ABOUT THE BOOK
Everyone admires animals that are big and fast and strong. But this book isn’t about them. It’s about the unsung underdogs of the animal world. Don’t you think it’s time someone paid attention to them?

Written in a humorous, conversational voice, *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* offers a lighthearted look at a parade of critters that are small, slow, stinky, lazy, clumsy, shy, and more. These traits might seem like weaknesses, but they’re actually strengths. They help the animals survive in an eat-or-be-eaten world. After reading this book, you might think twice before making quick judgments about the animals around us.

THEMES
- Animal behavior | Humor
- Strengths and weaknesses | Defense against predators
- Animal survival techniques

BEFORE YOU READ
Introduce *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs* by reading the title, subtitle, and the names of the author and illustrator. Then show your class the cover. After discussing the terms pipsqueak, slowpoke, stinker, and underdog, invite children to share what they think the book will be about. Do they think underdogs are worth celebrating? Why or why not? Be sure to record all their responses to chart paper.

AS YOU READ
Work with students to create a data table that lists the name of each animal, its underdog feature, and how it survives despite or because of its apparent “weakness.” (To make this process more interactive for younger children, you may wish to print out photos of the animals in advance and invite students to add the images to the data table.) Your final data table may look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>&quot;Underdog&quot; Feature</th>
<th>How Animal Survives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Etruscan pygmy shrew</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Hides where larger predators can’t reach it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amau frog</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Hides where larger predators can’t reach it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galápagos tortoise</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Protected by a hard, strong shell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoatzin</td>
<td>Stinky</td>
<td>Has a stinky smell that makes predators feel sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zorilla</td>
<td>Stinky</td>
<td>Has a stinky spray that makes predators run away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okapi</td>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>Stays safe by living alone and hiding in shadows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koala</td>
<td>Lazy</td>
<td>Needs less energy than other animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giant armadillo</td>
<td>Lazy</td>
<td>Needs less energy than other animals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AFTER YOU READ
Grades K–2
Divide the class into six small groups. Give Teams 1 and 2 an index card with the words Etruscan pygmy shrew and okapi written on it. Give Teams 3 and 4 an index card with the words little brown bat and sea lion written on it. Give Teams 5 and 6 an index card with the words Galápagos tortoise and western fence lizard written on it.

Invite each group to use the information in the data table and Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs (including the backmatter) to determine what the animals’ survival strategies have in common. Then encourage each child to use words and pictures to record the group’s ideas. If students on Teams 5 and 6 struggle to find a similarity, guide them to the idea that a Galápagos tortoise and western fence lizard are both able to survive despite the challenges associated with their underdog feature.

After volunteers from each team have shared their drawings with the class, work with your students to develop a main idea statement for Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs and record it on chart paper. Then guide a class discussion in which students are able to make a connection between the ideas presented in this book and bullying.

LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITIES
Grades K–2
After students have watched the Time for Text Features video mini-lesson on Melissa Stewart’s website (www.melissa-stewart.com/video/videos_mini.html) encourage them to study and discuss the text features in some of the books recommended at the end of the video. Then invite them to use the information in the main text and backmatter of Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs to create their own text feature posters.

After students have had time to share their text feature posters with the class, hang the posters in the hall so that the entire school can see them.

Grades 3–5
To introduce students to the use of point of view in nonfiction writing, divide the class into six groups. Give each team a packet of sticky notes and one of the following books: The Most Amazing Creature in the Sea by Brenda Z. Guiberson; I, Fly: The Buzz About Flies and How Awesome They Are by Bridget Heos; Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating
Animal Underdogs by Melissa Stewart; Bone by Bone: Comparing Animal Skeletons by Sara Levine; Swirl by Swirl: Spirals in Nature by Joyce Sidman; and Born in the Wild: Baby Mammals and Their Parents by Lita Judge.

Invite each group to read its book and discuss who the narrator is and who, if anyone, the narrator is addressing. When teammates come to a consensus, one member should write the group’s ideas on a sticky note and attach it to the book.

When the class seems ready, encourage each group to rotate to a different table, leaving its book behind. Students should read the book at their new table and discuss how the previous group classified it. If they agree, they should add a second sticky note with an example to support the previous group’s ideas. If they disagree, they should add a second sticky note explaining their rationale. Repeat this process until each group has reviewed all the books. Next, introduce and explain the terms first-person narration, second-person narration, and third-person narration to your students, and encourage students to share their ideas about how each of the six books should be classified. During this discussion, classmates should feel free to respectfully disagree, ask questions, and offer their own insights. To facilitate the conversation and promote full-class engagement, help students stay focused on the topic. Restate any unclear comments or ideas, and encourage students to give one another the time they need to formulate and express their ideas and rationale.


**All Grades**

- Download a copy of the Readers Theater script written to accompany Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs from the author’s website (www.melissa-stewart.com). After your class has practiced it a few times, coordinate with other teachers so that your students can perform the Readers Theater for their classes. Your students may wish to make hats or name badges representing their assigned animal to wear during the performance.
- Encourage students to write letters to or draw pictures for author Melissa Stewart, explaining which animal in Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs they connect with most and why. Send the letters to Author Fan Mail, Peachtree Publishing Company Inc., 1700 Chattahoochee Ave., Atlanta, GA, 30318. If you include an e-mail address, Melissa will send a note to your class.

**ART ACTIVITIES**

**Grades K–2**

To help your class understand the process nonfiction authors go through when they review the accuracy of sketches created by an illustrator, find photos that show each of the animals in Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs in its natural habitat.

Invite students to choose one of the animals and write a short description of the animal and where it lives. Then ask the children in another class at the same grade level to illustrate the text. Like professional authors and illustrators, the young writer and the artist shouldn’t meet or even speak to one another.

When the drawings are done, the original writer reviews the artist’s work. Did the artist make any factual errors? If so, encourage students to form groups and brainstorm ways the writer can explain the problems clearly and politely in writing. Then encourage the groups to share their strategies and possible wording during a whole-class discussion.

**Grades 3–5**

Invite your students to look carefully at the artwork throughout Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs. As a class, list all the questions the book’s illustrator, Stephanie Laberis, had to ask herself and then research to make the art accurate. Possible questions include: Where does each animal live? What plants grow in its habitat? What are the animal’s predators and prey? What time of day is it? What time of year is it? Using their list of questions, students can do some research and then create a mural that depicts a local animal in its natural habitat.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Melissa Stewart is the award-winning author of more than 180 science books for children. She holds degrees in biology and science journalism and serves on the board of advisors for the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators. Melissa speaks frequently at conferences for educators and is available for school visits.

www.melissa-stewart.com

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR
Stephanie Laberis is a character designer and illustrator who specializes in creating art for animation and children’s publications. She has illustrated several picture books, including My Little Golden Book of Sharks and A is for Awful: A Grumpy Cat ABC Book. Stephanie lives and works in the San Francisco Bay area.

www.stephlaberis.carbonmade.com

RELATED READING


REVIEWS
“The point that every animal, no matter how seemingly weak, has ‘its own special way of surviving’ is effectively made. The narrative also offers discussion-encouraging questions, and the lively painted portraits depict the animals fairly realistically, placing them in simplified natural settings, sometimes with a humorous touch.”
—Booklist

“Friendly and approachable, this compendium is sure to create some new favorites in the animal kingdom.”
—Kirkus Reviews

“Many diverse and fascinating animals depicted in humorous and informative portraits…”
—Foreword Reviews

AWARDS
• Eureka! Gold Nonfiction Children’s Book Award —California Reading Association, 2018
• Golden Kite (Nonfiction Honor Book) —Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, 2019
• Massachusetts Book Awards (Honor Book) —Massachusetts Center for the Book, 2019
• Virginia Readers’ Choice (Master List) —Virginia State Reading Association, 2020–2021
• Delaware Diamonds Awards (Nominee, K–2) —Diamond State Reading Association, 2019–2020
• Keystone to Reading Elementary Book Award (Preschool Nominee) —Keystone State Reading Association, 2019–2020