

ROCK PAPER INCISORS

BADGER

By Amy Timberlake | Illustrated by Jon Klassen



TEACHING TIPS



IMPORTANT ROCK WORK:

Badger is a geologist: a scientist that studies the structure, history, and composition of the planet. His research involves collecting, studying, and classifying rocks and the article that he is writing is about an ice age known as 'Snowball Earth'. Research geologic time and create a timeline of planet Earth. When was the period scientists call 'Snowball Earth'? What happened during this period? How did it impact the fossil record?

Extension Activity: Badger treasures his rock collection, which he keeps alphabetically organized. Practice identifying and classifying rocks by starting your own rock collection. The American Museum of Natural History has a guide that can help you get started: https://www.amnh.org/explore/ology/earth/start-a-rock-col-

If you would like to learn even more about geology, research geologic time periods and create a geologic timeline of planet Earth.

IMAGERY:

In Rock Paper Incisors, Amy Timberlake uses descriptions that appeal to all five senses, especially taste and smell. Words that appeal to the senses are called imagery and words that mimic a sound are called onomotopoeia. Make a chart that lists the five senses and then, as you read, fill it in with examples you find in the book.

Extension Activity: Try writing your own short story or descriptive paragraph that uses imagery appealing to all five senses. You may want to start this activity with a sensory walk—a walk where you pay close attention to what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.

FRIENDSHIP AND FEELINGS:

Describe the characteristics of a good friend. Even though they have very different personalities, Badger and Skunk are best friends. How does Skunk support Badger when he is working on his article for Rock Hound Weekly?

What causes Badger to think about leaving the brownstone he shares with Skunk, Zeno, and Zephyr and moving to Owl Pond? Why does he change his mind?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: Timberlake writes: "When Badger had

lived alone, Important Rock Work got done on time. A little hup-hup, some focus-focus focus was all Badger had needed to complete things. Now emotions ran through him: yanking him, turning him, entangling him" (p. 159). Recognizing and understanding his emotions is a new skill for Badger. Help him out by looking at the following passages and naming the emotion (or emotions) that Badger is feeling. Is it ever hard for you to tell people how you are feeling?

The morning after Tin Can Day (and two mornings after Zipline Day) Badger awoke in his sleeping bag, stiff and weary on hallway floorboards. He rubbed his haunch, then went to his bedroom closet for his sweater. He threw open the closet door, then stood and stared.

My doset is empty? But we slept in the hallway!

These thoughts were immediately followed by: WHERE IS MY UKULELE?

(Badger kept his best ukulele, the koa-wood one, in a case

Skunk and Badger found Badger's wide-brimmed field hat rolled up in the umbrella stand. Inside an umbrella, they found a single work glove. Badger's red long johns dangled from the pot rack. "My waffle wear!" The cupboard under the kitchen sink held his crate of balled socks. "FOUND YOUR SWEATER," Skunk called out upon opening the utensil drawer. "Where are the forks, knives, and spoons?" (It was chilly, so Badger put his sweater on.) Badger's Geology Rocks! T-shirt was stuffed between towels in the linen closet. His flannel shirt? In the backyard, splayed on a twiggy bush.

The missing work glove was found in Skunk's bedroom, squashed beneath the beanbag chair. "They came into my Moon

Room?" Skunk said, frowning. It seemed so. Missing spoon forks, and knives decorated Skunk's bookshelves. Badger found three forks under pillows on Skunk's window seat. Skunk shook a slipper and two more forks fell out. "But we slept in the hallthe headboard of Skunk's bed. Skunk turned to Badger. "THIS HAS GOT TO STOP."

Finally, finally, finally, Skunk and Badger located Badger's

"In the laundry bin?" Skunk said as Badger tugged the uku lele case out, scattering laundry and toppling the bin

"Open it. Is it inside? OPEN!" Skunk hop-hopped. Heart pounding, Badger set the ukulele case on the floor

and—k-dick, k-dick—opened the latches.

There lay his koa-wood ukulele.

He ran a claw over the strings: Beed-el-la-BONK!

They both stared at the ukulele.
"Needs tuning. Later!" Badger k-diok, k-dioked the case closed

and went to his bedroom to put it away

Badger was pacing back and forth, deep in thought, when Skunk joined him. Badger stopped pacing and looked at Skunk. "If it

Emotion(s): _

The rats left with a trio of Silkies. With the rock tumbler turning ErrrrRRRRR over . . . and ErrrrRRRRR over again, Badger sat at his rock table and opened his notebook. I wrote a lot. There will

He read what he had written. A frown crossed his furry face.

He leaned forward and read it again. "Huh."

Then he shoved the notebook away and scrubbed his stripe. The first sentence was supposed to draw one in, entice, be irre-

Nothing drew him in. There was zero enticement. Irresistible?

MOVE ON, Badger ordered himself. He quickly wrote OPENING SENTENCE HERE and began writing the rest of his

Seconds later, Badger ran out of things to write. He pawed frantically through the notes in his notebook, but this only added to the sensation that he was turned around, directionless, didn't

"RRRRAAAH!" Badger jumped to his hind feet and began to pace. "What I need is something to tell me what to write and when to write it. . .

Badger gasped as it came to him. "OUTLINE. I will make

an outline!" An outline was a list of all the important points in order from beginning to end. Follow the outline, and the article would finally, finally write itself. "Har-har!" In euphoria, Badger

Skunk stood by the door. "Ha! Looks like the writing is going well!" He glanced at his clipboard. "Five forty-eight. I am running six minutes late. Ready for a planning meeting in my Moon Room? I have dinner."

Dinner! Badger followed Skunk. The sound of the rock turn bler lessened as Badger descended the stairs: ErrrrRRRRR. . .

ErrrrRRRRR...ErrrRRRRR.

They stuck their heads into Aunt Lula's bedroom as they passed. The rats sat on the floor playing the AstroNewts board game with two black-and-white chickens. (A whisper from Skunk: "Lakenvelders.") Zeno rolled dice, then picked up his orange AstroNewt. "Blast OFFFF! THREE SQUARES AHEAD. One Newt Suit for me please!"

In the hallway, Skunk informed Badger that the Lakenvelders yould roost overnight next to the rats' bunks. "Lakenvelders are extremely light sleepers." Skunk stopped, snapped the clipboard clip, and looked up at Badger. "I hope you do not mind that I scheduled the Lakenvelders without consulting you, but I thought we could use help right away."

Emotion(s): _

ROCK PAPER INCISORS SKUNK AND BADGER STORY

TEACHING TIPS

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-tentips" 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 with 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.

