

Make Way for Ducklings

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This lesson is adapted from *Using Caldecotts Across the Curriculum*.

With foxes in the words and turtles in the water, a duck can't raise a family just anywhere. So Mr. and Mrs. Mallard fly on and on until they come to the Charles River in Boston and declare it "just the right place." Have a duck call and police whistle handy for sound effects when you read this story aloud!

Students who wonder "could this really happen?" will be interested to hear the story behind the classic. "I first noticed the ducks when walking through the Public Garden every morning on the way to school," he writes. "...I noticed the traffic problem of the ducks and heard a few stories about them. Then the book just sort of developed from there." (*From the book's back-flap*)

To get the ducks in his drawings just right, McCloskey brought a few live mallards home. In *Meet the Authors and Illustrators: Volume One*, McCloskey Says "No effort is too great to find out as much as possible about the things you are drawing. It's a good feeling to be able to put down a line and know that it's right."

Like Robert McCloskey, children will discover that observing something up close can help them get the details just right in their own drawings. Though you may not be able to invite ducks into your classroom, bring in stuffed animals! (If you have a class fish or hamster, use it instead).

Materials

- Class pet or stuffed animal
- Drawing paper
- Colored pencils or pastels

Directions

1. Have children observe their animals from all sides. Ask questions to guide their observations:

- How many legs (wings, paws, claws and so on) does the animal have?
- What is the texture of the animal? Is it soft? Prickly? Furry? Slimy?
- What shades of light and dark do you see in this animal?
- How big is the animal? What object is about the same size?
- What shapes and patterns do you see?

2. Before students begin drawing, have them experiment with various drawing techniques. Look at the book for inspiration, noticing the flowing:

- The color of the illustrations (all done in shades of brown — children can use brown pencils to achieve a similar effect)
- Shading (try smudging colored pencil or pastels with a finger or a tissue)
- Shadows (notice where real shadows fall)

3. Let the children draw their animal(s) several times — like Robert McCloskey — until they "know that it is right."

Tip: To guide students in their drawings, introduce the concept of gesture drawings. Explain that a gesture drawing is like a quick scribble that shows the shape of what you're drawing. Let students make several gesture drawings of their animals and then select one each to work into a drawing — darkening lines and adding details.

If students are drawing stuffed animals, suggest that they turn them upside down to encourage that they draw what they see and not what animals are supposed to look like.

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