

9780316575478

# REACHING ACROSS THE SKY

A CELEBRATION OF BRIDGES  
BY CHRISTY HALE

## TEACHING TIPS

Bridges span obstacles, carry necessary things, and bring people together. In this nonfiction text, author and illustrator Christy Hale masterfully invites readers to consider bridges as phenomena of engineering, geography, innovation, and connection. Both evocatively literary and packed with compelling information, *Reaching Across the Sky* is a compendium worth savoring and revisiting again and again in elementary and middle school classrooms.

### READ WITH PURPOSE

Plan for how you'll share *Reaching Across the Sky* with students based on your particular goals; various text types and features offer myriad choices. Focus on the main narrative to model and practice identifying a main idea, such as "Bridges vary widely in form and function, but they all solve challenges." Linger on the fascinating captions to provide context and examples from around the world and throughout history. Dive into the extensive back matter to build students' STEM knowledge and satisfy their curiosity about bridge design and types of bridges.

### BUILD VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE

Consider the vocabulary and concepts you'll emphasize with students and plan to provide repeated experiences over time. You might make a concept map that links *bridge* to related words from the text like *span*, *join*, *connect*, *gap*, *divide*, *separation*, *passage*, and *access*. Use the glossary as a starting place to identify content-specific focus words, such as *anchorage*, *cantilever*, *foundation*, and *truss*; the captions include many other valuable terms as well, like *pedestrian*, *viaduct*, *arch*, *suspension*, and *gravity*.

Foster academic discourse by creating opportunities for students to share evidence from the text that supports their thinking. Move from asking them to reference specific examples on a given page ("Bridges can exist in nature. For example...") to encouraging them to gather examples from throughout the book that relate to a theme. Solicit oral or written reflections on how reading this book impacted their perspective. Ask, "How does this book relate to your own experiences?" "How did this book change your thinking about bridges?" or "What information surprised you?"

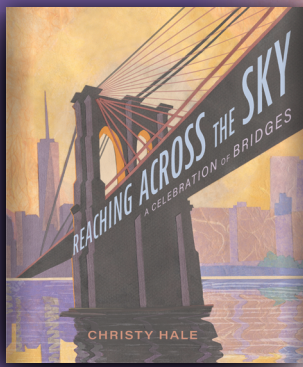
### INVESTIGATE SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

*Reaching Across the Sky* introduces readers to the idea that bridges can both be inspired by nature and defy it. Compare and contrast different examples of bridges in the book with regards to their materials, design, and purpose. Younger students will definitely enjoy identifying and experimenting with building bridges in the school yard—especially after it rains! Connect to and read about other ways nature impacts design choices and fuels innovation.

### EXPAND GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY LEARNING

Move outwards from students' first-hand knowledge of bridges. To introduce the book, share images of bridges in your community and learn about the history behind their design and use. Ask, "What challenge does this bridge solve?" Examine bridges on a local map, noticing how they span bodies of water and other obstacles. Refer back to these conversations as you consider the bridges in the book. Find the locations of bridges introduced in the text on a map or globe. Relate dates mentioned to historical events students have studied, or their own lives. Ask students, "What would it be like to use this bridge as part of your daily routine?"





9780316575478

# REACHING ACROSS THE SKY

A CELEBRATION OF BRIDGES  
BY CHRISTY HALE

## TEACHING TIPS

### EXPLORE THE IMPACT OF BRIDGES ON TRADE

The question of “How would life be different if this bridge did not exist?” is such a compelling one. Use examples in the book as a springboard for studying trade routes examining the role of bridges in transporting goods, materials, and people. Have students imagine themselves in the role of tradesperson, merchant, or city planner, asking them to write a persuasive letter or preparing a mock speech advocating for—or against—the building or repair of a bridge.

### DESIGN A BRIDGE COLLAGE

Christy Hale’s collage artwork perfectly fits the book content; just as a collage emerges from layers set upon layers, a bridge layers over its surroundings to connect two points. Invite students to make their own bridge collage artwork, starting by creating a background that depicts an obstacle. Then, have them design and collage a bridge that spans it using cut or torn paper, or found or recycled materials.

### BUILD BRIDGES

The range of examples of bridges in this book, as well as the extensive back matter about bridge construction, materials, and types of bridges, makes it ideal to use for launching a STEM inquiry into bridges. You might assign small groups to become experts on different types of bridges and share examples and explanations with the class. For each type of bridge, talk about the relationship between structure and function. Ask students to explain, “In what situation would a bridge like this be a smart design choice? What are its advantages and disadvantages?”

Engage students in a bridge-building design challenge. Encourage exploration and innovation with building toys such as blocks, planks, interlocking bricks, and snapping pieces. Invite students to try building bridges modeled after images of real-life examples. You also might give students constrained materials, such as paper, craft sticks, balsa wood, string, straws, paperclips, or toothpicks. Specify that bridges must span a certain gap, like a shoebox, space between books or desks, or a hypothetical “river.” Add complexity by establishing a real or hypothetical “budget.” Hold a contest to see which bridges can hold a defined load of pennies, washers, small weights, or toy cars. After building and testing students’ bridges, explore the questions, “What causes a bridge to fail? What can failure teach us?”

### CREATE CONNECTIONS

Use physical bridges as a jumping off point to examine the metaphorical concept of “building bridges.” The author’s note at the start of the book provides many ideas for discussion. Brainstorm obstacles and examples of disconnection in your school or community. Task students with creating a plan to “bridge” the divide. Connect to vocabulary from the text: Who or what will this bridge connect? What will serve as an approach from both sides? What will be foundation be? How will this bridge “reach across the sky?”

These teaching tips were prepared by Lindsay Barrett, Curriculum Writer. Find her on [LinkedIn](#).

