

# An Educator's Guide to *I Wish I Could Draw*

written and illustrated by Cary Fagan;

An Educator's Guide for Grades K, 1, 2 and 3

Prepared by We Love Children's Books

## About the Book

*I Wish I Could Draw* is a picture book by an artist who says he can't draw! But he doesn't let that stop him. He figures out a way to tell (and draw) the best story he can — and along the way, delivers plenty of excitement, silly jokes and fun. There is also an inspiring message about self-confidence and perseverance. *I Wish I Could Draw* encourages readers to pick up a pen and let their imaginations do the rest!

## About the Author

Cary Fagan is the award-winning author of many books for children and adults, including *Danny Who Fell in a Hole* and *Oy, Feh, So!* Cary has won the Jewish Book Award and the World Storytelling Award. He lives in Toronto. Visit Cary Fagan's website: [www.caryfagan.com](http://www.caryfagan.com).

## Praise for the Book

“By book's end, readers will recognize that, amid all the self-abasement, Fagan is encouraging them to scribble, doodle, and draw away, without worrying whether their art is 'good' enough.”

— *Publishers Weekly*

## Pre-Reading Questions and Activities

Look at the cover of the book and read the title aloud to the class. What do students think this book will be about? Why do students think the book jacket is designed the way it is? Does it make them want to read the book?

This book is about drawing. Ask students if they like to draw. Is there anything they are particularly good at drawing? Do they have favorite things they like to draw?

## Vocabulary Words

There are some words in this book that students may not know. Using context and the accompanying illustrations in the story, define the words as a class. Discuss other words that could be used which mean the same thing. Have each student draw a picture illustrating one of these words.

- drapery
- still life
- exploding
- dragon
- predicament
- dragon chow
- mandolin
- earhole
- trembling
- satellite
- complained
- yodeling
- bravo
- good-deed doer
- blushing
- self-portrait
- museum
- landscape

## Post-Reading Discussion Questions and Activities

### Written & Illustrated By

Picture books are unique in that they combine the strengths of words and illustrations in telling their story. As a class, review the roles of the author and the illustrator in telling a story. In this case, the author and illustrator are one and the same. How do students think this would affect the process of creating a book? Would it make it easier or harder?

### Deceptively Simple

In the beginning of the book, the narrator describes a drawing of his by saying, “Maybe it isn’t terrible, but it is not very good. It isn’t like a drawing by a *real* artist.” As a class, take a close look at the drawings in this book. Are they really “bad,” like the artist says? Or are they stylized — did the illustrator intend for them to look this way? Discuss the difference. Do students like the drawings? Do they communicate the story? What are the strengths of his approach? What does it do well? What does it do poorly? How do these drawings compare to other picture books you have read as a class?

### Now That’s Funny

*I Wish I Could Draw* is a very funny book. The story itself is funny, and the book is filled with little jokes tucked into the illustrations. Go through the book with the class, reading closely to catch the jokes. Can students come up with additional jokes or doodles that would fit into the spirit of this book? Discuss them as a class and have them write or draw the best of these quips or doodles on sticky notes and put them onto the appropriate pages in the book.

## Meeting the Challenge

In the story, the narrator does not like the way he draws. He does not give up, however. Instead, he comes up with several techniques or approaches to improve his drawing. First, he breaks drawings into their component pieces to make them simpler for him to do (e.g., the still life and the house). Then he tries drawing things he likes (e.g., a bird on a nest, an exploding star, etc.). Then he uses his pictures to tell a story (e.g., the battle with the dragon). Working as a class, have students identify the main character in this story, the challenges he faces, and the different steps he takes to respond to them. Conclude by discussing the results he gets.

## Story Order

Discuss with the class the general structure of a story. Be sure to address how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action, and how a character's actions contribute to the sequence of the events. Next, work as a class to list the major events of this story. Write them on separate pieces of paper and shuffle the pages. Give each one to a different student. Place students in a random order and have them step forward one at a time to read their summary out loud. Discuss if the story makes sense in this new order. Working as a class, arrange the events and the students holding them in the order from the story. Now once again have students step forward one at a time to read their summaries. Which version do students prefer, the scrambled one or the one in the correct order?

## Themes

Discuss with the class the fact that every book has a “theme” or “big idea” in it. Explain that this important, underlying idea is usually not expressed directly — readers often must figure it out from the events, characters and settings of the story. Break into small groups or pairs and have students discuss themes that they see in *I Wish I Could Draw*. Is there more than one “big idea” in this book? Come together as a class to discuss their conclusions.

## Story Within a Story

At the heart of it, *I Wish I Could Draw* is about a boy who wants to be a better artist. In the course of the book, he creates a story called *Bad Dragon!* This “story-within-a-story” is simple, and provides a perfect opportunity for students to chart the literary elements of a story. Working as class, have students summarize *Bad Dragon!*, being sure to identify its beginning, middle and end, and using words like “first,” “next,” and “then” to describe the action. Next, work as a class to create questions that describe the settings of the story and major events using the “Five Ws and One H” – Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.

## Now You Try It

This book talks about drawing, and using pictures to tell a story. Cary says, “Maybe my pictures will look even better if I use them to tell a story. After all, I like making up stories.” To get their creative juices flowing, break students into pairs and have each one discuss things he or she likes to draw and a story that could be told using those drawings. Then, working independently or with a teacher or other adult if necessary, have students fold a piece of paper into quarters and use these four panels to tell a short story using simple drawings and text. Have students share their stories with their partners and, based on peer feedback, revise with the help of an adult if necessary.

## How to Draw A . . .

At one point in the book, Cary Fagan gives a quick explanation of how to draw a house. Locate that page, read it aloud to the class and study the picture. Have students follow the directions and use the suggested “parts of a house” to make their own drawing. Discuss how the directions were written and whether they helped students to complete the drawing. Now, have students make up a set of directions and “kit of parts” for their own object to draw. For example, an ice cream cone might be described as a circle on top of a triangle. Have students exchange directions with each other and try to follow them to make a new drawing.

## How To, Part 2

With the assistance of a teacher or other adult if necessary, have students take the drawing they made from another student's directions and create a story, illustrating it with more pictures, just like Cary does in the book. Encourage them to be creative and let their imaginations run wild. Collect these illustrated stories and publish them in a bound collection for students to take home.

## Scale Up, Scale Down

In picture books, the illustrator often will change the scale of his drawings to tell the story and to help make the illustrations exciting and interesting to the reader. Discuss with students the use of differing scale, including close-ups, panoramic views and full-frame illustrations. Review these concepts by looking at illustrations from this book and others you have read as a class. The fight with the dragon is a prime example of this technique. Now have students select a subject for a drawing of their own, and have them draw it on one side of a sheet of paper. When they are finished, instruct students to turn the paper over and fold it in half. On one side of the fold have students draw a close-up of a section of the scene. On the other, draw a “zoomed out” version, from a distance or height. Break students into small groups and have them present their drawings to each other, explaining the perspective drawings and the over-all scene.

## What I Like

Working independently or with a teacher or other adult, have each student create a self-portrait. Instruct them not to draw themselves, but to fill the page with smaller drawings and notations, in the style of this book, depicting the things they like and the things they like to do. Gather as a class and look at the “self-portraits” one at a time. Have students try to guess the identity of the artist. Once the subject has been identified, invite the artist to give a presentation describing his or her drawing and discussing the significance of each element.

## Skills and Standards Used in this Guide

### KINDERGARTEN

#### Reading

##### *Key Ideas and Details*

With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.

With prompting and support, identify characters, settings and major events in a story.

##### *Craft and Structure*

Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story

##### *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories

#### Writing

##### *Text Types and Purposes*

Use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred and provide a reaction to what happened.

##### *Production and Distribution of Writing*

With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

## Speaking and Listening

### *Comprehension and Collaboration*

Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).
- Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges

Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information or clarify something that is not understood.

### *Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas*

Describe familiar people, places, things and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.

Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.

Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings and ideas clearly.

## Language

### *Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content.

- Identify new meanings for familiar words and apply them accurately (e.g., knowing duck is a bird and learning the verb to duck).
- Use the most frequently occurring inflections and affixes (e.g., -ed, -s, re-, un-, pre-, -ful, -less) as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word.

With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

- Sort common objects into categories (e.g., shapes, foods) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.
- Demonstrate understanding of frequently occurring verbs and adjectives by relating them to their opposites (antonyms).

- Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at school that are colorful).
- Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs describing the same general action (e.g., walk, march, strut, prance) by acting out the meanings.

## GRADE 1

### Reading

#### *Key Ideas and Details*

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

Describe characters, settings and major events in a story, using key details.

#### *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting or events.

### Reading

#### *Craft and Structure*

Distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and information provided by the words in a text.

### Writing

#### *Text Types and Purposes*

Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order and provide some sense of closure.

#### *Production and Distribution of Writing*

With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

## Speaking and Listening

### *Comprehension and Collaboration*

Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.
- Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.

### *Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas*

Describe people, places, things and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation.

## Language

### *Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 1 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

- Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- Use frequently occurring affixes as a clue to the meaning of a word.
- Identify frequently occurring root words (e.g., look) and their inflectional forms (e.g., looks, looked, looking).

With guidance and support from adults, demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

- Sort words into categories (e.g., colors, clothing) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.



- Define words by category and by one or more key attributes (e.g., a duck is a bird that swims; a tiger is a large cat with stripes).
- Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at home that are cozy).
- Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs differing in manner (e.g., look, peek, glance, stare, glare, scowl) and adjectives differing in intensity (e.g., large, gigantic) by defining or choosing them or by acting out the meanings.

## GRADE 2

### Reading

#### *Key Ideas and Details*

Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson or moral.

Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges

#### *Craft and Structure*

Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

#### *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting or plot.

### Reading

#### *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.

### Writing

#### *Text Types and Purposes*

Write narratives in which they recount a well elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order and provide a sense of closure.

*Production and Distribution of Writing*

With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

**Speaking and Listening***Comprehension and Collaboration*

Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.
- Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion.

Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

*Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas*

Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

**Language***Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 2 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

- Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

- Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known prefix is added to a known word (e.g., happy/unhappy, tell/retell).
- Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., addition, additional).
- Use knowledge of the meaning of individual words to predict the meaning of compound words (e.g., birdhouse, lighthouse, housefly; bookshelf, notebook, bookmark).
- Use glossaries and beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases.

Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

- Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe foods that are spicy or juicy).
- Distinguish shades of meaning among closely related verbs (e.g., toss, throw, hurl) and closely related adjectives (e.g., thin, slender, skinny, scrawny).

## GRADE 3

### Reading

#### *Key Ideas and Details*

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers

Recount stories, including fables, folktales and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

#### *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

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 setting).

### Writing

#### *Text Types and Purposes*

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details and clear event sequences.

- Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.
- Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.
- Provide a sense of closure.

### *Production and Distribution of Writing*

With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising and editing.

With guidance and support from adults, use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

## **Speaking and Listening**

### *Comprehension and Collaboration*

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic and link their comments to the remarks of others.
- Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively and orally.

Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

*Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas*

Report on a topic or text, tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.

Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

**Language***Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning word and phrases based on grade 3 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known affix is added to a known word (e.g., agreeable/disagreeable, comfortable/uncomfortable, care/careless, heat/preheat).
- Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., company, companion).
- Use glossaries or beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.

Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

- Distinguish the literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases in context (e.g., take steps).
- Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe people who are friendly or helpful).
- Distinguish shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty (e.g., knew, believed, suspected, heard, wondered).