

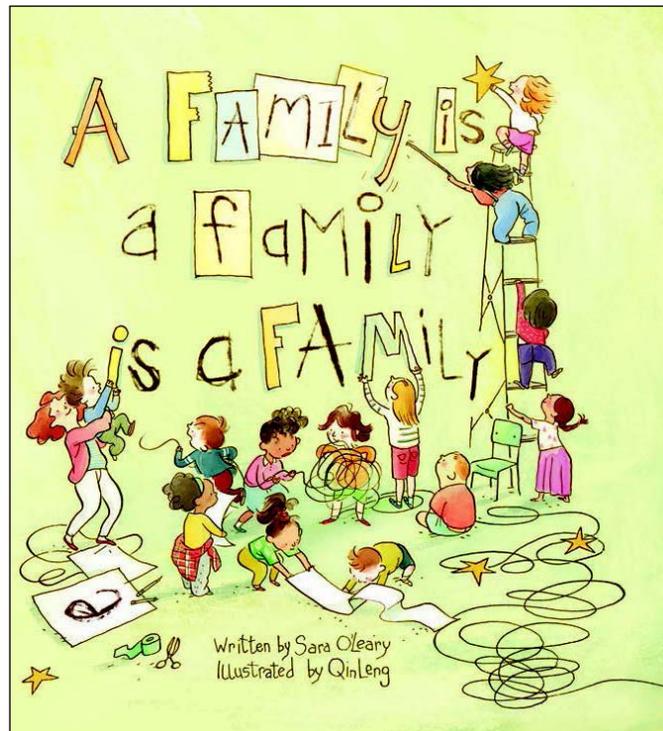


GROUNDWOOD STUDY GUIDES

A Family Is a Family Is a Family

Written by Sara O'Leary

Illustrated by Qin Leng



**A funny picture book that answers an important question:
What is a family?**

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Ages 4 to 7 / Grades K to 2

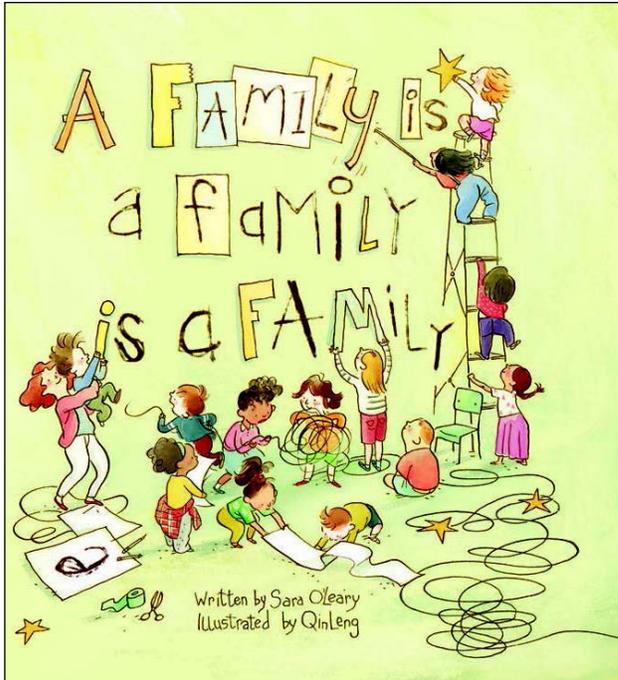
JUVENILE FICTION / Family / General

Full-color illustrations / 8.5 x 10 / 32 pages

Hardcover with jacket / \$18.95 CDN / \$17.95 US

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BOOK DESCRIPTION

When a teacher asks the children in her class to think about what makes their families special, the answers are all different in many ways — but the same in the one way that matters most of all.

One child is worried that her family is just too different to explain, but listens as her classmates talk about what makes their families special. One is raised by a grandmother, and another has two dads. One has many stepsiblings, and another has a new baby in the family.

As her classmates describe who they live with and who loves them — family of every shape, size and every kind of relation — the child realizes that as long as her family is full of caring people, it is special.

A warm and whimsical look at many types of families, written by award-winning author Sara O'Leary, with quirky and sweet illustrations by Qin Leng.

► Note: the activities in this guide align with English language arts standards for kindergarten, and grades 1 and 2, but standards for other grades may also apply.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

What makes a family a family? Are families all the same?

Families come in all shapes and sizes, but there is one thing they all have in common. What do students think that one thing might be?

A sweet and tender tale that shows that families are composed of love regardless of how they may be configured.

Vocabulary

As you read the book aloud, have students raise their hands if they hear a word they do not recognize or a word used in an unfamiliar way. Write these words on the board. Ask students to figure out the meaning of the word from context. Provide real-life connections to this new word by discussing other situations where it could be used.

POST-READING QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

It's Okay to be Different

Come together as a class and examine the opening pages of the book. Read the text aloud. Which character is speaking? How does this character feel at first about the class assignment to discuss one's family? How do students think she feels by the end of the book? Why do students think her feelings might have changed?

What Is a Family?

One of the main themes in this book is that all families are different but they also have similarities. Each student in the book describes something special or different about their family but underneath those details the reader sees the similarities. Come together as a class to discuss families. Ask students what makes their family special. What do they love most about their family? How is their family like other families? How is it different? Do students have a different idea of what a family is now that they have read this book?

Building the Title

Look at the front cover with the class. In it, the characters from the book are making letters to spell the title of the book, “A Family Is a Family Is a Family.” What do students think this illustration means? Are all the letters the same? How does this cover illustrate the main message or theme of the book?

Words and Pictures

Break students into small groups and assign each one a two-page spread from the book for closer study. Work with students to explore the following questions: Who are the characters in this scene? What is the setting? What do the words tell us about the family? What do the illustrations tell us? Do you need both to tell the story? How do they work together to communicate the main message of the book? Have each group present their findings to the class.

What’s Your Family Like?

Break students into pairs and have them interview each other about their families. Instruct them to ask questions to learn about their partner’s family and clarify details they don’t understand. When they are done interviewing each other, have each student tell the class about their partner’s family, including fun and interesting facts that show how that family is special.

Hey! We Do That Too!

Examine the illustrations of each family. As a class, describe who is in the family and what they are doing together in the illustration. How many students have done this same activity with their own families? Do you need to be a certain kind of family to do this together? Why or why not?

Beginning, Middle, End

Read *A Family Is a Family Is a Family* to the class, paying special attention to how the story is structured. Discuss the different parts of a story, including how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action. Ask students what parts of the story need to stay in the same place for the whole book to make sense. What parts can be moved around? Is this true of every story? Have students compare this book with the last one read by the class. How are they each structured? How are they the same? How are they different?

Word Hunt

Have each student take the beginning letter or sound from their first or last name and go through the book, identifying all the words that begin with that sound. Working with an adult if necessary, have them make a list of the words they know and the words they don't know that begin with that sound. If a word is new, help them to figure out its meaning from context clues. Have them select a favorite word from their list, use it in a sentence and draw a picture illustrating it.

A Family Is a Family Is A Family Classroom Edition

Create a classroom version of *A Family Is a Family Is a Family* by having students write and illustrate their own pages. Working with an adult if necessary, have students compose a sentence or two describing what makes their family special. Have them illustrate their description with a drawing that shows their family doing something they love. Break students into small groups to discuss their pages with each other. Have students add details and revise their work based on their classmates' suggestions. Scan and print out copies of the final pieces to create a customized edition of the book. Have a group reading where each student gets to read their own page.

Once Upon a Time

Tell students to choose one of the families shown in this book as the subject for a creative writing project. Have students make up a new adventure for the family, then write or dictate the story and illustrate it with original drawings. Ask for volunteers to share their stories with the class.



COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS USED IN THIS GUIDE

READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE — KINDERGARTEN

Key Ideas and Details

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

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.

READING STANDARDS: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Phonics and Word Recognition

Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

- Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary sound or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant.
- Associate the long and short sounds with common spellings (graphemes) for the five major vowels.

- Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does).
- Distinguish between similarly spelled words by identifying the sounds of the letters that differ.

WRITING STANDARDS — KINDERGARTEN

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, 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 peer

SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS — KINDERGARTEN

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

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.

LANGUAGE STANDARDS — KINDERGARTEN

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.

READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE — GRADE 1 (RL):

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.

Craft and Structure

Identify who is telling the story at various points in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

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

Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

READING STANDARDS: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS — GRADE 1

Phonics and Word Recognition

1.3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words

- Know the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs.
- Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.
- Know final -e and common vowel team conventions for representing long vowel sounds.
- Use knowledge that every syllable must have a vowel sound to determine the number of syllables in a printed word.
- Decode two-syllable words following basic patterns by breaking the words into syllables.
- Read words with inflectional endings.
- Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

WRITING STANDARDS — GRADE 1

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 STANDARDS — GRADE 1

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.

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.

LANGUAGE STANDARDS — GRADE 1

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).

READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE — GRADE 2

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 STANDARDS: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS — GRADE 2

Phonics and Word Recognition

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

- Distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words.
- Know spelling-sound correspondences for additional common vowel teams.
- Decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels.
- Decode words with common prefixes and suffixes.
- Identify words with inconsistent but common spelling-sound correspondences.
- Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

WRITING STANDARDS — GRADE 2

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 STANDARDS — GRADE 2

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.
- Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.

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.

LANGUAGE STANDARDS — GRADE 2

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

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.



AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR BIOGRAPHIES



Sara O'Leary is a writer of fiction for adults and children. Her highly acclaimed picture books include *Night Walk*, illustrated by Ellie Arscott; *A Family Is a Family Is a Family*, illustrated by Qin Leng; and *Maud and Grand-Maud*, illustrated by Kenard Pak. She has also written the award-winning series of Henry books and *This Is Sadie* (adapted for the stage for New York City's Children's Theater), all illustrated by Julie Morstad. Sara writes for children's animation and teaches at Concordia University in Montreal.



Qin Leng lives and works as a designer and illustrator in Toronto. She graduated from the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema and has received many awards for her animated short films and artwork. *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin*, written by Chieri Uegaki, was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award and received the APALA Award for best picture book. Her recent books include *The Better Tree Fort* by Jessica Scott Kerrin, as well as *Away* by Emil Sher and *A Family Is a Family Is a Family* by Sara O'Leary, which were both selected for USBBY's Outstanding International Books List.