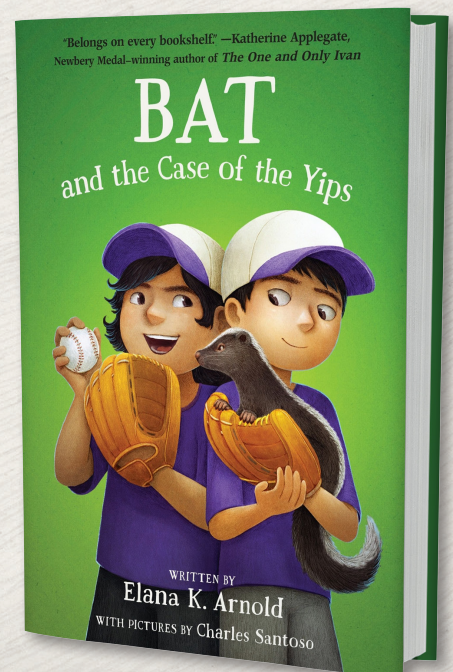
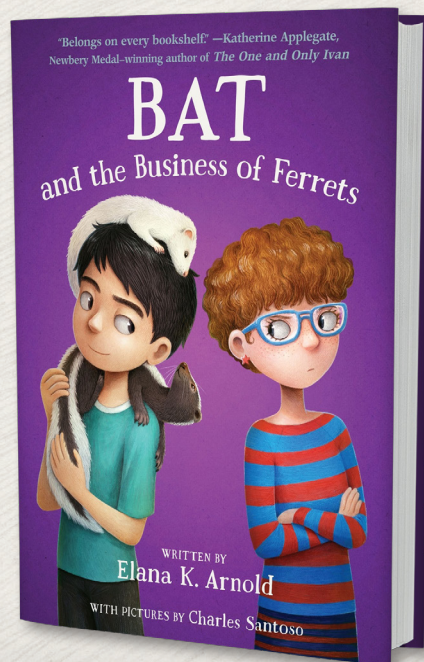
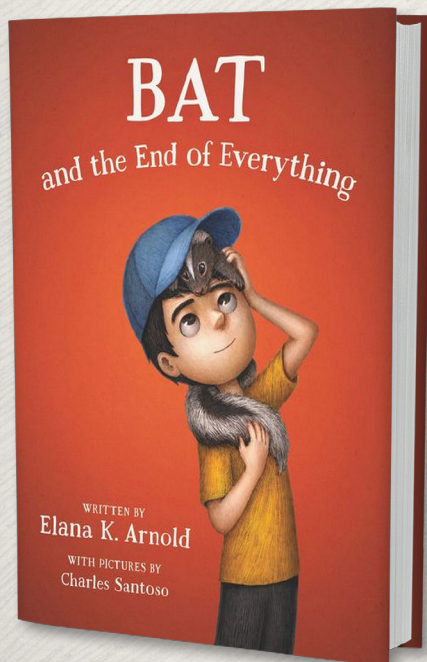
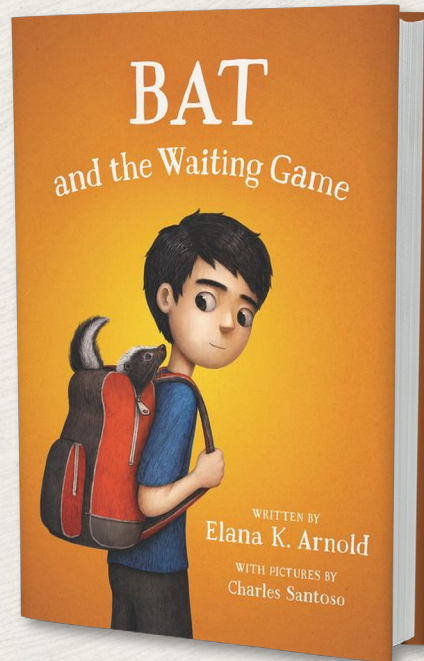
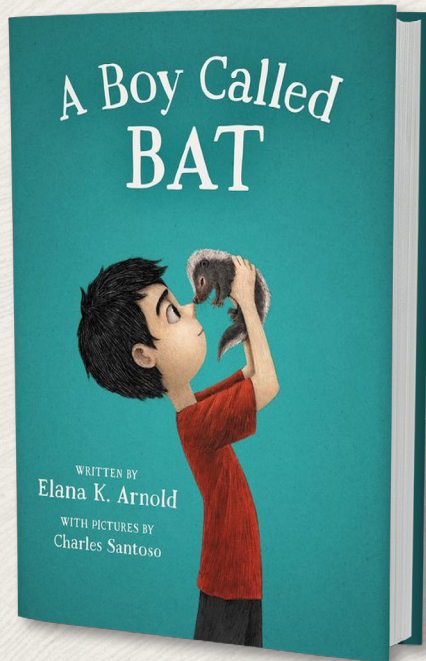


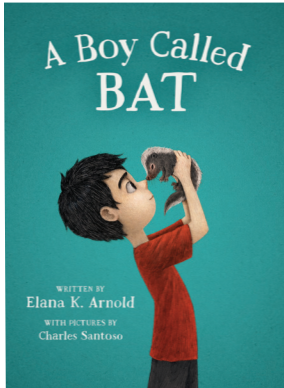
The BAT Series

Educator's Guide



A BOY CALLED BAT

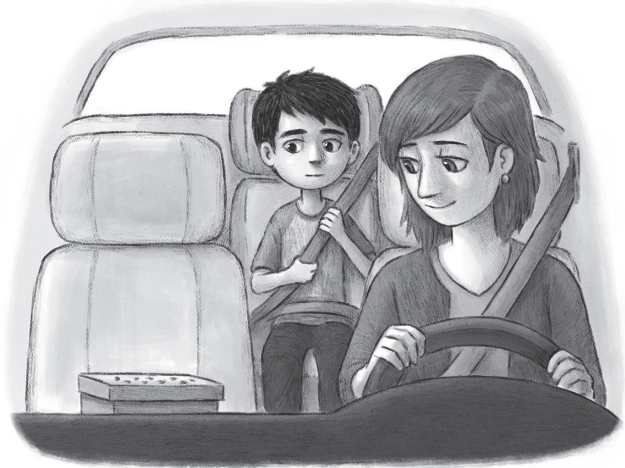
About the Book



For Bixby Alexander Tam (nicknamed Bat), life tends to be full of surprises—some of them good, some of them not so good. Today, though, is a good surprise day. Bat's mom, a veterinarian, has brought home a stray baby skunk, which she needs to take care of until she can hand him over to a wild animal shelter. But the minute Bat meets the kit, he knows they belong together. And he's got one month to show his mom that a baby skunk just might make a pretty terrific pet. Written by acclaimed author Elana K. Arnold and filled with drawings by Charles Santoso, *A Boy Called Bat* is a story of first friendship—the first book in a new series starring an authentic, unforgettable autistic character.

Discussion Questions

1. At the beginning of the book, it is established that “Bat’s room was his favorite place in the whole world. In his room, Bat felt completely comfortable” (p. 6). What room are you completely comfortable in? Why?
2. Bat’s teacher Mr. Grayson has an “open-door Babycakes policy” in his classroom. What does that mean? How does Bat feel about Babycakes?
3. Think about your five senses. What are some things that Bat likes? What are things Bat does not like? Do you think some of Bat’s senses are more sensitive than yours? Less sensitive? The same?
4. How does Bat feel about experiencing the sights, sounds, and smells of the clinic compared to when he is at school? Why do you think it is easier for Bat to be at the clinic than at school?
5. Although Bat has difficulty understanding the emotion in a facial expression, he understands other body language well. The book states, “Bat didn’t know much about eyes. But he knew about hands. . . . Israel’s hands told Bat that Thor would be safe” (p. 186–187). How does he know he can trust Israel with Thor?
6. Even though Bat and Israel don’t understand how to interact with each other well, they eventually become friends. How does their shared interest in animals help? How does Mr. Grayson help?

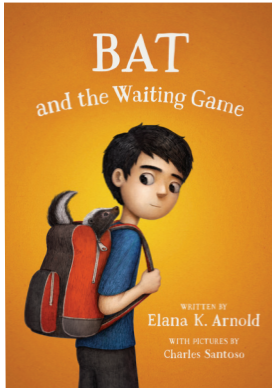


This Educator's Guide was created by Sara Hoagland Hunter, Ed.D. She is the author of ten books for children, including the award-winning *Every Turtle Counts* about the rescue of a rare sea turtle by a seven-year-old on the autism spectrum. Find her online at sarahunterproductions.com.

This Educator's Guide was reviewed by Elizabeth Bartmess, a writer and autistic advocate. Find her online at elizabethbartmess.com.

BAT AND THE WAITING GAME

About the Book



For Bixby Alexander Tam (nicknamed Bat), life is pretty great. He's the caretaker of the best baby skunk in the world—even Janie, his older sister, is warming up to Thor. But when Janie gets a part in the school play, it means some big changes. Someone else has to take care of the skunk kit in the afternoons and Bat has to go to a new place after school. Why can't everything just stay the same? Bat can't wait for Janie's play to be over!

Acclaimed author Elana K. Arnold follows her popular first book, *A Boy Called Bat*, with the second book in this delightful series about a boy who loves animals, his family, and having a best friend but who struggles with everyday challenges. Bat's autism makes learning facts easier than making friends. As famed animal scientist and autistic

advocate Temple Grandin once put it, "Autism made school and social life hard, but made animals easy."

Through the support of his parents, teacher, and best friend, Bat is learning to see the world through the eyes of others. The lessons along the way, punctuated by the charming pictures of Charles Santoso, are tender and true.

Discussion Questions

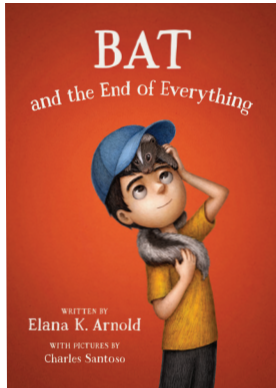
1. When Bat visits Israel's house for the first time, he gets anxious because the tastes, sights, sounds, and smells of a new place are too much for him to take in all at once. Israel brings Bat to his mom's pottery studio when he sees Bat is upset. Do you think this will make Bat feel better? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever felt overwhelmed after going somewhere new? If so, describe what happened and how you reacted. Did you find a good way to make yourself calm?
3. During a baseball game, "[Bat] looked out across the field, not trying to keep track of the players or the score. Instead he tried to melt a little, like the cotton candy, and just be happy to be right there at the game with his dad" (p. 88). When Bat's father explains what he loves about baseball games, Bat relaxes for the first time that evening. He no longer feels impatient. What does he learn?
4. Janie's point of view is shown when Bat makes the decision to bring Thor to her performance in a musical at school. Think about this situation from Janie's point of view. Write a journal entry as if you were Janie after her big moment was spoiled by Bat's decision to bring Thor to the play.
5. Bat learns to put aside some of his own wishes in order to be a better friend and kinder family member. What are some other scenes where Bat shows his social and emotional skills? Describe and discuss.
6. At the beginning of the book, Israel gives Bat a clay sculpture of Thor. Why is this little lumpy clay skunk so special to Bat? What is an object that is special to you?

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This Educator's Guide was reviewed by Elizabeth Bartmess, a writer and autistic advocate. Find her online at elizabethbartmess.com.

BAT AND THE END OF EVERYTHING

About the Book



Bixby Alexander Tam (nicknamed Bat) has been the caretaker for Thor, the best skunk kit in the world, but the last day of third grade is quickly approaching, and Thor is almost ready to be released into the wild.

The end of school also means that Bat has to say goodbye to his favorite teacher, and he worries about the summer care of Babycakes, their adorable class pet. Not only that, but his best friend is leaving for a long vacation in Canada. Summer promises good things, too, like working with his mom at the vet clinic and hanging out with his sister, Janie. But Bat can't help but feel that everything is coming to an end.

Discussion Questions

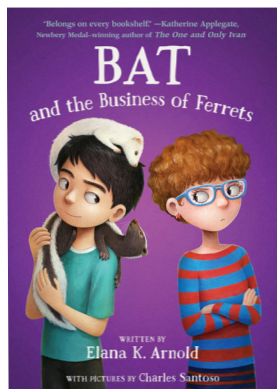
1. Bat and Janie have very different reactions to meeting Dad's friend Suzette, who Janie understands to be their father's new girlfriend. These different reactions illustrate their different points of view. Why is Bat so confused by Janie's reaction?
2. Throughout the novel, Janie is angry with Dad for inviting Suzette along for their time together, and Bat is confused and unhappy as well. One big part of emotional intelligence is sharing those feelings to solve problems, rather than stomping off. Another is being able to apologize when you've done something wrong. How does talking about her feelings help Janie? Why is it important for Dad to apologize?
3. How do Bat, Janie, and Dad come to an agreement at the end about their Every-Other-Weekend and Suzette? Do you think that's a fair agreement for everyone? Why or why not?
4. When Jenny and her grandmother bring a sick Babycakes to the veterinary clinic in the summer, Bat first thinks that it wasn't a good idea to let Jenny take the rabbit home for the summer. Read pages 100 and 101 and find three pieces of evidence that Jenny is taking good care of Babycakes. How does this evidence change Bat's mind about Jenny and Babycakes?



This Educator's Guide was created by Lyn Miller-Lachmann, MLIS, MFA, an author, translator, and teacher who writes books about young people on the autism spectrum.

BAT AND THE BUSINESS OF FERRETS

About the Book



Third grade is over for Bixby Alexander Tam (nicknamed Bat), and he's starting a new school year. His fourth grade teacher, Mr. Peña, is nothing like Mr. Grayson. His desks are arranged in groups of four rather than rows . . . and he has no class pet! There's no furry animal friend for Bat to hold, as he did in his third grade class whenever he was upset.

When Bat's veterinarian mother receives a box with ferrets, Bat thinks the deaf white ferret, Ghost, is the perfect class pet. But Mr. Peña won't budge and classmate Lucca is taking the teacher's side!

Bat and the Business of Ferrets is the long-awaited fourth Bat book from Elana K. Arnold about an unforgettable animal-loving boy on the autism spectrum.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. New school years usually mean new teachers and classrooms set up in different ways. How does your teacher this year do things differently from your teacher last year?
2. Many classrooms have class pets. What are some class pets that you've seen? What are some good reasons for a classroom to have a pet? Why might a class pet be a problem for a classroom?
3. A group of ferrets is called a "business." What would you think this book is about if you didn't have that prior knowledge? Why do you think ferrets as a group have been given the name "business"?
4. Bat tries to convince his classmates and teacher to get a class pet. How have you tried to convince someone—a family member, teacher, classmate, or friend—to do something you'd like to do? What ways of persuading others have worked well, and what ways didn't work so well?



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BAT AND THE BUSINESS OF FERRETS

Discussion Questions

1. Both Bat and his older sister, Janie, are starting a new school year. This means big changes for both of them. What are the changes that each one is facing? Why does Bat think his changes are a bigger deal? Who do you think is facing the biggest change and why?
2. When Bat goes to Mr. Grayson's room to see Babycakes on the first day of school, he notices that Mr. Grayson is "wearing a new ring, a silver band on his thumb" (p. 18). Why doesn't he ask Mr. Grayson about the ring or how his summer went? How do you think this makes Mr. Grayson feel?
3. When Bat's classmate Lucca arrives, he tells her she can't sit in the seat that has her name on it. Do you find it hard to believe that he doesn't recognize her? Why or why not?
4. Both Bat and Janie have had hard first days at school. Why do you think Bat wants to talk about what went wrong, while Janie doesn't? What would you be most likely to do if you had a bad day?
5. On page 82, Bat tells Israel and his father, "Animals who are predators are way friendlier than prey animals . . . and more playful, too." Why is that the case? How do we see those differences in the ways Thor and Babycakes behave? Do you agree with Bat's statement based on animals you have observed?
6. Why does Bat think Ghost being deaf would make her an especially good class pet? Why would an animal with white fur and deafness have an especially hard time surviving in the wild where Bat lives? Where might a white-coated animal have an easier time surviving in the wild and why?
7. Israel suggests that Bat make up a petition for the entire class to sign, stating that they want to adopt a class pet. What is a petition, and why is it a good way for a person or group to convince someone to do something that they want?
8. According to Bat, why does Lucca keep refusing to sign the petition for the class pet? Why, in fact, does Lucca not want the class to get a pet? Who do you agree with more on the class pet question, Bat or Lucca? Why?
9. At dinner one night, Janie tells Bat, "Don't be such a try-hard" (p. 134). How are both Bat and Janie acting like try-hards in the story? Why does Bat think being a try-hard is a good thing? According to Janie, why is being a try-hard a bad thing? Using examples from your own life, who do you agree with most, and why?
10. Mr. Grayson says that Bat and Lucca have a lot in common. He also tells Bat, "Sometimes it's easy to miss the ways people are alike, when you're focused too closely on the things that are different" (p. 144–145). How are Bat and Lucca alike? How does Bat first attempt to use that knowledge to approach Lucca? Why does that first attempt fail, and what does he do differently in order to succeed? Have you ever made friends with someone because you noticed that they were like you?

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ACTIVITIES

Animal Groups and Their Names

Bat was a fan of the names given to different groups of animals. Some of his favorite animal group names included: a shrewdness of apes; a conspiracy of lemurs; and, of course, a cauldron of bats. There was one group name he really didn't care for: a stench of skunks (p. 49–50).

Research each of the animals in the above selection and the meaning of their names. In a sentence or two, explain why each name may have been chosen. Find the group name for another animal that you think is interesting and describes that animal as well. In another sentence or two, explain your choice.

Badgered

On page 87, Israel tells Bat, “But people don’t really like being badgered into doing things.” The word “badgered” is drawn from the animal world. Find out what this word means and what it has to do with the badger. Then choose another action word that is drawn from the name of an animal. Write the definition of the word, explain what it has to do with the animal, and use the word in your own sentence.

The Animals’ Stories

Bat and Lucca imagine a family of goldfinches talking to each other. Together, they make up a story from the birds’ point of view:

Here came the mother bird, with more seeds. The chicks got loud and bossy-sounding again, as if they were saying, “Hurry up, hurry up, what took you so long?” It wasn’t a pretty-sounding song. . . .

Then, in a funny, high-pitched voice, Lucca said, “Feed me first! You fed him last time!”

She was doing a bird voice! “No fair!” Bat said, making his voice squeaky. “I’m hungrier than she is! You should give those seeds to me!” (p. 184–185)

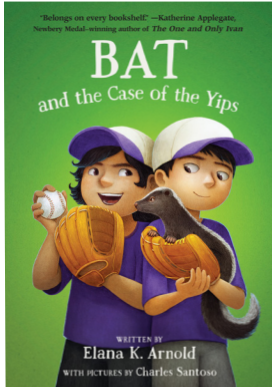
Alone or with a partner, observe some animals doing things with each other. Imagine what they are saying to each other. Write a story using the animals you have watched as the main characters.

Advice for Bat

Bat needs your help! It seems that every time he tries to talk to someone, he makes that person angry or upset. It’s not just Lucca. There’s also Janie, Dad, Mr. Peña, and even Israel. Write a letter to Bat giving him advice on how he can solve his conflict with either Janie, Dad, Mr. Peña, or Israel. How can he make that other person “feel understood” (p. 190)?

BAT AND THE CASE OF THE YIPS

About the Book



Bat doesn't always love Every-Other-Weekends at his dad's apartment—mostly because Dad won't let him bring his pet skunk, Thor. He just doesn't seem to understand Bat the way Mom does. But now Dad says Bat can bring Thor—if he joins the baseball team Dad is coaching. Bat's best friend, Israel, has already signed up. Bat agrees, but soon begins to believe that being on a team is not for him—and wonders if there's some way to get out of playing baseball while not breaking his agreement with Dad. All he needs is the right plan...

Thus begins the fifth book in Elana K. Arnold's award-winning series about an unforgettable animal-loving boy on the autism spectrum—a story about friendship, discovery, and what it means to be part of a team.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Israel thinks playing on the baseball team will be fun, but Bat doesn't agree. What activities do you think are fun? What activities are fun to your sibling or your best friend? How are your choices alike, and how are they different?
2. Have you ever made an agreement with a family member or friend to do something and then wished you hadn't? Why were you sorry you made the agreement? How did you resolve the problem?
3. Bat feels pressured to play baseball for the team his father coaches. Why might it be challenging to play for a parent or other family member who is the coach?
4. The book is titled *Bat and the Case of the Yips*. Athletes are said to get the yips when they suddenly lose an important ability for no clear reason. Why do you think it's called this funny word, "yips"? Who do you think will get the yips and why?



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BAT AND THE CASE OF THE YIPS

Discussion Questions

1. On pp. 24-25, we discover one big thing that makes “Every-Other-Weekends hard for Bat.” What happens at that moment that causes Bat to think about how hard Every-Other-Weekends are? Why does he find it so upsetting? According to what Bat tells Mr. Grayson earlier in the day, what is the very worst thing about Every-Other-Weekends, and why? Which of Dad’s rules and actions would you think is the biggest problem, if you were in Bat’s situation?
2. On p. 29, Dad says, “...if I want you to do something big for *me*, like joining the team... maybe I should be willing to do something big for *you*.” Why might this kind of deal seem fair in general? How might it turn out not to be a fair deal? How does Bat respond to Dad’s offer and why? If you were giving Bat advice, how would you tell him to respond?
3. When he gets home from his dad’s apartment, Bat tells Mom and Janie about the deal he made with his dad. Why is he disappointed by their reaction? Is Mom and Janie’s advice similar to or different from the advice you would have given Bat? If it’s different, have Mom or Janie convinced you to change your mind?
4. Why does Israel want to be part of the team even though he has never played baseball before? Why is Ezra helping out with the team? What other reasons did kids give for why they signed up? How are these reasons different from Bat’s reason for signing up?
5. Page 63 explains: “It wasn’t that Bat didn’t like presents. It was more that the presents made him feel Dad wanted Bat to be...not *Bat*. Like the presents were for someone else. Or maybe that Dad wished Bat would *be* someone else.” Give examples of the kinds of presents Bat has received from Dad that make him believe this. Why does Bat have such a hard time explaining this feeling to Israel? Have you ever felt this way about certain presents that other people have given you? Why?
6. Why is Bat’s team called the Veterinarians? What does the team name tell you about Mom’s feelings about baseball and about Bat joining the team? Given that she warned Bat about making the deal with his father, why do you think she decided to do this?
7. After the Veterinarians’ first game, “[t]here was one good thing Bat had discovered. Playing in a baseball game was at least a little more interesting than when Dad took him to watch one” (p. 103). Why does Bat find playing in the game more fun than watching? Why might some people prefer watching a game to playing in one?
8. The word “empathy” describes a person’s ability to understand the feelings of someone else. How does Bat feel when his sister, Janie, comes home crying from middle school? How does he show his empathy? Give an example of how someone showed empathy when you were upset. How did their action make you feel?
9. When Bat reads about athletes catching the yips, he thinks it will be easy for him to play poorly and make mistakes. Is he right? Why might it be harder to play poorly than to play well?
10. Page 174 states, “There was a word for that feeling, of wanting two opposite things at the same time. Mom had told him what it was: *ambivalence*. ...If there was a word for it, that meant other people felt it, too.” Give an example in the story when Bat feels ambivalent. How does he resolve this feeling? Describe a time when you felt ambivalent about something important.

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ACTIVITIES

Smells and What They Mean

Scientists have noticed a close connection between smells and feelings. This is certainly true for Bat, who finds some smells calming and others upsetting:

The worst were things that smelled like chemicals; most of the stuff that people rubbed or sprayed onto their bodies gave Bat a headache. (p. 27)

One good thing about the hardware store was the way it smelled. Like fresh-cut wood. Just inside the door, Bat stopped to take a deep breath. It reminded him of Christmas trees. (pp. 27-28)

Think of a smell that you associate with a place, a feeling, or a memory; it can be a good one or bad one. Write a poem about the smell in which you describe it and what it means to you.

A Venn Diagram of Bat and His Parents

Throughout the story, Bat compares himself to his parents and has decided which one he shares the most with. However, events in the story lead him to change his mind. Make a Venn diagram with big circles for Bat in the center, his mother on one side, and his father on the other. Fill out each of the circles, showing how Bat is similar to or different from each of his parents, with the similarities in the overlapping circles. With a different color pen or pencil, add the things Bat discovers he has in common with his father by the end of the novel.



About the Author

Elana K. Arnold is the award-winning author of many books for children and teens, including the Sydney Taylor and National Jewish Book Award winner *The Blood Years*, the Printz Honor winner *Damsel*, the National Book Award finalist *What Girls Are Made Of*, and the Global Read Aloud selection *A Boy Called Bat*. She lives in Long Beach, California, with her husband, two children, and a menagerie of animals. You can find her online at elanakarnold.com.

Famous Autistic Athletes

Bat enjoys doing research on topics he's interested in, like taking care of animals and getting out of having to play on the baseball team while still being able to bring Thor to Dad's apartment. Now it's your turn to bring research! Bat is autistic and also very good at playing baseball. And there are many other athletes at the top of their sport who are also autistic. Research the life of one of those athletes. When did they find out they were autistic? What sport do they play? How does being autistic help them? What are the challenges of being autistic in their sport? Some examples of autistic athletes are Joe Barksdale, Lucy Bronze, Jenson Brooksby, Jim Eisenreich, Anthony Ianni, Clay Marzo, Billy Mayfair, Safia Middleton-Patel, Tony Snell, and Natasha Stasiuk.

Things You're Good At and Things You Like to Do

"Hey Bat," Jenny said, crunching on a long, peeled carrot. "How come you've never played rec league baseball before? You're really good!"

Bat shrugged. "Just because you're good at something doesn't mean you want to do it." (p. 84)

Make a list of three to five things you think you're good at, and another list of three to five things that you enjoy doing. With a partner, take turns sharing your lists and talk about the following: Are the things you're good at and the things you like to do the same? If you like to do something that you're not good at, how could you become better at it? Do you want to become better at it? If there's something you're good at that you don't like to do, how could you make that activity more enjoyable?

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