

A Common Core Curriculum Guide to *When I Draw a Panda*

Written and illustrated by **AMY JUNE BATES**

HC: 9781481451482 • EB: 9781481451499 • Ages 4–8

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY

A young girl shares how she takes charge of her artistic process, deciding for herself what to draw. Sometimes people tell her how to draw, telling her to make a perfect circle, create something pretty, or be sure not to run out of space, but she doesn't follow this advice. Instead, she listens to her own ideas, follows where they lead, and develops a unique style. As she explains, "So when I draw a panda...he probably needs a hat, and then he is my panda. My panda draws his own way."

Author and illustrator Amy June Bates shows us that true artistic creation emerges from our inner thoughts and imagination. Artists follow wherever their ideas take them. The young girl's panda shows her how to draw in her own way, asking questions and adding finishing touches that make her work unique. Using this book as the basis of discussion, adults can encourage children to follow their own ideas about drawing and see where their innate creativity takes them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/ACTIVITIES

Key Ideas and Details

The discussion questions and activities below draw on Common Core State Standards for reading text (RL) that ask children to ask and answer questions about the key details in a text (RL.K–3.1), retell stories including key details and demonstrate understanding of the central idea (RL.K–3.2), and describe characters, settings, and major events in a story. Children should also be able to describe how characters respond to major events and challenges (RL.K–3.3).

1. What do some people tell the girl about drawing a circle? What happens when she tries? How does it make her feel?
2. How do the girl's feelings change when she draws a panda? Why do you think that is? How does the panda draw?
3. What does the girl say she learns from the panda? Do you think she learned useful lessons? Does this change the way you think about anything? Explain your answers.
4. The girl says that, like the panda, she can draw her own way. What does she mean by that?
5. Do you draw your own way? Describe the kinds of drawings you make, or create a new drawing to share.
6. Imagine you can interview the girl about her drawing. Write down questions you would ask. Then work with a partner to take turns being the interviewer and asking the questions, or the person being interviewed and answering them. Here are some things you could ask about:
 - Drawing perfect and not-perfect circles
 - What the panda thinks about drawing his own way
 - What the girl learns from the panda
 - What the girl thinks about drawing a perfect pirate, superhero, crocodile, mad scientist, or princess
 - Drawing your own way
 - Letting your pencils roar!

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

To learn about craft and structure, the Common Core State Standards asks us to help students identify words and phrases that suggest feelings (RL.K–3.4); think about the features of text, including how the beginning introduces a story and the ending concludes the action (RL.K–3.5); and acknowledge different points of view and distinguish the reader's point of view from the author's (RL.K–3.6). The questions and activities below emphasize these understandings.

1. **The Beginning and the Ending of a Story.** On the first page of the book, a man is opening a door. We see a blank wall and a young girl beginning to think about how she draws. At the end of the book, the same man is once again opening the door, but now we see him smiling at the girl, and the wall is no longer blank. Examine the two illustrations below to see what clues you can find about the changes that happened from beginning to end of the book. Answer the questions listed below for each picture.



The Beginning

- Who do you think is opening the door? Why?
- Why is the wall dark and blank?
- What problem is the girl having?



The Ending

- How has the room changed?
- If the man spoke to the girl, what do you think he would say?
- How do you think she would answer?
- How did the girl solve her problem?

2. **Words that Express Thoughts About Drawing.** Some words in the book show what “they say” about drawing. They use words like these:

- perfect
- the right way
- something pretty
- that will never work

Other words show what “the girl and her panda” think about drawing. They use words like these:

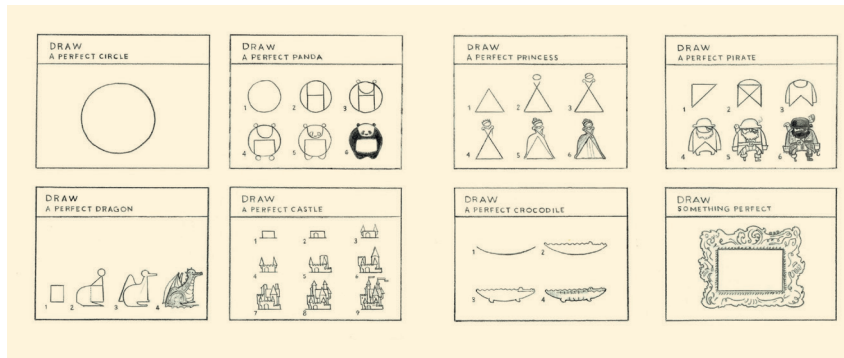
- non-perfect
- step back and think
- pretty silly
- imperfect
- draw my own way

Use these words to discuss the different ways to think about drawing. What do they think? What do the girl and her panda think? What do you think? Why is it important to consider different perspectives?

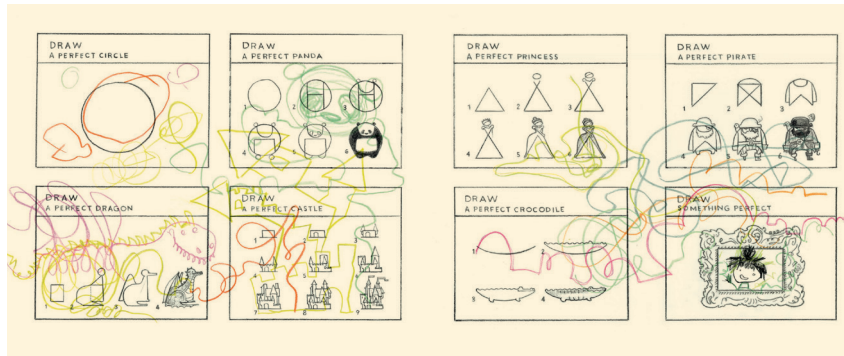


3. **Discussing Front and Back Endpapers.** Endpapers are the illustrated pages at the beginning and end of a book. They are found inside the front and back covers.

FRONT >



BACK >



As you look at the front endpapers, discuss the following questions:

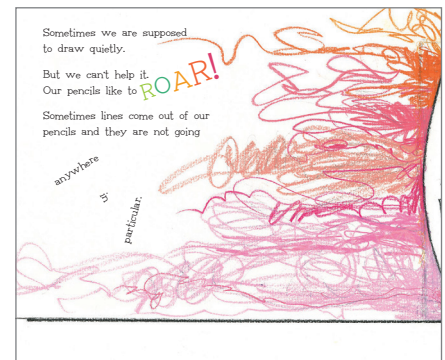
- What do the front endpapers show you about drawing perfectly?
- Try one of the series of steps. Can you draw a perfect circle, panda, dragon, or castle? How does it make you feel?
- Are the front endpapers offering you useful advice?

As you look at the back endpapers, discuss the following questions:

- What do these endpapers show you about drawing perfectly?
- Do the drawings on these endpapers look like your attempts to draw perfectly?
- What are the differences between the front and back endpapers?

4. **Looking at How Words and Illustrations Work Together.** Toward the end of the book, the girl explains how sometimes unexpected things happen when she draws. The words and the illustrations help explain what she means. After looking closely at the page shown at right, discuss these questions:

- What do you learn from the words?
- What do you learn from the illustrations?
- How do words and pictures work together to illustrate the girl's thoughts?



WRITING

The Common Core State Standards emphasize writing informative and explanatory text in the early grades. The writing activities below provide experience writing to give an opinion (W.K-3.1), to inform (W.K-3.2), and to explain a sequence of events (W.K-3.3).

1. **Beginning, Middle, End.** The girl's attitude about drawing changes over time. Draw and write about what happens when she refuses to listen to what people sometimes say about how to draw and begins to find her own ideas and follow where they lead her. Use the Beginning, Middle, and End reproducible at the end of this guide to show her ideas and actions in the beginning, middle, and end of the story.
2. **Give your opinion.** Should people be told how to draw? Before you answer this question, first list all the reasons you can think of that they should be told. Then list all the reasons you can think of that they should not be. Finally, write your conclusion and explain your most convincing reasons. Use the Give Your Opinion reproducible at the end of this guide to gather your thoughts.
3. **Explain the steps you take when you draw.** Do you follow ideas from other people? Do you "let your pencils roar" like the girl in the story? Explain how you find ideas for your drawings. Make a drawing to share, and explain how you came up with the idea. What is your favorite part about drawing? How might you share your excitement for art?

EXTENDING THE EXPERIENCE OF READING THE BOOK

1. Watch videos about drawing by children's book authors and illustrators:

- Watch "Lunch Doodles with Mo Willems!" at [YouTube.com/Watch?v=RmzjCPQv3y8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmzjCPQv3y8). The author shares his work and invites viewers to draw too. This is the first of fifteen other episodes.
- Watch Grace Lin show how to draw a Chinese dragon at [YouTube.com/Watch?v=uu4-jqMaQxw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uu4-jqMaQxw). There are many additional drawing videos by Grace Lin.
- Watch "Draw Every Day with JJK" to draw with Jarrett J. Krosoczka at [YouTube.com/Watch?v=p8yhH7AHty8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8yhH7AHty8). This is the first of fifty episodes.
- Watch "Let's Draw Each Other and a Dog!" with Wendy MacNaughton at [YouTube.com/Watch?v=ieUJaRDRrKE&t=446s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieUJaRDRrKE&t=446s). There are more episodes of DrawTogether.

2. Read other books by Amy June Bates:

- *The Big Umbrella* (written with Juniper Bates)
- *Loving Hands* (by Tony Johnston, illustrated by Amy June Bates)
- *Beach House* (by Deanna Caswell, illustrated by Amy June Bates)
- *Gittel's Journey* (by Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Amy June Bates)

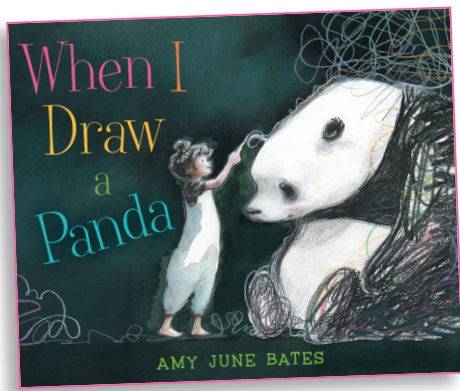
3. Read other books about drawing:

- *Draw!* by Raúl Colón
- *Andrew Draws* by David McPhail
- *The First Drawing* by Mordicai Gerstein
- *Drawing on Walls: A Story of Keith Haring* by Matthew Burgess, illustrated by Josh Cochran



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Beginning, Middle, & End Activity

The girl's attitude about drawing changes over time. Draw and write about what happens when she refuses to listen to what people sometimes say about how to draw and begins to find her own ideas and follow where they lead her. Show her ideas and actions in the beginning, middle, and end of the story.



BEGINNING



MIDDLE

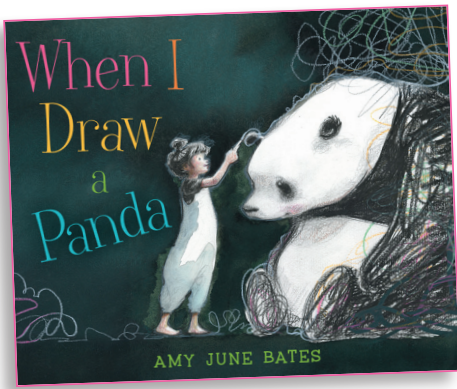


END

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Give Your Opinion!

Should people be told how to draw? Before you answer this question, first list all the reasons you can think of that they should be told. Then list all the reasons you can think of that they should not be. Finally, write your conclusion and explain your most convincing reasons.

SHOULD PEOPLE BE TOLD HOW TO DRAW?

YES

NO

CONCLUSION:

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