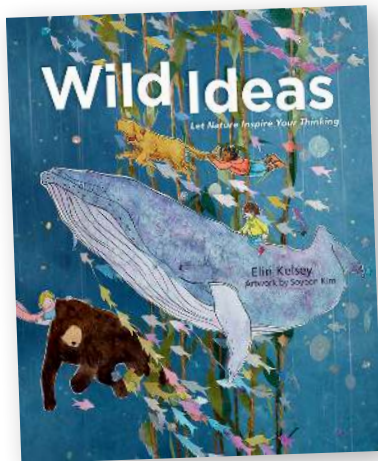


An Educator's Guide to *Wild Ideas*

Created by the educators at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School (OISE, University of Toronto)



ISBN 978-1-77147-062-9
HC \$18.95 CDN/ \$18.95 US

Wild Ideas

By Elin Kelsey, illustrated by Soyeon Kim

“This is a work that will be read and examined again and again, with something new to be discovered at every turn. Profound and entirely wonderful.”

★ — Kirkus Reviews

Grades K to 4

Reading levels Fountas & Pinnell: M
Reading Recovery: 20
Lexile © Measure: AD 560L

Curriculum links **Language arts:** reading comprehension, making inferences, interpreting texts
Life sciences: needs and characteristics of living things, observation of living things

About the book

Wild Ideas looks deep into the forests, skies and oceans to explore how animals solve problems. Whether it's weaving a safe place to rest and reflect, blowing a fine net of bubbles to trap fish, or leaping boldly into a new situation, animals can teach us a lot about creative problem solving tools and strategies. This book uses lyrical text grounded in current science alongside detailed diorama art to present problems as doorways to creative thinking. Most of all, it sparks questions about the world around us.



One way to use *Wild Ideas* is at the start of an inquiry about animals or our environment.



Visit OwlkidsBooks.com/WildIdeas for more learning resources related to this book, including author and illustrator Q&As, podcasts, and more.



Beyond the book

As educators, we need to continuously model thinking, wondering, and learning with the purpose of having questions become an accepted and expected part of the learning environment. It is our role to ensure that students understand that asking questions does not reflect a lack of knowledge. On the contrary, asking questions leads to greater knowledge, which inevitably leads to the desire to know more.

This guide offers ways to explore questioning with *Wild Ideas*. Be sure to take your students' questions and insights seriously and provide a safe space for them to explore and respond authentically and enthusiastically.

Using Wild Ideas to spark questions

Ask questions at all stages of the learning process: before, during, and after.

BEFORE

Show students the cover of the book. Ask:

- Based on the cover art, what do you think this book is about?
- Based on the title, what do you think this book is about?

Remember: Always record students' thinking, even if it isn't "right."



DURING

When reading the book, regularly model your thinking and wonderings out loud. Not knowing is a good thing! Encourage students to ask their own closed-ended and open-ended questions about the book.

Closed-ended questions or fact-based questions may be used to help develop research skills, inspiring students to explore materials to find answers and become more informed about a topic.

Examples of closed-ended questions sparked by *Wild Ideas* from Grade 2 and 3 students:

- What are dung beetles?
- How do bears count berries?
- What are sticker burrs?
- How do dung beetles use the Milky Way to guide them?
- Are all of these animals real?

Open-ended questions, on the other hand, can lead to more involved investigations and/or conversations. Keep in mind that students always surprise us, so what you predict the major themes of their questions to be may not be the case!

Examples of open-ended questions sparked by *Wild Ideas* from Grade 2 and 3 students:

- How do animals invent tools?
- What might orangutans be puzzled about?
- How do animals know what they should and shouldn't eat?
- Do different species of animals get along? Do they ever help each other?
- How can animals learn from us when their brains and minds are different from ours?
- What does it mean to throw yourself into a new situation?
- Why might it be harder for kids to solve problems than for grown-ups to solve problems?

AFTER

Classroom activities

1. Make the most of your wild ideas with a wonder wall

Make space for a “wonder wall” in your classroom as a platform for students to write and post their questions about the book. Using sticky notes or corkboards makes it easy to honor each contribution and move questions around later.



Provide opportunities for students to sort and categorize their questions. Ask:

- Do you see a question that might connect with your own?
- Perhaps there is a way to organize our ideas. Do you notice any patterns that might help us do that?
- Are there questions here that might require further investigation, perhaps questions that we need to experiment with or discuss to further our understanding?

As students organize their questions, try to identify misconceptions, highlight promising ideas, and gain insight into their prior knowledge. If you notice a number of questions about a particular area, this could serve as a springboard for developing an inquiry or experience around that topic. For instance, if many questions have to do with what we can learn from animals, perhaps a field trip to the local park or ravine to observe animals in their habitats would interest your students.

2. Ask questions to spark further inquiry inspired by *Wild Ideas*. Ask students:

- What problems prick and poke and nag at you?
- Do you have any ideas about how you might try to solve those problems?
- Go for a walk outside. Look for animals, insects, and birds. What do you see them doing? Why do you think they are doing that?
- What problems might the animals in your neighborhood have? Finding food? Shelter? Surviving difficult weather? Avoiding predators? Coping with pollution or other hazards that come from living near people?
- How do you think they solve these problems?
- What ideas do you think they might have tried that didn't work before coming up with a solution?
- Do you know of any examples where animals work together to solve their problems? How do you think they figured out they needed to do this?

3. Develop a knowledge-building circle sparked by *Wild Ideas*

What are knowledge-building circles?

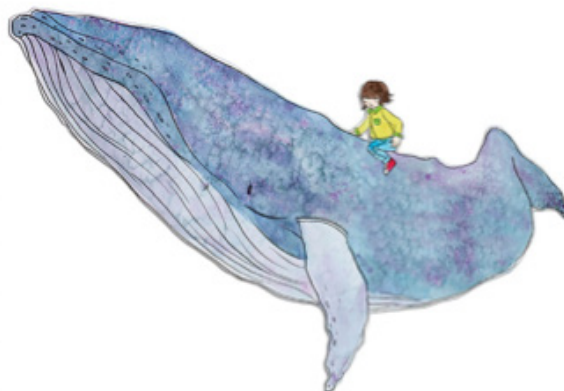
- They are learning opportunities for students to bring forth and discuss questions, misconceptions, and new understandings. They allow ideas to unfold within a community of learners. Dialogue often moves from student to student and knowledge is built upon each other's ideas.
- As students participate in different learning experiences (e.g., a shared reading, an experiment, outdoor play, small group conversation), more questions and thoughts about *Wild Ideas* will arise. Knowledge-building circles are one approach to further explore these questions, particularly questions that involve higher level thinking – the whys and hows.

Steps to creating a knowledge-building circle:

- As students enter a classroom or learning space, ask them to join a knowledge-building circle and have them sit in a circular formation
- You can use this context to open the floor to student questions and pose questions of your own.
- In a knowledge-building circle there is no hierarchy. All students have an equal right and opportunity to express ideas. Teachers are co-learners.
- In order to actively participate, students must wait patiently for their turn to speak, either through the raising of hands, or through the natural flow of the process (in early years, the teacher may choose who can speak next, whereas in older grades, the students might learn to select the next contributor once they are finished speaking).

Prompts for a knowledge-building circle:

- What do you think about this question?"
- This question came up during our read aloud this morning – what do you think?
- Would anyone like to build onto this idea?
- Can you make any personal connections to this topic?
- Always remember: when a student responds, look around at the other children in the group and wait. Wait time can encourage other students to respond. Prompts by the teacher can also encourage dialogue.



For more information on and examples of knowledge-building circles, please visit:

- www.naturalcuriosity.ca
- <http://www.naturalcuriosity.ca/pdf/NaturalCuriosityManual.pdf> (page 12)

4. Broaden the discussion to big ideas

What can we learn from the animal kingdom about topics like social justice? A great deal, actually. Students may be fascinated to discover that amongst animals there are many examples to be found of cooperation, fairness, empathy, trust, and forgiveness.

Whether it's a red squirrel adopting an orphaned baby from an abandoned nest or a sperm whale protecting a deformed bottlenose dolphin, animals will adopt orphan babies of their own species, or even of other species, and care for them as if they were their own offspring.

After reading *Wild Ideas*, ask your students:

- What new information did you learn?
- What new things do you now wonder about?
- What can we learn from the way animals solve their problems to help us solve our own?
- Just as we have learned from *Wild Ideas*, animals' solutions to their problems come from the need to try out different ideas until they find something that works. What ideas could we try to solve problems of unfairness?
- If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be? How might you make this happen?

As the discussion unfolds, let your students' ideas and questions flow naturally, allowing them to respond to each other. Record the questions and ideas and post them in the classroom.