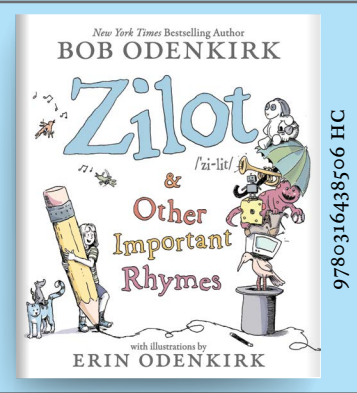


# Zilot & Other Important Rhymes

By BOB ODENKIRK,

illustrated by  
ERIN ODENKIRK,

contributions from Erin Odenkirk,  
Naomi Odenkirk, and Nate Odenkirk



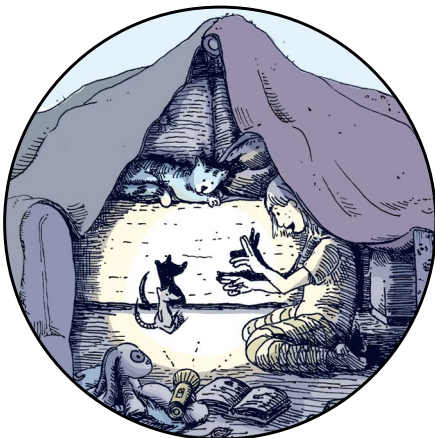
Readers respond in many ways, including: making connections to themselves, their communities, and their literacy experiences; pursuing their curiosity through discussion, inquiry, and self-expression; and changing their attitudes and behaviors. This guide provides suggestions and resources for supporting and extending students' authentic reading responses to *Zilot & Other Important Rhymes*. Select activities and resources that best meet the needs and interests of your students.

## Read and Discuss

On page 143, author Bob Odenkirk and illustrator Erin Odenkirk, share more information about their family traditions around reading and writing, and the creation of *Zilot & Other Important Rhymes*. They also encourage young people to enjoy wordplay, writing, and illustrating by creating words and stories of their own. Read “Inventing Words” to students as you begin your exploration of *Zilot & Other Important Rhymes*. How do these inspiring words from the books’ creators invite children into the book? What questions do students have about the book after this brief introduction?



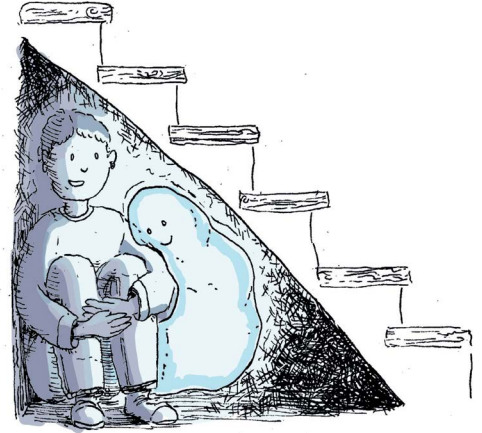
Read aloud several poems from the book, and discuss the poems with students. What do they notice? What surprised them? What connections do they have? Collect students' questions and thoughts on chart paper or an online platform like Flipgrid, and/or invite students to record their thinking in their notebooks. Students can add to these shared notes and use them for writing and discussion topics for the following activities.



## Personal Connections

1. In their notebooks or computers, invite students to list family memories, hobbies and games, nicknames, made-up words and phrases, and other traditions such as building a fort in the living room and calling it a zilot. What are some games and activities they enjoy with their loved ones? What fun memories do they have? Does their family have made-up words or phrases? Do they have nicknames? Share one or two memories of your own. After students brainstorm a few ideas, they can select topics from this list for their own poems.

Each day, read a few more poems from *Zilot & Other Important Rhymes* and invite students' authentic responses and questions about the poems. Many of the poems in this book explore the fears, joys, and everyday experience of childhood. Students will have connections to many of them. Ask students, "What are you thinking after reading this poem? What connections are you making? How does this poem spark ideas for your writing?" Provide students daily opportunities to write poems based on the book's examples. Students can draft and share these poems as time and needs allow.



**\*\*Model and set expectations for inclusivity and acceptance of all families and experiences—recognizing that many young people can feel uncomfortable sharing opinions, preferences, or experiences that reveal differences. Encourage interest and respect for each other.**

**\*\*Many students stall when drafting poetry because they mistakenly believe all poetry rhymes. Share models of different poetry forms, including free verse poetry. Free students from the expectation that they must use rhyming words for every poem and unlock their creativity!**

**\*\*Writing drafts are messy! Encourage students to experiment with their writing. Not all drafts lead to finished pieces. Drafts are places to try out ideas and play with language. Build students' writing confidence and interest by fostering a writing community for them to explore ideas and make mistakes.**

## Literacy Connections

1. The American English language continues to evolve. Inventions, discoveries, and the influences of many cultures and languages add new words or word usage to our vocabularies all of the time. Encourage



vocabulary exploration and wordplay by providing time and space for students to celebrate and share the new words they learn. Explore the [Merriam-Webster website](https://www.merriam-webster.com) or other age-appropriate, comprehensive dictionary resource with students. Show students features of the dictionary's website such as "Word of the Day" and other wordplay and vocabulary building resources. How can students celebrate new words every day?

Create a word wall with students to collect wacky, weird, wonderful words they discover from reading books and websites, watching TV and YouTube,

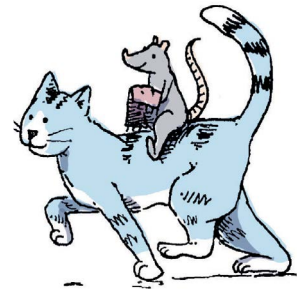
listening to music, or communicating with friends and family. In their notebooks or computers, students can collect ongoing lists of their favorite words or words that relate to general topics such as emotions, animals, or adjectives. Ask students to suggest topics for word lists! Set aside a space in your classroom to display index cards, butcher paper lists, or word art illustrating students' word collections or create an online space using websites like Google Docs.

2. One way that new words are added to American English is by the creation of portmanteau words. These words combine the sounds and meanings of two words into a new word. For example, popsicle (lollipop and icicle), podcast (iPod and broadcast), and brunch (breakfast and lunch) are all portmanteau words. Invite students to create lists of nouns. They may use word lists from other writing activities, or develop a new list. Working as a group, select a few words from students' lists to create new portmanteau words and write definitions for them. After creating a few class examples, students may work with a partner or solo to create original portmanteau words. Students can create definitions, design word art, or illustrate their words and definitions. Display students' words on the walls or in a digital space.
3. When expanding ideas for writing, introduce students to the "phenomenon of the synonym." For example, "Tweeting Birds" on pages 46 & 47 of *Zilot* includes the following synonyms for talking: tweeting, speaking, commenting, sharing, grouse, and say. Looking at their writing drafts, ask students to select one or two important or interesting words from their poems and create lists of synonyms for these words. How can students incorporate these words into their poems or create new ones? Can they replace words? Add new lines using these synonyms? Create a list poem using nothing but synonyms? Take this exploration further by creating synonym (and antonym) lists for some of the portmanteau words or topic lists students have created in previous writing activities from this guide.



## Community Connections

1. Poetry begs to be read aloud! Invite family members, other classes, or community members to a reading of students' poems. Create a class book or digital display space to share students' poetry. Make copies to take home or invite family member to visit your poetry site. Students can illustrate their poems just like *Zilot & Other Important Rhymes*.
2. Students can illustrate their poems just like *Zilot & Other Important Rhymes*. Collaborate with the art teacher or set aside time for students to create collages or illustrations to accompany their poems. Create a physical or digital "gallery wall" for students to display and share their poems and illustrations. Invite students to view this exhibit and respond. How do the illustrations add to their understanding of the poem? How did the author reveal additional information through their illustration? What question do they still have about the poem or illustration?





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## Additional Resources

**Merriam-Webster: WordPlay.** This [webpage](#) shares topical word lists, articles about etymology, and other vocabulary trivia.

**Merriam-Webster: Help Page.** [Learn more about etymology and how new words are formed.](#)

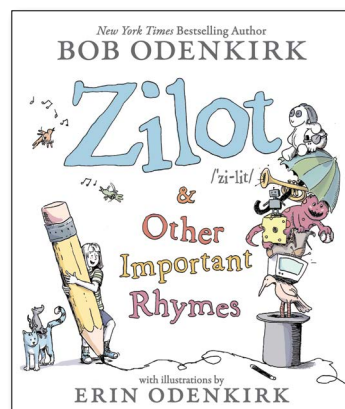
**Poetry Foundation: Children.** This [webpage](#) offers resources for educators and caregivers such as poems, articles, videos, and poetry activities.

**Poets.org: Poems for Kids.** This [webpage](#) includes a poetry database organized by topic, a glossary of poetry terms, and lesson plan ideas.

## Description

Bob Odenkirk began writing these poems with his children when they were little, compiling the poetry into a homemade book entitled *Old Time Rhymes*. He wanted Nate and Erin to understand that actual people had written the books the family loved to read and to instill in them the feeling that they could be writers and illustrators themselves. Almost twenty years later, when the Odenkirks found themselves quarantined under the same roof, they revisited these mostly silly, sometimes poignant works. It wasn't until Erin began to create illustrations to accompany the words, though, that the book grew to be something much bigger than an Odenkirk family treasure.

From the titular made-up word for a blanket fort, an adorable dog with a penchant for the zoomies, and a father teaching his kids how umbrellas work, the subjects of these works, complemented by Erin's whimsical and detailed linework, come alive on these pages. Featuring over seventy poems, *Zilot & Other Important Rhymes* will delight readers young and old.



9780316438506 HC

160 Pages

Ages 6 and up.

Juvenile Poetry/ Humor

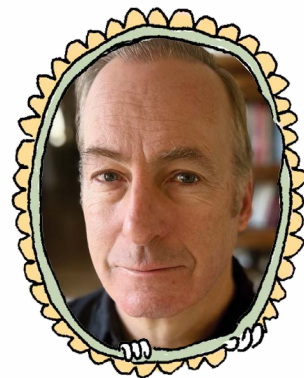
Also available as an audiobook or e-book.

# Zilot & Other Important Rhymes

## Teaching Tips

### About the Authors

BOB ODENKIRK is known for acting (*Breaking Bad*, *Better Call Saul*, and feature films like Greta Gerwig's *Little Women*) and for writing lots of comedy sketches for TV shows (*Saturday Night Live* and *Mr. Show with Bob and David*). In fact, he's been writing silly stuff his whole life because he sees the world as a mostly funny, pretty ridiculous place. Bob's other books include *A Load of Hooey*, a collection of comedic essays, and *Comedy Comedy Comedy Drama*, his instant *New York Times* bestselling memoir, but *Zilot & Other Important Rhymes* is the thing he's most proud of in this world. His greatest wish is that you laugh today and he'd very much like to help make that happen.



ERIN ODENKIRK has been creating art as long as she can remember, having first found inspiration in drawing real and made-up animals. Now a graduate of Pratt Institute, she lives in Brooklyn, New York with a lot of pencils and one bunny. Erin hopes *Zilot & Other Important Rhymes* makes you chuckle, maybe even chortle, but mostly she hopes it inspires you to go make something "important."

NATE ODENKIRK contributed to *Zilot & Other Important Rhymes* both as a little kid and as a tall wisp of a man. His original "radio" play, *Summer in Argyle*, is kid-and adult-friendly and perfect for keeping both quiet on long road trips. As a classically trained writer, Nate has yet to make a single mistake.



### Praise

★ "In the same vein as...Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky, Odenkirk's poems beg to be read out loud.... Highly recommended for those looking to freshen up their collections of silly poetry."

—*SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL*

"If you DON'T want to read funny, heartfelt, wild poems with perfect illustrations...don't read this book!"

—JON SCIESZKA, first National Ambassador for Young People's Literature

"Utterly charming. An invitation inside the Odenkirks' pillow fort, and you should accept."

—ADAM REX, bestselling author of *Frankenstein Makes a Sandwich* and *On Account of the Gum*

"Everyone should have a family like the Odenkirks, who, in this delightful book, share their love of reading, art, and whimsy with all of us." —CAROL BURNETT, actor, author, legend

"It is my civic duty to demand that you and your entire family read this wonderfully ridiculous book written and illustrated by a wonderfully ridiculous family called the Odenkirks." —TIG NOTARO, actor, comedian, writer

These Teaching Tips were prepared by Donalyn Miller. Find her at [bookwhisperer.com](http://bookwhisperer.com), [theauthorvillage.com](http://theauthorvillage.com), on Twitter at [@donalynbooks](https://twitter.com/donalynbooks), and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/donalynbooks](https://www.facebook.com/donalynbooks).

