Life begins small, then grows…

There are so many wonderful things about life, both in good times and in times of struggle. Through the eyes of the world’s animals— including elephants, monkeys, whales, and more—Cynthia Rylant and Brendan Wenzel explore the beauty and tenacity of life.


Available as an ebook through the Ohio Digital Library: ohiodigitallibrary.com

Get Ready To Read! Encouraging early literacy skill-building in young children.

Many of the activities in this toolkit incorporate five early literacy practices, everyday activities that help children get ready to read. These practices are:

- Reading
- Writing
- Talking
- Singing
- Playing

Reading to and with children is the most effective way to support reading readiness. Reading aloud develops comprehension and vocabulary, builds familiarity and comfort with books, and is fun for adult and child.

Writing (or drawing and scribbling) helps children learn about print, letters, and vocabulary, and supports fine motor skills.

Talking helps children learn oral language—a critical early literacy skill—and increases vocabulary and comprehension.

Singing slows language down so children can hear the different sounds that make up words, and helps develop vocabulary and phonological awareness.

Playing teaches children to think symbolically, practice self-expression, and put thoughts into words.

All of these practices lead to children being ready to learn how to read when they begin school.

Parents, teachers, and librarians can share these practices with children at home, in the classroom, or at the library. For more information, visit ohreadytoread.org.
Choose to Read Ohio

About the Author

Cynthia Rylant is the author of more than 100 books for young people, including the beloved *Henry and Mudge*, *Annie and Snowball*, *Brownie & Pearl*, and *Mr. Putter and Tabby* series. Her novel *Missing May* received the Newbery Medal. As a young adult, Cynthia Rylant lived in Akron and Kent, where she earned a Master of Library Science degree from Kent State University. She now lives in Lake Oswego, Oregon.

Author Resources

- Cynthia Rylant’s official website
  cynthiarylant.com
- Author page on Simon & Schuster website
  www.simonandschuster.com/authors/Cynthia-Rylant
- Teachingbooks.net interview with Cynthia Rylant
  www.teachingbooks.net/interview.cgi?id=131&a=1
- For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:
  Contact author.appearances@simonandschuster.com.

Talk About It!
Share these questions with children to increase comprehension and spark creativity.

- Love! What is love? Can you name some things that you love? Food, movies, books, activities? How about people? Think about your family and friends. What makes us love the people that we love? Talk about other emotions we feel.

- Do you think animals feel love and other emotions? What feelings do you think they experience? How can we tell?

- When the bird in the story gets lost in the dark wilderness, do you think he is afraid? Are you afraid of the dark? What could you tell a friend who is afraid of the dark to comfort them?

- Different colors often make people feel different emotions. The illustrator, Brendan Wenzel, uses colors to express a variety of emotions throughout this book. Choose a page spread and talk about the colors used and the emotions they evoke. What colors make you feel happy? Sad? Afraid?

- Most animals on the earth need people to protect them, both wild and domestic. Can you think of some ways we can help protect wild animals? How do we protect and care for our domestic animals, or pets?

- Cynthia Rylant is the author of this and many other books, but she also illustrates some of her books. Talk about the difference between an author and an illustrator. Do you think you would like to be an author? What would you write about? Maybe you would like to illustrate a book. Do you enjoy drawing or painting?

“Remember this:
in every corner of the world, there is something to love.

And something to protect.”
About the Illustrator

Brendan Wenzel’s artwork often explores the natural world and our relationship to it and he has teamed up with many groups working to preserve wild places and creatures around the world. He has illustrated several acclaimed animal-themed picture books, including Some Bugs and Some Pets by Angela DiTerlizzi, Beastly Babies by Ellen Jackson, and his own They All Saw a Cat. He lives in New York.

Illustrator Resources

Brendan Wenzel’s official website
brendanwenzel.info

Illustrator page on Simon & Schuster website
www.simonandschuster.com/authors/Brendan-Wenzel

Life: An Interview with Brendan Wenzel
From Design of the Picture Book, a website by children’s book author Carter Higgins.

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:
Contact author.appearances@simonandschuster.com.

Learn and Have Fun!
Ideas for extending the experience of reading and sharing Life.

Dramatic play is a perfect way to extend this story!
These gross motor activities engage the imagination, enhance vocabulary, tie in to conversations about life science and animal behavior, and are simply fun.

- Walk like an elephant, using your arms like a trunk, swaying back and forth. Talk about the many ways elephants use their trunks.
- Walk like a camel, arching your back like a camel’s hump. What purpose does a camel’s hump serve for the camel?
- Slither like a snake, down on the floor. Do snakes make any noise? What noise do you imagine they make? Talk about how snakes use their tongues.
- Fly like a bird. Imagine how it would feel to fly! Swoop, flap, and glide, using those words and talking about what they mean.
- Hop like a bunny. What other animals hop? Talk about other words for hop, like jump and leap. Play a game of leap frog!
- Howl like a wolf. Think of other animals in the canine family, such as coyotes and dogs. What other sounds do they make? Are the sounds similar or different?

Take a Trip!
There are many opportunities to extend Life into field trips and adventures in your community and throughout Ohio.

- Visit an art museum or exhibit. The Mazza Museum in Findlay houses a collection of original artwork from children’s picture books.
- Take a trip to the zoo. Try to see as many of the animals featured in the book as you can.
- Visit a science center or museum. COSI and the Great Lakes Science Center are among many in Ohio.
- Go outside at night and observe the moon. And if you can, visit the Neil Armstrong Air and Space Museum in Wapakoneta, a museum dedicated to all things Neil Armstrong and the moon.
Tie It In!
Using this book with Ohio’s Learning Standards.

**Educators:** Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio’s English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Other Learning Standards also apply. These activities using *Life* align with Ohio’s Learning Standards for Kindergarten – Grade 3.

**Librarians, parents, and others:** These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, education.ohio.gov. From the Topics dropdown menu, click on “Learning in Ohio.”

These activities are also great for library programs, family time, and playgroups.

**Science**

*Observations of the Environment: Daily and Seasonal Changes.* The baby elephant grows “Beneath the Sun and the Moon.” Talk about the sun and moon in relation to day and night, a month, and a year. How long is a day? How long is a night? During the span of a year, what changes occur? Talk about the changing seasons and how they relate to weather patterns and to plant and animal life.

*Observations of the Environment: Interactions within Habitats.* Different animals exist in different habitats: the sky for the hawk, desert for the camel, grass for the snake, water for the turtle. What habitats exist in your community? In Ohio? Around the world?

*Interconnections within Systems: Behavior, Growth and Change.* Throughout the book, the baby elephant grows. Talk about how small animals grow into big animals and how a baby is different from a child or an adult. Compare the length of time it takes a human baby to grow with that of other animals. Which animals are born live? Which hatch from eggs?

**Fine Arts: Visual Arts**

Use *Life* as a springboard to many art activities. Talk about illustrators and authors, and the different work that they do. Discuss how different colors make you feel and how different tools create different effects on the page. Then, draw or paint a picture! Get creative and use a variety of tools and media. If possible, visit an art museum. Also talk about the power and importance of words as well as pictures. Share a poetry book. Focus on the lyrics of a favorite song, then sing it!

**Social / Emotional Development**

*Self: Awareness & Expression of Emotion.* Talk about the many emotions that we feel: happiness, love, anger, fear, and others. How do we express these emotions? Are some ways better than others? Then consider the emotions we might share with animals. Do animals feel the same emotions that we do? How can we tell? How do animals express their emotions? What do animals love? Compare what we love and how we express it.

*Relationships.* Talk about human relationships: family, friendships, school and work relationships, neighbors. What are the different ways that we interact with people? *Life* offers an opportunity to discuss empathy. How do we feel when the bird is lost in the wilderness? How do we think the bird feels? How can we love and protect the creatures of the earth?

Download the *Life Activity Sheet* provided by Simon & Schuster for a reproducible doorknob hanger and coloring sheet based on Brendan Wenzel’s artwork for *Life*: d28hgpri8am2if.cloudfront.net/tagged_assets/3209181/9781481451628_as_[life].pdf (also available at www.simonandschuster.com/books/Life)