



SPARROW LOVES BIRDS

by Murry Burgess

Illustrated by Tamisha Anthony



TEACHING TIPS



VISUAL LITERACY: CHARACTERIZATION

While reading aloud the opening pages of *Sparrow Loves Birds*, harness the energy within Tamisha Anthony's illustrations to support students' visual literacy and understanding of characterization. Start with the cover, the endpapers, even the spot illustration on the verso page. What do these pictures tell us about Sparrow and her interests? What clues can students find throughout the book (binoculars, crayons, drawings, framed art, books about animals, bookends, stuffed animal)? After completing the book, have students draw their own endpapers to share one of their interests or hobbies. These drawings can be used as a catalyst for conversation during morning meeting and other points of transition throughout the day.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND MOVEMENT

Sparrow learns about birds' movements through direct observation. Burgess uses delightful language to describe those motions: flap, hide, hop, swoop, circle, waddle, hammer, and zoom. After reading those pages, go back and reread, asking students to look at each illustration more closely. After reading aloud each sentence, call out the verb specifically and ask students to call back in response. Next, have them stand up and act out the verb while saying it aloud (ex: saying "swoop!" as they mimic the illustration of sparrows in flight).

ONOMATOPOEIA: IDENTIFYING AND CREATING SOUNDS

When Sparrow doesn't see birds, she listens for them. After completing the book, return to the spread that features birdsong. Use the open-access resources of the [Audubon Society](https://www.audubon.org/) website or the [Cornell Lab's Merlin Bird ID app](https://www.cornell.edu/merlin/) to play the bird calls featured in the book (crow, chickadee, towhee, robin, tufted titmouse, Canadian goose). Repeat the word used in the book before and after playing each bird call. Invite students to mimic what they hear. Engage in conversation about the ways in which their sounds are similar to and different from the words used in the book.

BECOMING ORNITHOLOGISTS: BIRD OBSERVATION

Invite your students to observe birds in the wild from the comfort of your classroom. First, read the author's note to learn about author Murry Burgess's passion for birds in childhood. Explore [Burgess's website](https://www.murryburgess.com/), which introduces the field of ornithology (the study of birds), shares her current research, and centers woman of color in science. Next, examine the information about birds common to North America provided in the back matter. Using a projector, share the open-access Bird Cams available from the [Audubon Society](https://www.audubon.org/) and the [Cornell Lab](https://www.cornell.edu/).

Have students draw or write notes on the bird behaviors they observe, and if they identify any of the birds from the book. Students may also want to track bird calls, creating their own words to match the sounds they hear. If possible, go outside with your students to observe local birds.

CREATE A BIRD GALLERY

Throughout the book, Sparrow is never without her research tools: her yellow backpack, binoculars, spiral notebook, and crayons. Her colorful drawings appear on almost every page. Ask students individually, in pairs, or in small groups, to identify a bird they would like to know more about. Work with your school or public librarian to curate a collection of nonfiction picture books about birds for students to research. If your students are emergent readers, they can view the pictures in these books along with the photographs, videos, and audio files available from the [Audubon Society](https://www.audubon.org/) website or the [Cornell Lab's Merlin Bird ID app](https://www.cornell.edu/merlin/). Have students create portraits of the birds they have studied using available art supplies and invite friends and families to tour your bird gallery. As students share information about the birds they studied, encourage them to demonstrate how those birds move and to make some bird sounds!



These Teaching Tips were created by Dr. Mary Ann Cappiello.

