Mama built a little nest

By Jennifer Ward
Illustrations by Steve Jenkins

CLASSROOM and ACTIVITY GUIDE

STEM Aligned • Common Core Aligned

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Beach Lane Books • Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing
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★ ***Publishers Weekly*** **(starred review)**
★ ***Booklist*** **(starred review)**
• **"Practically the perfect science picture book." —*School Library Journal***

Mama Built a Little Nest, **written by Jennifer Ward, illustrated by Caldecott honoree Steve Jenkins (Beach Lane Books, 2014), serves as an ideal springboard into scientific inquiry.**

Students will identify with central ideas, concepts, and principles related to animal behavior, the study of birds (ornithology), architecture, habitats, biomes, predator-prey relationships, ecology, and nature—key elements which plant the seed for focus and further research.

COMMON CORE ABBREVIATIONS
RL – Reading: Literature
RI – Reading: information Text
W – Writing

STEM ABBREVIATIONS
S – Science
T – Technology
E – Engineering
M – Math

About the Author

Jennifer Ward has authored many award-winning picture books, including *There Was a Coyote Who Swallowed a Flea* and *There Was an Old Monkey Who Swallowed a Frog*, both illustrated by Steve Gray. Jennifer lives with her family in Illinois.

About the Illustrator

Steve Jenkins has illustrated many award-winning picture books, including *Hello Baby!* by Mem Fox and the Caldecott Honor Book *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?*, which he created with his wife, Robin Page. Steve lives with his family in Boulder, Colorado.

Visit the Author & Illustrator on the Web!

JenniferWardBooks.com
SteveJenkinsBooks.com

BUDDING SCIENTISTS WANT TO KNOW!

[CC key ideas & details — RI.K–2.3; STEM: S]

Materials:
- copy of *Mama Built a Little Nest*
- chart paper
- pens

Form Strategic Readers and Thinkers.

First, introduce the book. Show the cover and read the title aloud.
Prior to reading the book, discuss and predict what the book might be about, based on the title and cover art.

Discuss & Chart:
What do we know about nests? Bird nests, specifically?

Document responses with a K–W–L–H chart, which can be used as a reference at the beginning and throughout the course of a unit of study. The chart has four vertical columns: K–What we know; W–What we'd like to know; L–What we have learned; H–How can we learn more? *(See K–W–L-H Classroom Chart Activity Sheet at the end of this guide.)*

Key Questions to Engage Prior Knowledge, Brainstorm, and Spark Curiosity (for columns K and W)!
- What do we know about nests?
- Are all nests built the same?
- How are nests built?
- How does size play a role in nest design?
- What personal experiences have you had with a nest, if any?
- What is the function of a nest?
- Where are nests found?
- Is color, form, location, and size important to nest function? How so?

Read the story aloud. Discuss and revisit the KWLH chart, adding content and information gained from the story. Refer to the KWLH chart throughout the unit of study related to research areas including birds, animal behavior, and nests.

WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? HOW?

[CC integration of knowledge and ideas — RL.K–2.7]

Materials:
- copy of *Mama Built a Little Nest*
- paper
- pencil

Strategy/Lesson: Students will explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character, or emphasize aspects of setting).

Set the Stage
Select a page (setting where a nest has been built: shore, cliff, tree, etc.) from *Mama Built a Little Nest*. Read the text aloud to students—do not share any illustrations with the students when reading the section aloud.

Ask students to visualize the setting as the scene is read. Then have students draw a picture of the setting according to the description that has been given to them.

Invite students to share their illustrations. Are they generally consistent with the scene depicted in the story?

Reread the text aloud again, but this time change the setting location in some way. Have students take turns discussing how their illustrations would change, based on the text change.

Finally, discuss how illustrations contribute and more fully define the words in a story.

SPRINGBOARD TO SCIENCE: Create, Observe, and Document When You Make a "Nest-Helper Ball."

[CC: text types and purposes — W.K–2.3; STEM: S]

Many birds, such as wrens, finches, and hummingbirds, love to build nests with fibers, grasses, and strings. Encourage students to supply wild birds with materials they may use for nest building with a nest-helper ball. Students may then observe and document wild birds as they access the provided materials.

Materials:
- dried grasses
- jute
- natural colored yarns and fibers
- cotton
- grapevine balls or hollow balls crafted from paper-wrapped garden wire

Directions:
- Cut garden wire into three-foot strips—one strip per nest ball.
- Bend and twist each strip around to create a hollow ball.
- Each ball may then be filled with nesting materials: dried grasses, fibers, and yarn scraps.
- Use a chenille strip or string to hang ball outside in an area accessible to birds.

Hypothesize:
- Will the materials be utilized? Why or why not?
- Does time of year affect use of materials?
- Ask students to observe and document bird activity into the next few weeks and months via data collection, journaling, and writing.

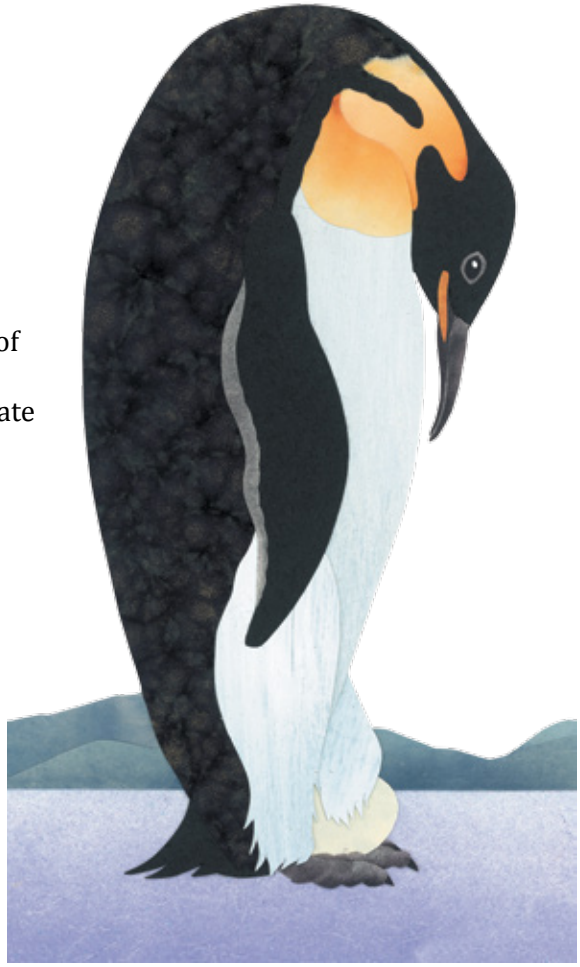
CRAFTY CRITTERS!

For story-time fun, create a nest craft with young readers.

After reading *Mama Built a Little Nest*, invite readers to create their own cozy nest.

Materials:
- 1 brown lunch sack per child, rolled down into a small nest shape
- 2 plastic eggs per child (the "chicks"—2 per nest)
- Black Sharpie pens (to draw eyes on chicks)
- Finely shredded paper or yarn/fabric (for nest lining)—line bottom of paper bag "nest"
- 2 small, orange, diamond-shaped papers per child (fold in half to create a beak for each chick)
- Paper cut into small oval shapes (two per chick) for the wings—may match paper to egg color.
- Glue

Directions:
- Glue a wing onto side of each "chick" (egg).
- Glue the beak to the top of "chick" (egg).
- Draw an eye on each side of the beak.
- Place "chicks" in their "nest" (paper bag).



CAN YOU BUILD A LITTLE NEST? Explore and Learn Science Activity

[text types and purposes — W.2.3; research to build and present knowledge — W.1.7; STEM: S, T, E]

Birds are remarkable architects! Just read *Mama Built a Little Nest* and see how crafty, clever, and creative birds are when building their homes. How do they do it, using only their beaks and feet? Can YOU build a nest?

Materials:
- Twigs and sticks
- Grass
- Yarn and or string
- Thread
- Small pebbles

Directions:
Provide access to all materials and allow kids to have their hand at nest building. No rules. No guide. Simply let them "be the bird" and the architect, and see what they can design. Some birds use spiderwebs, mud, and other materials for their nests. Provide kids with mud (Play-Doh® may be used as a substitute) and elastic string to see if these materials aid in their architecture. This activity provides a newfound understanding and appreciation for wildlife, encouraging stewardship and empathy for all living things.

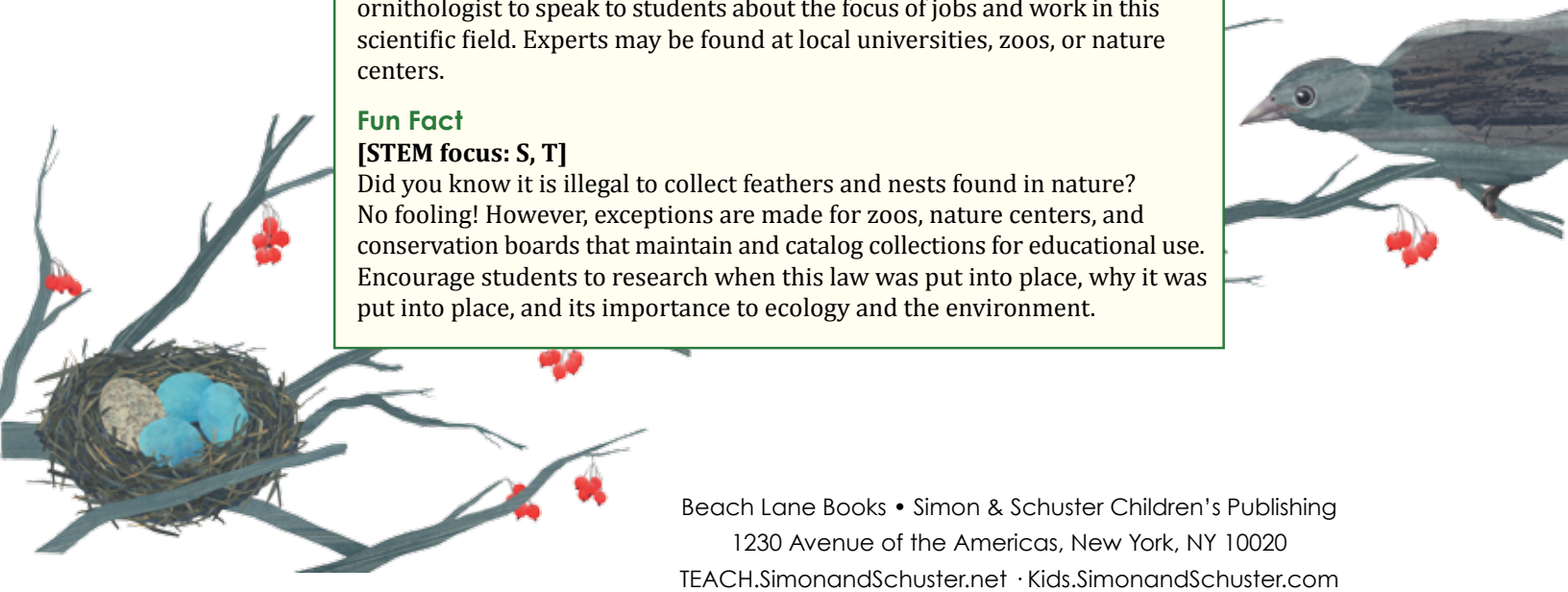
For each experience, encourage students to document the steps in their process and publish their findings as How To Build a Bird Nest.

Follow-up questions to explore:
- Was the building successful?
- Will the structure support a delicate, fragile egg?
- Which process was the most successful? Process A or Process B? Why?
- Will your nest stand up to gravity and weather?

Explore further: How are birds able to create such strong, durable structures using only their beaks and feet?

Fun Fact
[STEM focus: S]
Ornithology is the branch of zoology that studies birds. Invite a local ornithologist to speak to students about the focus of jobs and work in this scientific field. Experts may be found at local universities, zoos, or nature centers.

Fun Fact
[STEM focus: S, T]
Did you know it is illegal to collect feathers and nests found in nature? No fooling! However, exceptions are made for zoos, nature centers, and conservation boards that maintain and catalog collections for educational use. Encourage students to research when this law was put into place, why it was put into place, and its importance to ecology and the environment.



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K–W–L–H Classroom Chart Activity

What do we know about nests? Bird nests, specifically?

K) What we know:	**W)** What we'd like to know:	**L)** What we have learned:	**H)** How can we learn more?