

"... the story is utterly
immersive."

*BlueInk Review, **starred review***

"... the beauty of
nature with the fun
of fantasy...will
enthrall young
readers."

Mike O'Connor

Why Do Bluebirds Hate Me?

Claire may be "an odd
bird" but no more
than her friends!



Grades 4 to 6
HC: 979-8985028102
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Classroom Activity Guide

About the Book . . .

Birds carry a message for Claire that she doesn't understand.



Eleven-year-old Claire doesn't tell anyone of her uncanny power to attract birds. She is a devoted birder, home schooled in the woods of central Pennsylvania, who discovers she's part of a local legend, one involving a Red-tailed Hawk. The hawk saved her as a toddler; now it's her turn to save the hawk.

P.K. Butler is a Pennsylvania-based author of children's books. Her middle grade trilogy ***Of the Wing*** has earned editorial praise, with *An Odd Bird* showcased in *Booklist Magazine* as an "exceptional independently published title."



Pre-Reading Activities

Divide the class into small groups or pairs. Assign a particular question or all questions to each group.

1. Based on the title and cover illustration, what might this book be about? (Think like a detective; look for details in the illustration.)
2. Read the book summary on the back cover. Can you imagine another possible illustration or title?
3. Scan the chapter titles in the table of contents. Share with your group the titles that look most interesting to you. Explain why you like them.
4. Take a few moments to read the first paragraph, which ends with the question: *Who—or what—am I?* This is a strange question . . . Take a guess on what it might mean.
5. Claire thinks that birds can answer her question. Why does she think so? (Hint: Skim the second paragraph and/or read the book summary on the back cover to get ideas.)

Reading/Writing/Speaking Activities

Become a Storyteller!

Every six chapters or so, divide the class into small groups. Have each student take his or her turn to tell those in the group the story of one chapter. Students can prepare for storytelling by beginning a journal in which they summarize the main events and characters in each chapter.

Sample Journal Entry



Chapter 1: Hawk

Claire walks with her dog Sammy in the woods, but he runs off. She sits down to wait for his return and then sees a hawk! The hawk grabs a snake from the ground and looks right at her. Claire calls as a Barred Owl for Sammy to return. He does but neither notice an old man sitting beneath a tree. The old man watches them while stroking his beard.

These journal entries will aid student recall of the story and prepare them for the relevant writing assignment **Claire Encounters a Bird** (see farther below).

Engage in the Story

Keep a Bird List

Claire is a birder, a person who likes to see, hear, and identify birds. Birders typically keep a list of all the birds they see or hear in the outside world. You can become a birder, too! Start a list of the birds you already know. Then, keep a list of the birds that Claire and her friends see and hear during their outdoor adventures. You can research these birds online to find out more about them.

<u>My Bird List</u>	<u>Claire's Bird List</u>
American Robin Blue Jay American Crow Northern Cardinal (If you don't know these birds, ask your family and friends and research them online. Then look for these birds outside.)	Red-tailed Hawk Barred Owl (Add to this list as you read each chapter).

Writing from Experience

Write Your Own Story



Students have acquired much experience with the book *An Odd Bird*. They began this journey by anticipating the story and talking about it. Now they are reading and writing about it in their journals. No longer mere "readers" of the story, students have become participants of it by engaging in activities pursued by the main characters.

Claire Encounters a Bird

Students will write a scene of about 150 words where Claire encounters a bird. Choose a bird appropriate to the season or a year-round bird like a blue jay or cardinal. Tell students that they can base their story on their own encounters with birds, or they can create an entirely new story.

Be sure to stress the importance of "setting the scene." See examples below.



Possible scene openers . . .

On a sunny afternoon after school, Claire and Sammy went into the woodland to look for birds. . . .

Claire watched the bird on the roof from her bedroom window. . . .

On a dreary Saturday afternoon, Claire and Victor were sitting by the pond when they heard a rattle-like bird sound. . . .

(If you like this opener, you'll need to find out what bird makes a rattle-like vocalization. **Note:** this would be a bird who feeds in water. Pose this question in Google; you're sure to get an answer!)

Students can use these openers or make up their own. These are simply samples to get them thinking.

Post-Reading Activities

Students have finished reading *An Odd Bird*, but is the story over? Ask students what they think. Whatever their responses, remind them that this book is the first in a trilogy, which means that the story continues through two more books (*The Hawk's Message* and *The Shining Swan*.) Suggest, then, that this means certain story elements remain "open."

Conclude discussion of *An Odd Bird* by asking the class to identify plots in the story that require further development. Offer various examples of plots that as yet have no closure:

Claire's relationship with Jerry . . . with
Ku-Khain . . . with Victor . . . with Billy.

Ask students what they need or want to know about these characters, their relationships, and their futures.

Finally, contact me if you need further direction or assistance. I am also happy to make Zoom visits to your classroom or provide pre-recorded sessions specifically for *your* class. These are free services. Email me at . . .

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and/or visit my website . . .

<https://www.pkbutler.com>

AN ODD BIRD

Hummingbird or hawk, birds find Claire Belle irresistible. In fact, they seek her out as if summoned. The question is why? The eleven-year-old searches for answers with the help of two new friends: Victor, a boy who rides her school bus, and Jerry, an old man who roams the forest with his pet chicken. Through their friendship, Claire awakens to an almost mythical hawk who holds the secret of her destiny as a champion for birds.

Be sure to read all three books in the trilogy
OF THE WING



*An Odd Bird was originally published under the title *The Legend Awakes* (2008, 2010). This edition represents a significant reimagining of that original story.*

Learn more about the trilogy and its author at www.pkbutler.com