

# "Do Unto Otters"

Written and illustrated by: Laurie Keller

Henry Holt and Company, LLC - 2007

**About the Author and Illustrator:** Laurie Keller's career didn't begin as an author of children's books. She took college courses at a community college in Michigan where she grew up. Laurie also performed with a local dance tour company. That all changed though the day a friend took her to a Kendall Art School student art show. She immediately began taking classes while also working for Hallmark Cards as a greeting card illustrator. Keller wrote her first children's book nearly eight years later. She moved to New York to find a publisher. Laurie has since authored and illustrated several more children's books. She currently resides back in Michigan in a small cottage near Lake Michigan. Among the awards Ms. Keller has earned include the CCBC Choice award and the Pennsylvania Young Readers Choice award for "The Scrambled States of America". "Do Unto Otters" has been recognized as Amazon.com Top 10 Editor's Picks for Children, the Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year, the California Young Reader Medal Master List, and the Indiana Young Hoosier Book Award Master List.

## **Author's Homepage:**

"Laurie Keller" <http://www.lauriekeller.com>

**Publisher's webpage:**

Henry Holt and Company, LLC <http://www.henryholtchildrensbooks.com>

**Other children's books written and illustrated by Laurie Keller include:**

The Scrambled States of America Talent Show, Grandpa Gazillion's Number Yard, Arnie, Open Wide, and The Scrambled States of America.

**Other children's books illustrated by Laurie Keller include:**

Stinky Thinking by Alan Katz, Fooled You by Elaine Pascoe, Toys! By Don Wulffson, and Marty Frye, Private Eye by Janet Tashjian

**Annotation:** Laurie Keller does a remarkable job teaching the Golden Rule in her latest book, "Do Unto Otters". She cleverly uses forest animals to depict a problem all of us have faced: what if we don't like our new neighbors. Mr. Rabbit wisely seeks the advice of Mr. Owl and as to be expected, Mr. Owl dispenses superb advice.

Keller presents great life-long lessons with her characters such as playing fair, honesty, cooperation, forgiveness, and consideration. These lessons are presented in a friendly, non-threatening way for students to enjoy. She gives great examples of appropriate times to display these manners and the importance of the Golden Rule. Keller play on words only enhances the warm and funny feeling a reader senses as he reads through the story.

Laurie Keller also illustrated this wonderful children's book. The pictures are of cartoon-like style featuring fun, bright characters. The pictures are engaging as is the layout and font used throughout.

This is a must read for primary teachers and students. "Do Unto Otters" would be a great read on the first few days of school as teacher and students work through behavior expectations and set classroom guidelines for the school year. "Do Unto Otters" perhaps teaches the most basic, yet most important rules in life: how to treat others.

**Genre:** animal and nature, contemporary fiction

**Point of view:** first person

**Theme:** manners, the Golden Rule - do unto others as you would have others do unto you

**Conflict:** A family of otters moves in next door to Mr. Rabbit. Mr. Rabbit is concerned that he may not get along with his new neighbors.

**Resolution:** Mr. Owl gives Mr. Rabbit wise advice to just follow the Golden Rule and he will get along fine with his new neighbors.

### **Characters:**

Mr. Rabbit - worried, reflective, smart, yellow, hairy, long feet, big pink eyes

Mr. Owl - wise, helpful, kind, big yellow eyes, wearing a suit and tie, small feet, large head, beak

Otters - polite, respectful, funny, well versed in other languages, tall, thin, hairy, tails, big blue eyes

**Setting:** This story takes place in a forest where Mr. Rabbit and the otters live. Mr. Rabbit's home is in a tree while the otter family lives in the river close to the tree. This story happens during the daytime just after the new neighbors, the otters, move to the forest.

**Interest and Reading Levels:** ages 4-8, 2.4 reading level

**Booktalk:** What if you got a new neighbor either at your house or here in the classroom? What would he/she be like? Would you get along? Well, in the story "Do Unto Otters" that is just what happened to Mr. Rabbit. A new family of otters moved in and he doesn't know anything about otters. Mr. Rabbit is worried since they are so different that they may not get along. In this wonderful book, you will learn all the ways you can be sure you will get along with others. The characters are funny and will help you never have to worry again about getting along with a new friend or neighbor!

### **Discussion Questions:**

**Pre-reading:** What if a new neighbor moved in or sits by you? How will you ensure you'll get along?

**Pre-reading:** What is the Golden Rule? Have you heard of that?

**Post-reading:** What is one way you have shown one of the good manners mentioned in the story to a classmate or friend?

**Post-reading:** Now, have you heard of the Golden Rule? What is it?

Pages 3-4 How is Mr. Rabbit feeling?

Pages 5-6 What might happen if Mr. Rabbit and the otters don't get along?

Pages 7-8 Why is Mr. Rabbit making so many different faces?

Pages 9-10 Describe the relationship Mr. Rabbit probably had with Mrs. Grrrrrrr.

Pages 11-12 Why did the otter say "Pretty please with CARROTS on top?"

Pages 13-14 Do you know any other way to say thank you?

Pages 15-16 How might you feel if you got interrupted?

Pages 17-18 Why would there be pictures of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln on the Honesty page?

Pages 19-20 Have you shown patience like one of the ways the otters show?

Pages 21-22 How might Mr. Rabbit and the otters cooperate in the forest?

Pages 23-24 Which is the most important rule for playing fair? Why?

Pages 25-26 Do you notice anything about the titles of the books the characters are holding?

Pages 27-28 Why do the otters look sad on page 28?

Pages 29-30 How do apologizing and forgiving go together?

Pages 31-32 Was Mr. Owl right? Is it simple to get along?

## Language/Vocabulary:

Page 9 eye contact - looking directly at someone in the eyes

Page 11 language - different ways of speaking depending on culture

Page 15 interrupting - to talk while someone else is talking

Page 18 considerate - caring about others, thinking of others

Page 21 appreciate - to be thankful for something

Page 29 apologize - to say you are sorry

## Academic Standards:

### Language Arts

K.2.3, K.3.3, K.4.3, K.5.1

1.2.7, 1.2.3, 1.5.5

2.2.2, 2.2.5, 2.2.6, 2.5.6, 2.5.7

3.2.2, 3.3.3, 3.5.5, 3.5.7

### Science

K.4.1, K.4.2

1.4.2, 1.4.1, 1.4.4

2.4.2, 2.4.4

3.4.1

### Social Studies

K.2.4, K.5.1

1.2.3, 1.2.4, 1.2.5, 1.2.6, 1.5.3, 1.5.4

2.2.4, 2.5.1, 2.5.2

3.5.1

## **Anticipation Guide:**

Students will fold paper in half and number it one to 5. Read the following statements and have students mark A for agree or D for disagree. The same questions will be answered on the other side of the paper at the conclusion of the story.

- Meeting new people is great.
- It is important to play fair some of the time.
- The Golden Rule means doing whatever you want.
- You should always be considerate.
- It is not possible for very different people to get along.
- Making friends takes a lot of work.

**Art Medium Used:** Laurie Keller did an amazing job with her illustrations using acrylic paint on watercolor paper. The characters and setting are cartoon-like and remind the reader somewhat of an animated film. The illustrations pull the reader in and clearly explain the lessons presented in this wonderful story.

# If You Like "Do Unto Otters" by Laurie Keller,

## You Might Also Like:

(The following is a list of other books that teach manners such as honesty, playing fair, be considerate, forgiving, accepting others differences, and kindness - these would be great reads throughout the school year to continue to reinforce the lessons presented in "Do Unto Otters")

- "Chocolate-Covered-Cookie Tantrum" by Deborah Blumenthal (throwing a tantrum)
- "Clifford's Manners" by Norman Bridwell (being polite)
- "No Excuses! How What You Say Can Get in Your Way" by Wayne W. Dyer (kind words)
- "The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners" by Jan and Stan Berenstain (being polite)
- "Where the Wild Things Are" by Maurice Sendak (throwing a tantrum, consideration)
- "Toby's Please and Thank You" by Cyndy Szekeres (kindness, being considerate)
- "What Do You Say, Dear?" by Maurice Sendak (variety of manners)
- "Cookies: Bite-Size Life Lessons" by Amy Krouse Rosenthal (variety of manners)

## Across the Curriculum Connections:

**Social Studies** - standards 2.2.4, 1.2.6, K.2.4, 3.5.1

Students will read a variety of biographies about famous Americans. (grades K - 1 can have them read to them). While reading, students will record a list of admirable character traits of that person such as fairness, honesty, trustworthiness. They will then get with their partner and trade books to read. After partners have read each other's book, the original reader of the book will share his list of character traits. Partners will concur and/or make changes to the list as necessary. The original reader will then select one quality and write a short paragraph about this famous American, the trait, and how the trait was demonstrated by this person citing examples from the book. (Students could complete a web prior to writing to help with organizing thoughts) Students will conference with the teacher and then write the final draft complete with an illustration of the person. These will be compiled into a classbook or could be displayed in the room.

Resources needed: age appropriate biographies of famous Americans, pencils, paper, art supplies

**Science** - standards 2.4.2, 1.4.2, K.4.2, 3.4.1

Students will read and research forest habitats. As they read they will complete the questions below. Once complete, students will create a diorama of a forest habitat including plants and animals found in that habitat. Students will also write a brief description of the habitat.

Resources needed: science books, books about forest habitats, possibly already printed out internet research, paper, pencil, art supplies, shoe boxes, construction paper

# Forest Habitat

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Look through your science book and several other books from the front table. Complete this paper as you go. You may also use the internet to find some information.

1. Animals in a forest \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Plants in a forest \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Where are some forests located in the United States? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. In a forest, what might someone:

Hear? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

See? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Smell? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Feel? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rubric for forest habitat:

- \_\_\_\_\_ habitat has at least 3 animals found in a forest
- \_\_\_\_\_ habitat has at least 2 plants found in a forest
- \_\_\_\_\_ habitat reflects research that was done
- \_\_\_\_\_ habitat is neatly done and on time

## **Book Activities:**

**Activity #1:** individual assignment

Standard 2.5.6, 3.5.5, 1.5.5, K.5.1

After listening to "Do Unto Otters" and discussing the good manners that were taught in the book, students will write and illustrate about a time when they or someone they know displayed one of these good manners. Students will "draw" one of the manners (from the book) that is listed on a slip of paper out of a bag. They will think of a time when they either did or observed or even could do this good manner.

Students will then illustrate and write two or three sentences about this time. These could be shared out as a class and could be displayed in the room as a reminder of the Golden Rule or compiled into a classbook. (I personally like to create enough classbooks that by the end of the year, each student gets to select one to take home!)

Resources needed: good manners from book written on slips of paper, paper, art supplies

**Activity #2:** group assignment(3-4 students)

Standard 2.5.7,3.5.7, 1.5.5, K.4.3

Students will select or be assigned one of the manners from the story. It will be the group's job to create a script and short "filmstrip" to act out the good manner in action. (The filmstrip is created by cutting a baggy down each side, opening it flat and then connecting other baggies like the first one to it. Students then use permanent markers to illustrate the pictures - I don't let them put words other than the title on the filmstrip - their words come in their script and are orally shared. I also require them to do a rough draft on paper first of their pictures. You then slowly pull the baggies across the overhead and it colorfully shows up on the screen. The kids LOVE this!) Students will work collaboratively to create the script and filmstrip.

Resources needed: baggies cut along the sides, permanent markers, paper, pencil

Rubric for filmstrip and script:

- \_\_\_\_\_ all members of the group contributed
- \_\_\_\_\_ the filmstrip is complete with pictures that reflect the script
- \_\_\_\_\_ the script describes the assigned good manner in action
- \_\_\_\_\_ the group orally tells the script while showing the film
- \_\_\_\_\_ all work is neatly done

## **Bibliography:**

Indiana Academic Standards, <http://www.doe.state.in.us>

Laurie Keller, <http://www.lauriekeller.com>

Barnes and Noble, <http://barnesandnoble.com>

Children's Literature Comprehensive Database, <http://clcd.odyssey.com>

Amazon Books, <http://www.amazon.com>