

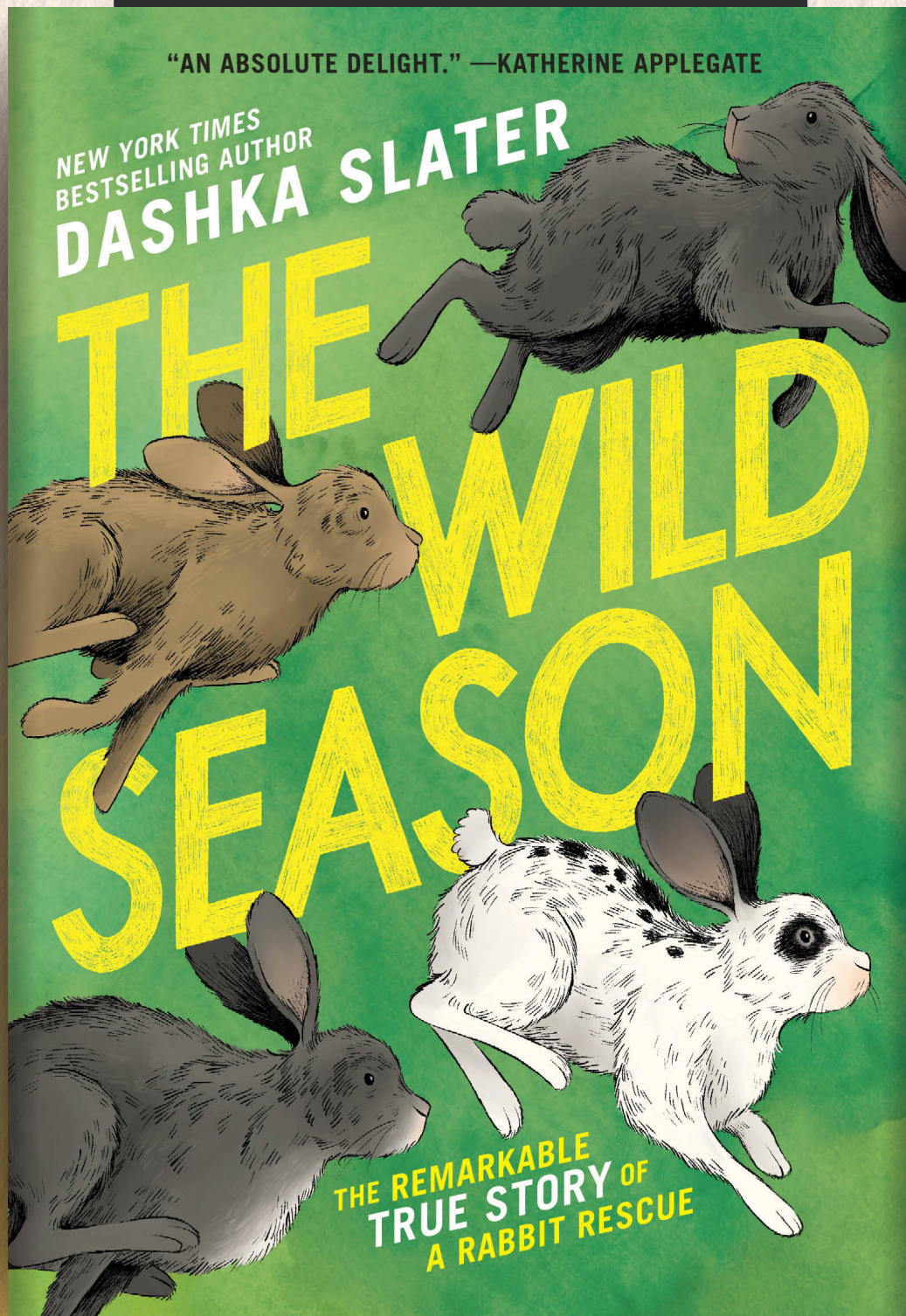
# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Ages 8-12

LITTLE, BROWN BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS



9780316596275 | Also available in ebook and audio



This Educator Guide was created by Cyndi Giorgis, Professor of Literacy Education and Children's Literature at Arizona State University.

### Dear Educator,

One night in June 2023, four rabbits were abandoned in a San Francisco city park. As the rabbits searched for food, they began to be noticed by patrons of the park. What were pet rabbits doing in a park where dogs chased them into the underbrush and predators circled high above? If the rabbits were not captured soon, would they begin to multiply, causing the park to be overrun with baby bunnies?

Join a cast of kids hiding out in forts, keen-eyed teenagers surveying the park, rabbit experts setting traps, and scores of neighbors willing to do anything to help as they rally together in pursuit of rabbits in this unforgettable middle grade narrative nonfiction by award-winning, bestselling author Dashka Slater.

## BENEFITS OF NARRATIVE NONFICTION

Narrative nonfiction blends factual information with literary techniques to tell a compelling true story. Character development, engaging dialogue, captivating real events (both past and present), dramatic storytelling arcs, and immersive settings make narrative nonfiction distinctive and appealing. Key benefits include:

- **Riveting Read-Alouds:** Narrative nonfiction naturally lends itself to reading aloud. Students who enjoy listening to fictional stories appreciate how narrative nonfiction offers a fascinating story that is rooted in fact. The entire book can be read aloud or just the first few chapters to pique readers' interest in wanting to know more.
- **Background Knowledge Builder:** Background knowledge impacts comprehension as students can understand what they are reading. Nonfiction offers information and facts about a range of topics, including rabbits.
- **Vocabulary Volumizer:** Nonfiction contains specific terms associated with the subject of the book. In *The Wild Season: The True Story of a Remarkable Rabbit Rescue*, readers will encounter words such as *domesticated*, *compression*, *camouflage*, *predator*, and even *galumph*. Nonfiction often contains a glossary for word pronunciation and definitions. This is especially helpful for English language learners (ELLs) to assist in building their academic vocabulary.
- **Mesmerizing Mentor Texts:** Narrative nonfiction provides a model for how to structure a plot, use absorbing dialogue, interject descriptive language, and cite primary sources. Stories follow a clear narrative structure while integrating information in an engaging manner.
- **Cross-Curricular Connections:** Narrative nonfiction can bridge language arts with social studies and science. Numerous nonfiction books can be found on topics such as wild and domestic animals, space exploration, historical events, environmental concerns, bridge building, ideas for recycling, and many more. There are also hundreds of biographies about famous individuals in the areas of math, science, and social studies.

The National Council of Teachers of English has posted a Position Statement on the Role of Nonfiction Literature (K-12) on their website at <https://ncte.org/statement/role-of-nonfiction-literature-k-12/>

### ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This educator's guide contains background information, discussion and response strategies, inquiry projects, and activities applicable to various curricula. *The Wild Season: The True Story of a Remarkable Rabbit Rescue* can be shared through reading aloud or by students reading the book independently.

### NONFICTION LITERATURE CIRCLE DISCUSSION

Nonfiction books, particularly narrative nonfiction such as *The Wild Season: The True Story of a Remarkable Rabbit Rescue*, are excellent choices to discuss in a literature circle format. These informative books expand students' natural curiosity about the world. Discussing a book in small groups of five to seven students is the hallmark of literature circles. Literature circles are generally associated with reading fictional books. However, discussion of nonfiction results in readers connecting to the text and furthering knowledge about a topic. Additionally, nonfiction literature circles can be structured to support close readings of text and the development of academic/content-specific vocabulary.

Students' preparation to discuss a nonfiction book is enhanced when a role is assigned or self-selected. A few roles that work well for the discussion of *The Wild Season* include:

- **Qualified Questioner:** Develops a list of questions the group might want to discuss about the book. The goal is to help others talk about big ideas in the reading and share their reactions. For example: What type of trap works best in catching rabbits? What would rabbits eat in Golden Gate Heights Park?
- **Illuminating Illustrator:** Draws a picture about the story. It can be a sketch, cartoon, diagram, flowchart, or stick figure scene of a person, an event, or a setting.
- **Travel Tracer:** Creates a map or diagram. There is a tremendous amount of "travel" in *The Wild Season* involving the rabbits and the volunteers trying to catch them. Select one or two chapters, rather than the entire book, to depict the travels of a specific rabbit, an individual who was featured in the chapter, or the small group of volunteers who worked together. The maps can then be compiled at the conclusion of the book. Show the aerial map of the park at the beginning of the story to offer ideas about creating a map.
- **Captivating Connector:** Shares connections with the story, and past experiences, school or community events, other individuals or characters, similar problems or issues, and books on the same topic or by the same author.
- **Wondrous Word Wizard:** Selects words that are interesting, or powerful, or just feel awesome to say. The goal of the word wizard is to assist by increasing vocabulary from words that resonate with the reader.

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- **Rockin' Researcher:** Explores additional information about the topic by searching websites and other nonfiction books. One interesting area of research might focus on the proliferation of rabbits in Australia.
- **Inquisitive Inquirer:** Prepares a BIG idea chart by recording questions, ideas, and diagrams that may lead to further inquiry on a topic. This inquiry might be about rabbits or other animals.

### FLIP BOOK

A fun feature in *The Wild Season* is the rabbit running as the pages are flipped. A flip book is a small book that can be created with a series of drawings. The pictures are in a sequence of positions, so it gives the impression there is a movement happening when you flip the pages quickly like in *The Wild Season*. Think of it as a little animated movie.

Materials for making a flip book:

- **Index cards:** Index cards that measure 3 x 5 inches usually work best for making a flip book. Blank index cards are preferred but lined are fine as well. Sticky notes measuring 3 x 3 inches can also be used. Ten cards is a good place to start.
- **Binder clip:** A medium-sized binder clip, which is about 1.25 inches in length, works well to hold the index cards together. This works better than stapling as it allows opportunities to see if the cards show movement as they are flipped or if they need to be revised/redrawn.
- **Sharpie Ultra Fine Point Marker:** A fine point marker works best to create the small, black line images. Pencils, colored pencils, crayons, or a ballpoint pen can also be used.

Making a flip book (there are videos available online to illustrate the process):








1. First, stack the cards landscape direction and number them from one to 10 in the bottom left-hand corner. The right-hand side is for the drawings.
2. Plan an action for the animation. How can this action be shown in 10 step-by-step drawings? Here are a few ideas:
  - **Stick Figure Waving:** A stick figure on one side of the paper with only the arm moving up and down to wave.
  - **Growing Flower:** A seed on the ground, which sprouts into a stem, and then grows a flower, bloom by bloom.
  - **Facial Expressions:** A simple smiley face where the eyes blink or the mouth changes from a smile to a frown.
  - **Spider Building Web:** A spider lowering down, with lines gradually forming a web around it.
3. Make a draft of your action on another piece of paper. Draw the object in the series of 10 action steps that you want to create. Then think about the direction the object will move or grow. Then draw the actions on your cards.

4. Make sure the cards are in order from one to 10. Additional blank cards can be added to the back to make the book easier to flip. Place the binder clip on the left-hand edge of the cards, carefully keeping the cards in position.
5. Hold the flip book with the left hand around the binder and use the right hand to flip the pages.

### HOP TO IT! RABBIT IDIOMS

“Often when people start talking about rabbits, they use rabbit words” such as “She hopped right on it” (*The Wild Season*, p. 21). This phrase or expression is called an *idiom* in which the meaning cannot be understood from the literal definition of the individual words. For example, when a friend is performing in a play, you might say, “Break a leg.” You aren’t wanting the person to literally break a leg but rather, wishing them good luck.

Here are a few rabbit idioms for students to decipher:

-  Pull a rabbit out of a hat
-  Go down a rabbit hole
-  Quick like a bunny
-  Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed
-  Rabbit in the headlights
-  Dust bunny
-  Rabbit, rabbit, rabbit

Next, have students write their own rabbit idioms or explore other animal idioms that may prove equally as puzzling.

### RABBIT RESEARCH

Chapter 19 in *The Wild Season* reveals how thirteen European rabbits were brought to Victoria, Australia in 1831 so that a wealthy English sheep farmer could host a party where attendees shot small animals. Since that date, the population of rabbits has increased to approximately 200 million today. They cause severe environmental damage, including soil erosion, loss of native flora, and threats to endangered species which costs agriculture millions annually. Have students conduct research on the following topics:

- **Population & Spread:** How many rabbits are there currently in Australia? How much of the continent do they cover?
- **Environmental Impact:** What is the environmental damage? How are they affecting other animals and vegetation?
- **Agricultural Impact:** The rabbits are damaging crops and grazing pastures. What is the economic cost annually for this agricultural impact?
- **Control Measures:** What has been used to control the rabbit population? Is it working?

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### LEVEL THREE QUESTIONS

Level 3 questions are based on Costa’s Levels of Inquiry and are open-ended, argumentative, and go beyond the text to apply, evaluate, or synthesize information. They require critical thinking, inspire creativity, and often ask for personal judgment or hypothetical scenarios. The answers are not found directly in the text but are supported by evidence. Level 3 questions can only be answered by evaluating, imagining, judging, speculating, predicting, and hypothesizing. Some possible questions might be:

- Many possibilities were stated about why someone would dump rabbits in the park. Why do you think people abandon animals they don’t want?
- Why would so many people volunteer to capture the rabbits? Would you?
- What do you think would be worse—rabbits multiplying or being captured by a predator?
- If you were a rabbit, how would you avoid being caught?
- Why were Sam, Jean, and Allison the only individuals to receive the Golden Gate Outstanding Neighbor Award?

### GRAPHIC RETELL

A graphic retell of a book involves transforming a text-based narrative into a visual format, such as a comic strip, storyboard, or illustrated timeline, focusing on key elements like characters, setting, and plot. The process involves mapping the plot, creating a visual storyboard, and summarizing the narrative for beginning, middle, and end. *The Wild Season: The True Story of a Remarkable Rabbit Rescue* contains chapters that focus on specific characters or events. For example, readers meet Sam and learn about the formation of the Bunny Club in chapters 6, 9, 11, and 13. A graphic retell can be based on these chapters initially. Students can select a specific person, or rabbit, to base their graphic retell, or the efforts to capture one or more rabbits could be told visually. Then place these retellings in order and have students share the visual narratives they have created.

### PRAISE FOR *THE WILD SEASON*

**“An absolute delight. Wildly suspenseful, utterly fascinating, and just plain fun. I dare you to find a reader who doesn’t fall in love with this perfect little book.”** —Katherine Applegate, bestselling author of *The One and Only Ivan*

**“Dashka Slater is a magician of a writer and this thrill ride of a book is a sort of magic trick: when we turn the last page, we look up and see anew how wondrous, how capacious our world is.”** —Nicholas Day, bestselling author of *The Mona Lisa Vanishes*

**“*The Wild Season* is a tender lesson in a different kind of love—one that starts with worry for defenseless bunnies and radiates out to the wonderment and oneness of a community. Part natural history, part adventure, and all heart, this endearing book is glorious, not least because it is true.”** —Candace Fleming, award-winning author of *The Family Romanov*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Dashka Slater** is the author of numerous bestselling, award-winning books for children, teenagers, and adults, including the award-winning nonfiction titles *Accountable* and *The 57 Bus* as well as the beloved Escargot picture book series. A Pushcart Prize nominee and the recipient of a Creative Writing Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, Dashka is a frequent speaker at schools, conferences, colleges, and universities. She lives in Oakland, California and teaches at the University of San Francisco’s MFA Program in Writing for Young Readers.



Photo credit: Amy Sullivan

