

Activity Guide

Written by Lauren Adams

To Be Used With

I Was Born To Be A Sister

by Akaela S. Michels-Gualtieri

illustrated by Marcy Dunn Ramsey

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Being a big sister is great...or is it?

This sweet story captures the highs and lows of sisterhood. As its narrator grows up, she discovers a balance between increasing independence and family harmony.



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Before reading this story...

- Introduce this story by taking a "Picture Walk" through the book. Look at the cover. Predict: What do you think this story will be about?
- Describe what is happening in each illustration. How do you think the little girl in the story is feeling?
- Explain that we will read to find out how the little girl feels about having a baby brother.

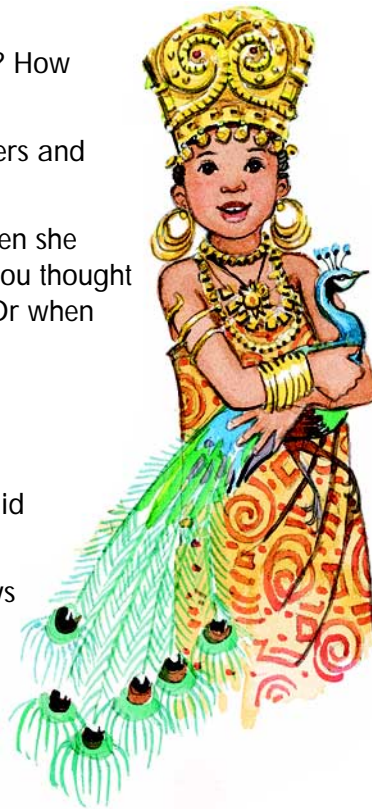


Reading...

Read the story once without interruption. Then read it again and discuss the following questions:

Relate to personal experiences ...

- Did you ever feel the same way the little girl felt? Excited, happy, sad, mad, proud...?
- What are some positive and some negative aspects of being the older/younger sibling? Of being an only child?
- Would anything be different if the older child were a boy and the baby were a girl? What if the "baby" were twins?
- Why do you think the girl was getting upset with her brother? How would you have felt?
- What are some ways that you can get along with your brothers and sisters?
- At first, the little girl thought being a sister would be great, then she wasn't too sure if she liked it. Can you think of a time when you thought you would really like something, but ended up not liking it? Or when thought you wouldn't like something but you did?
- Can you think of something that you were "born" to be?



Recalling details...

- What are some fun things that the little girl and her brother did together?
- What did her brother do that bothered her? Do babies always have to be annoying?
- What changed to make the little girl like being a big sister once again?

After reading this story...

- Encourage a retelling of the story using puppets. Make a sister and a brother puppet out of paper bags. Have children use the puppets to tell the story from both the brother's and sister's point of view.
- Explain that the author of this story is an 11-year-old girl who wrote about her own experiences. She wrote about something that she knows. Pretend that you are an author. What do you know? What would your book be about?

Language Arts Activities

The following activities may be discussed orally, or as paper and pencil tasks or hands-on activities.

Try It

*The little girl showed her brother how to slurp spaghetti. What is the difference between eating and slurping? What other things make a slurping sound? DO IT...Slurp something. Was it fun? Why do you think the baby has sauce all over his face? Can you help your mom or dad cook spaghetti?



Make A Book

*The little girl in the story clapped her baby brother's feet together to make him smile. How can you make others smile? What are some things that make you smile?

Create your own "Smile" booklet. Ask: What is the opposite of a smile?

Turn your pages upside down to make your smile booklet into a "Frown" booklet.

Illustrate and/or write a sentence for each page.



Pantomime

The little girl was a teacher. She taught her brother how to slurp spaghetti at dinnertime. You are a teacher too! What have you taught someone else to do? Why did you teach them to do that? Was it hard or easy to teach? Talk about or write step-by-step directions explaining what you taught someone to do, and how you taught them.

Write A Letter

*Think of 3 things that you like about your family. Write your parents a letter or tell them why you think your family is so special.

* The little girl could not wait to become a sister. Can you think of something that you couldn't wait to happen? Draw a picture and tell about what that special event was.

*The little girl and her brother did lots of things together in this story. See if you can pantomime or act out some of the activities from the book. Can you pretend that you are slaying a dragon...getting water splashed in your face...slurping spaghetti? Think of some other activities that you could act out. **(NO talking allowed!)** See if someone else can guess what you are trying to show.

continued next page...

Language Arts Activities Continued

Skill Development

The text of this story lends itself to the enhancement of various skills.

Word Endings (Suffixes)

Introduce or review the suffix “ed.” Discuss how this word ending changes the meaning of the root word, or base word that it is added to. It shows that the action of the base word has already happened.

Find as many “ed” word as you can in the text. What is the root word? What happened when the “ed” was added?

whisper → whispered

ask → asked

splash → splashed

crash → crashed

Ask: What do you notice about the following words?

squeeze → squeezed

hate → hated

save → saved

Explain that if a word already ends with an “e,” you only add the letter “d” to the root word.

Other words from the story that fit this pattern: Scream, Knock, Want, Show, Turn

Rhyming Words

Talk about what makes words rhyme. Point out that rhyming words all end with the same sound. Play a “Rhyme Game.” Say a word. (Ex. Day) Take turns trying to find a word that rhymes with that, either a real word or a made-up word. Find rhyming words in the story:

All, tall, mall, fall (what others can you think of?)

Day, slay, play, birthday (can you think of other words that fit this rhyming pattern?)

Types of Sentences

Explain or review the 3 types of sentences. Try to find examples of each in the story. Come up with your own examples of each type of sentence.

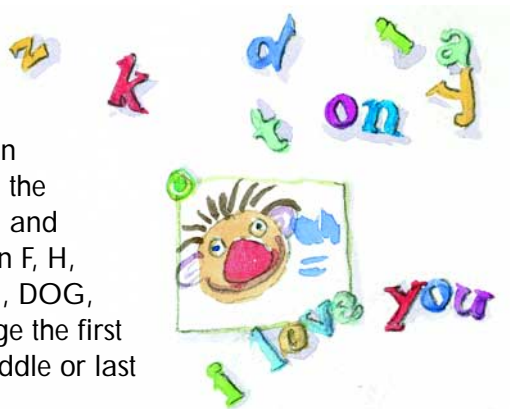
Asking— “Why do I have to be a sister?”

Telling— “I was born to be a sister.”

Exclamatory— “This was what I was meant to be!”

Building Words with Magnetic Letters

The little girl had magnetic letters on the refrigerator. Can you read what she wrote? Use your magnetic letters to build your name. How many letters are in your name? What other words can you spell? Can you make some “word families?” Start by spelling the word CAT. What would have happened if you took away the “C” and put a “B” in its place? How about if you exchanged the “C” for an F, H, M, P, R or S? What words would you have? Spell the words CAN, DOG, TIN, MAN and SIT. What other words can you make if you change the first letter of the word? Can you make new words by changing the middle or last letter of the words?



Math Activities

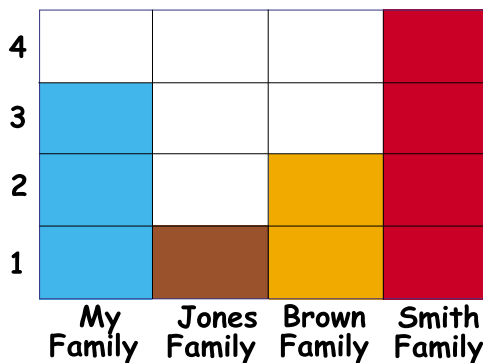
Graphing

Make a graph of the number of children in your family. Think about your friends and neighbors. Count the number of children in their family and add it to your graph.

You can also create graphs to show:

Which of your friends is the youngest, oldest, middle or only child.

Who has brothers, sisters, both or none.



Problem Solving/Manipulatives

In the story, the little girl built towers of cheese cubes. What can you build a tower from? Find different objects and see how high you can make your tower before it falls down. Try crackers, or cookies or ice cubes. Use a ruler to see how high your tower is. Who can build the biggest tower in your family? Compare the height of each tower. Why was it easier to make some towers go higher than others?



Comparing Numbers

Introduce the signs $>$ (greater than) and $<$ (less than).

The girl's age is $>$ than her brother's age;
 $0 < 3$, etc.

You can also compare the weights of objects—

The weight of a block is $>$ the weight of a sponge.

Teach kids that the symbols can remind you of an alligator's mouth, and the mouth is always facing, or ready to eat the biggest, or greater object.

Problem Solving

How much older is the girl than her brother?

When she is 10, how old will her brother be?

When her brother is 5, how old will she be?

Measuring

In the story the little girl tells of making cookies with the red candies that her brother saves for her. Make the following recipe for sugar cookies and add red M&M's to the top of them.

Ingredients:

1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup softened butter
1 egg
1 TBSP. vanilla
2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda
Additional sugar
Red M&M's

In large bowl, blend sugar and butter. Beat in egg and vanilla until light and fluffy. Mix in flour and baking soda. Divide dough in half. Shape each half into roll about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. Wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour (or place in freezer for 30 minutes). Cut rolls into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices. Place on ungreased baking sheet and sprinkle generously with additional sugar. Bake in 350 degree oven for 10-12 minutes or until lightly browned around the edges. Decorate with red candies and enjoy! (Makes about 3-dozen cookies.)

Science Activities

Think about the title, ***I was Born to Be a Sister.***

Now think of some animals. What were they born to be?

See if you can figure them out, and draw a picture to go with each one.

Example:

A cub was born to be a bear.

A doe was born to be a deer.

A puppy was born to be a dog.

A gosling was born to be a goose.

A calf was born to be a cow or a
hippo or an elephant or a whale.

A kid was born to be a goat.

A colt was born to be a horse.

A tadpole was born to be a frog.

A caterpillar was born to be a butterfly.



What other ones can you think of?

Activity Extension -

After you create your list of baby/adult animals, write each animal name onto an index card. Turn all of the cards face down and form them into a square shape. Play a game of "Memory". Players take turns turning over 2 cards, trying to find the matches (Ex. Cub & Bear). If a player finds a match, he goes again, if he does not find a match, it is the next player's turn. The winner is the player who has the most matches at the end.

Grow marigolds

The little brother helped the school children by turning on the hose to water their marigolds. Why is water needed for plants to grow? How do plants inside and outside get their water? What would happen if plants did not get any water? Plant marigold seeds in a small cup. Don't forget to water them! Chart their growth. Can you see some of the different parts of a plant? (Roots, Stem, Leaves, Flower, Seed).



Seasons

Think about the story. In the summer the little girl and her brother were playing in the pool. In the fall they went to the Harvest Party at school together. Discuss the 4 seasons and what happens in each season. Ask: What season are we in now? What season comes next? What season was before this one? What is your favorite season?

Divide a paper into quarters. In each square, draw an activity that you can do with your family in each season.

Social Studies

Families

All families are different. That is what makes them special. Think about all of the different kinds of families that you know. How are other families different from yours? Draw or paint a picture of your family. Label each person. Show each person doing something that they enjoy.

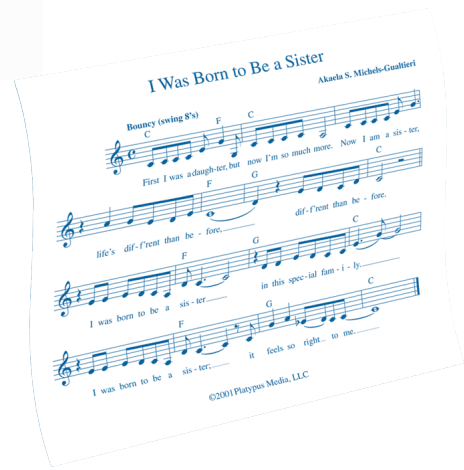


Aesthetic/Arts

Ideas to use with the song, "I Was Born to Be A Sister."

Be a Dancer!

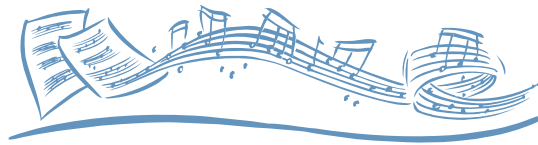
Listen to the song several times.
Let your body move to the music.
Make up your own dance moves.
Try to do some of the actions mentioned in the song.
The little girl tried to do a cartwheel. Can you do one? Go outside and practice.



Create your own song!

Memorize the chorus of the song, "I Was Born To Be A Sister." (See complete lyrics at end of guide.) Now, see if you can change the words so that the song tells about you.

I was born to be a _____
In this special family.
I was born to be a _____
It feels so right to me.



Brainstorm all of the things that you could be. Put each idea into a verse of the song.

I was born to be a painter, doctor, fire fighter.....

Activity Extensions:

When you get to the line of what you were born to be, don't sing the word. Try using hand motions to show what you were born to be. Or try acting it out how could you act out being a veterinarian? A teacher? A horseback rider? Have someone else act one out. Can you guess what they were born to be?

SHHH... The Baby is Sleeping!

The little girl helped her brother to fall asleep by singing *Rock-A-Bye Baby* to him. Why do lullabies help us sleep? What would wake us up? Pretend you are trying to put one of your stuffed animals to sleep. Now how would you wake it up?



You've Got the Beat!

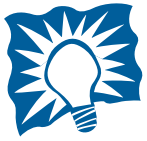
Can you make a **percussion instrument**?

A percussion instrument is a musical instrument that is played by striking it, such as a drum, cymbal, tambourine etc. Make your own drum! Use an empty container, cover the top with a piece of fabric, and secure it with a rubber band. Or use a wooden spoon and hit the bottom of a pot or pan. How else could you make a drum? Listen to the song and see if you can find the beat of the music. Strike your drum in rhythm with the music of the song.

Show me with your thumbs!

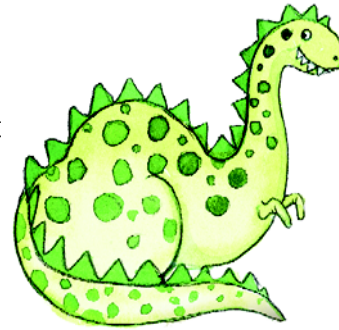
Listen to the lyrics of the song. Give a "thumbs up" sign each time the little girl does something nice with the baby (sing lullabies, snuggle in bed, hum and sing together, hold hands, laugh, play peek-a-boo...). Give a "thumbs down" sign each time the little girl teaches the baby something that might get them both into trouble (dribble oatmeal on the rug, eat a bug, break a lamp, slam the door, write on the wall...). Can you think of some other activities that would fit into each category?

Stretch Your Brain...



Imagination can take you anywhere!

The little girl and her brother played castle. Their baseball bat and umbrella became magic when they pretended to slay a dragon with them. Pick up some objects around you. What else could they be used for? Could you catch leprechauns in your trashcan? What else could you do with a shoe...a comb...a chair... Be creative!!



What can pictures tell us?

Look through the pictures of this book. What can you tell about the family by looking at the objects around their house? Look at the toys. What do you think the little girl and her brother like to play with? What pets do they like? What foods do they like to eat? Look carefully around your house. What would your room tell about you? Would someone else be able to tell what you like by looking at your things?



Speaking of magic...

What magic words do you know?

Abracadabra is one that we all know. What other things could you say when you want something magical to happen? Can you make up some of your own magic words?

Why are **please** and **thank you** sometimes called "*Magic Words*?"

Can you be a Copy Cat?

The little brother began to copy everything his big sister did. Have you ever copied someone because you wanted to learn something? Can you copy someone in a mean way? Find someone to try to copy each movement you make. Can they copy the words that you say too? Now try to copy an adult who is reading a story to you. After they read a sentence, you copy or "echo" what they said. Try to make your words sound just like the person you are copying.



I Was Born To Be A Sister

Words and Music by Akeala Michels-Gualtieri

I thought life was just fine.
My parents were mine, all mine.
No one asked me if I wanted to share.
Suddenly the baby was there.

First I was a daughter,
But now I'm something more.
Now I am a sister,
Life's diff'rent than before,
Diff'rent than before.

I taught the baby how to dribble
The oatmeal on the rug,
And how to slam the bedroom door
And how to eat a bug,
A juicy little bug.

I showed the baby how to break a lamp
With a rubber ball,
And how to hold a crayon
When you're writing on the wall,
Writing on the wall.

**I was born to be a sister
In this special family.
I was born to be a sister
It feels so right to me.**

I thought that I would hate it,
That it would be a chore.
But now I 'preciate it,
Life's better than before,
Better than before.

I was born to be a sister
In this special family.
I was born to be a sister
It feels so right to me.

I noticed that after a while
The baby had an adorable smile.
And lookin' closer made me realize...
Oh wow, the baby had my eyes!

When the baby was bathed and fed
I sang the lullabies, we snuggled in bed.
One day my baby started hummin' along with me.
Now we're keepin' time and singin' harmony,
Keepin' time and singin' harmony.

Interlude

Now we hold each other's hands
When we're strolling at the zoo.
We love to laugh together
When we're playin' peek-a-boo (peek-a-boo),
Playin' peek-a-boo (I see you!).

**I was born to be a sister
In this special family.
I was born to be a sister
It feels so right to me.**

Bein' a sister isn't easy,
But it's an awesome thing to be.
'Cause now I really love my baby,
And my baby loves me (whattaya know!),
My baby loves me,
My baby loves me (can you believe it?).

First I was a daughter,
But now I'm so much more.
Now I am a sister,
And that's what life is for.
That's what life is for.

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About the Author

Akaela S. Michels-Gualtieri

Akaela S. Michels-Gualtieri lives in Washington, DC with her writer-mother, her scientist-father, her younger brother, a baby sister and three cats. Akaela is 12 years old and will be in the 7th grade at Stuart Hobson Middle School, a public school in the nation's capital. She was born right in Washington D.C. and raised to be a traveler. Akaela has already visited Europe and China.



When she is not playing the piano, she is usually doing gymnastics. She is a big Harry Potter fan, but also particularly enjoyed reading "The Diary of Melanie Martin or How I Survived Matt the Brat, Michelangelo, and the Leaning Tower of Pizza" by Carol Weston and "Because of Winn-Dixie" by Kate Dicamillo.

Learn more about Kaely and email her on our website, www.PlatypusMedia.com.

Meet the Illustrator

The pictures were drawn by Marcy Dunn Ramsey, mother to two grown daughters. She is fortunate to have a patient husband, who is a good cook. When she isn't tearing her hair out over deadlines, she paints nice quiet places to nap in. She lives in Chestertown, Maryland.



Meet the Activity Guide Writer

Lauren Adams has been teaching first grade for 13 years in Prince William County, Virginia where she was recently nominated as Teacher of the Year.

Visit the kids section of our website, PlatypusMedia.com, for more activities and information.



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