty animal parts and a narrator. The animal parts vary in difficulty to accommodate children at a variety of reading levels. The narrator text is the most challenging. It can be read by an adult or by an advanced young reader. The script also includes a variety of choruses—lines read by everyone.

If you are working with a small group of children, some students can perform two roles. If you have a group larger than twenty-one, some children can share a role or you can divide the narrator role into multiple parts.

After you've matched students with parts, ask the class to read through the script a few times. As the children practice, provide as much support and advice as needed.

PLANNING THE PERFORMANCE

When the children feel confident about their roles, you may want to set out a variety of art supplies and encourage students to make animal badges, hats, or even simple costumes to wear during the performance. The narrator may want to wear something special too.

During the final reading, the students can perform for another class or even a group of parents.

Peachtree Readers Theater
prepared by Melissa Stewart

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updated 2/3/20



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PIPSQUEAKS, SLOWPOKES, AND STINKERS: CELEBRATING ANIMAL UNDERDOGS

Readers Theater Script

Cast of Characters:

narrator	zorilla 1	western fence lizard
elephant	zorilla 2	walrus
cheetah	okapi	seal
Etruscan pygmy shrew	koala	sea lion
Amau frog	giant armadillo	naked mole rat 1
Galápagos tortoise	little brown bat 1	naked mole rat 2
hoatzin	little brown bat 2	naked mole rat 3

Elephant: Everyone loves **me** because elephants are so big and strong.

Cheetah: Everyone respects **me** because cheetahs are so fast and fierce.

Narrator: Hey, go sit down you two. This book isn't about you.

Chorus: It's about us! We're the unsung underdogs of the animal world.

Narrator: Let's start with this little critter—the Etruscan pygmy shrew. It's a real pipsqueak.

Shrew: [Crouch down to make body small.] *Squeak! Squeak!*

Narrator: An Amau frog is even smaller.

Frog: That's right. I could perch on your pinkie with room to spare.

Narrator: How can these puny peewees survive in a world full of predators with huge teeth and razor-sharp claws?

Chorus: Size is on their side!

Narrator: When hunters get too close, they slip into small, secret spots their enemies can't reach.

Tortoise: G-r-e-e-t-i-n-g-s, f-r-i-e-n-d-s. [Speak slowly.]

Narrator: Galápagos tortoises are such slowpokes. Hurry up! We don't have all day.

Tortoise: S-o-r-r-y. [Speak slowly.]

Narrator: It's a good thing your hard, strong shell protects you from predators.

Chorus: *Pee-eeew!* What's that stinking stench?

Narrator: Meet the hoatzin.

Hoatzin: As my body digests food, it smells worse than poop.

Narrator: Feeling sick to your stomach? Then you might not want to know about zorillas.

Zorilla 1: Our smelly spray is stronger than a skunk's.

Zorilla 2: And the awful odor lasts even longer.

Narrator: Should hoatzins and zorillas clean up their act?

Chorus: **No way!**

Narrator: These stinkers are sending their enemies a powerful message.

Hoatzin: When hungry hunters sniff a whiff of my body odor, they lose their appetites.

Zorilla 1: And when predators smell our stinky spray. . .

Zorilla 2: they skedaddle.

Chorus: **You can say that again.**

Zorilla 2: They skedaddle.

Narrator: Okay, settle down, you underdogs. Next up is the okapi.

Okapi: [Hide behind another student.]

Narrator: [Look around.] I said, next up is the okapi.

Okapi: [Shyly steps forward.]

Narrator: Oh, there you are. I forgot. You're one of the shyest animals on Earth. Maybe the other underdogs can help you out.

Chorus: **Why do you live alone in shadowy forests?**

Okapi: To stay safe. [Sneak away and hide behind another student.]

Narrator: Right. When an okapi senses danger, it silently sneaks out of sight.

Koala: [Snoring sound.]

Armadillo: [Snoring sound.]

Narrator: Koalas and giant armadillos are so lazy! They sleep 18 hours a day.

Bat 1: [Snoring sound.]

Bat 2: [Snoring sound.]

Narrator: Little brown bats get even more shut-eye. They rest for twenty hours a day.

Koala: [Snoring sound.]

Armadillo: [Snoring sound.]

Bat 1: [Snoring sound.]

Bat 2: [Snoring sound.]

Narrator: Should these sleepy slackers change their ways?

Chorus: Nope! Napping is the secret to their success.

Koala: What? [Stretch. Yawn.] Oh, yes. Because we sleep so much, we don't have to eat as much food as more active animals.

Narrator: Bet you can't guess what's the clumsiest critter?

Chorus: What?

Narrator: It's the western fence lizard.

Lizard: As I run along tree branches, I sometimes lose my balance and fall to the forest floor.

Chorus: *Thud!*

Narrator: Why don't you just slow down?

Lizard: I need speed to catch quick-crawling spiders and insects. I'd rather stumble once in a while than starve to death.

Narrator: Walruses, seals, and sea lions sure are a bunch of blubbery blobs!

Walrus: My thick layer of fat can weigh more than 400 pounds.

Seal: Think we should go on a diet?

Chorus: [Scratch head.] Well, maybe.

Sea Lion: Think again! Blubber helps us stay warm in chilly ocean water.

Walrus: Plus it gives us energy during periods when we can't hunt for food.

Narrator: Now feast your eyes on these curious critters—naked mole rats.

- NM Rat 1: Um, maybe they'd rather not.
- Narrator: Don't be so hard on yourself.
- NM Rat 2: Yeah, our big buckteeth help us dig for tasty roots.
- NM Rat 3: And our furless bodies help us beat the heat in our hot desert home.
- NM Rat 1: That's right! Our oddball looks help us survive.
- Narrator: Some people might be tempted to make fun of creatures that seem slow or lazy or shy.
- Chorus: But every animal on Earth . . .**
- Shrew: from tiny shrews...
- Zorilla 1: and stinky zorillas...
- Okapi: to shy okapis...
- Lizard: and clumsy lizards...
- Chorus: has its own special way of surviving.**

THE END