



Story Summary

Juno and her boy live in a red house at the top of the world. One day Juno will be big and strong enough to help pull a sled across the tundra, but for now she is just a small puppy with a big-dog heart. Small puppies have to go to bed when their boys do, but Juno can't sleep with the midnight sun shining out across the town. She slips outside to play. Returning to see a hungry polar bear sniffing around the open door, Juno has no time to be afraid. It's time to find her voice, summon the big dog inside her, and save her beloved boy.

With Deborah Kerbel's warm, expressive text, *Sun Dog* is a love letter to life in the Arctic Circle from the perspective of a sled dog pup. Suzanne Del Rizzo's dimensional art in polymer clay and acrylic wash offers both an intimate romp with a young puppy and a sweeping celebration of the vast and beautiful tundra.

Links:

Article with diagram to explain midnight sun: <https://www.scienceabc.com/pure-sciences/midnight-sun-what-is-it-and-why-does-it-occur.html>

Wordless video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4NJHl3dwTU>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bViq2i4gEWA>

Suggested reading for teachers: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/facts-and-arguments/living-in-the-Arctic-has-taught-me-about-community/article574437/>
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/features/photography/life-in-Arctic-exploration-culture/>

Pair this book with:

My Beautiful Birds by Suzanne Del Rizzo

Deborah Kerbel and Suzanne Del Rizzo
Sun Dog

Deborah Kerbel is the author of seven novels for middle grade and young adult readers. Born in London, England, she moved to Canada at the age of two and went on to attend the University of Western Ontario. Her novels have been shortlisted for the Governor General's Literary Award, the Canadian Library Association YA Book of the Year, and the Manitoba Young Reader's Choice Award. Deborah lives in Thornhill, Ontario, with her husband, two book-loving children, and a schnoodle named Alfredo.

Suzanne Del Rizzo has always loved getting her hands messy. She traded her job in scientific research for a career in children's books, creating dimensional illustrations with polymer clay, acrylic paint, and other media. Suzanne's 2017 picture book *My Beautiful Birds* was a *New York Times* Notable Children's Book, a Junior Library Guild selection, and the 2017 One Book, One San Diego for Kids selection. It also won the Malka Penn Award for Human Rights in Children's Literature and was an honorable mention for the Middle-East Book Award. Suzanne lives in Oakville, Ontario, with her family.

Picture Book Ages 4–7 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-038-3 | Pages: 32

THEMES

Courage, Communities around the world, Climate, Climate change

BISAC CODES

JUV002070 JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / Dogs

JUV030120 JUVENILE FICTION / People & Places / Polar Regions

JUV024000 JUVENILE FICTION / Lifestyles / Country Life

READING LEVEL

Lexile Measure: AD590L | Fountas & Pinnell: N

THIS GUIDE CONTAINS:

ACTIVITY	MAIN SUBJECT AREA	SPECIFIC SKILLS AND TOPICS
Read-Aloud	Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activate prior knowledge • infer, predict, make connections • perspective, similes, metaphors
Retell a Story	Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elements of a narrative
Communities Around the World	Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how latitude affects climate, culture, and the way people meet their basic needs • landforms and ecosystems
Daily and Seasonal Changes	Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shadows • seasons
Illustrator Study	Visual Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3D images using polymer or oil-based clay



THE READ-ALoud

This guide includes suggestions appropriate for a range of student ages. Teachers can choose the ones that work best for their own age group. Teachers may also prefer to read through the book once without stopping for much discussion, and save the questions for a subsequent reading.

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- develop and practice comprehension strategies, including activating prior knowledge, inferring, considering perspective, predicting, and making connections

You Will Need

- *Sun Dog*

How To:

Before Reading

Show the cover. Read the title and the author's and illustrator's names. Have the students read any other books by these women? Invite students to predict who the words "Sun Dog" might refer to. If students have heard of or seen the sky feature called a sun dog, they might share that now. "What details on the cover are included that emphasize the word 'sun' in the title?" (The title words are yellow, the flowers are bright yellow, and there is a sun in the sky, which is also reflected in the water for double the impact.)

On the inside front flap, read the first three sentences. "Whose perspective is suggested in these sentences?" (Juno's, rather than the boy's.) "What could the 'midnight sun' be?" Allow students to answer if they can, then read the definition given on the endpapers. Help students understand that the author is using a play on words in using the phrase 'Sun Dog', a phenomenon common in the Arctic where the sun is often low in the sky, to refer to Juno. Invite students to consider, as you read, ways in which Juno really is a sun dog.

Read the dedication page and invite students to guess at the author's and illustrator's relationships with dogs (more about the author's pet can be found on the back flap) and how that might affect how they write and illustrate a book about a dog. Again on this page, the illustrator emphasizes the sun in three details: the sun in the sky, the sunny flowers, and the orange circle in the lower right. What do students think that is? They will find out soon.

During Reading

First spread: As you read, point to the items mentioned: *Juno and her boy, red house, faraway town, invisible circle, top, world.*

Second spread: After reading the first paragraph, ask, "What time of year is it? How do you know?" (The sun stands tall, snowdrifts melt, days grow longer: it must be spring.) After reading the second paragraph, ask, "How is Juno a Sun Dog?" Point to the boy's shadow and then the shadow of the ball, and ask students to identify them. They may suggest that it's the ball from the dedication page. How has the illustrator emphasized the sun in this picture? (Pink sky, shadows.)

Third spread: After reading, ask what students learned about Juno here (things she loves; her life's goal). How has the illustrator emphasized the sun in this picture?

Fourth spread: After reading, discuss the meaning of "big dog inside her... it comes out every evening after dinner." Help students connect the sun, low in the sky after dinner, with the big shadow Juno sees of herself, and how it reminds her that she will be big one day. How has the illustrator emphasized the sun in this picture?

Fifth spread: After reading, discuss how the illustrator has depicted the passage of a summer day by dividing the scene into segments, each with its own sun, getting higher and then lower in the sky, but not setting. If the idea of the midnight sun is new to them, students may have a lot of questions. Assure them they will have a chance to learn more about it at a later time. If they live any significant distance from the equator themselves, they will no doubt have experienced having to go to bed when it is still light outside in the summertime and be able to relate to Juno's feelings.

Sixth spread: After reading, invite students to really notice the enriching details in the illustration: the clock (11:00), the window (where the sun is still visible), the map on the wall (an Arctic perspective), the drawing (no trees), the problem-solving (the boy needs to shield his eyes with his pillow), the humor (Juno is chewing on a sock), and the fact that in every picture, we do not really see the boy's face, which emphasizes to the reader that he is not the main character.

Seventh spread: Do not show the page. Invite students to close their eyes and visualize the scene. Read slowly, with meaning. Whisper the last sentence. Finally, show the illustration.

Eighth spread: Read with varying tempo and volume. The first two sentences suggest a puppy darting energetically about. The third and fourth can be drawn out, as Juno wanders. The fifth and sixth can be read quietly, so as not to wake the rabbits, seals, and narwhals.

Ninth spread: Infuse this spread with energy, suspense, and fear. Emphasize the words *somebody*, *whoosh*, *flash*, *meal*. Read the zig-zagging sentence with great urgency. Slow down in the next paragraph, especially the last sentence, pausing after the words *iceberg*, *adrift* and *sea*. Pause before turning the page.

Tenth spread: "Whose perspective is suggested here?" (The owl's.)

Eleventh spread: Before reading, invite students to consider the illustra-

tor's depiction of Juno here—we see her big shadow behind her, suggesting that she is drawing courage from the big dog she knows is inside her. Notice how the illustrator has filled the entire page with the face of the polar bear, emphasizing its size relative to Juno. Read the bear page slowly, especially the last sentence.

Twelfth spread: Show the picture, then invite students to close their eyes and visualize what is happening, putting themselves in Juno's place as you read.

Thirteenth spread: Read with a crescendo (getting louder and louder).

Fourteenth spread: After reading, invite students to notice the sun symbolism—there is a sun dog in the sky. What could this mean?

Final page: We finally see the boy's face (albeit with closed eyes). What could this mean? Why might the boy be holding on to Juno's foot? Do you think Juno will achieve her goal of becoming a sled dog?

After Reading

Discuss the different ways both the author and illustrator encourage us to see things from a perspective other than our own. Students can be invited to identify ways in which life in Juno's town is similar to and different from their own community. The first spread is an excellent example of a map with an alternate perspective. Our maps tend to show our own continent in the center, with north at the top, but the planet really does not have a "right way up" and can be viewed from any perspective. Invite students to identify known features and compare to a traditional classroom map. A starting point might be the Great Lakes in the lower right-hand corner, moving on to James Bay, Baffin Island, and Greenland as one moves counter-clockwise. Throughout the book, the illustrator uses a variety of viewing angles: low, medium, high, close-up, and wide-angle. On the second spread, we feel the intimacy between Juno and her boy; on the next page, we feel Juno's longing to join the sled dogs. The fact that Juno is given a name and the boy is not,

and the fact that we often see Juno’s face, but not the boy’s, are clear indications that the story is from Juno’s perspective and not the boy’s. How would the story be different if told from the boy’s perspective?

On a subsequent reading, collect similes and metaphors by copying them onto a T-chart, helping students identify them as needed. Discuss what each one could mean and how the author’s use of these kinds of descriptive language help us understand the text. Young children will have an easier time with similes than with metaphors because the presence of the word *like* or *as* makes it more concrete for them. On the chart, have them circle the word *like* or *as* in each one.

The book could provide a strong introduction to a science study of the sun.

Similes	Metaphors
The sun looks like a yellow ball	The sun stands tall
The sand-colored sky is like a wide-open beach	She salutes it every morning
The air is as soft as a whisper	its golden hugs
She feels like an iceberg adrift on a giant sea	shadows it paints on the ground
Her heart pounds like a stampede	Spring has sprouted into boundless summer
	The seals and narwhals are cozy in their watery beds
	a pair of ghostly wings
	an army of fur and fangs
	a storm of barking

ACTIVITY 1: RETELL A STORY

Deborah Kerbel and Suzanne Del Rizzo
Sun Dog

There are many ways for students to retell a story. This is a simple one that has been used successfully in grade two and grade three classrooms.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- demonstrate understanding of narrative texts by identifying the characters, setting, goal, problem and solution

You Will Need

- *Sun Dog*
- Chart paper and markers
- Fiction Retell blackline master

How To:

Do a modelled or shared simple retelling of the story. If students are not experienced with this format, just do a small portion of it (title and author) the first day. Have them practice “retelling” their guided or independent reading selections over the next week in the same way, doing just that small part. A week later, do another modelled/shared retelling of this or another book, adding the characters, and a week later, the setting (place and time). At later times, add the goal, the problem, and the solution. If students are already familiar with the elements of a story, you can review them all at once using these prompts on a posted chart:

Fiction Retell

I read _____ by _____.

The main character is _____.

The setting is _____.

The main character’s goal is _____.

The problem is that _____.

The problem is solved when _____.

The finished retelling might look like this:

I read *Sun Dog* by Deborah Kerbel. The main character is Juno. The setting is a village in the Arctic, during summer. Juno's goal is to become a sled dog. The problem is that a polar bear is prowling around the house where Juno's boy is sleeping. The problem is solved when Juno barks and barks. Her barking alerts the big sled dogs, who come and scare the polar bear away.

Most students benefit from writing the retell independently, in a notebook, with just an anchor chart for reference, rather than doing a fill-in-the-blank worksheet. It helps them internalize the elements of the story—characters, setting, goal, problem, and solution. However, a few students will need extra support, so the Fiction Retell worksheet is provided. For students who just need to have the reference closer to copy from, laminate the sheet or put it in a sheet protector. For those who would be overwhelmed by writing the full sentences, the sheets can be photocopied for each use.

ACTIVITY 2: COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD

This activity helps students to develop their mapping skills and compare communities around the world.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- compare selected communities from around the world, including their own community, in terms of the lifestyles of people in those communities and some ways in which the people meet their needs
- identify the location of selected countries, cities, and/or towns around the world, and describe how their location and climate are related

You Will Need

- *Sun Dog*
- picture books about communities around the world (suggestions follow)

- Communities around the World blackline master
- globe and large wall map or interactive digital map

How To:

1. On both a globe and a large world map, locate the Arctic Circle. Based on the illustration in the first spread of *Sun Dog*, locate communities that might be Juno's home (e.g. Nauyaat, Nunavut, Canada). On a globe, point out the equator and discuss its distance from the Arctic Circle. Find your own community and find its latitude. (For young children, this conversation can be: "Look how far we are from the equator. Look how far the Arctic Circle is from the equator.") Discuss, in an age-appropriate way, the effect of latitude (distance from the equator) on climate and how people meet their basic needs. Look at photographs of life in the Arctic. Compare and contrast with life in your community. Place stickers on the globe (or map, or interactive map) to mark Juno's (possible) village, the Arctic Circle, the equator, and your own community.
2. If possible, read *My Beautiful Birds* by Suzanne Del Rizzo. It depicts the journey of a family of Syrian refugees. Because it is also illustrated by Suzanne Del Rizzo, in the same medium (polymer clay) but in a very different place in the world, it provides an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast with *Sun Dog*. Collect a variety of books representing global communities/countries. Read them and add them to your map/globe. Some examples include *Community Soup* (Kenya), *A Good Trade* (Uganda), *In a Cloud of Dust* (Tanzania), and *When the Rain Comes* (Sri Lanka), all by Alma Fullerton; *Adrift at Sea: A Vietnamese Boy's Story of Survival* by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch with Tuan Ho (Vietnam); and *Water's Children: Celebrating the Resource that Unites Us All* by Angèle Delaunois (several communities). More ideas can be found here: <https://childhood101.com/around-the-world-in-40-books/>. Students can then complete the blackline master "Communities Around the World."
3. Teach students the song "One Light, One Sun" by Raffi at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGkmNSznJQo>.

ACTIVITY 3: DAILY AND SEASONAL CHANGES

The idea of the “midnight sun” introduced in *Sun Dog* is sure to arouse students’ curiosity and motivate them to learn how the Earth’s tilt and rotation around the sun affect our seasons.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- investigate daily and seasonal changes
- demonstrate an understanding of light and shadows

You Will Need

- *Sun Dog*
- internet source
- tape measures

How To:

1. Project this article and read it with your students, using the embedded diagram to aid their understanding: <https://www.scienceabc.com/pure-sciences/midnight-sun-what-is-it-and-why-does-it-occur.html>.
2. View this wordless video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4NJHl3dwTU>.
3. Create a 3D model of Earth and the sun in the classroom, using a globe for the planet and a bright lamp for the sun (an old overhead projector works well), with classroom lights turned off. Help students see how the Arctic Circle remains in light as Earth rotates in summer (when the pole is tilted toward the sun) and how it remains in darkness in winter (when the pole is tilted away from the sun). Allow students access to the materials to re-create the model in their spare time.
4. In *Sun Dog*, re-read the endpapers. Ask students to explain what they now understand about the midnight sun. Leaf through the book and invite students to stop you when the illustrations show a shadow. Invite students to explain why the shadow is large or small at that moment.
5. Outside, have students measure one another’s shadows at different times of the day. For maximum impact, repeat this experiment twelve times:

at 9am, noon and 3pm on each of the fall equinox, the winter solstice, the spring equinox, and the summer solstice (or as close as possible to those dates). Additionally, investigate firsthand or using internet sites the sunrise, sunset and number of daylight hours on those dates.

6. Students’ shadows during the school day will be tallest on the winter solstice, near the beginning or end of the school day. If that day is too busy, or is during the holidays, the first day back to school after the solstice will also work well. After measuring their shadows, students could write a paragraph about their life goal, beginning with the words, “When I am as big as my shadow...” As an example, show the fourth spread of *Sun Dog*. Invite students to imagine Juno thinking, “When I am as big as my shadow, I will be a sled dog. I will be brave. I will chase away polar bears. I will protect my boy.”
7. Additional activities on the Arctic and the midnight sun, and a worksheet created for World Wildlife Fund, can be found here: http://www.panda.org/knowledge_hub/teacher_resources/Arctic_science_3.cfm.



ACTIVITY 4: ILLUSTRATOR STUDY

Students will love studying the unique artwork of Suzanne Del Rizzo and then trying their own hands at a similar technique. The product and process can be considered for assessment in both visual arts and media literacy.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- create two- and three-dimensional works of art that express feelings and ideas inspired by personal experiences
- express their feelings and ideas about art works and art experiences
- identify and document their strengths, their interests, and areas for improvement as creators of art
- produce media texts for specific purposes and audiences, using a few simple media forms and appropriate conventions and techniques

You Will Need

- *Sun Dog*
- A collection of other books illustrated by Suzanne Del Rizzo, for example *My Beautiful Birds*, *Sky Pig*, *Gerbil Uncurled*, and *Skink on the Brink*
- A variety of modelling compounds, such as salt/flour clay, air-dry clay, oil-based clay (e.g. Plasticine), and polymer clay

How To:

1. Create a display of picture books illustrated by Suzanne Del Rizzo and read them over a period of a few days.
2. With your students, browse through Del Rizzo’s website at <https://suzannedelrizzo.com/>.
3. Invite students to guess how Del Rizzo has made such illustrations. (Information for teachers: Del Rizzo’s signature style involves making the images using polymer clay and then enhancing them with acrylic paints. In some of her earlier work, such as *Sky Pig*, she has also included Plasticine, multimedia, and found objects.)

4. Provide self-directed learning centers at which students can experiment with a variety of clays appropriate to their age group (e.g. oil-based clay, salt clay, air-dry clay, or other modelling compounds available at craft stores). For materials that dry and harden, allow this to happen (or bake, as appropriate) and allow students to paint them with tempera paint.
5. At the learning centers, students may have made 3D sculptures, as that is likely how they have used modelling clays in the past. Show a 3D sculpture that you have made (standing upright like a statue). Invite a student to choose one of Del Rizzo’s books, look through it, and wonder aloud how Del Rizzo managed to get her sculptures flat enough to fit in a book, as your sculpture would clearly not fit in a book! Guide discussion to help students articulate two necessary steps: making the clay picture flat, but with texture, instead of 3D in the usual sense, and then taking a photograph of the picture. Tell them the exciting news that they will learn to make pictures using a similar technique.
6. Tell students they will make two pictures—one using a practice compound and one using “the good stuff.” Polymer clay is fairly expensive and, depending on your students’ ages and your budget, you may choose not to use it at all, or you may choose to provide it for the final picture. A variety of suggestions for different age groups are given in this table:

Grade	Practice Picture	Final Picture
K–1	Homemade play dough	Oil-based clay
1–3	Previously used oil-based clay	New oil-based clay
2–6	Oil-based clay	Polymer clay

7. Students often do not wish to make a practice piece of a work of art, and when they are forced to do so, they often do a better job on the practice piece than on the final attempt. They just need to practice the techniques, not the subject of their final picture. Brainstorm familiar subjects that they might choose for their practice picture. This could

be a pet, a self-portrait, their house, a favorite toy, etc. Discuss possible backgrounds. Use a think-aloud to decide upon a subject for your own picture and then model creating it, using the same material that your students will be using. For example, “I really love my dog, so I am going to make a picture of her. Since she and I like to play outside together, I’m going to use an outside background.” If you are “not good at art,” that’s actually a good thing, though don’t model those thoughts to your students! Your humble attempts, and your acceptance of them, will help students accept that their work may not be as spectacular as that of a professional artist. Remind students that artists like Del Rizzo have to practice a lot to get that good. Place your clay onto heavy art paper or cardboard, with a clipboard to hold the paper firm. You can use an easel, or work on your lap or on the floor if you have gathered students at the carpet, but if you have a document camera and data projector, that would be ideal. Don’t take too long, but be sure to demonstrate creating a background using at least one color of clay and overlaying it with your subject using at least one other color of clay. To ensure the demonstration doesn’t go on too long, you can have some of the pieces pre-formed ahead of time. Be sure to show how to flatten the clay. You could begin with demonstrating flattening and laying down some clay for the sky, then overlay it with some pre-flattened clay of another color for the ground. Make sure the two colors meet and overlap slightly. Point out your horizon line, even to young children, but if they leave a gap between their earth and sky, accept it as an indication of their developmental stage. Encourage a horizon line, but don’t force it. Many students begin to use them around grade two if the idea is modelled for them. Next, add some texture to the ground (for example grass or sand), using a pencil as a stylus, then place your mostly premade subject on the ground, with the upper part extending into the sky, as on the cover of *Sun Dog*. Finish by demonstrating adding features and texture to your subject. You could also model looking up your subject to check details. You do not need to finish your picture in front of the students.

8. By now, the students will be itching to get started themselves, so let them! If using oil-based clay, it’s helpful to protect the desks/tables with wax paper or a similar material, or you will be spending time with a degreaser later, removing the oily residue! Provide a variety of colors of the practice clay and the same heavy paper or cardboard you used in your demonstration. Circulate among students, providing encouragement and suggestions when asked, but allow them to do most of the problem-solving on their own or with their peers.
9. If available, have students use tablets or cameras to photograph their own work. Even kindergarten children can do this successfully. It’s empowering and a skill they will use in the future, both in the media literacy curriculum and in everyday life. Show them how to hold the device squarely and directly above their work for best results. Encourage them to raise or lower the device until the work fills the frame. If possible, have the pictures printed out.
10. Using both peer conferences and teacher conferences, have students evaluate their own work, while looking at either the actual work or the photograph. Encourage them to say what worked well, what didn’t, and what they would do differently next time. Take notes and use them as part of your student assessment.
11. Tell students that they will soon begin their final project. Choose a subject related to a current curriculum topic or student-led inquiry (for example seasons, animals, or early settlers) that you are studying with your class. Have students choose a subject for their picture that will go along with this theme.
12. Repeat steps 7 and 8 using the material you have chosen for them to work with on their final picture.
13. If desired, have students add small amounts of multimedia (perhaps patterned papers), found objects, or paint. If using paint, urge students to just add tiny embellishments. Give them tiny (1/8”) brushes. Consider the following suggestions.

salt/flour clay	Air-dry or bake, then paint with any paint, including tempera
air-dry clay	Air-dry or bake, then paint with any paint, including tempera
oil-based clay	Oil-based clay will not dry, so any paint used may not dry as expected. But thick tempera paints, acrylic paints and permanent marker will all adhere somewhat, at least long enough to photograph the piece. Some colors/brands of tempera paint adhere better than others. Not all oil-based clays have the same formulation either, so test on your own materials first. See photo below.
polymer clay	Bake, then paint with acrylic paints. Some schools do not permit students to use these. If permitted, ensure students wear old clothes, as the paint can ruin clothing if spilled. Clean brushes with soap and water before the paint dries.



14. Repeat steps 9 and 10.
15. Have students write a sentence or short paragraph to accompany their picture. Collate the photographs into a class book. Include a dedication to Suzanne Del Rizzo for inspiring the work. Make a copy for each of the students and one for the classroom.

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Fiction Retell

I read _____ by _____.

The characters are _____.

The setting is _____.

The problem is that _____.

The problem is solved when _____.

_____.

Fiction Retell

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_____.