



By Amy Timberlake | Illustrated by Jon Klassen

TEACHING TIPS

L B LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

THE WRITING PROCESS:

Badger is working hard to finish his article for *Rock Hound Weekly* by the deadline. To do this, he needs to get through the steps of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. What step seems to be the hardest for Badger? What step seems to be the easiest? Why does starting with prewriting make the task of drafting easier? What is the hardest part of the writing process for you? What strategies do you use to make it easier?

What did Badger do when he realized that he was not going to finish his article by the deadline? Have you ever been in a situation where you had an assignment that you were not able to complete on time? What did you do? What do you think you could do if this happened again?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: Badger's prewriting strategy involves "the apple box technique"—a method he invented that involves writing ideas down on scraps of paper and putting them in an apple box to use later. Create a box for your own thoughts and/or research and fill it with ideas and questions that you would like to research or think about later.

As an additional activity, create an idea box with your class. Fill the box with writing prompts by having everyone in class contribute ideas and questions.

TAKING CARE OF ZENO AND ZEPHYR

Skunk and Badger find themselves responsible for Zeno and Zephyr: two orphaned rat pups. When their friend Scratch visits, she tells them that "spontaneity and improvisation" will be the key to parenting, but Badger disagrees and says, "RULES ARE THE KEY" (p. 8). Who do you think is right? What challenges do they face as they try to raise the young rats? How do they deal with each challenge? How does Badger's attitude towards having to take care of the rats change over time? How do his priorities change? Do you think Skunk and Badger are good adoptive parents to the rats? Explain your answer. Have you ever helped take care of a pet or someone younger? If so, what was the most difficult thing about being responsible for something or someone else?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: Badger gets a book, *YOU'VE GOT RATS*, for advice on how to take care of the rambunctious rats, but while he finds the book a little bit helpful, he was hoping for "a top-ten-tips" kind of book (p. 68). Help Skunk and Badger out by creating a short "Top Ten Tips" book for raising rat pups.

JOURNALISM:

Badger is working on an article for the next issue of *Rock Hound Weekly*. This type of writing to inform is called *journalism*. Look at several different magazines and identify the different types of articles and content that they contain (While online magazines will work here, physical copies of magazines are preferable if you have access to them). Next, look at the different roles that people involved in creating a magazine have (editor-in-chief, writers and journalists, copy editor, proofreader, art director, photographer or illustrator). Work together as a class to produce your own magazine. First, brainstorm and choose a theme or topic for the publication. Next, select your editor-in-chief (note: the teacher may want to take this role and assign a student to be assistant editor), this person will approve article and photo/illustration ideas and help keep everyone working to meet the deadline. Your art director(s) will oversee designing the magazine. Writers, journalists, photographers, and illustrators will all create content for the magazine, and your copy editor(s) and proofreaders will make sure there are no errors.

Once you are finished, share your magazine by publishing it online or printing copies of the magazine to share with your school.

SECRET TALENTS:

Badger loves rocks, and his knowledge of rocks helps him navigate his way during the snowstorm. Skunk loves food, and he uses his talent in cooking to care for his friends and guests of the Brownstone. Zeno and Zephyr are good at building and organizing, and they use this skill to organize the garden shed. Later, Zephyr uses her love of chiseling rocks to open a rock emporium in the shed.

What are your interests and talents? How could you use your talent to help you if you were stranded on a desert island or lost in a snowstorm? How could you turn doing the thing that you love to do into a way to help others? How could you use your talent to create your own business?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

The following resources will help connect earth science concepts to *Rock Paper Incisors*.

American Geosciences Institute:

<https://education.americangeosciences.org/resources/elementary-resources/>

One Geology

https://onegeology.org/kids2/english/what_is.html

National Park Service:

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/fossils/outreach-materials.htm>

These Teaching Tips were created by Amy Jurskis, English teacher and Academic Affairs Associate at Oxbridge Academy in West Palm Beach, Florida.