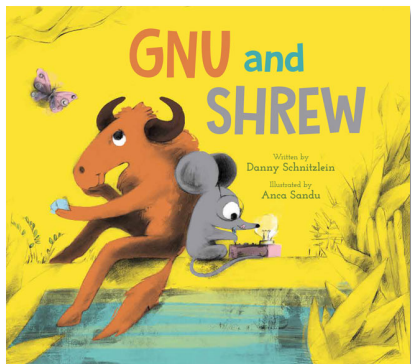




PEACHTREE

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Includes Common Core Standards Correlations



Gnu and Shrew

Written by Danny Schnitzlein | Illustrated by Anca Sandu

HC: 978-1-68263-146-1

Ages 4–8

Lexile • F&P • GRL L; Gr 2

ABOUT THE BOOK

Gnu and Shrew are good friends. They dream of adventure and finding a treasure on the other side of the river. But there are crocodiles. And there are other dangers.

And Gnu is complacent. Solving problems in order to have their dream come true will take some effort and Gnu just isn't in the mood. He'd rather dream of future adventure and riches than do whatever work it will take right now to get there. He has big ideas but little motivation.

It doesn't take long for them to realize one of them is going to have to do all the work.

Shrew works in the present moment, he works hard, and he works smart, spurred on by ideas Gnu has while dreaming. Shrew has the motivation but needs Gnu's ideas. A clever innovator, Shrew focuses his efforts to makes the boat they need to cross the deep, wide river with ideas recycled from Gnu's dreams and supplies recycled from scraps on hand.

In the meantime their friendship is tested. Gnu doesn't believe in Shrew and it appears that Gnu doesn't really want an adventure after all, or at least he doesn't want to have to work for it. So Shrew bravely sets out alone.

After years apart, Gnu and Shrew come to realize that combining their unique efforts and working together could be just the answer they had been hoping for, and the tale that unfolds allows them another chance at friendship.

We are not all here to be alike. We are not all here to do things the same way. We are here as individuals in our own uniqueness. We have different desires, wanting different experiences. Is one way of being lesser than the other, or is it just different?

Gnu and Shrew have invited us into a world where having valued ideas and taking the necessary steps to have the results we want are like partners in a dance, where both the visionary dreamers and the doers with the power of action are celebrated.

THEMES

Adventure | Friendship | Recycling | Personality Traits
Character Traits | Teamwork/Collaboration
Uniqueness/Individuality
Persistence/Perseverance/Determination | Creativity
Synthesis/Innovation | Problem Solving

KEY SKILLS

- Communication/Collaboration/Interaction with others
- Listen/Question/Discuss
- Manipulate real materials
- Independent research/Use of resources
- Point of view
- Vocabulary building
- Brainstorm for ideas
- Values clarification
- Evaluate and synthesize new ideas
- Critical and productive thinking

- Creative thinking (fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration)

BEFORE YOU READ

- Display the front and back cover of the book and ask students to predict what the story might be about. What do the illustrations suggest? What do the characters seem to be doing? Does it make you want to read the story? Where do you think the setting of the story might be? Why do you think that?
- Ask students, What is an invention? Introduce the term “innovation” and explain or review the difference between an invention and an innovation. An innovation makes an improvement on an invention or an idea that already exists. Is a cell phone an invention or an innovation?
- Introduce and explain the idea of synthesis. Synthesis is a way of thinking that transforms ideas into better ways to solve problems and design products. When we synthesize we make connections, and we combine and extend old ideas in new ways to create something new.
- Explain that this story is about a character who uses synthesis, a clever way of thinking, to combine ideas and create something new, an innovation, in order to solve a problem.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

KNOWLEDGE AND COMPREHENSION

- Name three events that revealed Gnu’s personality. What three words would you use to describe him? What events revealed Shrew’s personality? What words would you use to describe him?
- What was Shrew’s motivation to build the boat? What were the problems Gnu and Shrew faced in getting to the diamonds? What are you most motivated to do right now? Are there problems that stand in your way? What first steps could you take right now to help you?
- What problems did Shrew face in putting his boat together? How many ideas did he get from Gnu? What were they?
- Identify the central and supporting themes in this story. What other stories have you read or listened to that have similar themes?
- Do Gnu and Shrew remind you of people you know? Who are they? Which one would you choose for your friend? Why?

APPLICATION AND ANALYSIS

- Summarize the story, making sure to include the beginning, the middle, and the end. Decide on one word that is the main idea or the essence of this story. Did you like the way the story ended? Why or why not? If not, how would you change it?
- Ask students to reflect upon the following: Who is my best friend? Am I a good friend? What is my relationship like with my best friend right now? Why?
- Gnu didn’t believe in Shrew and made assumptions about Shrew’s abilities because of his size. What does that tell you about Gnu? How did Shrew respond? Did that surprise you? What does that tell you about Shrew? How would you have responded? What assumptions about Gnu had you made that were changed after finishing the book? Have you ever judged someone by their appearance? Who was it? What was the result?
- Has anyone ever tried to discourage you? How did you respond? Shrew is careful not to react to Gnu’s belittling and dismissive insults. He stays calm, rather than does or says anything that might reinforce Gnu’s behavior or make the situation worse. Would you have been able to stay calm?
- How does Gnu’s attitude toward his friendship with Shrew change by the end of the story? Why does it change? How does this influence their plans? How does Shrew’s attitude toward his friendship with Gnu change by the end of the story? Why do you think Shrew came back to Gnu after a long time? How did their friendship change in the end? What do they learn about each other? If someone gave you a second chance to repair a friendship would you take it? Why?
- Shrew made a paddle wheel for his boat but didn’t know how to make it work. Then he got an idea from Gnu to use a bicycle chain and pedals. Would you quit if you couldn’t solve your problem the first time you tried to do something, or would you keep looking for ideas and answers?
- Shrew expanded and elaborated on the ideas he got from Gnu. Then he worked alone to build his boat. Do you work better alone or with someone else? Are you confident in your own abilities? Do you think most creative people prefer to work alone or with someone else? Why do you think that?
- Offer students opportunities to reflect on their personal feelings, awareness, and insights and discuss as a class: How did you feel when you were

listening to or reading this story? Were you concerned with what happened to Gnu and Shrew? How do you think Gnu and Shrew felt at different times in the story? Did you have different feelings at different times in the story? What were they?

- Describe the setting of this story, using both the text and the illustrations as a reference. Where do think the story takes place? What makes you think that? Would you want to live in a place similar to the location of this story? Why or why not? How do you think it would feel to live in that setting? What would you like or dislike about it?
- Compare stories you know that contain animals with human qualities to stories without animals. Which type of story is more interesting to you? Which type of story is easier for you to understand?

EVALUATION AND SYNTHESIS

- What parts of the story did you like best? What parts did you find the most exciting? Which parts did you find the most humorous? Why?
- When it comes to solving problems, there are visionary dreamers and there are energetic doers. Do you think Shrew could have come up with a plan by himself if he did not get ideas from Gnu? Did each need the other in order to be successful? Are you a dreamer of big ideas or are you a hard worker, the one who takes action to get things done? Think about a time when you were both a dreamer and a doer in order to solve a problem. Share your experience with the class.
- Did you learn something new from this story that could be useful to you? Do you think this story is important? Why? Would you want to read other books about these characters?
- If you were offered a chance to travel around the world would you take it? How hard would you be willing to work to make that dream come true?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

VOCABULARY

- Ask students to use context clues to help define any unfamiliar words or terms in the text such as paddle wheel, hot air balloon, emeralds, etc.
- Introduce new vocabulary words to increase student understanding of the concepts in the book. Ask students to find the meaning of each word and list three synonyms, or words that could take its place. Suggested new vocabulary: collaboration,

perseverance, complacent, resigned, tenacious, persistent.

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Use pivotal moments in the story to pause and have students predict what they think might happen next. Share predictions in a class discussion.
- In small groups of two to three students, brainstorm adjectives that best describe Gnu. Do the same for Shrew. Have students explain their choices using specific examples from both the text and illustrations. Share examples with the class. From a combined list choose one trait that you already possess or would like to develop in yourself. Write a paragraph or a short poem in response.
- Use a Venn diagram to compare Gnu and Shrew's personalities and record how they are similar to and different from each other. What qualities do they share?
- Write a letter to either Gnu or Shrew. What would you say? What encouragement would you give? What would you reveal about yourself? What questions would you ask?
- Gnu often spent time dreaming, a time when he came up with his best ideas. Does your mind often wander? Describe or imagine a place where you feel comfortable, safe, and inspired. Carefully observe your surroundings. Make note of what you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Be as specific as you can with sensory details. Why do you visit this place? When? Spend at least ten minutes in this special place without talking, writing, or texting, experiencing how it feels. Note how your thoughts change and what ideas come to mind. Write a description in a short essay or poem about your special place and share it with the class.
- Choose one of the following values you feel strongly about and explain how it affects the friendship between Gnu and Shrew and why it is important to you: individuality, trust, respect, risk-taking, perseverance.
- Write a letter to the author of the story from the viewpoint of one of the characters. What would that character want to say to the author? Do you think he would feel he was well presented in the story?
- If you could be or do or have anything, what would you choose? Where and when would you have to study, train, or practice? What barriers or challenges might you have to overcome? What sacrifices might you have to make? Are you willing to do these

things to accomplish your dream? There may be people who will disagree with your ideas. What first steps could you take now to begin to realize that dream?

STEM/STEAM

- Impressive breakthroughs in science, technology, and medicine are made every day. Choose one of the most important innovations of the twenty-first century to research. Present your findings in the form of an online newspaper article. How has this discovery helped to create or improve upon something? What problems could it solve?
- A hot air balloon is a type of aircraft. How does it fly? View the Kiddle encyclopedia article *Hot Air Balloon Facts for Kids* at https://kids.kiddle.co/Hot_air_balloon
- . As a class, discuss the definitions of the following vocabulary words and terms: density, radiant heat, propane, nylon, and inflation. Draw and label the parts of a hot air balloon. What materials are used in modern hot air balloons? Use at least two other references as source material and write a brief explanation of the basic principles of hot air balloon flight technology.
- As a class view the video *Simple Machines for Kids: Science and Engineering for Children*—FreeSchool (www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=fvOmaf2GfCY) Discuss the fundamentals of classical simple machines.
- There are two types of paddle wheel boats: a stern-wheeler, which has a single wheel at the back, and a side-wheeler, which has one wheel on each side. Which type did Shrew make? In order for Shrew to build his boat he had to have a plan. As a class view the *Model Paddle-Wheeler to Make You*Tube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MOSpw3xfhM). Powering a paddle wheel boat requires the use of several types of simple machines. How many simple machines did Shrew use to give his boat the power and speed it needed? Explain how each device works in propelling the paddle wheel components. What were the most important tools for Shrew to have? What skills might he have had? What skills would he have had to learn?
- Innovative solutions require creative thinking to improve on an existing idea and to try different ways of doing or using things. In small groups of three or four, students brainstorm as many uses as they can for a paddle wheel. Discuss how you could modify or adapt a simple paddle wheel to solve a problem or be useful in your home or your school or your community. What problem would you solve? What materials might you be able to combine or substitute? What if you made it smaller? Or larger? Could it still be useful if you eliminated one part of it? Could it be useful if it ran in reverse? Turn each of these ideas into visual representations, as literal or as abstract as you like.
- Shrew used recycled materials to build his boat. Why is it important to recycle? Who benefits from recycling? How do you and your family help the natural environment by recycling? There are many books and online articles and videos for you to learn about what happens when we don't recycle, reuse, and reduce. Explore at least three of these resources and create a classroom display of your findings.
- Shrew used a bicycle chain and pedals to help power his boat. There are many different types of bicycles—road bikes, racing bikes, mountain bikes, tandem bikes, etc. Investigate the various ways bicycles are used today: in transportation, exercise, and sports, for example. Use any form of visual art such as a drawing, collage, or mural to describe your findings.
- Draw and label the major parts of a bicycle. Draft designs to describe how you might put each of these parts to other uses in a variety of new and different situations, to improve something that already exists or to create something new.
- If you could put together a bicycle that had everything you ever wanted on it, what would it look like? What would be its most important features? How would it be used? Paint or draw a sketch of your ideal bicycle, create a sculpture, or use any artistic medium in whatever way you feel most inspired to create.
- Create a collaborative work of art with two other friends or classmates, merging your creative skills with theirs. Collaborations can take many forms, including a painting or sketch or sculpture, a handmade book, a photo series, or a performance piece. Allow each person to stay true to their individual authenticity, respecting each other's uniqueness. Present your collaborative work of art to your peers or to a wider audience in your community. Did you find collaborating with someone else to be a difficult assignment? For what reasons?

- Make a three-dimensional model of either Gnu, Shrew, Shrew's boat, a crocodile, the landscape in which the story is set, or any other scene or event of your choosing. Use clay, papier-maché, or any other suitable medium. Combine your model with other students' work to create a 3-D representation of the story.
- Using visual clues the illustrator, Anca Sandu, tells the reader a deeper story than the text alone can tell. What additional circumstances and emotions does she reveal by showing the cover illustration of Shrew working with technology? The flag flying on Shrew's boat? What story do the eyes of the crocodiles tell? What adventures do the travel photos at the end of the book represent? Who traveled the world with Shrew and Gnu? Where did they travel and how did they get there? What other illustrations can you find that tell the reader a story that the text did not?
- Gnu and Shrew don't have names. Why do you think the author didn't give them names? What is a gnu? What are two other common names for a gnu? What is a shrew? Research these animals, noting where they live, how long they live, their average size, what they eat, and who their predators are. Is it likely these two animals would be friends in the real world? For what reasons?
- Find Africa on a map. Locate Kenya and Tanzania, to include the Serengeti National Park and the Maasai Mara National Reserve, the areas in Africa where both gnus and shrews can be found. Form small groups and have each group choose one of the following interests to research: What are some of the languages of the indigenous peoples who live there? What kinds of games do children play? What are some of the different kinds of schools found there? What is the wildlife like, with specific reference to the Great Migration? What are some of the features and patterns in the natural environment? Present your findings to the class using a short essay or poem; a painting, a collage, or mural; an original song you have composed; a performance of a dance or short play; or some other form of expression that is meaningful to the members of your small group.
- After your presentation to the class, notice who in your group came up with most of the ideas. Who did most of the writing or typing? Who was the most creative with the final presentation? Or were the responsibilities evenly balanced among members of your group? Do you think this presentation was easier for you collaborating with the members of your small group than it would have been if you had worked alone? Do you think you learned more than you would have if you had worked alone? Do you think it was more fun? For what reasons?
- Listen to music from countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. What are some of the features that make this music unique? Discuss the rhythm. How would you describe it? Explore what instruments are used in traditional African music. Make a drum or other African instrument from recycled materials and beat out some ethnic rhythms using the drum and shakers or rattles. Use the short video *African Percussion Instruments: Understand Their Use and Purpose* to guide your inquiry. <http://www.african-music-safari.com/percussion-instruments.html>
- Commercial hot air balloon rides and festivals are popular around the world. Well-known balloon safaris explore the setting of the story of *Gnu and Shrew*—the plains of the Maasai Masa (Kenya) and Serengeti (Tanzania) Reserves in Africa. Investigate the many possibilities for virtual travel to these areas.

THE ACTIVITIES IN THIS GUIDE OFFER OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R1-5
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R6
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R9-10
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2-4
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.6
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.9
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.10
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.4.A
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.4.D
 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.5.B
 K-2-ETSI-1
 K-2-ETSI-2

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Danny Schnitzlein studied creative writing at Eckerd College and holds a BS degree from the University of Florida. He lives in Georgia.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Anca Sandu was born in Romania and studied children's illustration at Anglia Ruskin University, in Cambridge, England. She works as a freelance designer, and *Churchill's Tale of Tails* was her first picture book. She lives in Oregon.

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Peachtree Teacher's Guide

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