

# An Educators' Guide for *First Notes of Spring*



## Meet the Creators of *First Notes of Spring*

### About the Author:

Jessica Kulekjian first discovered her love for storytelling during a young authors' contest in elementary school. Even though she lost (three times!), she didn't give up writing. After years of practice, and with lots of encouragement from family, friends, teachers, and other storytellers, Jessica became the author of picture books, including *Before We Stood Tall: From Small Seed to Mighty Tree* (an NCTE Notable Book for Poetry). Jessica has an MA in teaching and teaches second grade. She lives with her family in Central California.

Visit her website at: [www.jessicakulekjian.com](http://www.jessicakulekjian.com) or on Instagram @jessicakulekjian

### About the Illustrator:

As a kid, Jennifer Bower spent a lot of time with the imaginary friends she met in books, created on paper, or colored with crayons. Now as a grown-up living in North Carolina, she's still making lifelong friends as an author, illustrator, and kidlit creator. A self-taught digital artist who earned a BFA degree before the internet and personal computers were invented, Jennifer has illustrated numerous books for a wide variety of clients, including *First Notes of Spring* (Bloomsbury). Inspired by a love for classic Disney cartoons and Little Golden Books, her work has an MCM vibe with a twist. When not in the studio with her hair in a messy bun, Jennifer can be found hiding under a ball cap while she hugs trees, nurtures nature, volunteers with horses, and attempts to lower her splits on an indoor rowing machine.

### About the Book:

*Not Quite Narwhal* meets . . . *And Then It's Spring* in this funny, charming picture-book debut about marching to the beat of your own drum to create a song that wakes spring.

Juniper can't wait to audition for the First Notes of Spring, the orchestra that melts away winter and wakes up spring with its melodies. With her strong sticks, thumpity toadstool, and rowdy rhythms, she plays with all her might. BOOMEY-BOOM-BOOM!

But Mr. Moose says there's no room in the band for her loud percussion skills. Juniper is heartbroken, until she discovers other tappers, clappers, and noisemakers in the woods. As they parade through the forest playing music together, they learn that maybe their song can wake spring too.

Watch the seasons change in this delightful picture book about being true to yourself, sure to leave readers with a spring in their step.



## Educators' Guide

created by Kari Allen

Visit [kariallenwrites.com](http://kariallenwrites.com) for more information.

### About This Resource:

The activities that follow are designed for students in kindergarten through 3rd grade. They can be adapted and differentiated for other grade levels and student needs (see STEAM section and Other Activities for ideas for 3-6 grades). Common Core Standards and Next Generation Science Standards connections are listed below each section.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever been told “no” or not gotten what you wanted like Juniper in the beginning of *First Notes of Spring*? How did that feel? How does it feel to be disappointed? What did you do?
2. Juniper meets Holly, Darby, and Dash, who have their own sound just like she does. What things in common do you have with your friends? How are you different?
3. How does Juniper change the mind of Mr. Moose? Why do you think Mr. Moose feels differently at the end of the book?

### Writing:

1. In *First Notes of Spring*, Juniper might be described as an individual. Write about how you are unique like Juniper.
2. Brainstorm as a group: different events that are a first (i.e. the first day of school, first lost tooth, first sleepover, first soccer goal). Then choose one of those firsts to write about.
3. Define alliteration. Where do we see alliteration used in *First Notes of Spring* (see spreads 6-7, 8-9) “with strong sticks, a thumpity toadstool, and rowdy rhythms.” Try writing a piece that uses alliteration. This can be done as an individual activity or as a class piece through shared writing.

4. Define onomatopoeia. Where do we see the author using onomatopoeia? How would the text and story change if the author hadn't used onomatopoeia as a craft move? Brainstorm a list of onomatopoeic words. Try writing a class piece or an individual piece using sound words.
5. The text contains a lot of great verbs. Make a chart of them. What do we notice about the tense of the verbs? How do past-tense verbs end? Sort for the different sounds of "ed" (/t/, /d/, /id/).
6. Discuss what happens in the beginning of *First Notes of Spring*, then the middle, then the end. Make a comic highlighting the different parts of the story in order.
7. Songs can be like poems. Look at the lyrics of a favorite song. What craft moves do the students see? Annotate the lyrics as the group looks for different craft moves and writing conventions.

Extension: Write your own song about spring or another season, or about something you really like to do.

## **STANDARDS:**

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3**

Write narratives that recount a well-elaborated event or a short sequence of events. Include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal event order and to provide a sense of closure.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4**

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.K.6**

Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.

## **SCIENCE:**

1. Observe some first signs of spring. Write a scientific observation about how we know spring is coming.
2. Go on a season scavenger hunt. Depending on the current season, you can look for different seasonal signs. For example, in the fall look for: leaf colors, falling leaves, browning grass.

## **NGSS STANDARDS:**

## K-ESS2-1 Earth's Systems

Use and share observations of local weather conditions to describe patterns over time.

## 2-LS4-1 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity

Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.

### MATH:

1. Look at sheet music of a familiar song. Talk about how music and rhythm and fractions can be connected. What do you notice about the notes? Do different notes mean different things? How do musicians know how long to play a note?
2. Use *First Notes of Spring* to think about patterns.
  - For a Morning Meeting activity, have one person clap a pattern using their hands and body. Class repeats the pattern back to them.
  - For another Morning Meeting activity, have one person clap or tap or stomp to make a noise. The next person in the circle repeats the sound and then adds on a new one, building a class pattern around the circle.

### STEM/STEAM/SCIENCE

1. Plan and design your own instrument.
  - Start by brainstorming about the kinds of instruments you know.
  - How do we think they work? How do they make sounds? (If there is a way for children to explore actual instruments, even better!)
  - Make a diagram or sketch for your own musical instrument:
    - Will it be a percussion instrument?
    - A string instrument?
    - A wind instrument?
    - Gather, collect, or upcycle materials to build the instrument.

#### Alternative Activity (reverses the process):

- Present the children with a selection of materials. Have them build an instrument. Draw a diagram of their design. Does their instrument have a name?
  - Extension: How does changing something on your instrument change the sound? Make a guess/hypothesis before you make the change. Explore this concept and document your ideas and noticings with drawings, writing, and discussion.
2. Observe something that will change over a period of time. Date and record observations. Compile at the end. Ideas:

- Pick a tree and observe it at various times of the year. What do you notice? What changes do you see? What questions do you have? Draw and write your observations.
- Plant a seed in a small container. Observe over several weeks. What do you notice? What questions do you have? What changes do you see? Draw and write your observations.
- Fill a bag with water. Tape to a window. Watch for condensation and water-level change. What do you notice? What questions do you have? What changes do you see? Draw and write your observations.
- Make or collect mud. Leave mud outside. (It's better if you pick a week with different kinds of weather.) Observe mud each day. What happens as it dries out? If more water is added what happens? What do you notice? What questions do you have? What changes do you see? Draw and write your observations.

## NGSS STANDARDS:

### K-PS2-1 Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions

Plan and conduct an investigation to compare the effects of different strengths or different directions of pushes and pulls on the motion of an object.

### 1-PS4-1 Waves and Their Applications in Technologies for Information Transfer

Plan and conduct investigations to provide evidence that vibrating materials can make sound and that sound can make materials vibrate.

### 3-5-ETS1-3 Engineering Design

Plan and carry out fair tests in which variables are controlled and failure points are considered to identify aspects of a model or prototype that can be improved.

### K-LS1-1.

Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.

### 2-LS2-1 Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics

Plan and conduct an investigation to determine if plants need sunlight and water to grow.

### 2-LS4-1 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity

Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES:

1. After reading *First Notes of Spring*, listen to Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*: "Spring" (the first allegro might be the most recognizable). Have children paint, create art, or write while listening. What connections do they hear between the book and the music?
2. Design a band poster for the First Beats (or the First Notes).
3. Alternative Activity: Design a band poster for your own band. What would you need to include to show what kind of musician you are? What feeling do you want to portray with your music?
4. Vocabulary Words (these are words you could explore in connection with *First Notes of Spring*):
  - orchestra
  - percussion
  - tempo
  - resonance
  - seasonal

- Ways to explore:
- Clap the syllables for these words.
  - Define the words. What do they mean?
  - Look for known phonemic patterns within the words or introduce new ones.
5. Check out the original song and lyrics made by Tara Trudel for *First Notes of Spring*.



Extension: Write your own song about *First Notes of Spring*.

Picture books that connect to *First Notes of Spring*:  
*And Then It's Spring* by Julie Fogliano, illustrated by Erin Stead  
*When Spring Comes* by Kevin Henkes, illustrated by Laura Dronzek  
*Goodbye-Winter, Hello Spring* by Kenard Pak



Activity kit for

# FIRST NOTES OF SPRING



JESSICA KULEKJIAN

illustrated by

JENNIFER BOWER

BLOOMSBURY

Name:

Date:

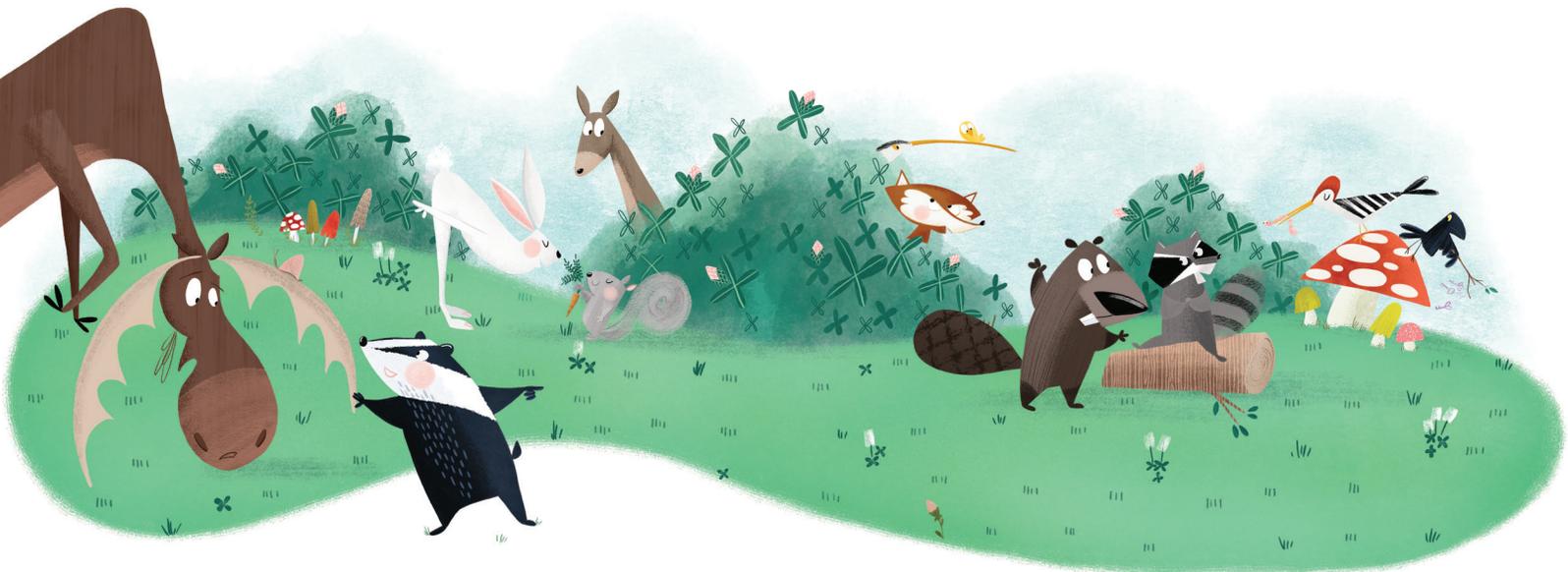
Draw what happened in *First Notes of Spring* by putting important events in each box. Put the events in order.

Beginning...

Middle...

Middle...

End...



Name \_\_\_\_\_



## LOOK AND SORT FOR WORDS WITH AN -ED ENDING

*-ed* makes three different sounds at the end of a word. Look in *First Notes of Spring* for words that end in *-ed* and sort them according to their sound.

/d/

played

/t/

marched

/id/

melted

How do you know it's spring? Put a sign of spring in each box. Use pictures and words!



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If I were in Juniper's band,  
my instrument would be...



Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal lines: a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# I am unique because...

Handwriting practice lines consisting of solid blue top and bottom lines and a dashed red middle line. There are 10 sets of these lines provided for writing.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Write about a "first"



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 10 sets of three horizontal lines: a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 10 sets of horizontal lines. Each set includes a solid blue top line, a dashed red middle line, and a solid blue bottom line.