

# Joe and Sparky

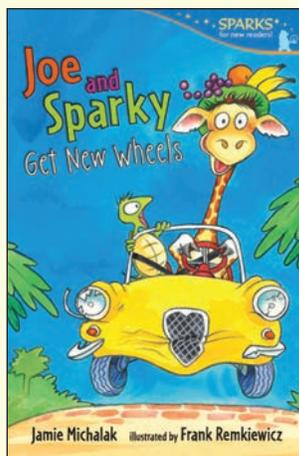
Jamie Michalak  
illustrated by Frank Remkiewicz

## ACTIVITY GUIDE

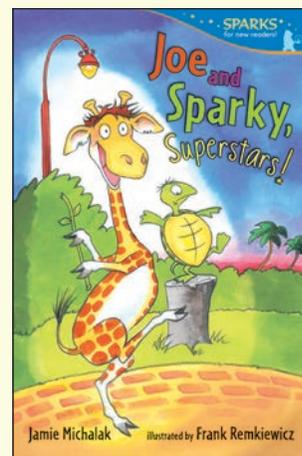


### About the Series

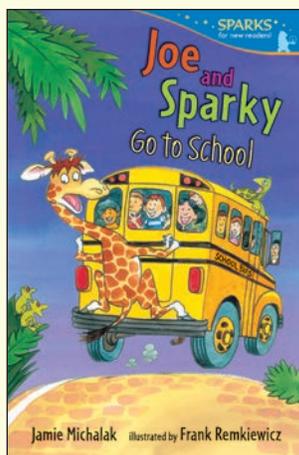
Joe and Sparky are a very unlikely pair of best friends. Sparky is a timid turtle who likes to stay inside his shell on a rock in his pond. Joe is a giraffe who likes to stretch his neck to see the world. Even though they live in a famous cageless zoo, they manage to find excitement and adventures both near and far—much to the chagrin of safety-conscious Sparky. Young readers will love reading about this zany odd couple in a string of adventures that are by turns innocent, charming, wacky, and laugh-out-loud funny.



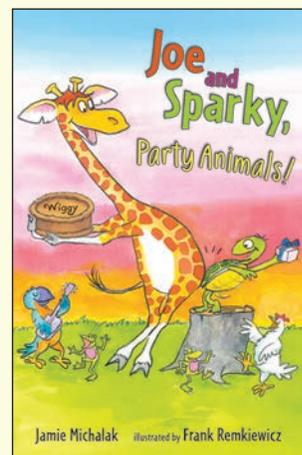
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### Common Core Connections

Aligned to the K–4 Common Core State Standards, this guide can be used as a learning resource in classrooms, at libraries, for book events, or by parents to extend and reinforce the educational aspects of reading the Joe and Sparky books.



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# Wild Discussion Questions

## Series Questions

1. Joe and Sparky are best friends, but they are very different. Compare and contrast their personalities, characteristics, and outlooks on life.
2. All the books in the series begin and end with the same few sentences. Why do you think the author does this? Do you like the fact that all the stories have this common element? Why?
3. How do the illustrations in the books add to the story?
4. What is your favorite Joe and Sparky book? Point out scenes in the story that contribute to making it your favorite.
5. Joe and Sparky live in a cageless zoo called Safari Land. How does this zoo help Joe and Sparky go on their adventures?



## Joe and Sparky Get New Wheels

1. What was the first big prize that Joe thought he won? Why did he think he had won it? How do you know he didn't really win it?
2. Make a time line depicting Joe and Sparky's road trip. Be sure to label each place they went to. Write a few words or draw a picture about what happened at each place.

## Joe and Sparky, Superstars!

1. What was the small box that Joe and Sparky saw through the window? Who were the people in the box? Why did Joe and Sparky think the people were talking to them?
2. List the talents that Joe made Sparky try. What one-of-a-kind talent did Sparky find out he has?



## Joe and Sparky Go to School

1. How did Joe and Sparky end up at school? Why didn't Miss Hootie notice they were not her students?
2. List three ways Joe tried to get a star from Miss Hootie. How did he get a star in the end?



## Joe and Sparky, Party Animals!

1. Who is Wiggy? Why does Sparky think he doesn't exist? How do you know he is real?
2. Who was the uninvited guest at Wiggy's party? How was this scene an example of humor in writing?

# Vibrant Vocabulary

Review this list of vocabulary words found in the Joe and Sparky books. First, ask students if they can guess the words' meanings by rereading or hearing each word in the context of the story. Then, as a group, use a dictionary to check the students' guesses. After all the definitions have been established, have students use each word in a sentence of their own. Teachers can also use this word list for daily word study or spelling exercises.

## *Joe and Sparky Get New Wheels*

announced	hubbub
average Joe	purchases
contest	road trip
continued	stumpy
familiar	suggested
gatekeeper	watering hole
halt	

## *Joe and Sparky Go to School*

absent	scowling
clump	slowpoke
confused	solved
crooked	squinted
greeted	whirling
peeped	whooped

## *Joe and Sparky, Superstars!*

balancing	pair
copy	speed bump
disaster	stretched
grumbled	talented
host	

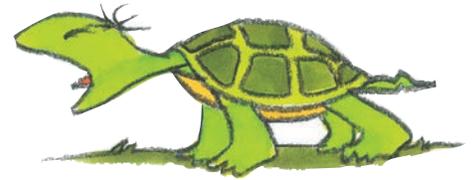
## *Joe and Sparky, Party Animals!*

conga line	skydiving
grooved	surprise
necktie	tango
nervous	uninvited
rotten	

# Adventurous Activities

## Funny Times Two

The Joe and Sparky books help young readers develop their reading fluency and comprehension skills. They're a great starting point for getting beginning readers to think about words and expressions, especially when it comes to phrases that have puns or double meanings. Talk about how this language is used throughout the series, then assign students to groups. Have each group reread a Joe and Sparky book together to find examples of humorous words or phrases. Invite students to share their findings with the class. Finally, take a class vote to find which pun or double meaning they find the funniest.



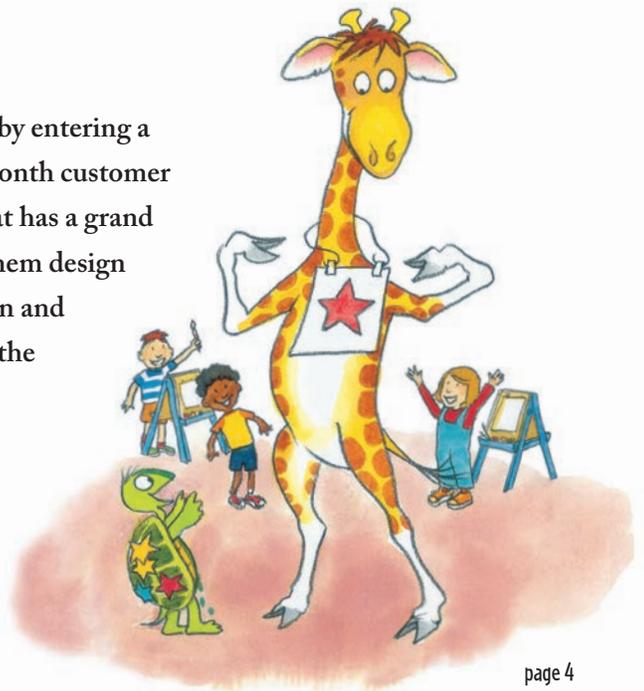
## Mapping Safari Land

Safari Land, the famous cageless zoo where Joe and Sparky live, is a very unique zoo. As a class, invite students to recall as many facts about Safari Land as they can. Make sure they use examples from the text to back up their answers. Then have them draw maps depicting the way they think Safari Land is laid out. Before they start, discuss the need for zoos to have maps so that visitors know where things are located. Show an example of a zoo map (you should be able to find one online). Point out the map's key and discuss its importance. Have students be sure to create a key for their map to help people identify different animals, locations, and points of interest. Invite them to share their maps with the class.



## And the Winner Is . . .

In *Joe and Sparky Get New Wheels*, Joe thinks he won a big prize by entering a contest. Later, he really *does* win a prize when he is the one-millionth customer at a store in the mall. Ask students to come up with a contest that has a grand prize they think either Joe or Sparky would want to win. Have them design a poster for the contest that explains how to enter and how to win and shows the grand prize. Hang the posters up so everyone can see the exciting contests.



# Adventurous Activities

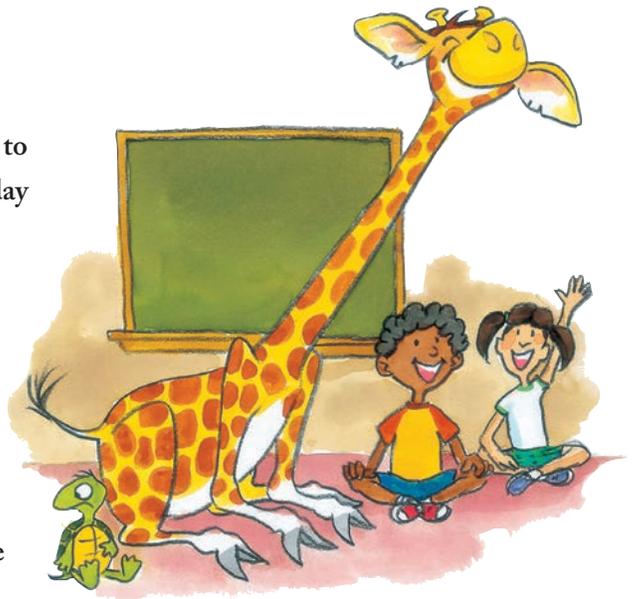


## Lights, Camera, Action!

In *Joe and Sparky, Superstars!*, Joe helps Sparky try to find his talent, which turns out to be making shadow puppets. Have your students put on their own puppet show depicting scenes from the books, but with paper-bag puppets instead of shadows. Divide students into small groups and have each choose their favorite Joe and Sparky adventure. Ask them to make paper-bag puppets of Joe and Sparky, create appropriate scenery for their backdrops, and write short scripts containing Joe and Sparky's dialogue. Finally, have each group bring their show to life through a puppet performance for everyone to enjoy.

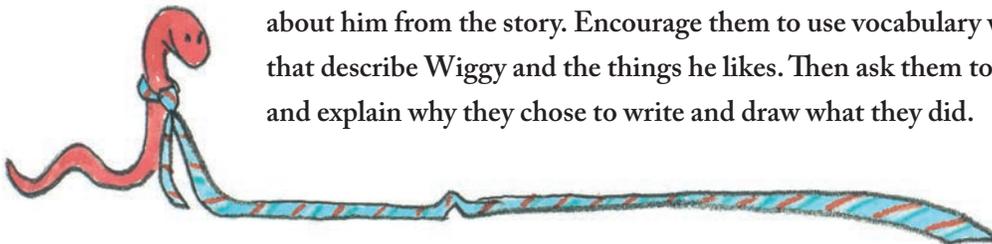
## School Days

In *Joe and Sparky Go to School*, Joe and Sparky accidentally get stuck in Miss Hootie's classroom for a day. Ask your students to brainstorm what it would be like if Joe and Sparky spent the day in your classroom. What kind of silly situations would they get into? What would be their favorite part of the day? Why? How would things be different from a regular school day? How would Joe and Sparky act during different subjects? Then ask students to write a story titled "The Day Joe and Sparky Came to My School." Make sure they begin and end their stories the same way as the Joe and Sparky books, and encourage them to make their stories funny. Invite students to share their stories with the class.



## Surprise!

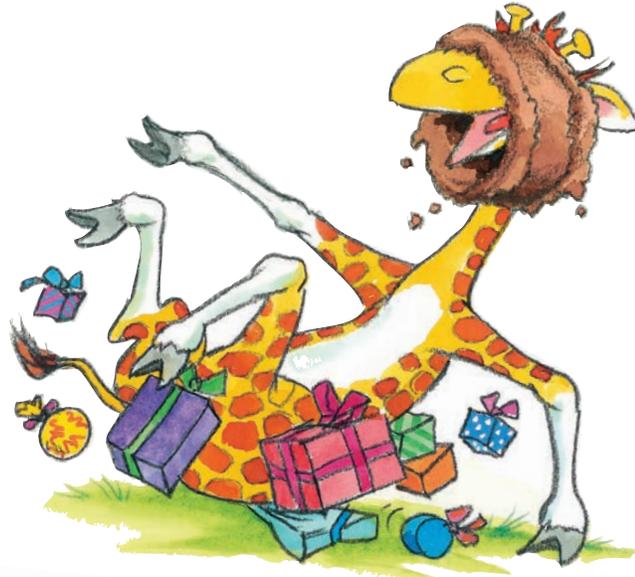
In *Joe and Sparky, Party Animals!*, Joe throws a surprise birthday party for his pet worm, Wiggy. Have your students create birthday cards for Wiggy using information they learned about him from the story. Encourage them to use vocabulary words, phrases, and drawings that describe Wiggy and the things he likes. Then ask them to share their cards with the class and explain why they chose to write and draw what they did.



# Adventurous Activities

## Funny Tales

Joe and Sparky are always up to something that makes readers laugh! Ask your class to share their favorite Joe and Sparky adventures. Then take a vote on which one the class thinks is the funniest. Make a chart of the students' favorite antics. After tallying up the totals from the chart, have kids make a graph that is a visual representation of Joe and Sparky's funniest adventures.



## A Trip to the Zoo

Ask students if they have ever been to a zoo. Talk about their experiences and how real zoos differ from one another and from Safari Land. Then, either individually or in small groups, have students research a real zoo online. Instruct them to list things such as the animals housed at the zoo, its historical milestones, and any special attractions or events it holds. Then have each student write a narrative about how he or she would spend a day at that zoo.

# Joe and Sparky's Time-ly Adventures

Name \_\_\_\_\_

You can use **time words** to help recall and retell a story. Think about your favorite Joe and Sparky adventure. Then retell the story using the time words below. Finally, draw pictures of the adventure in order in the correct spaces.

First, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Next, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

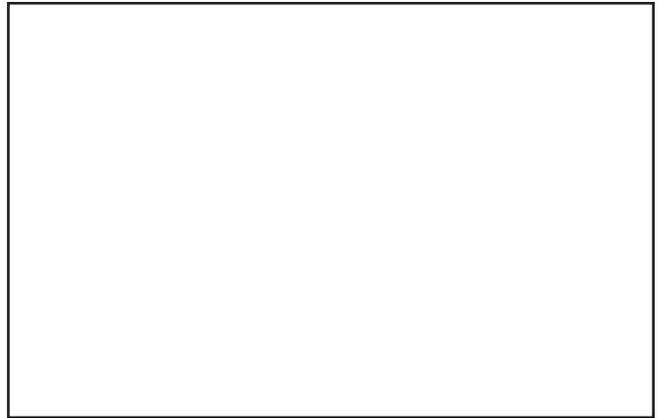
After that, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Finally, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**First,**



**Next,**



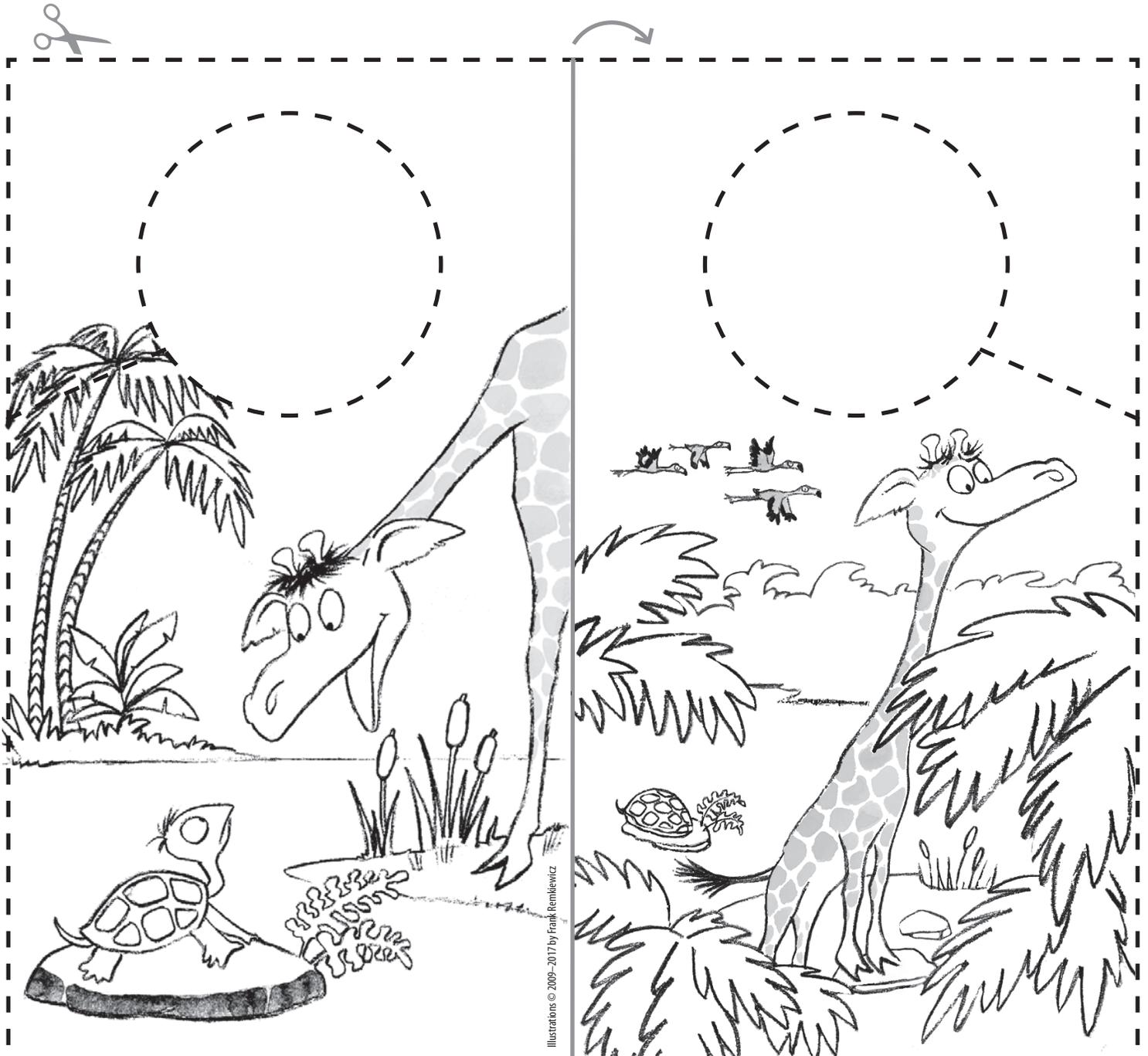
**After that,**



**Finally,**



# Joe and Sparky Doorknob Hanger



I'm ready for my  
nice warm rock!

I'm ready to  
see the world!

# About the Author and Illustrator

The Joe and Sparky series is written by Jamie Michalak and illustrated by Frank Remkiewicz. Both author and illustrator work hard to bring your favorite giraffe and turtle duo to life.

## About the Author



**Jamie Michalak** is a children's book author and editor. When not writing, she can often be found singing off-key, drinking too much coffee, or hanging out with her two sons. Jamie Michalak was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, and grew up in the same neighborhood where Dr. Seuss once lived. She now lives with her family in Barrington, Rhode Island.

## About the Illustrator



**Frank Remkiewicz** is an award-winning illustrator (and author) of more than one hundred books for children. His other books with Candlewick Press include *Piggy and Dad*, *Piggy and Dad Play*, and *Piggy and Dad Go Fishing* by David Martin. Frank Remkiewicz lives on the Gulf Coast of Florida with his wife, Sylvia.

### Common Core Connections

The discussion questions and activities in this guide address the following Common Core State Standards in Language Arts for kindergarten through grade 4:

#### Common Core State Reading Standards for Literature:

RL.K.1–5, 7, 9–10; RL.1.1–4, 7, 9–10; RL.2.1, 3–5, 7, 10; RL.3.1, 3–5, 7, 9–10; RL.4.1–4, 7, 10

#### Common Core State Reading Standards for Foundational Skills:

RF.K.1–4; RF.1.1–4; RF.2.1–4; RF.3.1–4; RF.4.3–4

#### Common Core State Writing Standards:

W.K.2–3, 5–8; W.1.1–3, 5–8; W.2.1–3, 5–8; W.3.1–4, 6–8, 10; W.4.1–10

#### Common Core State Speaking and Listening Standards:

SL.K.1–6; SL.1.1–6; SL.2.1–6; SL.3.1–6; SL.4.1–6

#### Common Core State Language Standards:

L.K.1–2, 4–6; L.1.1–2, 4–6; L.2.1–2, 4–6; L.3.1–6; L.4.1–6

