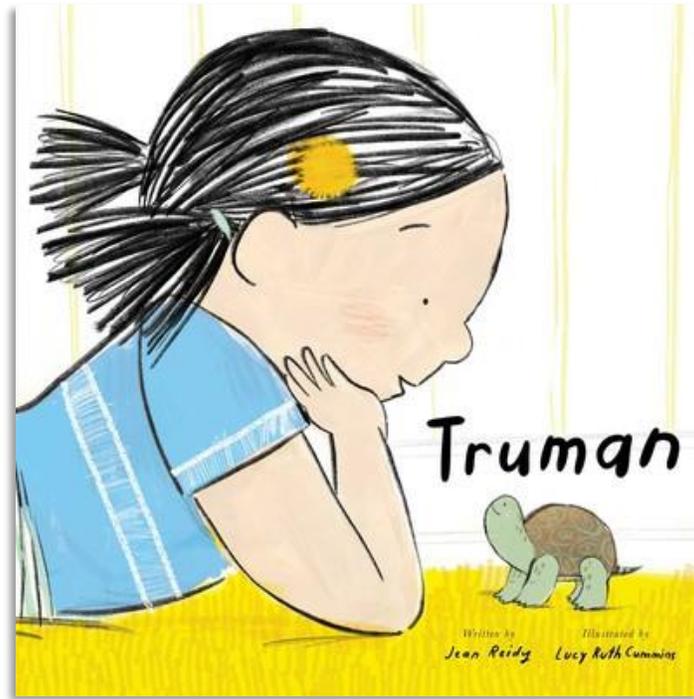


A Storytime and Curriculum Guide for

Truman

by Jean Reidy, illustrated by Lucy Ruth Cummins



TRUMAN ©2019 by Jean Reidy; Art by Lucy Ruth Cummins;
Antheneum Books for Young Readers An imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division

Praise for Truman

"...This book charms; there's just something uplifting and wonderful about the whole package." ~ Kirkus Reviews, starred review ★

"... a memorable pet-owner love story." ~ Publishers Weekly

"[Truman] will have readers of all ages falling in love." ~ Booklist

"A heartwarming tale of devotion that will be enjoyed by children and their adults."
~School Library Journal, starred review ★

"Truman's seemingly small accomplishment will give readers and viewers cause to celebrate and appreciate the things they achieve every day, no matter the size."
~Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books



Learning activities align with CCSS (Common Core State Standards).

Story Summary

Truman the tortoise lives with his Sarah, high above the taxis and the trash trucks and the number eleven bus, which travels south. He never worries about the world below...until one day, when Sarah straps on a big backpack and does something Truman has never seen before. She boards the bus! Truman waits for her to return. He waits. And waits. And waits. And when he can wait no longer, he knows what he must do. Even if it seems...*impossible!*

About the Author

Jean Reidy's fun, lively and award-winning picture books have earned their spots as favorites among readers and listeners of all ages and from all over the world. She is a frequent presenter on writing and reading and at schools and storytimes across the country—in person and virtually. Jean is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Colorado Council International Reading Association and she has served on the board of Reach Out and Read Colorado. She writes from her home in Colorado where she lives right across the street from her neighborhood library ... which she visits nearly every day.



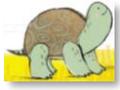
About the Illustrator



Lucy Ruth Cummins is a writer and illustrator, and also a full time art director of picture books, middle grade books, and young adult novels for Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers and Paula Wiseman books, the art director for numerous *New York Times* and international bestsellers, and proudly serves as both art director and illustrator for Stuart Gibbs's *New York Times* bestselling middle grade mysteries. Lucy is the youngest of six children. She was born in Canada (and lived in an actual log cabin!), raised in upstate New York, and currently lives with her little family in Brooklyn, New York. Her favorite food is the French fry. Learn more about Lucy and her work at lucyruthcummins.squarespace.com.

Storytime Ideas

FINGER PLAY



Invite children to act out the story as a finger play using the following words and hand motions. To extend this activity, search online for “ASL video dictionary” to learn the American Sign Language signs for key words such as *turtle*, *crawl*, *bus*, *door*, *floor*, *school*, etc.

Words	Actions
Truman	Make the “turtle” sign in American Sign Language (ASL) by making a fist with thumb resting on top. Place other hand over top of the thumb, allowing thumbnail to stick out and wiggle to represent turtle’s head.
loves Sarah,	Cross hands over heart.
and Sarah	Cross hands over heart.
loves Tru!	Make ASL sign for turtle.
When Sarah goes to school,	Kiss finger and touch to top of turtle hand.
what will Tru do?	Make shrugging motion with palms facing up.
He’ll crawl out his tank	Crawl turtle hand up opposite vertical arm.
and onto the floor,	Crawl turtle hand across opposite horizontal arm.
But when the bus comes...	Put hand to ear.
VROOM!	Quickly extend hand and arm away from body to mimic traveling bus.
SCREECH!	Hold up hand in a “Stop!” motion.
WHISH!	Use both hands to mimic bus door opening.
Who’s at the door?	Put hand to ear.
SARAH!	Throw hands in air then hug yourself.

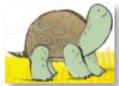
THE TORTOISE TWO-STEP



Sing along to the tune of *The Hokey Pokey* with the following lines:

- ♪ You stretch one leg in, you stretch one leg out...
- ♪ You tuck your green head in, you poke your green head out,...
- ♪ You roll your round shell in, you roll your round shell out...
- ♪ You put your tiny tail in, you put your tiny tail out...
- ♪ You crawl your whole self in, you crawl your whole self out...

TAKE TRUMAN ALONG



Prior to storytime, create make-and-take paper bag backpacks for children (see directions on pages 6 and 7). In each backpack kit, place 3 feet of yarn and a penny.

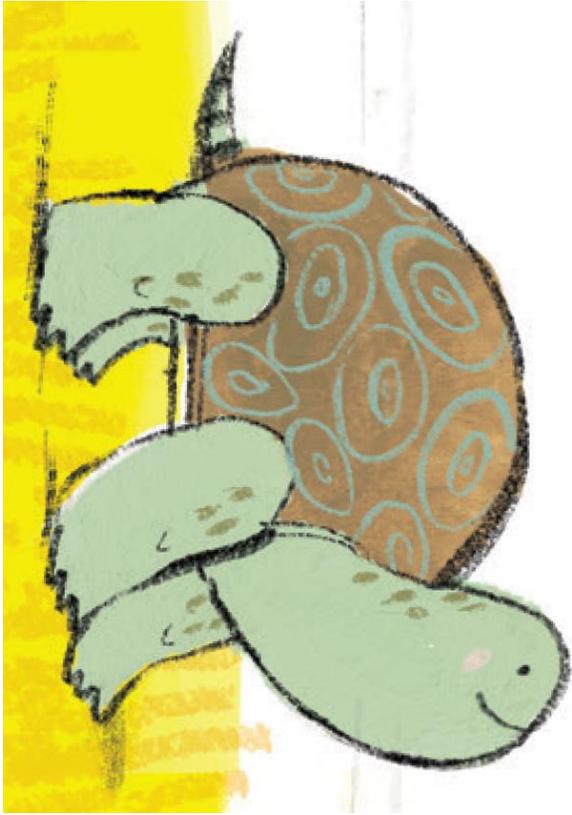
Print Truman standees (on following page) and hide them around the library for young listeners to find. After reading the story, suggest that you had a whole lot of Trumans that must have wandered away and ask children to find them.

Give each child a paper bag backpack. Demonstrate how you tape one end of a piece of yarn to a Truman standee and one end to the penny. When you drop the penny off the end of the table, Truman will walk/race. Encourage children to try different weighted coins at home.

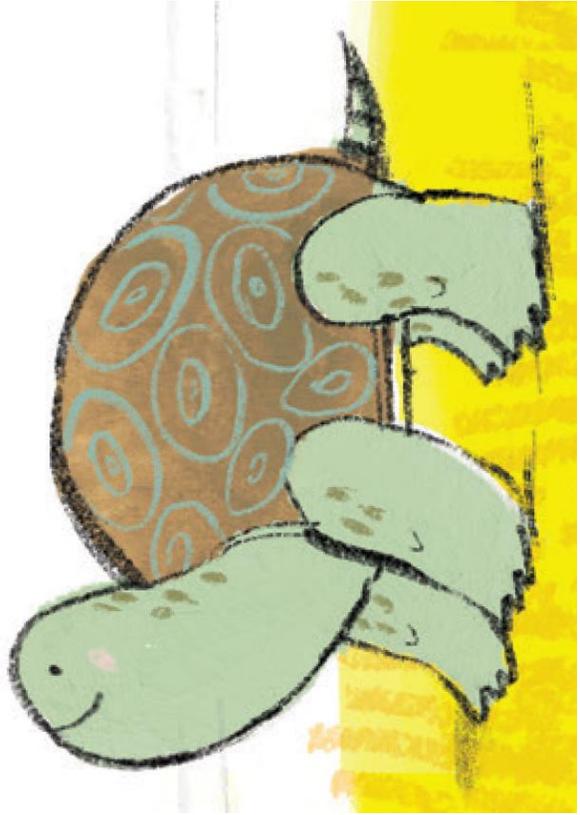


Supply children with additional slips of paper on which they can write or draw other items or people they might like to take along to school. (Suggestions include a blanket, pet, stuffed animal, toy, Mom, or Dad.) Have them store these additional items along with Truman in their backpack kit.

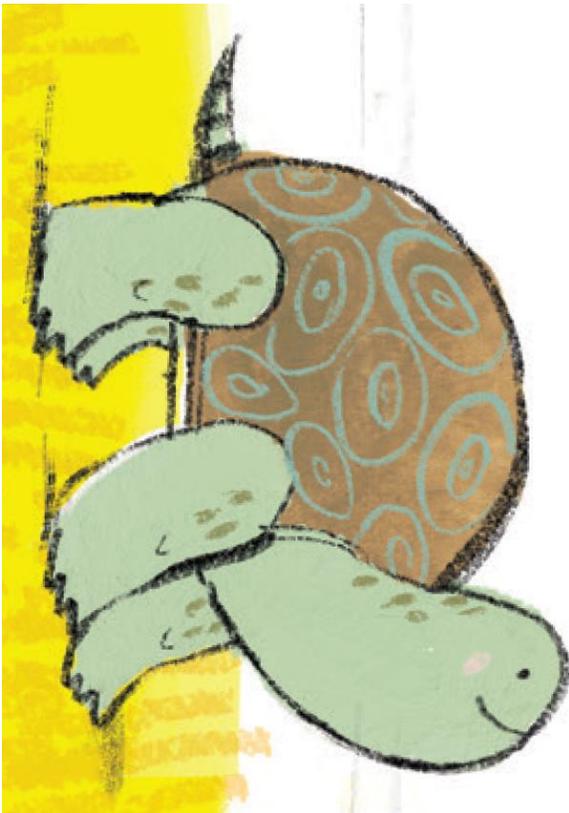
TRUMAN by Jean Reidy and Illustrated by Lucy Ruth Cummins (Atheneum/Simon & Schuster 2019)



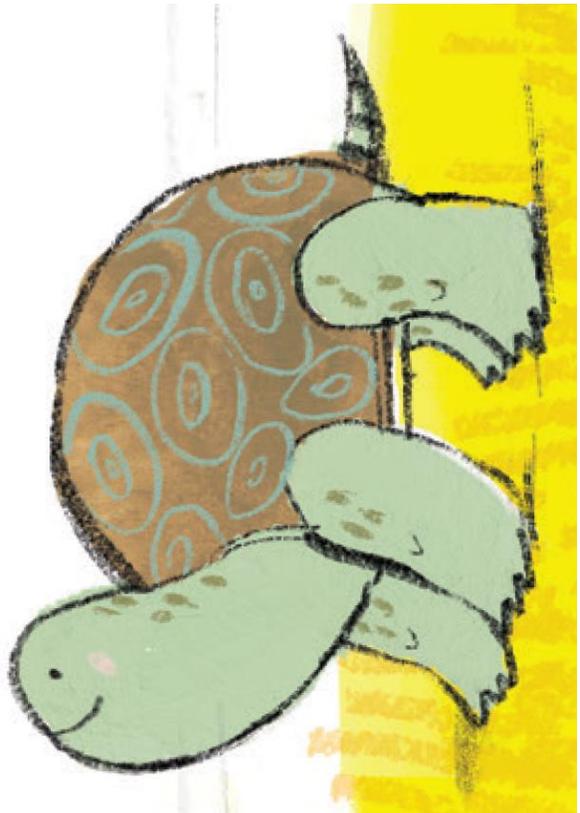
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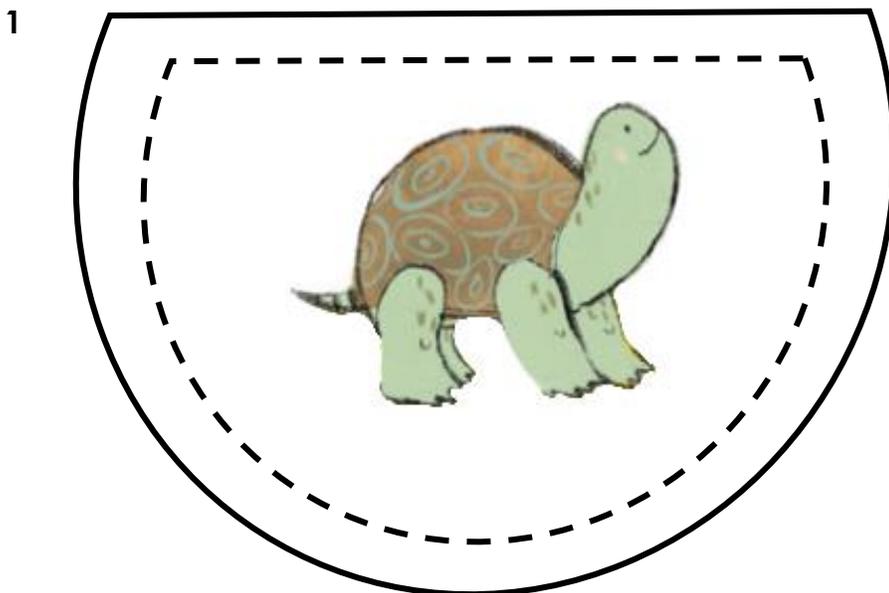
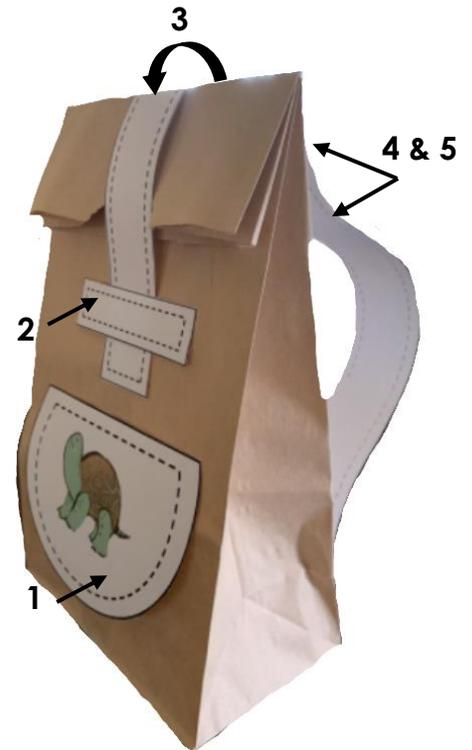
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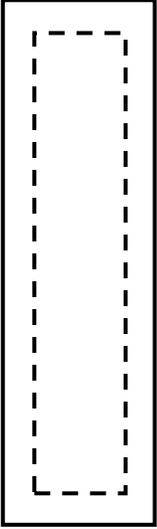
STORYTIME BACKPACK KIT

Assemble a paper bag backpack for the storytime activity "Take Truman Along." Begin by folding a paper lunch bag as shown.

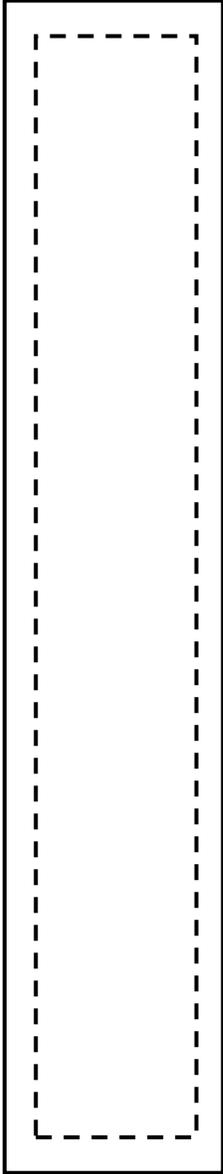
1. Glue the pocket onto the bag.
2. Glue the short tab horizontally onto the bag as shown.
3. Glue the longer tab onto the back of the bag, leaving room for the tab to curve over the top and be tucked into the shorter tab.
4. Glue the straps (4 & 5) onto the back of the bag.



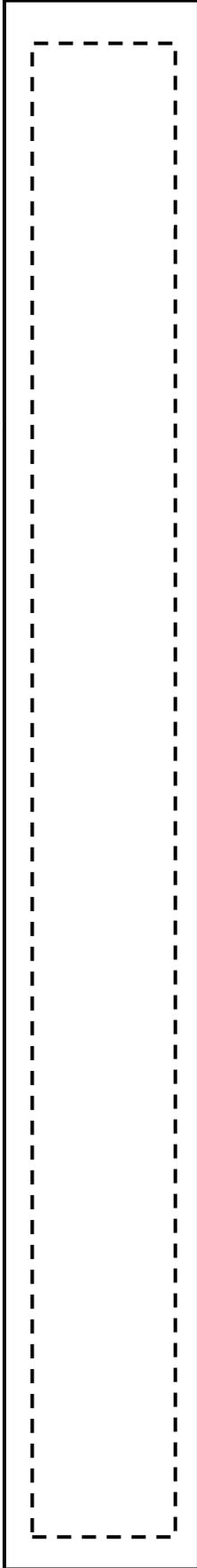
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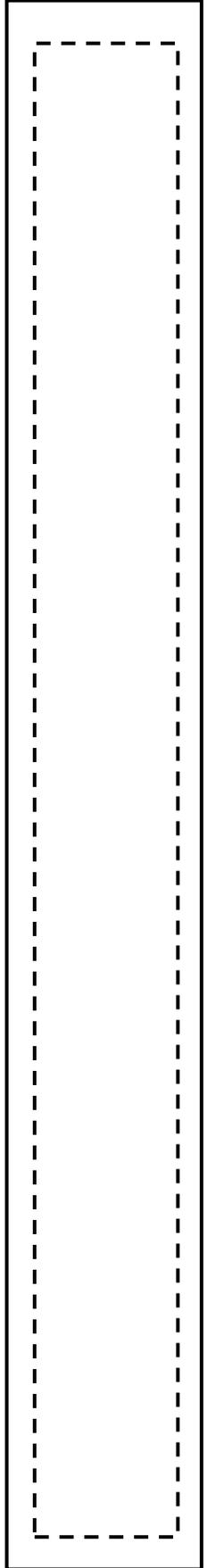
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4



5



Pre-Reading

ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

1. Ask children if they have a pet or if they would like to have a pet. What are some ways in which people take care of their pets? How do people show love for their pets? How do pets show that they love their owners?
2. Have children tell about the goodbye routines that they share with loved ones. Help children to categorize these routines; how many of them share a special word or phrase? A gesture? A physical show of affection, like a hug?
3. Ask about the longest journey that children have traveled. How did they get there? How long did it take? What did they do to pass the time? What did they do to prepare for the journey?
4. Have children talk about a time when they did something that was challenging or scary. How did they overcome their fear? Did someone help them? Have they ever helped someone to conquer a fear?
5. Invite children to share about a time when they had to wait for something they wanted. How did they feel? What did they do to pass the time?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.4

Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.4

Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.1.MD.C.4

Organize, represent, and interpret data with up to three categories; ask and answer questions about the total number of data points, how many in each category, and how many more or less are in one category than in another.

WONDERFUL WORDS



The words above may be new to your students within the context of this story. Help them to use picture clues and context to build understanding of these terms.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.4

Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7

Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

TAKE A BOOK WALK



Before reading, display the book's cover. Point out the names of the author and the illustrator and ask what jobs they do in the making of a book. Focusing on the front cover's illustration, ask: How do the girl and the tortoise feel about each other? Why do you think so?

Turn to the two-page spread of the city. Ask: Where does the girl live? What kind of noises might she hear from her window above this busy, city street? Using a document camera to zoom in on this page, see if readers can spot Truman in the window with the yellow curtains. How might this scene look and sound to a tiny tortoise?

On the page spread where Truman is watching Sarah color, point out the fact that both characters are "peaceful and pensive" in this scene. Ask children what makes them feel peaceful and pensive.

Continue to turn the pages and allow students to look at the pictures and make predictions. Pause on the page spread with the aerial view of the toys on the pink rug. What kinds of toys do they see? Turn the page to show the up-close view of the toys from Truman's point of view. What is surprising about this view? Notice details such as the broken heart on the horse's hip and the face on the doll's shirt. Ask what the problem in the story might be as well as possible solutions. Now go back to the start and read the story, allowing students to discuss their predictions afterwards.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.6

With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7

Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

After Reading

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy)

1. What are some of the objects that Truman used to help him in his quest to find his Sarah? (*Remembering*)
2. Which object made Truman feel the most brave? Why? (*Understanding*)
3. Truman knew that Sarah had "...left before. And she'd always returned." What made Truman start to worry this time? Why did Truman feel proud at the end of the story? Tell about a time when you did something challenging and felt proud of yourself. (*Applying*)
4. Which clues helped Truman realize that something would be different on this day? Tell how each clue brought Truman to his final conclusion that Sarah had left for her first day of school. (*Analyzing*)
5. In the story, Truman "waited a thousand hours—a thousand tortoise hours, that is—" What do you think the author means by this? (*Evaluating*)
6. What are some of the things that Sarah said to Truman when she came home and found him on the floor near the front door? If Truman could talk, what might he have said to his Sarah? Turn to a partner and roleplay what Sarah and Truman might say to each other in this scene if Truman could talk. (*Creating*)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.1

With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.9

With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.

Learning Activities

TIME FOR TORTOISES



In the story, Truman “waited a thousand hours—a thousand tortoise hours, that is—”

Ask students what they think the author means by this: What time of day did Sarah likely leave for school? What time of day was it when she returned home? What picture and text clues help to answer this question? Discuss this simile with children: “Now the sun hung low, like Truman’s head and heart.” How does this tell us about Truman’s feelings and the passage of time?

Review your class schedule for the day. Now make a schedule/timeline of what Truman’s day might have looked like in the story, labeling each activity with a time of day. Slow waaaaaay down for tortoise time! Help children to time how long it takes them to walk across the room with a normal walking pace. How long might that same journey take for Truman?

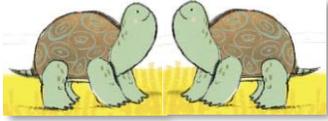
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.4

Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.1.MD.B.3

Tell and write time in hours and half-hours using analog and digital clocks.

TURTLES VS. TORTOISES



What are the differences between turtles and tortoises? Guide students through research on turtles and tortoises using non-fiction books, databases, and websites. (Try searching for “tortoise” on dkfindout.com.)

Organize your facts using the graphic organizer on following page by having students write, draw, or place fact cards in the appropriate boxes (facts pertaining only to tortoises go in the box labeled “tortoise,” and all other non-tortoise facts go in the box labeled “turtle.”) This graphic organizer helps students to understand that all tortoises are turtles, but not all turtles are tortoises.

Once your students are experts on the matter, guide them through the story once again for clues that Truman is a tortoise kind of turtle! (For example, there is no water in Truman’s tank for swimming, his feet are neither webbed nor are they flippers, and he eats vegetables—well, and the occasional donut or two!).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.2

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.7

Participate in shared research and writing projects

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.8

Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Turtles

Tortoises

omnivorous

herbivorous

live mostly on land

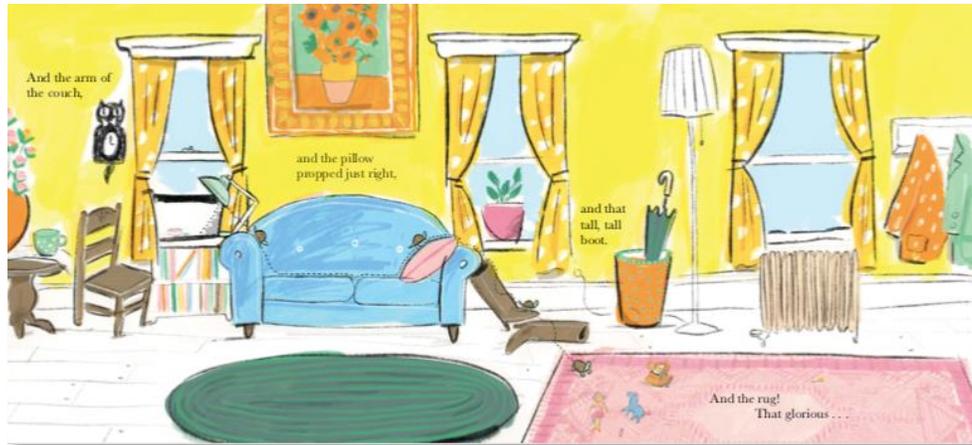
live mostly in water

non-webbed toes

webbed feet or flippers

OBSTACLE COURSE

Review the illustration showing Truman's path across the room. Have students follow the dashed line with their fingers to trace Truman's path.



Using items and furniture in the classroom and other materials (such as paper towel tubes, craft sticks, blocks, etc.) let students create their own obstacle course for Truman. Children can use their Truman standees (template on page 5) to walk Truman through their obstacle course.

Afterwards, ask:

1. Which part of your course was easiest for Truman? The most difficult?
2. Which part was the quickest for Truman? The slowest?
3. Are there any parts of the course that you had to adjust or change during your planning? Why?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.7

With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.K.10

Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

TELLING TALES



In *Truman*, we hear the story of Sarah's first day of school from Truman's point of view. Look at the scene where Sarah is reading her handmade book to Truman in his tank. Ask students what they think Sarah is saying. Might she be telling the story from her point of view, or from Truman's point of view?

Using the following story plot organizer, help students to:

1. retell the story from Truman's point of view as it is told in the book,
2. tell the story from Sarah's point of view as she might have imagined Truman's day without her,
3. tell Sarah's story of her first day of school, or
4. tell a story about a time when they were brave or did something hard.

Depending on the age of your students, this can be done as a class story, or students can write or dictate their own stories. The story plot organizer on the following page can be used to retell Truman's story or as a springboard for another story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.2

With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.3

With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.3

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.9

Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

STORY PLANNER



Main character: _____

Setting: _____



_____ wanted _____
main character _____ ,



so _____
_____ ,



but then _____
_____ ,



so _____
_____ ,



until finally, _____
_____ !

SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH TORTOISE GLASSES



Show the pages in the story where Truman sees the three “ordinary” rocks in his tank through the lens of new possibilities. Have children make tortoise glasses using the template on the following page copied onto cardstock. Add Truman’s head, legs, and tail to each “tortoise shell” lens. Glue a craft stick to the side of one lens (opera-glasses style) for holding the glasses up.

Ask students to look through their tortoise glasses and try to see their classroom as a tortoise might. Most reptiles have poor vision, but turtles and tortoises have excellent eyesight and are especially attracted to bright colors. Which areas of your classroom might make a tiny tortoise feel right at home? What might be some not-so-tortoise-friendly areas of the room?

Use this activity as a springboard for discussing how someone on crutches or in a wheelchair might view the classroom. How about someone with a visual impairment? What might be some obstacles, and which items in the room might not be accessible? Discuss modifications that could be made in order to make the classroom safe, welcoming, and accessible for anyone.

During this discussion, help students to connect with each other’s ideas and perspectives using sentence stems such as:

- I connect with what [classmate] said because....
- I want to add on to what [classmate] said...
- [Classmate's] comment made me think about...

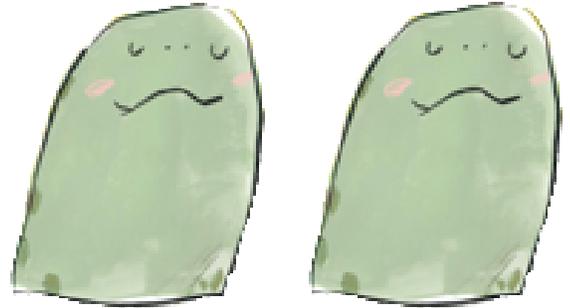
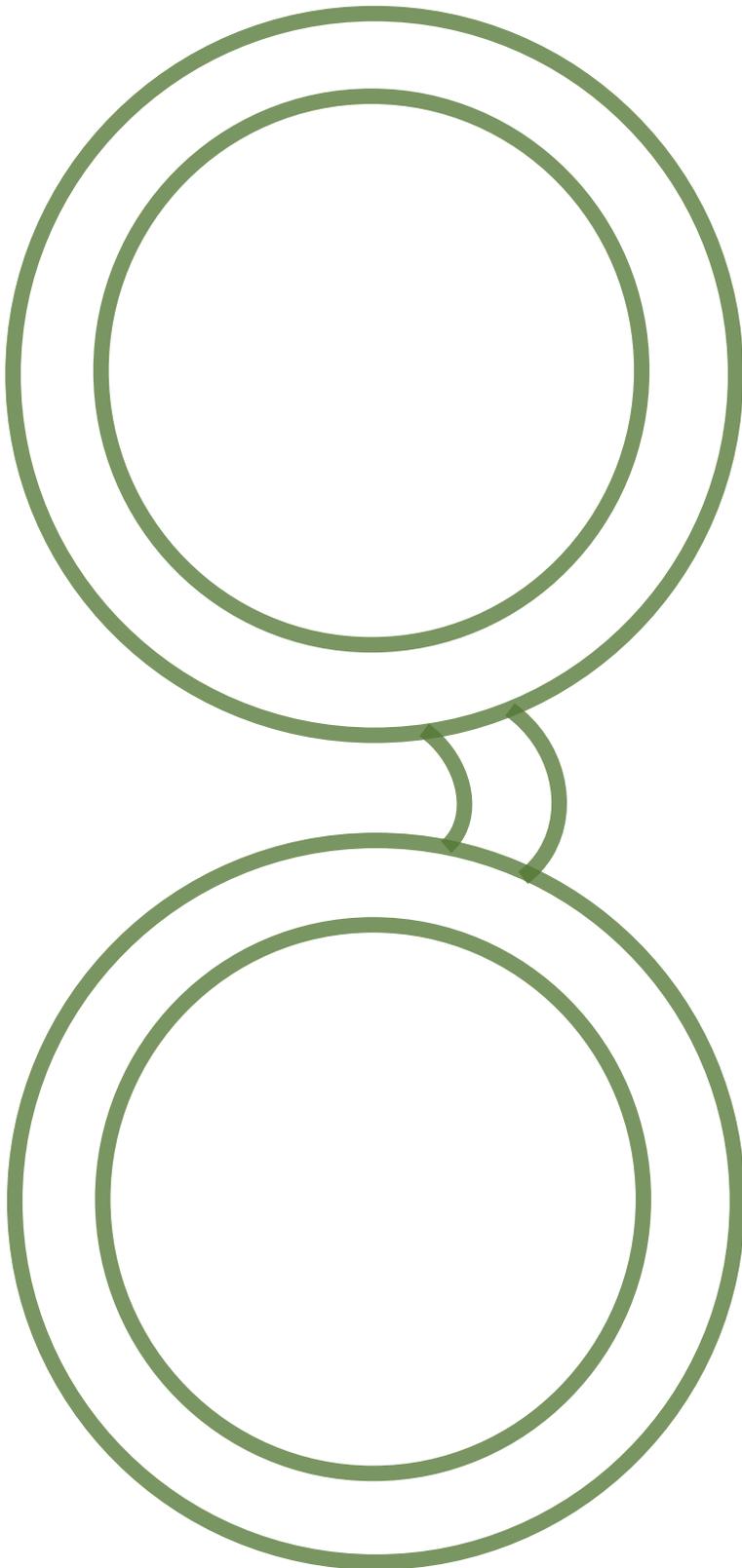
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.1.B

Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1.B

Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.

TORTOISE GLASSES CUT-OUTS



BUS RIDE



In which direction does the number 11 bus travel in order to take Sarah to school? Which way would it travel to bring Sarah home? Look at the last page showing Sarah and Truman in the back of the bus. Are they going to school, or home again? How does the sign at the top of the bus give you a clue?

Show students a Google Map of your school's community. Help them to identify where they live in relation to the school. Point out the compass rose on the map. In which direction do they travel to school in the morning and home again in the afternoon?

Have students help create a map of your school's community on an area carpet. Students can replicate local landmarks, including their school, with drawings or building materials (such as blocks or tissue boxes). Use duct tape or masking tape for important roads. Add a compass rose. Using toy buses, cars, and dolls, encourage children to show others how they get to school.

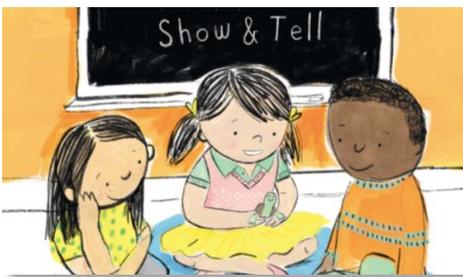
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.4

Describe familiar...places...and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.G.B.5

Model shapes in the world by building shapes from components and drawing shapes.

A TORTOISE IN THE CLASSROOM



Invite an amphibian expert to visit your classroom to talk about the amazing qualities of turtles and tortoises.

To prepare for the event, do the following:

1. If children will be allowed to hold or touch the animals, review safety rules such as washing hands before and after touching any animal.
2. Explain that turtle and tortoise shells are covered from the same material as our fingernails, and their bodies can feel pressure through their shells. To illustrate this, ask children to pretend that their index fingernail is a tortoise shell. With a washable marker, help children to draw two eyes, two tiny holes for the nose,

and a line for the mouth on the tip of their finger to represent a face. Have them press on their fingernail above the “face.” Can they feel pressure through their fingernail? Discuss how painful it could be if their fingernail were hit with something hard. How does this help them to understand more about turtles and tortoises and how they should be handled?

3. Ask children what questions they have for the speaker and list them on chart paper. During the presentation, you can place a check next to questions as they are answered and review the answers afterwards.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.8

With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.3

Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS



In the story, we learn that: “Sarah placed seven green beans in Truman’s dish—two more than usual!” Give students seven green paper strips to represent the green beans and guide them in figuring out how many green beans Sarah usually serves to Truman. Ask students to share the strategies they used to figure out the answer.

Working in pairs or small groups, invite children to make up their own “green bean” word problems. Have students write a problem on an index card and solve the problem on the back. Encourage pairs to swap cards, solve their classmates’ word problems, and check their answers.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.1.OA.A.1

Use addition and subtraction within 20 to solve word problems involving situations of adding to, taking from, putting together, taking apart, and comparing, with unknowns in all positions, e.g., by using objects, drawings, and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.OA.A.2

Solve addition and subtraction word problems, and add and subtract within 10, e.g., by using objects or drawings to represent the problem.

TORTOISE MATH



Show children the page with the illustration of 32 tortoises in Sarah's backpack. Ask students how Truman might have used estimation to come up with a quantity of 32. Reinforce the idea that the goal of estimation is not to arrive at a "correct" answer or to randomly guess, but to get a "ballpark" idea of quantity.

Print out the tortoises on page 25 of this guide onto cardstock and cut them out. Invite students to estimate how many tortoises would fit on an envelope. How many would fit on a piece of paper? A placemat? On a table? Set up a station where students can practice estimation. They can record their estimates using the templates on page 24 of this guide.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.CC.B.4.A

When counting objects, say the number names in the standard order, pairing each object with one and only one number name and each number name with one and only one object.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.1.OA.C.5

Relate counting to addition and subtraction.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.2.OA.C.4

Use addition to find the total number of objects arranged in rectangular arrays with up to 5 rows and up to 5 columns; write an equation to express the total as a sum of equal addends.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.G.A.2

Partition shapes into parts with equal areas.

DONUT DATA



Bring in plastic zip bags of different sizes and a few dozen mini-donuts or donut holes (check first for any food allergies). Hold up the smallest plastic zip bag and ask students to estimate how many donuts might fit in the bag. Record students' estimates using the template on the following page. Fill the bag and compare the actual number with students' estimates. Now ask students to estimate how many donuts will fit inside the next largest zip bag. Repeat the steps for comparing estimates with actual numbers of donuts. What happens to the accuracy of the estimates as the bags get bigger? As you use bigger zip bags for this activity, allow students to revise their estimates mid-way through filling the bag. How do they use their observations to revise their estimates? How do they use the data and observations from filling the smaller bags to inform their estimates of the bigger bags?

Let students practice their own donut estimation with the donut template on page 26 and a variety of areas to cover with donuts (a plate, tray, etc.).

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.CC.B.4

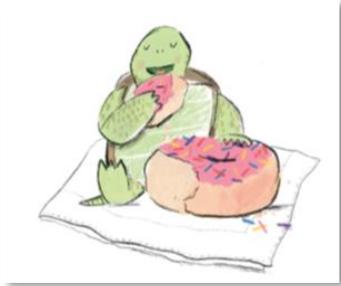
Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities; connect counting to cardinality.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.MD.A.2

Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has "more of"/"less of" the attribute, and describe the difference.

Estimation Station

Name of Mathematician: _____



My estimate is _____.

The actual number is _____.

My estimate was:

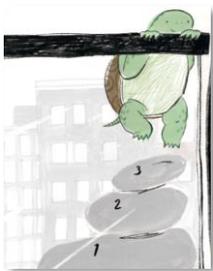
low

high

exact

Estimation Station

Name of Mathematician: _____



My estimate is _____.

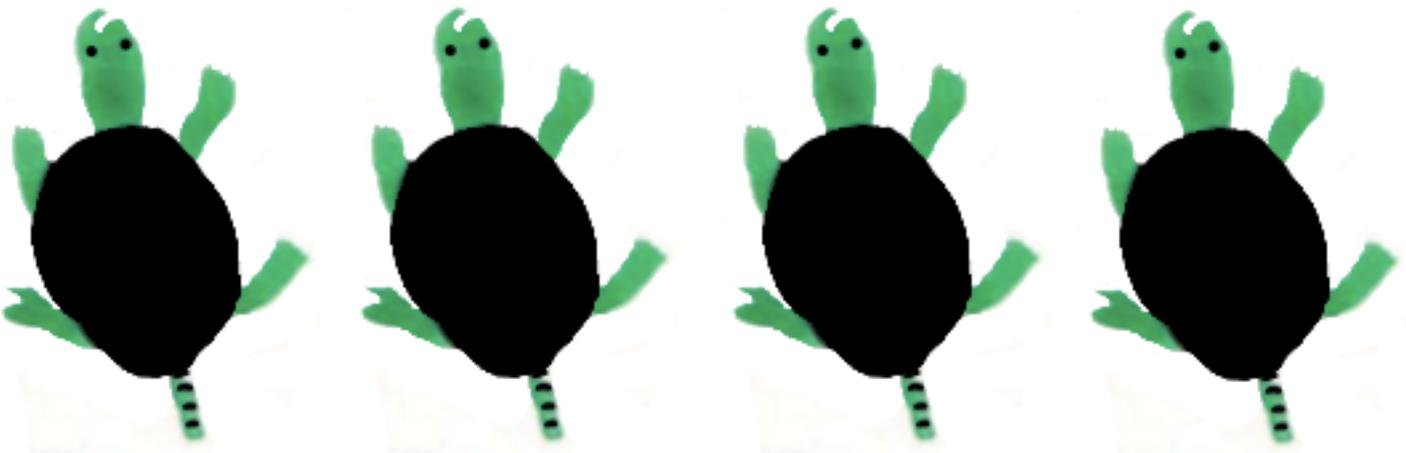
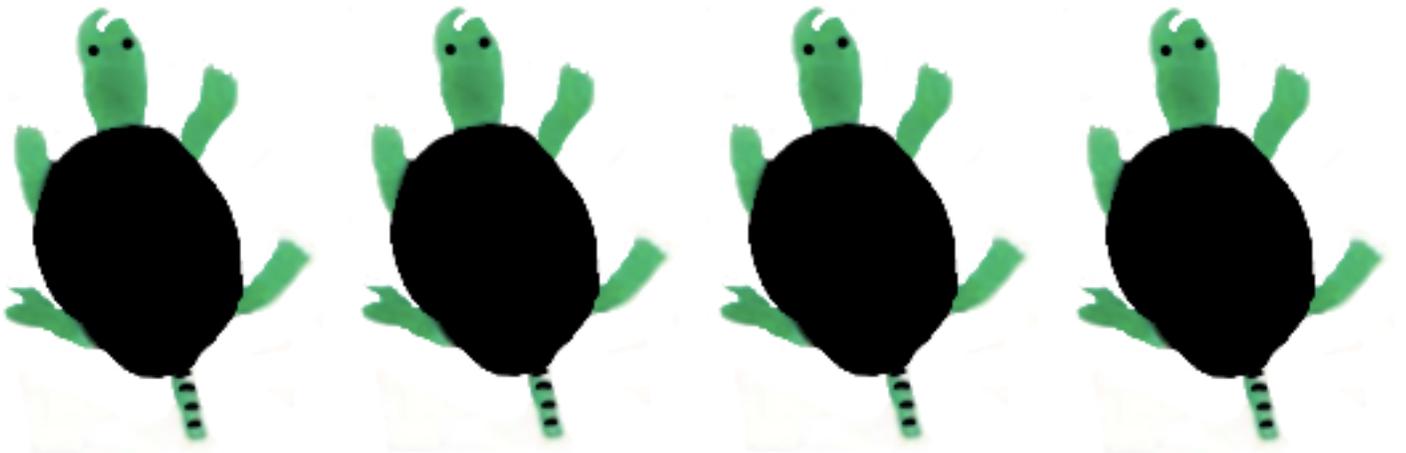
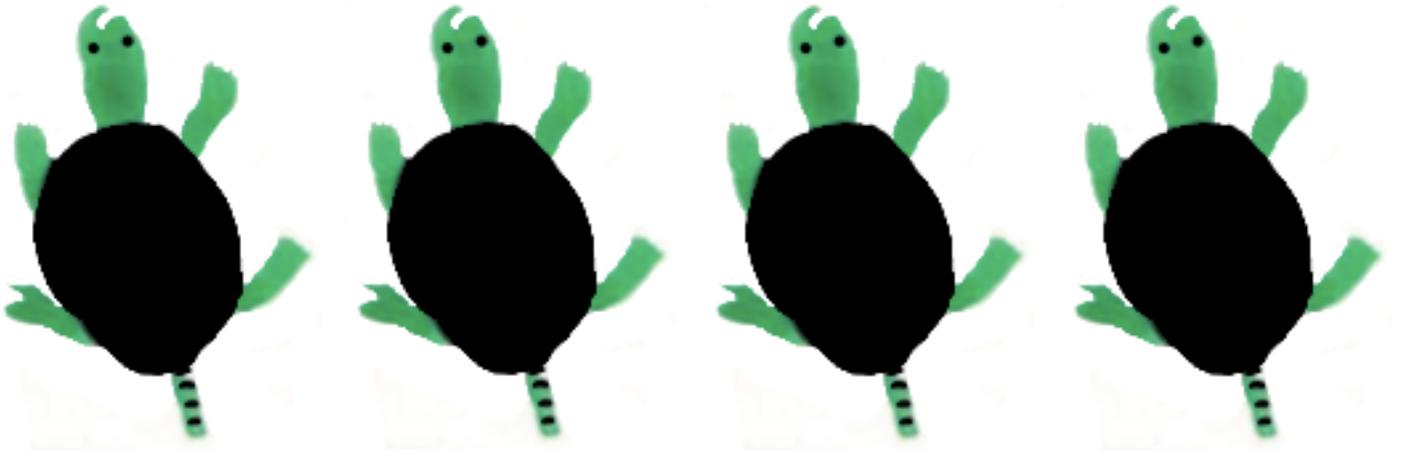
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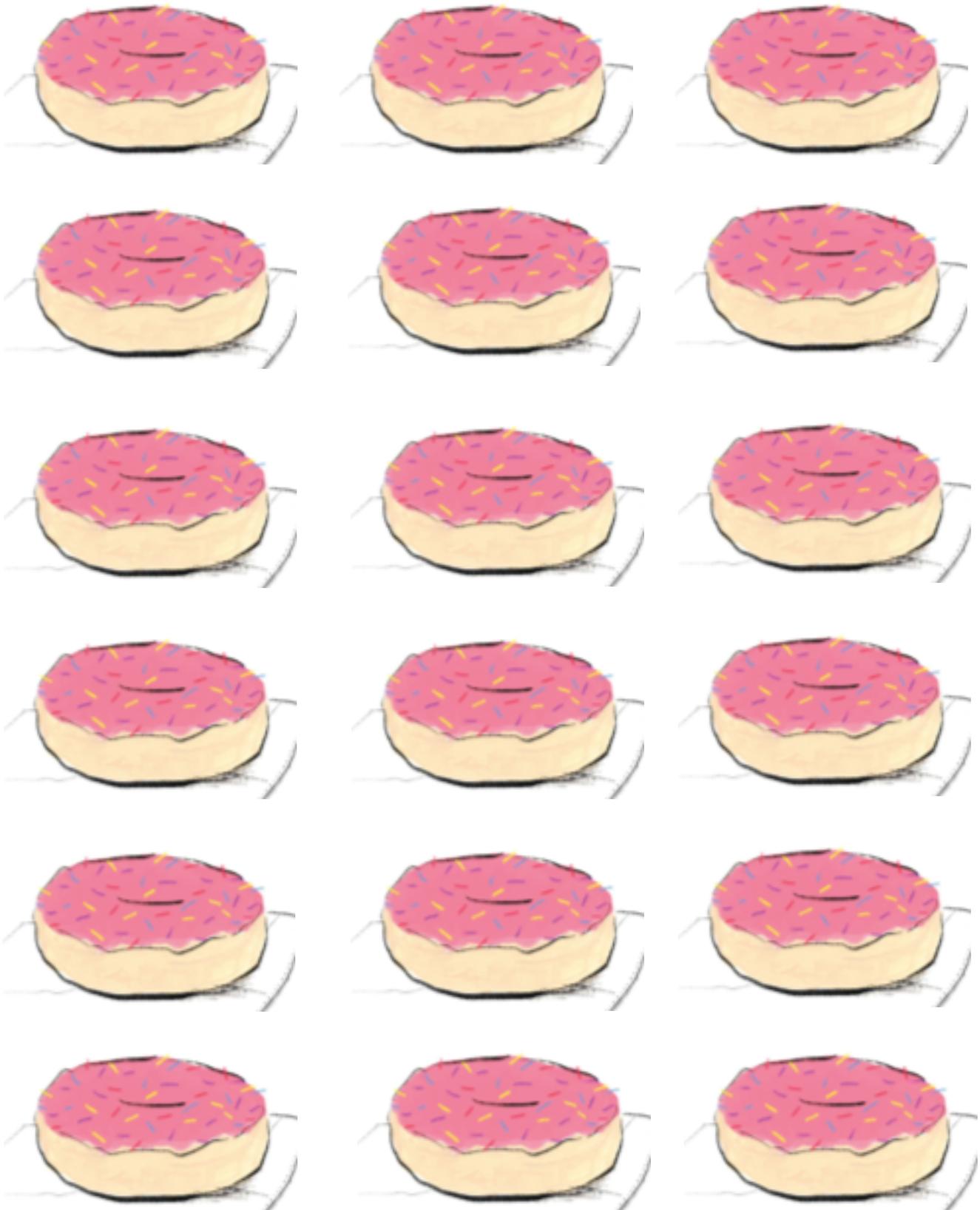
My estimate was:

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AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR JEAN REIDY



How did you get the idea for *Truman*?

Truman ambled into my mind when one of my favorite writing exercises merged with meeting a VIT – a very important tortoise.

I've been doing school visits for years. And in those visits, we talk about books and reading and writing ... and sometimes we talk about point of view. The subject of point of view never fails to spark the imaginations of young readers and writers. Stepping out of their own skins presents students with an endless array of story lines, settings and characters. One of the examples I've always used for point of view goes like this: "Let's say you were writing a story about the first day of school. What if you told that story from the point of view of your dog?" I then work through that fun example, imagining a dog's thoughts, emotions and actions.

Fast forward a few years and I meet an extraordinary, real-life tortoise named Hagrid, who belongs to my writer friend Sarah. Hagrid is quite a character. I've spent time with him at his house and he's visited my family and me at my house. I'd often imagined what he might be up to when Sarah was at work or going about her day. Those imaginings, coupled with that example from my school visits, became the spark that became *Truman*.

Once the idea came to you, what happened next?

Writing *Truman* came naturally because I felt so comfortable in this character's head. By using third person limited point of view, I could stay close to my little tortoise, revealing his thoughts, feelings and emotions through observational humor. That was fun! In my first version of the story, though, Sarah was an adult. So, while similar in content, this initial version had more of a child/parent separation anxiety theme. Then, still early in the editorial process, I rewrote Sarah as a child going off for her first day of school. Not only did I feel this version would resonate better with young readers, but I really loved the possibilities it afforded with Sarah and Truman facing their parallel and perhaps frightening "firsts."

What do you want young readers to know about this book?

If they look carefully at the story, they'll see plenty of clues that Sarah was as worried about leaving Truman as he was about her leaving. But both Sarah and Truman mustered their courage to do what they had to do. *Truman* is my tribute to young readers and listeners everywhere who take small but courageous steps everyday toward growing up, going after what they love, seeing new sights, hearing new sounds and thinking new thoughts. I hope the bravery of a donut-sized tortoise will inspire theirs. Because the world is waiting for them.

Did you have any childhood pets?

Over the years I have resided with a not-so-well-behaved assortment of turtles, parakeets, lizards, goldfish, hamsters, rabbits and even one feisty, fire-bellied toad. Admittedly, I've never had a tortoise. Maybe someday!

What is your writing process?

When a spark for a story comes to me – whether through inspiration or imagination – I immediately write it down – maybe in an e-mail, maybe in an old notebook (I keep them everywhere), maybe in a Word document. And I do a bit of an initial brain dump of everything that might have presented with that idea – phrases, themes, words, images – which often isn't much.

Over time – like maybe weeks, or even months – if that idea won't leave me alone, if my mind and my imagination keep going back to it, then I give it time and space to grow. I scribble down words and phrases and thoughts and images and endings without the constraints of a story structure. I give myself the freedom to play, to make a mess, to make mistakes. Because I know that once I start titling and formatting and formulizing, it's often hard to go back to that play state – when my brain is most rich with ideas and most open to experimenting. And as I cross out and fill in and keep the process as free as I possibly can, the structure begins to form organically.

When I do finally have a story-worthy structure, I play with it in manuscript form. Picture books are like poetry. So, I play with breath spaces and line spaces and word choices and lots and lots of white space. I also read it out loud – over and over again – to make sure that the story sings. After all, picture books are meant to be read out loud. And after I've read it out loud about a million times, then I might let someone else read it, to get some fresh eyes on it. Those usually come

from my amazing critique group and my online writer friends who offer me brilliant revision suggestions. Then I read, revise and repeat until my trusted readers tell me it's ready.

What advice do you have for young writers?

Whether you love to write or hate to write, my advice is the same: First, read, read, read. Read a lot. Read often. Comic books, magazines, cereal boxes, funny books, sad books, adventures, fantasies, poetry – whatever you like ... and some things you don't. Reading can be the best teacher of writing. I actually schedule reading time into my work day.

Then write. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of the blank page or the blank computer screen. Don't be afraid of sounding stupid. Don't worry about perfection. Just do it. Get it down. Write fast. Really fast. Write when you're not expecting to write. There are a million different ways to write. Start with something you enjoy. You might make lists, doodle, rant, rap, write poems, scribble wacky stories, compose diary entries. But just write. And if you want to, you can always go back and revise or get feedback from your own trusted readers. The more you write, the easier it becomes, AND the better writer you will be.

When you aren't writing, what are some of your favorite things to do?

Chatting or Skyping with my mom, kids and grandkids (they all live far from me). Hiking, biking and skiing in these beautiful Rocky Mountains. Reading – yes! Books. Magazines. Fiction. Non-Fiction. But especially Children's Books. Playing cards ... or just about any games for that matter. Traveling to see family and friends – I'm a huge fan of trains and road trips. Supporting a fabulous non-profit called Reach Out and Read – which essentially makes reading and books part of medical care. A no-brainer, right? And finally, working alongside amazingly selfless and generous people at a refuge for the homeless here in Denver. My co-workers and our guests fill my well with compassion on a weekly basis. Oh, and I almost forgot – chatting with other writers about writing, of course!

AN INTERVIEW WITH ILLUSTRATOR LUCY RUTH CUMMINS



When did you begin to think of yourself as an artist?

When I was about 10 years old, I had an art teacher who would occasionally have a student sit for a pencil portrait, and one day during class she did mine while the other students worked. When she was finished and showed me the portrait, I was stunned by how the likeness was exact, how she'd conjured me up so perfectly with just a pencil. I was in awe. I went home, and on the back of an envelope from my father's desk, I drew my mother as she read—she didn't notice me, and when I finished, I was so proud of what I made even though it was not perfect. I was so happy to see that I'd sent signals from my eyes and heart down through the tip of a pencil and onto paper. I thought, "I think with practice, I may too have this magic in me!" It was then that I thought I *could* be an artist, if I tried! And I'm still trying.

What types of media do you like working with the most, and why?

In college, I studied to be a graphic designer—a person who designs text and graphics, chooses fonts, and does layouts for books, magazines, logos—that type of thing. But while in school studying to be a graphic designer, I also took traditional fine art classes, like drawing, painting, color theory (which hues go with which), and sculpture, alongside some illustration classes. Illustration is the sort of place where fine art and communication meet: you make pictures that clearly tell a story to whoever sees them. I always loved my illustration assignments, and I always loved picture books, many of which I still had from when I was little and had brought with me to college. So when I finished school and started looking for my first job, I was thrilled when I found work as a graphic designer for picture books at a book publisher, Simon & Schuster. For years, I worked alongside illustrators, helping them craft their images to match text, designing books, living in the world of illustration. One day a text for a picture book was shared with me by an editor at my office, and he asked who I thought should do the illustrations. I liked the text a lot, and so I worked up a lot of courage and told him I would like to try. I made two illustrations to show him

what I intended to do for it, and I got the job! And I've been illustrating books ever since!

How long did it take to illustrate Truman?

I sketched the scenes for Truman over the course of about a month or two, in the evenings when I got home from my job at the book publisher. After the editor and art director of the book had a chance to look at my sketches, they made notes, and for another two months I made changes and adjustments, at which point they shared my vision (all in pencil) with the author, Jean Reidy. She gave her thoughts and notes (which were very helpful!) and I made a few more changes before starting on final artwork. The paintings themselves took about four months to complete. So the whole process took about eight months!

How did you collaborate with the author while creating the illustrations?

We didn't collaborate directly, although Jean's story had some art notes that explained what she envisioned the art would do to advance the story where the words were less direct. It's fun as the illustrator to sort of translate words into pictures, and to do so by yourself, so that you're not tied directly to what a writer has pictured, and I think it creates lots of happy surprises for the author when they see sketches. The nice thing is that even though the sketches are done mostly with the author and illustrator working separately, once the sketches are complete, the author is able to take it all in at once and make sure the vision matches their expectation for the story, and to add ideas in for more details in the art that make it even better when the final illustrations are rendered. So it's like a conversation that happens almost like letter writing—not back and forth, like a phone call, but with time, space, and thoughts collected fully before a response is made. It's very thoughtful and thorough!

What was the most challenging thing about this project? The most rewarding?

One of the most challenging things for me about "Truman" was to try and get the perspective right—to make sure that when you saw the world through Truman's eyes, and at his eye level, you sensed the enormity of what he was endeavoring to do in crossing that apartment. Varying close ups and distant scenes, and different angles (lots of looking up, up, up!) was important to get this across. So that took a lot of revision, and even a lot of laying on the floor in my apartment to really see what he would see!

The most rewarding thing about this project was getting to read the finished book to my son's class at school on the last day this year. He was excited to be able to sit in the little chair next to me and listen while I read, and he was happy to show his classmates that he and his friend Logan are in one of the pictures with their babysitter Janelle (on the spread where Sarah boards the bus, they are in a blue, two-seater stroller near the bus stop, my son is wearing his favorite little blue hat).

You've illustrated several books written by other people, and some that you've written yourself. How does your process differ from one book to the other?

I love illustrating books written by others because their stories aren't ones it would occur to me to tell—they're like gifts from outer space, worlds to live in and explore through pictures that I wouldn't have arrived at myself. I love the collaborative process of working back and forth with someone else, honing a story and images to their peak.

I also love writing and illustrating my own books, because I'm able to make books that I wish existed, from the ground up. If an idea occurs to me, nothing stops me from sitting down and conceiving it from beginning to end, usually I work back and forth between writing the words and crafting the sketches, and it's so satisfying to make a book from absolutely nothing and then share it with a publisher to make into a real thing. Those are my babies, I like that the words "sound like" me and the pictures "look like" me, all at once.

Pablo Picasso once said, "All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." Do you agree?

I think the trick may be in how we define art—in a broad sense, to me, art is whatever you do with flare and love, and by that definition, I think a good many adults have a life that includes a pursuit done with flare and love! Were it baking, speaking with children, writing, singing, tending to plants. I think there's some art and artist in all of us, and artistry enough in different strains to last each of us a lifetime!

When you're not illustrating, what do you like to do in your free time?

I love reading books and building LEGO with my son, I love singing karaoke with my friends, I love watching movies with my husband, I love going to the beach or a swimming pool, and I love reading the news.