

MESSING around on the MONKEY Bars

and other School Poems for Two VOICES



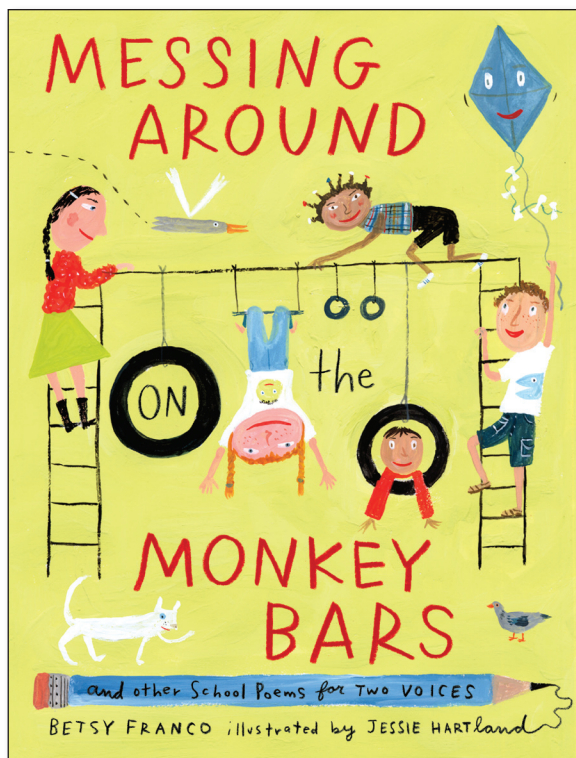
by **BETSY FRANCO**
illustrated by **JESSIE HARTLAND**



CLASSROOM TIPS

Want to use *Messing Around on the Monkey Bars* in your classroom?
Here are some suggestions from author Betsy Franco.

First, a general note: Always remind kids that their own poems do not have to rhyme.
The important thing is to have fun with sounds, words, and their imagination!



Messing Around on the Monkey Bars
and Other School Poems for Two Voices
ISBN 978-0-7636-3174-1

GETTING STARTED

As a warm-up exercise, invite kids to write poems based on some examples in the book. Here are some possible assignments:

- “Whirr, Whirr, Zing, Zap” (page 20): Take a few moments to listen to all the sounds in your classroom, then write a similar poem.
- “Jump Rope Jingle” (page 29): Add to the jingle.
- “Backboard Rap” (page 30): Add to the poem.
- “Weird Stuff in the Lost and Found” (page 32): As a class, find out what’s in your own school’s Lost and Found. Add those items to the poem. (Special bonus: In the process, students might find something they’ve lost!)
- “Back in the Room for the Afternoon” (page 36): Think of objects in the classroom to add to the poem.





SOUNDS GOOD

Many of the poems in the book use sounds, including “Wild Bus Ride” (page 8), “Jenny’s Pencil” (page 12), “In the Library” (page 16), and “Whirr, Whirr, Zing, Zap” (page 20).

Spend a week focusing on sounds with your class:

- Create a list of sound words with your students and post it in the classroom.
- Ask kids to listen to the natural world and then write about what they have heard.
- Encourage your students to consciously add sound words to stories and poems they write.

Then invite your class to write three-line “sound poems.” This is a form Betsy Franco made up; it’s similar to a haiku but focuses specifically on sounds and doesn’t involve any syllable counting. One of the lines should consist of sounds. Here are some samples written by third graders in California:

The class writing haiku
ts ts ts ts ts ts
pencils scraping against the paper
—Jon

hiss snap! hiss snap!
silently swaying in the leaves
a snake is camouflaging beneath the moon
—Annie

COMIN’ TO LIFE

Ask kids to find all the book’s examples of personification, instances where objects come to life, as in “Wild Bus Ride” (page 8), “Anatomy Class” (page 18), and “Back in the Room for the Afternoon” (page 36). Then invite them to imagine what an object in the classroom (or elsewhere) might have to say and write a poem in the object’s voice.

As an extra challenge, invite kids to imagine a conversation between two objects, as in “Two Bikes at the Bike Rack” (page 42). You could have kids write their conversation poems in pairs, then read them aloud to the class in two voices.

LIST-EN UP!

Have children find all the list poems in the book. Examples include “Animal Reports” (page 14), “Weird Stuff in the Lost and Found” (page 32), and “Me and Joe Lining Up After Recess” (page 34). Then have them brainstorm some ideas for lists—a list of favorite foods or favorite activities, a list of what’s in their pocket or desk—and invite them to create their own list poems. As an extra challenge, have them think about how their list poems might work for two or more voices.

For example, if a student’s poem is a list of favorite activities, it could be read aloud in two voices and so become a conversation between two kids discussing what to do after school or on a Saturday afternoon.



SUBLIME RHYME TIME

Find some fun examples of rhyming words in the book. Some can be found in "Animal Reports" (page 14), "I Can't Wait" (page 22), and "Back in the Room for the Afternoon" (page 36). Then tape a long roll of paper to the wall and work with the class to brainstorm pairs or groups of unusual rhyming words.



Invite students to use some of the rhyming words in a poem—or to write a poem using some other funky, fun rhymes. Again, invite them to think of how their rhyming poems might work for two or more voices. For example, one student could read the even verses and the other could read the odd verses. Or students could write choruses for their poems.

ACROSTICS

Invite students to write acrostic poems about objects at school. Here's an example that is not in the book:

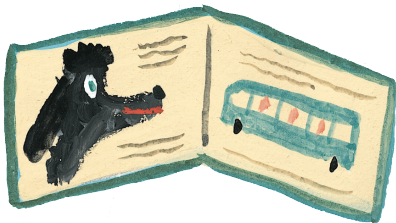
Pointy
Energetic
Nibbled on
Curve drawer
Illustrator
Line maker

A fun way for students to read their acrostics aloud in multiple voices would be to have a different voice for each line, then have the group read the acrostic word aloud at the end. (If the acrostic object is small, such as a pencil, they could each have one behind their back and present it at the end when they read the word.)



BOOK IT

Have students put their poems into a book. Or make books of all the kids' poems from different assignments, such as a book of sound poems or acrostics.



PUT ON A SHOW

Invite kids to present their poems to another class or to the school. This will encourage reading, fluency, cooperation, and performance skills.

Or stage a poets' café in your classroom. Have students dress up and read their poems aloud. Serve refreshments, and invite another class or parents to hear the kids' work.



Author **Betsy Franco** has worked as a teacher and author-in-residence with a school in Palo Alto for many years. She also leads poetry workshops for students and programs on teaching poetry for teachers.