

# TOGETHER *We Grow*

Exploring Together, Growing Together  
*Discussion Guide for Educators & Families*

## ABOUT THE BOOK

### **Together We Grow**

By Susan Vaught

Illustrated by Kelly Murphy

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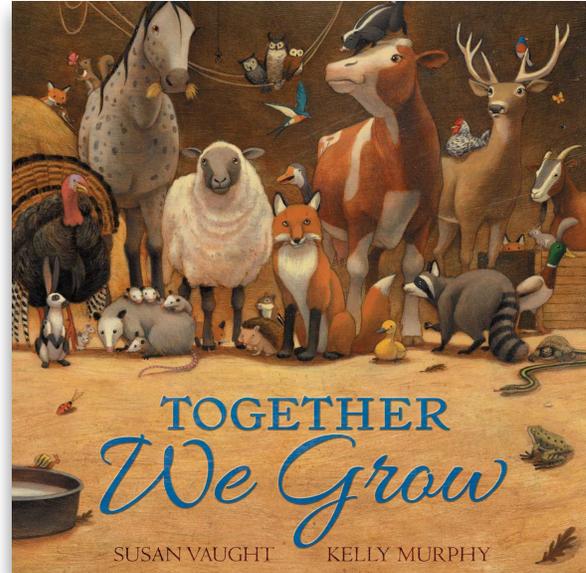
*Lightning gash!*

*Windy lash!*

A storm drives farm and woodland animals into a barn for shelter. A fox family needs shelter, too. Will the other animals let them in?

This stunning picture book explores themes of acceptance and belonging:

*Large or small,  
Short and tall,  
There is room,  
There is room,  
There is room  
For us all.*



“A gentle tale of inclusion and fairness that children will clearly understand.”  
—*Booklist* (starred review)

“A truly inspiring picture book that will resonate with both children and adults.”  
—*School Library Journal* (starred review)

“Emotionally charged and eloquently rendered in words and art, this picture book is worth owning and cherishing.” —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“Inviting dialogue about the need for inclusivity, Vaught offers a lyrical narrative.”  
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

## ABOUT THE DISCUSSION

We grow together when we talk with one another. Child and family LCSW therapist Bonnie Thomas offers some opportunities to explore TOGETHER WE GROW for Social Emotional Learning. Kirsten Cappy of I'm Your Neighbor Books, an organization that creates family and classroom conversation about immigration, welcoming, and belonging, also contributed questions to the discussion. Use these questions to explore the book spread by spread. There are no wrong answers. The conversation itself is the answer.

Look for a video read-aloud and discussion with child and family LCSW therapist Bonnie Thomas and a paper craft at [bit.ly/TogetherWeGrowTools](http://bit.ly/TogetherWeGrowTools).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### *End Papers and Title Page*

There are no words that tell the story on these first two pages. Can you tell us what is happening in your own words?

The fox looks so lonely. When have you felt alone? What happened to make you feel less alone?

### *Lightning gash! Windy lash!*

Tell me about your own experiences with thunder and lightning. What do you like, and not like, about storms? What do you think it would be like to be outdoors at night during a thunderstorm?

### *Rain and thunder, home asunder.*

We see two different animals in this picture—a fox and a rabbit. How do you think each one is feeling? Which animal would you rather be in this picture?

The fox's home is "asunder" or broken by the storm. Imagine if the fox were a human mother with children. What things might make the family leave their home? What might make a home "asunder"? Does the fox mother get her kits to safety?

*Note: Reassure your child that just like the fox mother, you will always find a way to keep her safe.*

### *Careful glances, taking chances.*

We see two different kinds of animals in this picture—a fox and owls. What do you think the owls are feeling? What do you think the fox is feeling? Which animal would you rather be in this picture?

Have you read or heard any other stories with foxes in them? What role does the fox usually play in books? Are foxes more trusted or less trusted in stories?

***Frightened faces, strange new places. Paws in need, beaks to feed.***

There are so many different animals gathered here! Let's see if we can name them all.

Do you think these animals would normally all gather in a barn together? Why or why not? And what do these animals all have in common?

Look at the expressions on the animals' faces— if you had to name one feeling they all have in common in this picture, what would it be?

***Go away! We're full today!***

The fox peeks through the barn window and sees all the animals inside. What do you think the fox is thinking at this moment?

The animals tell the fox to “go away!” Has anyone ever told you to “go away”? If so, what was that like for you? How did it make you feel?

The animals say, “We're full today!” Is the barn full? Why would the animals say that the barn is full when it is not?

The animals don't seem to trust the fox. Think of a person you trust. What makes you trust a person?

***Rain-soaked, lonely. A hope, if only...***

What does the gosling see when it looks outside the barn door? What do you think the gosling is thinking and feeling?

Is the gosling seeing and thinking differently from the other animals? Can you remember a time when you liked or trusted someone that others did not?

Tell me about a time you met an animal that you were warned about, and you ended up liking that animal. For example, has someone ever told you their pet doesn't like strangers and yet the pet was friendly and gentle with you? Or, has anyone told you to be scared of an animal but when you learned more about it you realized it wasn't as scary as the person made it sound?

***Picture of fox and gosling***

This page has no words. Can you use your own words to tell what is happening?

Tell me more about their facial expressions—how do you think each of them are feeling at the moment?

Do you think the gosling *feels* safe at this moment? Do you think the gosling *is* safe at this moment? Why or why not?

Like the gosling, close your eyes. Now think about what safety feels like to you. When you think of safety, do you see a person or a place in your mind?

***Drying tears, Calming fears***

The rain continues to fall and the lightning flash. Look at the gosling. What do you think the gosling is “saying” to the foxes?

Look at the expressions on the foxes’ faces and look at their body language. How do their emotions change? Why do you think that is?

In the 4th picture we can see the animals in the barn looking out at the foxes and gosling. Their facial expressions look more calm, compassionate, and willing than before. Why have their expressions changed?

What could you say to a new person to welcome them to your home, classroom, or neighborhood?

***Learn and show together we grow.***

Some of the animals leave the safety of the barn to watch the gosling and the foxes. On this page, who is learning and who is showing? What are they learning?

What do you think “together we grow” means? We know people and plants can grow bigger. Can kindness grow bigger?

The gosling’s mother comes out of the barn to meet the fox mother. Have you ever introduced your family to someone new?

What is the gosling teaching and showing the other animals? If there were a kid at school that other kids did not like, how could you show the other kids that you thought differently?

***Flat or long, screech or song. Slow or quick, lumpy and slick.***

The animals head back into the barn, including the foxes. Two of the fox pups look relaxed and comfortable inside the barn, while the fox mother and one fox pup watch from the barn door. Pick an animal on this page and describe what they may be feeling or experiencing in this picture. Have you ever felt that way?

Remember when the animals said the barn was full? There is now room for the foxes. Has the barn gotten bigger or has something else changed?

***Brindle and gray, dapple or bay.***

Can you look back at the horses on the “Go Away!” page? Compare the faces of the horses earlier in the story with their faces on this new page. What has changed? Why?

Have you ever been afraid of someone or did not like them, but changed your mind. What happened to change your mind?

***Shell and scales, love prevails.***

If “prevail” means win, what do you think “love prevails” means?

Look at the faces of all the animals once the foxes are inside. What has happened? How does love play a part?

Tell us about a time when things were frightening or sad and love prevailed or changed what you were feeling.

Can you think of a time when your love for someone else helped them prevail?

***There is room, there is room***

When the animals finally fall asleep, who stays awake to welcome more animals in? How can you become a welcomer on the playground? How about in your neighborhood?

***there is room...***

Every year the American government decides how many new families it will let in from other countries. Often those families live somewhere where there is war or other disasters. Just like the barn animals, this country decides whether they should let in the fox families whose homes have been destroyed. What would the gosling tell America if it could? What would you tell America?

***for us all.***

What do you think “There is room for us all” means? What does it mean in the book? What could it mean in your home? In your classroom? In your neighborhood? In the world?