

"Stick"

Written and illustrated by: Steve Breen

Dial Books for Young Readers - 2007

About the Author and Illustrator: Steve Breen is a well renowned editorial cartoonist. He earned the Pulitzer Prize in 1998 for editorial cartooning. Just recently has he stepped into the realm of authoring children's book with his hit, "Stick" Breen attended the University of California where he worked for the school paper doing editorial cartoons. He was about to become a high school history teacher when Asbury Park Press offered him a job in 1994 in their art department. Breen worked there until returning to his hometown of San Diego, CA and began working for the San Diego Union-Tribune as an editorial cartoonist. This is where Steve Breen continues to work. His comics are nationally syndicated and run in prestigious papers such as the New York Times, USA Today, and Newsweek. In 2007 Breen won the Berryman Cartoonist of the Year award. He is married to wife, Cathy, and they have two sons.

Author's Homepage:

Steve Breen does not have an official webpage. He currently works as an editorial cartoonist for the San Diego Union-Tribune.

Publisher's webpage:

Dial Books for Young Readers, a division of Penguin Young Readers Group <http://www.penguin.com/youngreaders>

Other children's books written by Steve Breen include:

This is Breen's first children's book. However he has created his own comic strip called "Grand Avenue" that runs in over 150 papers nationwide.

Annotation: Steve Breen hits one out of the park on his very first try at a children's book with "Stick". This young, playful frog wants to catch dinner on his own without his mother's help. We can all identify with wanting to step out on our own as did young Stick. He is quite the little daredevil as he haphazardly travels from place to place on such objects as a horse, a balloon bouquet, a car, and an airplane all just trying to catch his food, a dragonfly.

Finally Stick is dropped onto a dock and finds himself very much alone after his wild adventure. Now another adventure awaits young Stick: how to get back home to his mother.

Breen, a famous editorial cartoonist, does an amazing job with the illustrations in this book. They are done with watercolor and acrylic paints as well as colored pencils. The pictures are animated and draw the reader right into the setting. The bird's eye view that most of the pictures are from give the reader a sense of really being in all those places travelling right along side Stick.

This is a story of adventure, courage, luck, and realizing that sometimes you don't need to even leave home to realize what you want most of all.

Genre: animal and nature, contemporary fiction

Point of view: third person

Theme: frogs, curiosity, independence

Conflict: Stick wants to catch his own food, a dragonfly, but his tongue gets stuck to it and he is whisked away on a crazy adventure.

Resolution: Stick finally lands and a pelican scoops him up and returns him to his home pond and his mother.

Characters:

Stick - clever, daring, curious, mischievous, small, green, white belly, large black eyes

Stick's mother - caring, worried, surprised, loving, green, large, white belly, large black eyes

Dragonfly - determined, strong, blue, pink wings, large green eyes

Pelican - helpful, kind, resourceful, smart, large wing span, white, thin legs and neck, beak

Setting: This story takes begins in a pond habitat near breakfast time. The story then progresses through places such as a town, a larger city (New Orleans - jazz), through the country, and finally to the ocean by evening.

Interest and Reading Levels: ages 4-8, 1.5 reading level

Booktalk: Wouldn't it be so neat if you could fly? You could travel anywhere and see everything as if you were a bird. Wouldn't it be neat if you were independent and could do things on your own? What would you want to do? Well, in the book "Stick" you will meet a young frog much like yourself who wanted to do things on his own and ended up going on a wild adventure through the sky. You will love the pictures and feel like you are on this adventure with young Stick as you turn each page. Let's get going!

Language/Vocabulary:

Page 4 lunchtime - noon, the time you eat lunch

Page 7 farther - a distance

Page 10 jazzy - type of music typically played with horns

Page 20 motorcycle - type of vehicle with two wheels with a seat in between

Page 25 seagull - type of bird typically found near the ocean

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, 1.2.6

2.2.10, 2.2.6, 2.5.6

3.2.2, 3.3.3, 3.5.5

Science

K.4.1, K.4.2

1.4.2, 1.4.1, 1.4.3 1.4.4

2.4.2, 2.4.3 2.4.4

3.4.2, 3.4.3

Social Studies

K.3.1, K.3.2

1.3.2, 1.3.3, 1.3.4

2.3.1, 2.3.5, 2.3.4, 2.3.2

3.3.3, 3.3.1

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.

- I like to try new things on my own.
- Going on an adventure on my own would not be fun.
- Frogs are smart creatures.
- I would like to see things from a bird's eye view.
- I would ask for help if I needed to.
- A pond would be a great place to live.

Art Medium Used: Steve Breen used watercolors and acrylics along with colored pencils to create the amazing illustrations in "Stick". He drew on his cartoonist background to make the pictures somewhat animated. Breen so easily draws in the reader with his comfortable and convincing illustrations. Very few words are needed in this text as the illustrations do most of the work of conveying the storyline.