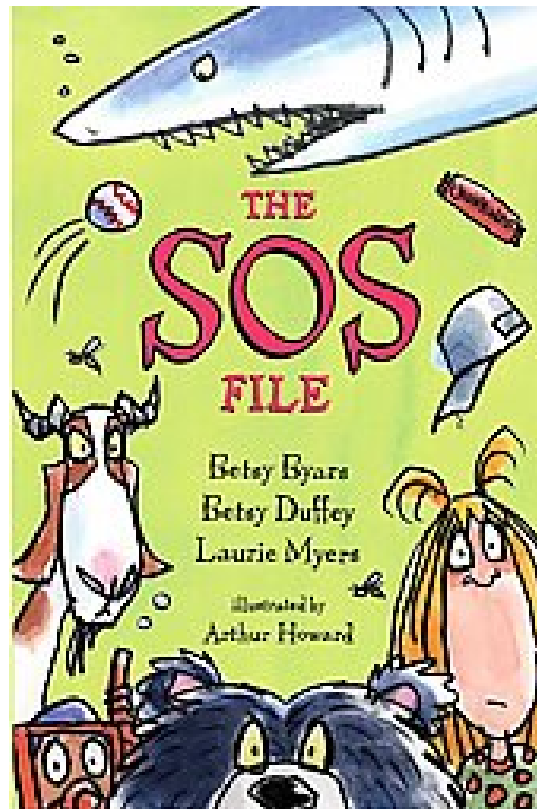


The SOS Files

Resource Guide

Created by Katherine Abel



Byars, Betsy and Betsy Duffey and Laurie Myers. *The SOS Files*. Henry Holt. 2004.

About the Authors:

There are three authors: Betsy Byars and her daughters, Laurie Myers and Betsy Duffey

<http://www.betsybyars.com/> -- Betsy Byers Home Page



Betsy Byars has written over sixty books for young people. Her first published in 1962 and since then she has published regularly. Her books have been translated into nineteen languages and she gets thousands of letters from readers in the United States and from all over the world.

She has won many awards. Among them is the Newbery Medal in 1971 for her novel *The Summer of the Swans*, the American Book Award in 1981 for *The Night Swimmers*, The Edgar (for the best mystery for young people) in 1992 for *Wanted..Mud Blossom* and the Regina Medal by the Catholic Library Association for the body of her work. She especially values her many state awards which were voted on by the readers of the state.

Byars, Betsy. *The Animal, the Vegetable, and John D. Jones*. Delacorte, 1982.

_____. *Bingo Brown and the Language of Love*. Viking Penguin, 1991.

_____. *The Blossoms and the Green Phantom*. Delacorte, 1987.

_____. *The Night Swimmers*. Houghton Mifflin, 1989.

_____. *The Pinballs*. Harper & Row, 1977.

_____. *The Summer of the Swans*. Viking Penguin, 1981.

Betsy Duffey Home Page



"My mother's writing was a part of my childhood. I have early memories of watching my mother at the typewriter, of reading her manuscripts, of sharing the excitement when a book was accepted for publication and of seeing her stories become books. She often asked me to critique a manuscript by placing an arrow in the margin pointing to the spot where I lost interest. I learned to edit at a young age.

"When it was time for me to choose a career I decided on Medical Technology. I loved science and I got to wear that white lab coat. My favorite job title was given to me when my husband, Bill, and I lived in Ankara, Turkey and I worked at a Turkish hospital. Grand Supreme Supervisor and Expert Specialist. It was the pinnacle of my career as a scientist.

"When my children were born I stayed home to raise them and read to them. I began to get ideas for books of my own and when those ideas came, I knew what to do. I sat at a desk for hours and typed and typed and typed and I discovered it was exciting after all.

Duffey, Betsy. *Cody's Secret Admirer*. Viking. 1998.

_____. *Fur-ever Yours, Booker Jones*. Viking. 2001.

_____. *Hey, New Kid!* Viking. 1993

_____. *How to Be Cool in Third Grade*. Viking. 1998.

_____. *The Math Wiz*. Viking. 1990.

_____. *Utterly Yours, Booker Jones*. Viking. 1995.

books about Laurie Myers school visits a writing family growing up

About Laurie Myers

- **Born:** October 29, Anderson, South Carolina
- **Grew up:** Morgantown, West Virginia
- **Graduated from:** Clemson University (Go Tigers!)
- **Married:** 1974 (Met husband at Clemson)
- **Three children:** Amy, Alan, Paul
- **Started writing:** 1990
- **Height:** 5' 7"
- **Weight:** yes
- **Pets:**
2 cats: Bantha and Venus
2 turtles: "the big one" and "the little one"
1 fish: Jonah

Myers, Laurie. *Lewis and Clark and Me: A Dog's Tale*. Henry Holt & Co. 2002.

_____. *Earthquake in the Third Grade*. Clarion Books. 1993.

_____. *Guinea Pigs Don't Talk*. Clarion Books. 1994.

_____. *Surviving Brick Johnson*. Clarion Books. 2000.

Annotation

Betsy Byars and her two daughters have teamed up to create a simple chapter book using the theme of small disasters that happen to children. Mr. Margo invites his students to write about an SOS experience. Each of the chapters consists of a child's adventure. Mr. Margo surprises the class with his own SOS experience at the end. Younger students will appreciate these stories, though older ones might lose interest.

Genre: Humor, Short Stories, Memoir

Point of View – Each story in the book is written from the point of view of the person (students or teacher) telling it; first person.

Theme: All stories are tied together with a theme of “emergency.” Most are funny, though some are more serious and heartwarming. The theme is that everyone has an SOS story to tell.

Conflict: Internal in most of the stories.

Conflict Resolution: Each of the twelve stories has its own resolution, but the book itself ends with the idea that everyone (even the teacher) has an SOS and that they live through it and persevere.

Characters

- Mr. Magro, teacher of the class (who also writes *Held Back*, about being held back in first grade as a child) and his students (grade level not given):
- Liz Monteon, author of *The Pink Panther*, who builds and rides a go cart.
- Marcie, friend of Liz Monteon who helps her build the Pink Panther.
- Randy Jefferies, author of *Three Strikes, You're Out*. He plays baseball.
- Jerry Lee Johnson, author of *The Chocolate SOS*, and he ate the candy he was supposed to be selling.
- Augustus T. Bruewhiler III, author of *A Bear Tale*, used the Gettysburg Address to save himself from a possible attack.
- Robbie Robinson, author of *Mrs. Meany* (another character who lives next door). He has a pet goat that runs away.
- Mrs. Meany, older woman who is the neighbor of Robbie Robinson
- Corky Cadenhead, author of *Wanted: SOS*, and she doesn't believe she had anything happen to her that warranted an SOS.

- Joy Frazure, author of *Miracle on Main Street*. She was abandoned as a baby and is searching for her rescuer.
- Red Fletcher, author of *Shark Food*, who goes to see sharks with a tourist group.
- Gripper Saunders, author of *Identity Crisis*, who is desperate because he loses his ratty baseball cap.
- Brianna Thompson, author of *White Lightning* (under the pen name of Ima Writer). Her story is about being saved by her horse from drowning.
- Kyle Weathers, author of *Pumpkin Man*, a story about an embarrassing moment that happened at summer camp.

Setting: present day (time), Mr. Magro's classroom of elementary students (place)

Interest Level (3rd -6th) and Reading Level (4th)

Booktalk (adapted from one found at www.amazon.com)

Have you ever had a big emergency? Maybe, you got separated from your friends and family at the zoo? Did you ever lose a pet temporarily that you were supposed to be taking care of? Or maybe, like me, you got lost in the woods and ended up in a stranger's tent! For fun and extra credit, the kids in Mr. Magro's class have written about their biggest and most exciting emergencies. Now, it is time for Mr. Magro to open up the file and share the stories with the class and figure out which story did not earn the extra credit.

Discussion Questions

- Pre-reading
 - What does the title of this book and the cover illustration make you think the book is about?
 - This book was written by a woman and her two grown daughters. Can you imagine writing a book with one of your parents? What kind of book would you write?

 ***The Pink Panther***

- A writer often will give the reader a clue that “trouble is coming.” When, in this story, do you know that trouble is coming?

 ***Three Strikes, You’re Out***


- Can you think of a time when you were absolutely sure you were going to fail? Did you?

 ***The Chocolate SOS***

- What could your own mom put in a “What-Have-You-Done-Now” file?

 ***A Bear Tale***

- Explain the Bear joke on page 25/26.

 ***Mrs. Meany***

- Have you ever had to memorize something for school? Do you still remember it?

 ***Wanted: SOS***

- In the story, Belly ended with the three things that he learned from this SOS. Can you think of three things you learned from your own SOS?

 ***Miracle on Main Street***

- Why did Joy want to “do the talking” when she and her parents were searching for Fred?
- Did this story surprise you after the others, because it was not funny, but heartwarming and serious instead?

 ***Shark Food***

- What does flailing mean? Why does the author have the character ask this question so we would know the answer at this point in the story?

 ***Identity Crisis***

- Do you own something that, even though it is old and ratty, it is still very special and important to you?

 ***White Lightning***


- Have you every had a really scary thing happen to you that helped you not be in trouble for what you may have done to cause it to happen? I can think of several examples of this happening to me.

 ***Pumpkin Man***

- Have you ever had something extremely embarrassing (like Kyle being in the girls' bathroom) happen to you? What did you do?

 ***Held Back***

- Why do you think the teacher wrote this story to include in the file?
- What was the underlying message or theme of this story?

 **End of Reading**

- Why did the author's of this book write it?
- What do all the stories have in common?
- Have you ever read other books of short stories that are all about one central idea or theme (like the SOS of this one)?
- Do you think you could write your own SOS story to add to the file?

Language/Vocabulary

Page	Word	Definition
7	contribute	“give” as in everyone has given their own story to the SOS file.
8	bustling	busy
11	axle	The rod that holds the wheels together on a car.
14	expectations	What you think or expect will happen.
30	nudged	Pushed lightly.
30	proposition	I have a <i>deal</i> or <i>proposition</i> for you.
36	resuscitation	Mouth-to-mouth “helping a victim breathe”
38	inspiration	Great idea or thought
40	rear-ended	Hit another car in the rear end.
43	embroidered	Stitched on words or pictures
60	trot/cantor/gallop	Ways a horse moves
65	infirmary	Nurse’s or doctor’s office at camp
71	dyslexic	Reads things backwards, a learning disability

Indiana Academic Standards met by novel content (Intermediate -- 3-6)

- LA3.3.1 Recognize different common genres (types) of literature, such as poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction.
- LA3.3.3 Determine what characters are like by what they say or do and by how the author or illustrator portrays them.
- LA3.3.4 Determine the theme or author's message in fiction and nonfiction text.
- LA3.3.6 Identify the speaker or narrator in a selection.
- LA3.3.8 Identify the problem and solutions in a story.
- LA4.3.2 Identify the main events of the plot, including their causes and the effects of each event on future actions, and the major theme from the story action.
- LA4.3.3 Use knowledge of the situation, setting, and a character's traits, motivations, and feelings to determine the causes for that character's actions.
- LA4.3.6 Determine the theme.
- LA4.3.7 Identify the narrator in a selection and tell whether the narrator or speaker is involved in the story.
- LA5.3.2 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.
- LA5.3.3 Contrast the actions, motives, and appearances of characters in a work of fiction and discuss the importance of the contrasts to the plot or theme.
- LA5.3.4 Understand that theme refers to the central idea or meaning of a selection and recognize themes, whether they are implied or stated directly.
- LA5.3.8 Identify the speaker or narrator in a selection and tell whether the speaker or narrator is a character involved in the story.
- LA6.3.1 Identify different types (genres) of fiction and describe the major characteristics of each form.
- LA6.3.2 Analyze the effect of the qualities of the character on the plot and the resolution of the conflict.
- LA6.3.3 Analyze the influence of the setting on the problem and its resolution.

- LA6.3.5 Identify the speaker and recognize the difference between first-person and third-person narration.
- LA6.3.6 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images.
- LA6.3.9 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

Anticipation/Reaction Guide

Response Before Reading	<i>The SOS Files</i>	Response After Reading
	Everyone has an SOS story to tell.	
	All teachers were good students when they were kids, which is part of why they became teachers.	
	Books can be placed in more than one genre.	
	Most writers give clues about exciting events.	

Read-Aloud pages/passages

- Passage 1 – (Page 1) This is the message that asks students (characters) to write their own entries into the SOS file, and explains what an SOS entry is about. It sets up the story for the reader.
- Passage 2 – (pages 8-9) – This is a really exciting part of the book that describes the action well. Kids will be on the edge of their seats and if you stop at page 9 (at “SOS”) they will be clamoring for the book.
- Passage 3 – (pages 64-68) – This is the funniest story in the book. If I wanted to read one story, this is the one I would read. It is funny, fast-paced and exciting.

“If you like *The SOS Files*, you’ll love...” (Read-Alikes)

Recommended reads of the same genre & interest level

- Cutler, Jane. *Rats*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 1998.
- Blume, Lesley M. *Cornelia and the Audacious Escapades of the Somerset Sisters*. Yearling Books. 2008.
- Forman, Mark. *Grandpa Jack’s Tattoo Tales*. Farrar, Straus Giroux. 2007.
- Robberecht, Thierry. *Sam Tells Stories*. Clarion Books. 2007

Same Authors (these also short stories)

- *My Dog, My Hero*. Henry Holt & Co. 2000.
- *Dog Diaries: Secret Writings of the WOOF Society*. Henry Holt & Co. 2007.

Across the Curriculum Connections

THEME: Animals (Many of the stories include animals)

Web Resources: National Geographic Website about animals
<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Animals/CreatureFeature/>

Yahoo site about animals
<http://kids.yahoo.com/animals>

Standards:

- 3.4.1 Demonstrate that a great variety of living things can be sorted into groups in many ways using various features, such as how they look, where they live, and how they act, to decide which things belong to which group.
- 3.4.2 Explain that features used for grouping depend on the purpose of the grouping.
- 3.4.3 Observe that and describe how offspring are very much, but not exactly, like their parents and like one another.
- 3.4.4 Describe that almost all kinds of animals’ food can be traced back to plants.
- 5.4.4 Explain that in any particular environment, some kinds of plants and animals survive well, some do not survive as well, and some cannot survive at all.
- 5.4.5 Explain how changes in an organism’s habitat are sometimes beneficial and sometimes harmful.

- 5.4.7 Explain that living things, such as plants and animals, differ in their characteristics, and that sometimes these differences can give members of these groups (plants and animals) an advantage in surviving and reproducing.
- 6.4.3 Describe some of the great variety of body plans and internal structures animals and plants have that contribute to their being able to make or find food and reproduce.
- 6.4.4 Recognize and describe that a species comprises all organisms that can mate with one another to produce fertile offspring.
- 6.4.5 Investigate and explain that all living things are composed of cells whose details are usually visible only through a microscope.
- 6.4.6 Distinguish the main differences between plant and animal cells, such as the presence of chlorophyll* and cell walls in plant cells and their absence in animal cells.
- 6.4.7 Explain that about two-thirds of the mass of a cell is accounted for by water. Understand that water gives cells many of their properties.
- 6.4.8 Explain that in all environments, such as freshwater, marine, forest, desert, grassland, mountain, and others, organisms with similar needs may compete with one another for resources, including food, space, water, air, and shelter. Note that in any environment, the growth and survival of organisms depend on the physical conditions.
- 6.4.9 Recognize and explain that two types of organisms may interact in a competitive or cooperative relationship, such as producer*/consumer*, predator*/prey*, or parasite*/host*.

THEME: SOS

Web Resources: The history of “SOS” and what it means.

<http://www.boatsafe.com/nauticalknowhow/060199tip6.htm>



- 3.2.2 Ask questions and support answers by connecting prior knowledge with literal information from the text.
- 3.2.3 Show understanding by identifying answers in the text.
- 3.2.4 Recall major points in the text and make and revise predictions about what is read.

- 3.2.5 Distinguish the main idea and supporting details in expository text.
- 4.2.1 Use the organization of informational text to strengthen comprehension.
- 4.2.2 Use appropriate strategies when reading for different purposes.
- 4.2.3 Draw conclusions or make and confirm predictions about text by using prior knowledge and ideas presented in the text itself, including illustrations, titles, topic sentences, important words, foreshadowing clues (clues that indicate what might happen next), and direct quotations.
- 4.2.4 Evaluate new information and hypotheses (statements of theories or assumptions) by testing them against known information and ideas.
- 5.2.1 Use the features of informational texts, such as formats, graphics, diagrams, illustrations, charts, maps, and organization, to find information and support understanding.
- 5.2.3 Recognize main ideas presented in texts, identifying and assessing evidence that supports those ideas.
- 5.2.4 Draw inferences, conclusions, or generalizations about text and support them with textual evidence and prior knowledge.
- 6.2.1 Identify the structural features of popular media (newspapers, magazines, online information) and use the features to obtain information.

Resources:

Many of the stories include animals, and these are two websites that children can go to and learn about the animals in their stories.

 National Geographic Website about animals
 <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Animals/CreatureFeature/>

 Yahoo site about animals
 <http://kids.yahoo.com/animals>

Book Activities

Activity 1 - Class Book: Read *My Dog, My Hero* by the same authors and have a whole class discussion about them both. After they realize they are compilations of stories written on a similar theme or topic (SOS and Dogs), students can decide on a topic that THEY all want to write stories for. Then, during Writer’s Workshop, they would create a class book.

SHORT STORY RUBRIC

Name _____

Title _____

Criteria for Evaluation	Rating
Organization: The story has a beginning, middle and end and events follow in a logical sequence.	4 3 2 1 0
Plot: The plot is interesting and keeps the reader in suspense. Setting is clearly established.	4 3 2 1 0
Characters: Characters are well-developed through dialogue, action or thoughts.	4 3 2 1 0
Point of view: One point of view is used consistently throughout the story.	4 3 2 1 0
Conflict: Conflict is clearly established, developed and resolved in a way that makes sense.	4 3 2 1 0
Grammar/Usage/Mechanics: Correct grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, spelling, punctuation and capitalization are used.	4 3 2 1 0
Total	

<http://teacherweb.com/VA/blacksburgmiddleschool/JonesKass/SHORTSTORYRUBRIC.doc>

- 3.4.1 Find ideas for writing stories and descriptions in conversations with others; in books, magazines, or school textbooks; or on the Internet.
- 3.4.2 Discuss ideas for writing, use diagrams and charts to develop ideas, and make a list or notebook of ideas.
- 3.4.3 Create paragraphs with topic sentences and simple supporting facts/details.
- 3.4.5 Use a computer to draft, revise, and publish writing.
- 3.4.6 Review, evaluate, and revise writing for meaning and clarity.
- 3.4.7 Proofread one's own writing, as well as that of others, using an editing checklist or list of rules.
- 3.4.8 Revise writing for others to read, improving the focus and progression of ideas.
- 3.4.9 Organize related ideas together within a paragraph to maintain a consistent focus.
- 4.4.1 Discuss ideas for writing. Find ideas for writing in conversations with others and in books, magazines, newspapers, school textbooks, or on the Internet. Keep a list or notebook of ideas.
- 4.4.2 Select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view based upon purpose, audience, length, and format requirements for a piece of writing.
- 4.4.4 Use logical organizational structures for providing information in writing, such as chronological order, cause and effect, similarity and difference, and posing and answering a question.
- 4.4.9 Use a computer to draft, revise, and publish writing, demonstrating basic keyboarding skills and familiarity with common computer terminology.
- 4.4.10 Review, evaluate, and revise writing for meaning and clarity.
- 4.4.11 Proofread one's own writing, as well as that of others, using an editing checklist or set of rules, with specific examples of corrections of frequent errors.
- 4.4.12 Revise writing by combining and moving sentences and paragraphs to improve the focus and progression of ideas.
- 5.4.8 Review, evaluate, and revise writing for meaning and clarity.

- 5.4.9 Proofread one’s own writing, as well as that of others, using an editing checklist or set of rules, with specific examples of corrections of specific errors.
- 5.4.10 Edit and revise writing to improve meaning and focus through adding, deleting, combining, clarifying, and rearranging words and sentences.
- 6.4.8 Review, evaluate, and revise writing for meaning and clarity.
- 6.4.9 Edit and proofread one’s own writing, as well as that of others, using an editing checklist or set of rules, with specific examples of corrections of frequent errors.

Activity 2: Dramatic Interpretations – Partners will each take one of the stories and create a skit from their story. They will write, type and copy the script. They will then practice (maybe using other students for some of the additional roles in the story) and be prepared to present these to our first grade Book Buddies during our Storytelling Festival.

- 3.4.1 Find ideas for writing stories and descriptions in conversations with others; in books, magazines, or school textbooks; or on the Internet.
- 3.4.2 Discuss ideas for writing, use diagrams and charts to develop ideas, and make a list or notebook of ideas.
- 3.4.3 Create paragraphs with topic sentences and simple supporting facts/details.
- 3.4.5 Use a computer to draft, revise, and publish writing.
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Bibliography

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- Byars, Betsy and Betsy Duffey and Laurie Myers. *My Dog, My Hero*. Henry Holt & Co. 2000.
- Dog Diaries: Secret Writings of the WOOF Society*. Henry Holt & Co. 2007.
- The SOS Files*. Henry Holt. 2004
- Byars, Betsy. *The Animal, the Vegetable, and John D. Jones*. Delacorte, 1982.
- _____. *Bingo Brown and the Language of Love*. Viking Penguin, 1991.
- _____. *The Blossoms and the Green Phantom*. Delacorte, 1987.
- _____. *The Night Swimmers*. Houghton Mifflin, 1989.
- _____. *The Pinballs*. Harper & Row, 1977.
- _____. *The Summer of the Swans*. Viking Penguin, 1981.
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- Duffey, Betsy. *Cody's Secret Admirer*. Viking. 1998.
- _____. *Fur-ever Yours, Booker Jones*. Viking. 2001.
- _____. *Hey, New Kid!* Viking. 1993
- _____. *How to Be Cool in Third Grade*. Viking. 1998.
- _____. *The Math Wiz*. Viking. 1990.
- _____. *Utterly Yours, Booker Jones*. Viking. 1995.
- Forman, Mark. *Grandpa Jack's Tattoo Tales*. Farrar, Straus Giroux. 2007.
- Myers, Laurie. *Lewis and Clark and Me: A Dog's Tale*. Henry Holt & Co. 2002.
- _____. *Earthquake in the Third Grade*. Clarion Books. 1993.

_____. *Guinea Pigs Don't Talk*. Clarion Books. 1994.

_____. *Surviving Brick Johnson*. Clarion Books. 2000.

Robberecht, Thierry. *Sam Tells Stories*. Clarion Books. 2007

Websites:

http://www.linc.lib.il.us/web2/tramp2.exe/do_keyword_search/A0bo4i1d.001?servers=1home&index=SU&material_filter=all&language_filter=all&location_filter=&location_group_filter=STCHARLES&date_filter=all&query=Storytelling+Juvenile+fiction%2E

For Read Alikes -- LINC – St. Charles Publishing

<http://teacherweb.com/VA/blacksburgmiddleschool/JonesKass/SHORTSTORYRUBRIC.doc> --- Short Story Rubric adapted from this site

<http://www.doe.state.in.us/standards/welcome2.html> --- Indiana DOE State Standards

<http://www.betsybyars.com/> --- Betsy Byers Home Page

http://us.penguinroup.com/nf/Author/AuthorPage/0,,0_1000009601,00.html

Betsy Duffey Home Page

<http://www.lauriemyers.com/> --- Laurie Myers Home Page

www.amazon.com --- Information for Booktalk, other bibliography information

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Animals/CreatureFeature/>

National Geographic Website about animals

<http://kids.yahoo.com/animals> --- Yahoo site about animals

<http://www.boatsafe.com/nauticalknowhow/060199tip6.htm> --- history of “SOS”