

Classroom Ideas for

TODAY AT THE BLUEBIRD CAFÉ: *A Branchful of Birds*

by Deborah Ruddell

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BE A BIRD WATCHER ...

As a class, watch birds near your school or in the park. Focus on one bird. Stand quietly and watch it for as long as you can. Look closely and carefully. Listen. Pay attention to everything you see and hear. Imagine *being* that bird. What would your life be like? Where would you get your food? Where would you sleep? Would you have friends? How would it feel to fly?

Back in the classroom, work together to identify the bird you were watching. Brainstorm a list of words that describe the bird and its life. Use some of the words to write your own poems about the bird. Don't worry about rhyming your poems.

LISTEN UP...

Read *The Loon's Laugh*. Then listen to a recording of a real loon at www.nationalgeographic.com. Now, read *The Loon's Laugh* again and imagine that you are all alone ... late at night ... listening ... Would you "pull up your covers and turn on the light?" Or would you go to the window and try to see who was laughing that creepy laugh?

MAKE A RECORDING ...

Choose one of the poems from the book to read out loud. Practice reading it slowly and clearly. Experiment with your tone of voice. Try pausing in different places or emphasizing certain words. Have a friend listen to you and give you advice. Have fun with it! When you're satisfied with your reading, make a recording and play it back.

PLAY WITH WORDS...

Hoopoe Voodoo is a silly poem that plays with the OO sound. Read *Hoopoe Voodoo* and find all the OO sounds. Brainstorm a list of fun words that have the OH sound, as in show or toe. Use as many of those words as you can to write a silly poem about a crow.

IMAGINE ...

Close your eyes and listen as someone reads the title poem, *Today at the Bluebird Café*. Try to picture The Bluebird Café in your mind. Paint or draw the picture that you saw in your mind.

PERFORM ...

Act out some of the poems using props, masks, simple costumes, or scenery. (*Mrs. Crow Gets Dressed*, *Bravo, Bobolink!*, *Hummingbird Search*, or *Toucan Tour Guide* are good poems to act out.) A student or the teacher should read the poem slowly and clearly as others act it out.

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CREATE...

* Pretend that you've never seen Joan Rankin's amazing watercolor illustrations in TODAY AT THE BLUEBIRD CAFÉ. Choose one of your favorite poems from the book, copy it, and illustrate it *in your own way* using paint, markers, crayon, or collage.

* Invent a bird that doesn't exist. Draw a picture of your imaginary bird and give it a name.

* Draw the outline of a hummingbird and cut it out. (Remember, it's a tiny bird!) Decorate the front and back with paint or markers and sprinkle it with glitter. Hang it from the ceiling.

* If you owned The Bluebird Café, what foods and drinks would you serve? How much would you charge? Design and decorate an imaginary menu for The Bluebird Café.

* Make a simple bird feeder and hang it outside for the birds.

INVITE...

Invite parents or other classes to a poetry reading at "The Bluebird Café" in your classroom. Read or dramatize some of your favorite poems from the book. Display your bird paintings and drawings, as well as your original bird poetry. For refreshments, be sure to serve "a sip of the lake" (pale blue punch) and "a bite of the sky" (popcorn clouds).

SING...

Sing songs about birds, such as:

Mockingbird Hill

Rockin' Robin

Feed the Birds (Mary Poppins)

Bye Bye Blackbird

When the Red, Red, Robin Comes Bob-bob-bobbin' Along

Yellowbird

READ...

Hummingbird Nest: A Journal of Poems

by Kristine O'Connell George

On the Wing

by Douglas Florian

The Raven

by Edgar Allen Poe