

**Teaching with**  
**Robert Munsch**  
**Books**

**ALLIGATOR BABY**

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## The story behind Alligator Baby



On Kristen's birthday in 1979, Robert Munsch made up a story for her. He knew her mother was going to have a baby, so he told a funny story about how Kristen's parents went to the zoo instead of the hospital and brought back the wrong baby. Kristen was so happy with the story that she wrote it down and drew illustrations for it. When Robert Munsch asked her if she would still like to be the girl in the story when he was ready to publish it many years later, she showed him her version of the book. In 1997, she received Robert Munsch's and Michael Martchenko's version to add to her library, and so did we!



# ALLIGATOR BABY

**Q:** "Are you going to release a continuation to *Alligator Baby*?"  
*Rachel, Grade 4*  
"P.S. I really like your books."

**A:** "I don't have a continuation of *Alligator Baby*, not even in my head. Do you have an idea for a continuation?"  
*Robert Munsch*

## Summary:

Kristen's mother is having a baby! On the way to the hospital, her parents get lost and end up at the city zoo. When her mother and father arrive home, they discover that they have the wrong baby. They have come home with an alligator baby. Through a series of hilarious events, Kristen eventually brings her baby brother home.

## Questions:

### Before

Look at the front cover.

- Why do you think the mother is holding a baby alligator?
- Where did this alligator come from?
- What do you notice about the lettering used in the title? What does this tell you about the book?

Look at the back cover.

- Read the description on the back of the book, and predict where Kristen's real baby brother is and how she will get him back. Record students' predictions on a chart.

Read the dedication page.

- To whom did Robert Munsch dedicate this book? (Find Guelph, Ontario, on a map.) How do you think he knows Kristen?

## During

- p. 9: What will they find under the blanket this time?
- p. 15: Look at the feet sticking out of the blanket. What animal has Kristen's mother brought home this time?
- p. 16: What is Kristen going to do?
- p. 20: How is Kristen going to get her baby brother from the gorilla?
- p. 26: What do you think Kristen sees out the window?

## After

- Check the predictions you made before reading the book.
- How did the animals know where to find their babies?
- What do you think happened when Kristen's mother had twins?
- The children could write their own story describing what happens next.



## Activity #1

# Research Project

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to research some of the animals featured in the book. If this is the students' first experience with research, you may want to begin as a class project, using specific categories and recording key facts and ideas as a group. This project may span over a two- to three-week period.

### Curriculum Link:

Language arts — developing research skills  
Science — needs of animals, animal life cycles

### Materials:

Class set of Research Webs (see reproducible on p. 38-39)  
Information books: see List of Resources (p. 59) for suggestions

### Procedure:

1. Select one of the animals in the story to further explore through a research project. With the students, brainstorm questions they may have about this animal and record them on chart paper for future reference. Look at the questions and divide them into categories e.g. food, habitat, enemies, protection, description, and interesting facts.
2. You may want to focus on one category at a time. Share the information books with the students, on the category you have selected to research that day. You may also want to make the books available for the students to read during their independent reading time.
3. Provide the students with a Research Web each, and have them fill in the section you have discussed, using point form. You may want to do this together on the overhead, or demonstrate one on a chart. This is also a wonderful opportunity to talk to the students about the purpose of using point form to gather information.
4. Once their webs are completed, demonstrate for the students how to write up the information from their webs into paragraphs.

5. Each student can then staple the completed paragraphs into a shape booklet of the animal he or she has researched.

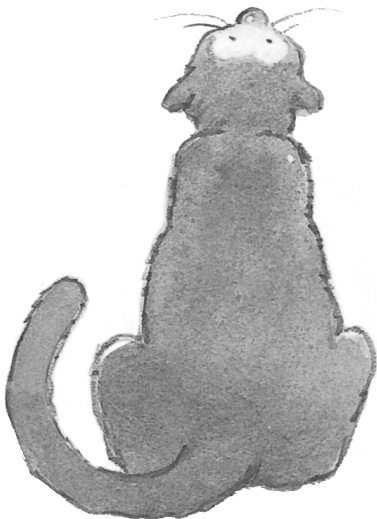
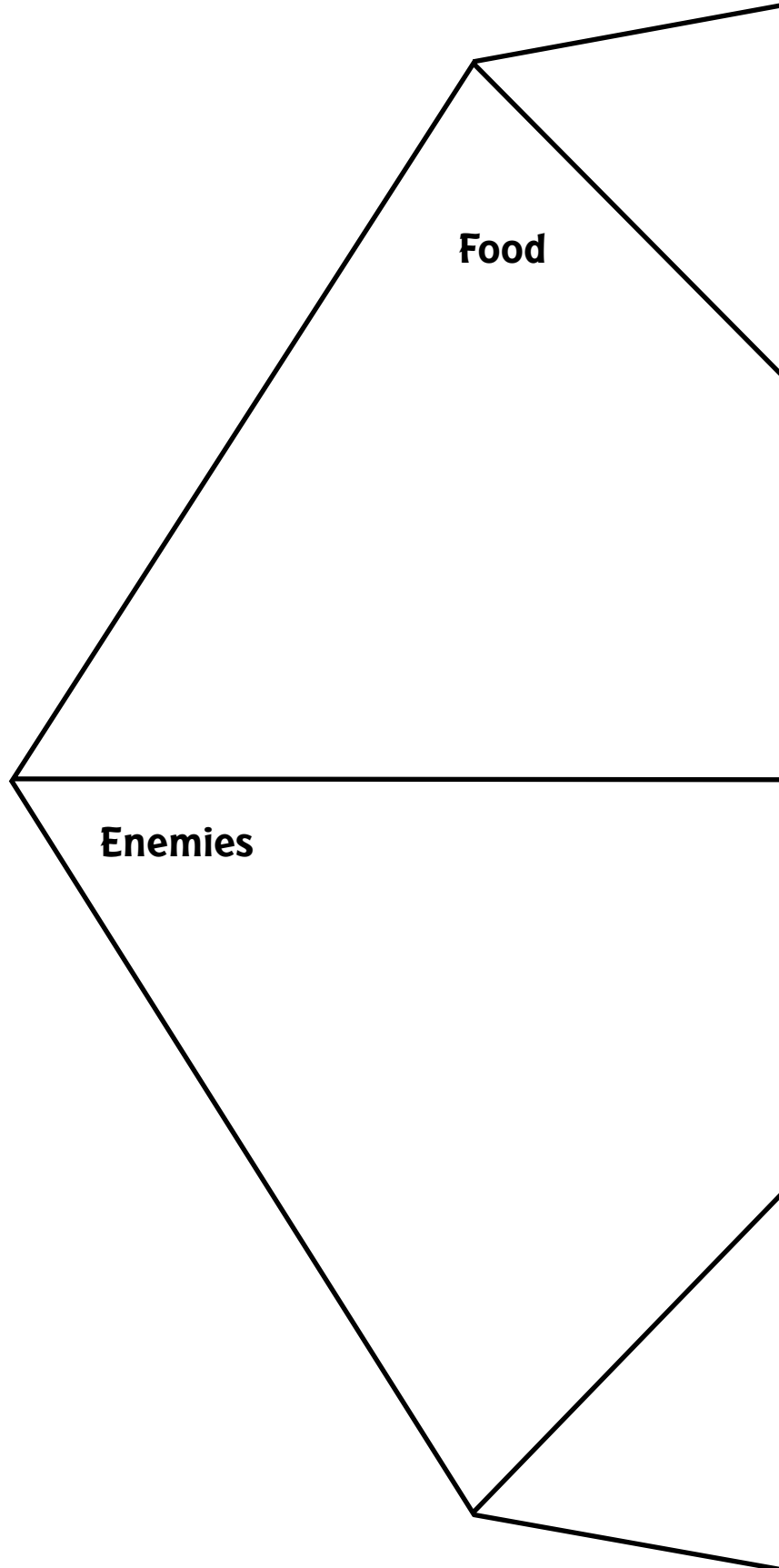
6. Invite the students to illustrate their reports.

**Extensions:**

- ☉ Students could select a second animal to research — as a class, with a partner or individually. You could then compare and contrast this animal with the first one selected.
- ☉ Ask the students to prepare a short speech explaining why they would like to have this animal for a baby brother or sister.



# Research Web

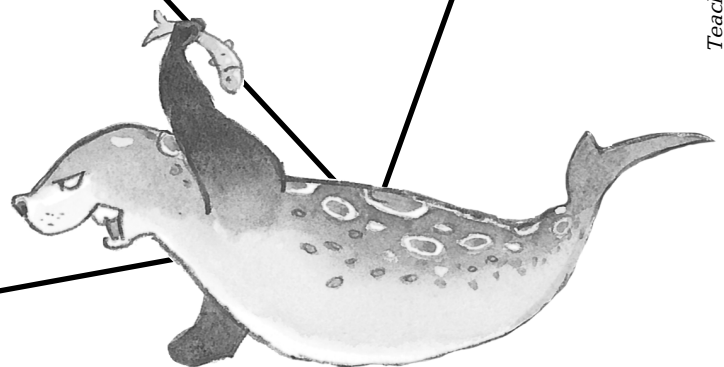


**Description**

**Protection**

**Interesting  
Facts**

**Habitat**



## Activity #2

### Write a Riddle

In this activity, the students can use the information they have researched from activity #1 to create their own animal riddles.

#### Curriculum Links:

Language Arts — descriptive listmaking

Science — animal characteristics

#### Materials:

Coloured construction paper

Large white index cards (4 per student)

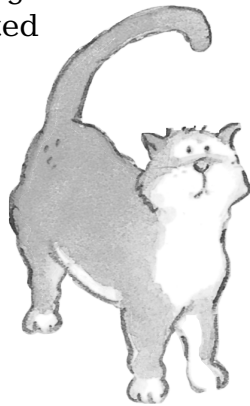
Riddle books — 6 sheets of 9" x 12" coloured construction paper stapled together (these may be prepared ahead of time by a volunteer)

#### Procedure:

1. Explain to the students that they are going to create their own riddle books using the different animals featured in the story.

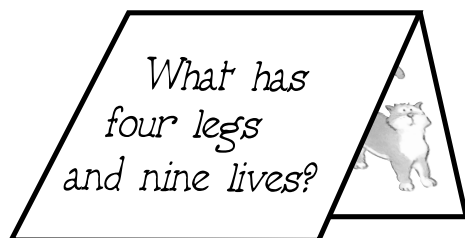
2. Begin by sharing examples of riddles with the students — from books, or some that you have created.

3. Look back at the description of the alligator on page 4: "a long green tail," "a long green face with lots of teeth." Together, write a riddle for an alligator using four clues and ending with "Who am I?" If you selected alligators as one of the animals to research in activity #1, you may want to refer back to the information you gathered, or gather ideas by sharing information books about alligators with the students.



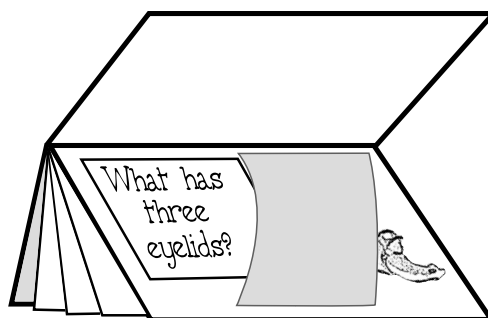
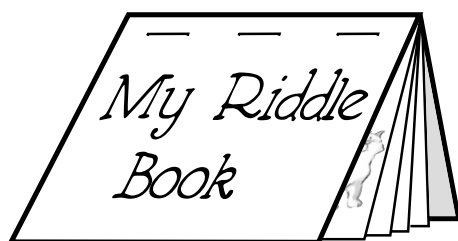


4. As a way of introducing the riddle books, have each student write one riddle for practice. Fold a piece of 9" x 12" construction paper in half. Glue the riddle on the top flap. Inside the flap, have each student illustrate the answer to the riddle. Share these riddles in the Author's Chair.



5. Before the children begin their own riddle books, have them select the four animals that will be featured in their books. Have the students do a first draft of their riddles for you to revise and edit. Once the riddles have been edited, the students can copy their riddles onto index cards, which will be glued into their riddle books.

6. Have the students glue their riddles on the left-hand side of the page and illustrate the animal on the right-hand side of the page. The students can glue a flap over the illustration to hide their answer. The children could share their riddle books with their classmates and with other classes in the school.



### Extensions:

- ☉ You could use a pop-up riddle format for the books.
- ☉ Students could write an acrostic poem about one of their favourite animals in the story.
- ☉ Share a variety of chants, poems, and songs about the different animals.