



# SPARROW LOVES REPTILES

by Murry Burgess  
Illustrated by Tamisha Anthony



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## Teaching Tips

### BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Begin by introducing students to reptiles and asking what they already know about these animals. Show images or videos of a variety of reptiles and invite students to describe what they notice about the animals' features and behaviors. Discuss the characteristics that make an animal a reptile, such as scales, cold-bloodedness, and how they differ from mammals and birds. Have students create a simple chart with these comparisons and observations. This activity will help students build a foundation for understanding reptile features and differences from other animal groups.

### READ AND DISCUSS

Before reading, ask students: what do you think the story is about? What clues does the title give us about the story? Examine the picture book cover and endpapers together, and discuss what they notice. Take a slow walk through the illustrations: What animals do you see? Where do these animals live? What do you notice about Sparrow? Encourage students to make predictions about the story based on their observations.

Read *Sparrow Loves Reptiles* aloud and discuss the text and illustrations with students. How does Sparrow show respect to the reptiles she finds in the park? What do you notice about Sparrow's feelings toward reptiles she finds? How does learning about different reptiles help Sparrow? Why do you think some people are afraid of reptiles? Encourage students to note facts about reptiles as they appear in the story. What information or ideas stood out? What questions do they still have? What do they want to learn about? Collect students' questions and ideas and invite them to record their thinking in notebooks or through drawings.

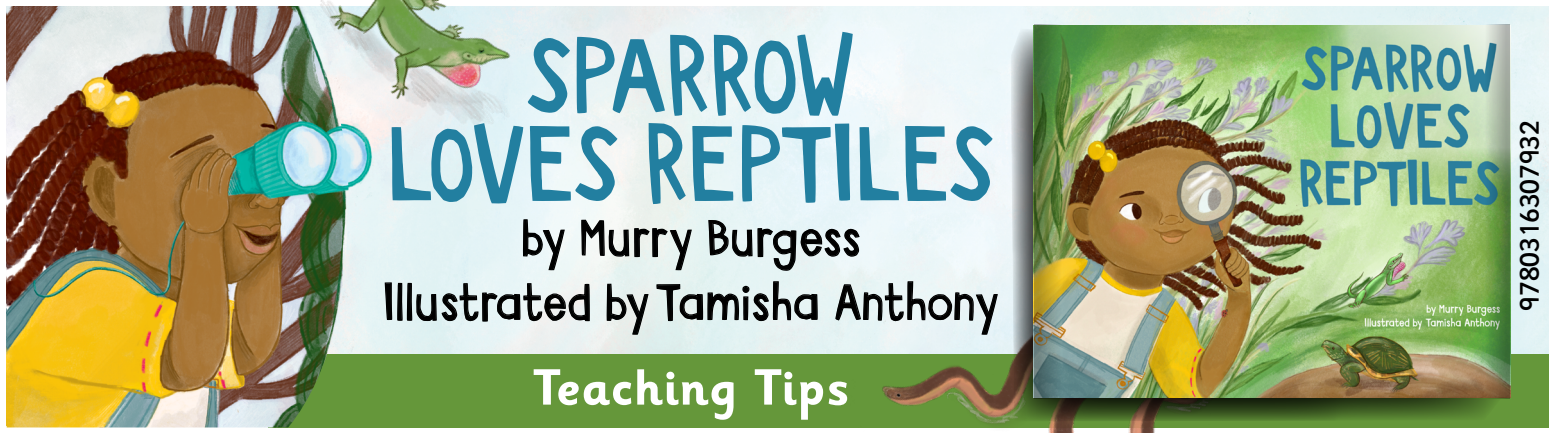
### VOCABULARY SUPPORT

Highlight and reinforce key words from the story (e.g., scales, cold-blooded, habitat, observe, curious). Students can act out the meanings of these words or create drawings that visually represent them. Engaging multiple senses helps strengthen understanding of vocabulary and encourages students to connect language with real-world observations.

### CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Invite students to share where they noticed reptiles living or hiding in *Sparrow Loves Reptiles*. Discuss other places where reptiles might be found (e.g., deserts, forests, swamps)? Ask students to share how they notice and interact with nature in their everyday lives. Have they explored state or national parks, backyards, woods, or neighborhood green spaces with family or friends? Discuss where reptiles might live in these environments, such as under rocks, near water, or in warm sunny areas. Ask students if they have observed reptiles such as lizards, turtles, or snakes, either in the wild, at a zoo, in videos, or in books like *Sparrow Loves Reptiles*. Encourage reflection on caring for reptiles: How can people help protect reptiles and their habitats? What does being respectful to animals in nature look like? Does anyone have a pet reptile? What is one thing you would want others to understand about reptiles? As you facilitate the conversation, model inclusive language and set clear expectations that all experiences are valued. Encourage students to listen with curiosity and respect for perspectives that may differ from their own.





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### ACTIVITY: "REPTILE-AWARE" NATURE WALK

Guide students on a nature walk around the classroom, school grounds, or nearby outdoor space. Encourage careful observation of places where reptiles might feel safe, such as warm surfaces, shaded areas, or spots near plants and water. Have students record what they see and hear or sketch what they notice, label features, and write short notes about their observations. Students may collect natural materials (such as leaves or bark rubbings) to create textured art inspired by reptile patterns like scales or shells, or draw reptiles in their natural environment. Afterward, invite students to reflect on how nature and reptiles are represented in the classroom or school environment and discuss why protecting these spaces matters. Students can also speak with family, friends or community members about how nature and wildlife are part of their lives.

### ACTIVITY: REPTILE HABITATS AND CREATIVE EXPLORATION

As a class, look at photographs and videos from student-friendly websites such as: [National Geographic Kids Reptiles](#), [San Diego Zoo Kids — Reptiles](#), [Smithsonian's National Zoo — Reptiles](#).

Watch the videos provided by the author on the resources page of *Sparrow Loves Reptiles*: [What's a Reptile?](#) Or [Reptiles for Kids|What is a reptile?](#)

Have students choose a reptile from the book or videos that they are interested in learning more about. Individually or in groups, students can create a "mini habitat" for the reptile using safe materials (cardboard boxes, small rocks, sticks, leaves, clay). Think about what a reptile like a lizard, turtle, or snake might need to feel safe and comfortable.

•**GET CREATIVE:** Imagine other reptiles that might explore the habitat. Students can draw or model these creatures and think about: What special features help them survive? How do they move, hide, or find food? How does sunlight, shade, or moisture affect the space?

•**SHARE AND DISCUSS:** Invite students to explain their habitat designs, show their sketches or models, and share their observations. Encourage them to talk about what surprised them and new questions or insights they have about reptiles and their homes.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Students' questions, paired with accessible resources, support deeper inquiry and interdisciplinary connections. Partner with your school librarian, media specialist, or a local public children's librarian to compile a list of websites, books, school library databases, organizations, and community experts.

These Teaching Tips were created by Hadeal Salamah, Children's Librarian.

