



AM I LIKE YOU?

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EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

K-12 Education

ABOUT THE BOOK

Join a mother and son on their nature walk as they play their favorite outdoor game: “Am I like you?” As they make their way down the trail, they come across many different species of birds, each with its own personality, traits, and behaviors. After observing each bird, the boy and his mother consider which one they feel most like on that day. As the story unfolds, children have the opportunity to recognize parts of themselves in a variety of birds, and ultimately discover that, like their feathered friends, they too are unique. In these activities, children are invited to explore the diversity of birds in their neighborhoods and beyond—from the ways they look, to the seeds that they eat, to the many ways they move and gather food.



USING THIS EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

This guide features activities that target national education standards for a variety of subjects for grades K–3. Each activity lists which types of standards it meets:

- **SCIENCE** (SCI; Next Generation Science Standards)
- **MATH** (MATH; Common Core State Standards)
- **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS** (ELA; Common Core State Standards)
- **ART** (ART; National Core Art Standards)



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE READING

Show the book cover and title, and ask:

- o What do you think this book is about? (Brainstorm some ideas, then find out if they match up to what happens.)
- o Who do you think is asking the question: "Am I like you?"
- o What is the mother holding in her hands? Why might binoculars be useful in looking at animals?
- o What types of birds might the boy and his mother see on their walk? (Make a list to post.)

AFTER READING

After reading, ask:

- o How did our predictions match up to what happened in the book?
- o Did any of the birds we brainstormed about before reading appear in the story? What other birds do you call? (Add species to the list started earlier.)
- o Have you ever gone outside to observe bird behaviors? What did you notice about them?





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ACTIVITIES

1 Reader's Theatre (ELA, ART) Familiarize children with the different points of view in story narration, explaining the differences between first ("I" and "we" point of view), second (addresses the reader as "you"), and third (uses "he," "she," and "it" to refer to people, places, and things) person narration. (Nearly the whole story is told in first person, from both the boy's and also from the birds' perspectives, until the end when the boy asks the reader. "What birds are you like?") Assign each child a different bird that appears in *Am I Like You?* to roleplay. Reread the book, introducing each of the birds as they appear (the boy's narration) while the children take turns reading and/or acting the roles of the birds. To incorporate art, invite students to design paper masks or headbands to represent the characters.

2 Neighborhood Bird Walk (SCI, MATH) Go on a bird walk to spot as many birds as you can. Name as many as possible, and sketch or describe any unknown birds so you can identify them using field guides or websites later. Do you see any of the birds found in *Am I Like You?* If possible, incorporate a weekly or monthly bird walk into your plans and see how the numbers and kinds of birds change based on the weather or seasons. Predict the numbers and kinds of birds you might see, and do a tally count to compare to your class predictions.





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3 Personality Pairs (SCI, ELA) On the last page of the book, the boy encourages kids to “take the quiz and find out” what birds they are most like. Visit www.AmILikeYou.com to take the bird quiz (a set of 15 personality-based questions). Then, have each child list three or four of their bird’s traits, compiled both from the book and from the information at the bottom of the quiz result page. Which traits match up to each child’s personality? (For example, if you wrote that your cardinal match is “protective,” what makes you protective? Do you stand up for your friends? Are you careful with your personal belongings?)

4 Poetic Powers (SCI, ELA) Revisit several stanzas within the story, paying special attention to their structure and

rhyme scheme (for example, each is four lines, and the second and fourth lines in each stanza rhyme). Have children create similar short poems (two to four stanzas long) about a bird or other animal of their choice.



5 Comparing Critters (ART, SCI) Hand out a variety of materials (e.g. craft feathers, tissue paper, ribbon, yarn, cotton balls, paper plates) and invite children to make a craft bird, either imaginary or based on a real species. First, revisit pictures of the birds in the book or show images of birds that are common in your area. Compare and contrast the creations to one another and to the pictures of real birds. List similarities and differences between color, shape, beaks, wings, and size.



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6 Bird Fact Experts (SCI, MATH)

Each bird species has distinct features, but birds as a group share many common traits. Establish opposite sides of a large outdoor space or room as “true” and “false.” Read the statements below and ask children to move to the side corresponding with what they think is the correct answer. After all kids have moved, read the answers to the group and discuss. Be sure to note any common misconceptions.

- Birds are the only living animals that have feathers. (True)
- All birds fly. (False; some, like penguins and ostriches, don't fly.)
- Birds lose and replace their worn or damaged feathers. (True; this is called molting.)
- All birds have thick, heavy bones that provide the structure they need to fly. (False; many of their bones are hollow and very lightweight with criss-crossing struts for strength.)
- Birds have poor eyesight. (False; birds have some of the best eyesight in the animal kingdom; eagles can see almost eight times better than humans.)
- Birds have heartbeats that are slower than humans. (False; typical heart rates in beats/

minute: humans = 60–80, birds = 300–600+, depending on the species.)

- All birds lay eggs. (True-ish; all female birds lay eggs)
- All birds sing. (False; singing is only one of the methods birds use to communicate. Some can also tweet, chirp, quack, and make a variety of other sounds, depending on the species.)

CHALLENGE STATEMENTS:

- All birds migrate. (False; about 75% of birds in the United States are migratory.)
- Birds are vertebrate animals. (True)
- All baby birds hatch covered in down feathers. (False; some have few, if any, feathers at hatching.)
- Male and female birds of some species look different. (True; if they do, males are often brighter, e.g., Northern Cardinal.)

Tally the number of correct answers for each question and use the results to create a bar graph. Use the graph to determine which statements were the easiest and which were the most challenging.





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7 Move Like a Bird (SCI, ART) Birds move in a variety of different ways. Ask children:

- How do birds get around? (Fly, walk, swim, soar, hop, etc.)
- Do all birds fly, walk, or swim the same way? What differences might you observe?
- Why do birds move? (To find food, get away from predators, etc.)

Show videos of the movements of different birds. (These could include the soaring of a Bald Eagle, the long-legged walk of an Ostrich, etc.) Challenge children to imitate each bird's movement after the videos. What are some of the biggest differences they notice about each movement they make? (I.e. do they take small, fast steps? Hop on one leg? Use wings [arms] to soar?) Why might birds need to move in so many different ways?

8 Birdy Says (SCI) Involve children in a game of "Birdy Says," the bird version of "Simon Says!" Demonstrate five bird species movements for the game:

- CITY STRUT: Take short steps like a pigeon, holding hands behind your back and bobbing your head.
- DESERT SOAR: Soar like a vulture, spreading arms wide and gently tipping body and arms back and forth.
- SHUFFLE-SHUFFLE: Waddle like a penguin, holding arms at a slight angle away from body and shuffling with very small steps.
- FLIT-AROUND: Acting like the little helicopters hummingbirds are, flap lower arms as fast as possible, staying in one place.
- STEP-STOP: Just like robins: step, step, step, and then stop to listen for worms.

After you demonstrate, go through each of the movements with the whole group. Then, explain the rules of "Birdy Says!": You will call out one of the five movements or yell "Cooper's Hawk!" (a bird of prey that is a potential threat to little birds). Players should only move if you start with "Birdy says" first, and must freeze when you say "Cooper's Hawk!" Anyone who moves without "Birdy says," or does the wrong movement, is out and takes a seat. The last person left standing wins!



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9 Seed Spotting (SCI) Get a bag of mixed birdseed, making sure that there are at least six or eight different types of seed within it (corn, sunflower, safflower, etc.). Split children into groups of four to six, and give each group a plate containing a small amount of the mixed birdseed. Have children take turns choosing one “secret” seed and describing it to the rest of their group while they try to figure out which seed is being described. Ask:

- o What clues were the most useful?
- o How are the seeds similar? Different?
- o Do you think that different birds prefer different seeds? Why or why not? (Birds do have preferences, for example, seeds differ in their nutritional value and how hard they are to crack.)

10 Picky Eaters (SCI) What types of foods do birds eat? Brainstorm and write some answers on the board (various seeds, nuts, flower nectar, fruit, berries, fish, insects, worms, small animals). Then show children at least five types of foods from the list, either in physical or picture form. Look at the food items one at a time, asking kids the following questions for each:

- o Where would you find this kind of food?
- o If you were a bird, what would be the challenges of getting and eating this food?
- o How might a bird's beak be shaped to get and eat this food? (You may wish to ask children to draw and share their responses. Note that for some foods, feet or talons are also useful for holding seeds or catching prey.)

For more advanced groups, have children break up into teams and answer the final question together, and compare each group's responses and drawings.

11 Eat with a Beak (SCI) Gather together any of the following supplies to represent some real foods birds eat:

- o Animal crackers (small animals)
- o Goldfish crackers (fish)
- o Gummy worms (earth worms)
- o Chocolate sprinkles (ants)
- o Sunflower seeds (small seeds)
- o Raisins (fruit)
- o Mini-marshmallows (grubs/caterpillars)
- o Dry cereal, such as rice crispies (insects)
- o Fruit juice (nectar)





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Then collect a handful of “beaks” from everyday objects (clothespins, toothpicks, straws, spoons, small plastic scoops, tweezers). Challenge children to a game of “Eating with a Beak”. The goal is to gather as much food as possible in 15 seconds using one of the objects as a “beak,” then place the food in a cup. After time is up, have each child try another beak and gather the same food for another 15 seconds. Repeat the process for different combinations of beaks and food. After playing the game, ask children:

- o Which beaks were most successful in gathering which types of food?
- o Birds have beaks similar to the tools used in the game. Can you match the shape/function of any of the tools to real beaks?

Next time children see a bird, urge them to take a look at its beak and see if they can tell what it eats!

12 Feeding Bird Friends (ART, SCI) Craft a set of pine cone feeders with your children by gathering some string, pine cones, peanut butter (or vegetable shortening, in case of nut allergies), and mixed bird seed. Tie a string to the top of the pine cone, leaving enough to be able to hang it up on a tree branch visible from your window. Apply a layer of peanut butter to the grooves, then roll it in bird seed until it is well covered.



See if you can attract any of the birds mentioned in *Am I Like You?*, such as Black-capped Chickadees, Northern Cardinals, or Blue Jays. Encourage children to observe the feeders and birds from their window—you could even set up a binocular station!

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