

A  
BIRD  
WILL SOAR

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Discussion Questions and Activities  
for Writing, Poetry, Science, Math, and Art



### A Bird Will Soar

By Alison Green Myers

Cover art by Madeline Kloepper

9780593325674 | Middle Grade (8-12)

Dutton Books for Young Readers

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### ABOUT THE BOOK

Axel loves everything about birds, especially eagles. No one worries that an eagle will fly too far and not come home—a fact Axel wishes his mother understood. Deep down, Axel knows that his mother is like an osprey—the best of all bird mothers—but it’s hard to remember that when she worries and keeps secrets about important things. His dad is more like a wild turkey, coming and going as he pleases. His dad’s latest disappearance is the biggest mystery of all.

Despite all this, Axel loves his life—especially the time he spends with his friends observing the eagles’ nest in the woods near his home. But when a tornado damages not only Axel’s home but the eagles’ nest, Axel’s life is thrown into chaos. Suddenly his dad is back to help repair the damage, and Axel has to manage his dad’s presence and his beloved birds’ absence. Plus, his mom seems to be keeping even more secrets.

But Axel knows another important fact: an eagle’s instincts let it soar. Axel must trust his own instincts to help heal his family and the nest he loves.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alison Green Myers is a writer and educator who has served as a classroom teacher, literacy coach, curriculum writer, and school director. She is the Program Director for the Highlights Foundation, a National Writing Fellow, and an active member of the Society of Children’s Books Writers and Illustrators. Find out more at [alisongreenmyers.com](http://alisongreenmyers.com).



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Are there any parts of the book where you could see yourself, your family, your community, or your friends? Explain those parts of the book or explain why not.
- Were there any characters in the book that you would like to spend more time with? If, so, who? If not, why not?
- How did reading this book make you feel as a READER? Are there any moments in the book that stood out that made you feel like an expert?
- Go back and look at the chapter titles for chapters thirty-four & thirty-five, how do the titles work together to help tell what is happening in the story?
- Reread the poem “Forgiveness” (chapter forty) what do you think the single word is that the poem references? Why?
- Each chapter begins outside the narrative of the story by using a poem, an email, or an excerpt from A.P. Brown’s *Collection of North American Birds*. Why do you think these details were added to the story?

## WRITING

### POETRY

- Using “Rescue II” as a mentor, write a poem of dialog from a rescue or activity in your life.
- Using “Enemies I,” “Pasta-palooza,” and/or “Dear Frank” as mentors, write a list poem about your fears, passions, family, or a pet.
- Using “After” as a mentor, write a poem that shows opposites in nature or opposites in your family.
- Select another poem of your choice from the book to use as a mentor and write any poem that comes to mind.

### NARRATIVES

- So much happens around Emmett and George’s big, round dining room table. Write a personal narrative that is set at a table where you have eaten a meal. This might be at home, school, a friend’s house, a restaurant... You pick the place and tell us what happened during this meal. (If you need a mentor, reread chapter nineteen and/or chapter thirty-one.)
- Axel enjoys finding quiet spaces to think. One of his favorite places is the quiet of the forest. Some people think better with busy backgrounds. Where does your brain think best? Quiet, noisy, somewhere in between, or somewhere completely different? Write about your best thinking spot: where is it? What do you think about when you are there?



### ALTERNATE ENDING

- After Ray and Axel go on their “adventure” near the end of the story, it is discovered that Axel has missed something important. Write a scene where Axel DOES NOT miss this important activity with Dr. Martin, Lark, the eagle, and his family. How would this change the outcome of the story?

## S.T.E.A.M. EXTENSIONS

### SCIENCE

- Axel knows a variety of birds by their physical features, instincts, and adaptations. Research a bird of your choice and make a list of physical features, instincts, and adaptations that you discover.
- Reread the excerpt “Dreaming” (chapter thirty-three). Select an animal of your choice. Investigate what we know about that animal’s dreaming and/or sleep cycle.
- Instincts are an important part of the book. Create a wordsplash with your class of all of the instincts that you know are part of the natural world. Put a star near any that are unique to humans.
- Reread the shape poem “Braviary” about the eagle’s life cycle. Investigate another animal’s life cycle and create a shape poem to share.

### MATHEMATICS

- Make a chart that includes the wingspans of several different birds. Order your data from the bird with the longest wingspan to the shortest.

### ART

- A theme in the book is to trust your own wings! Cut a pair of wings from sturdy paper. Fill the underside of your wings with all of your best qualities. Ask a friend or trusted adult for help if you need more qualities. Decorate the top side of your wings.
- The front and back covers of the book show a “bird’s eye view” of what is seen flying over part of the property near Axel’s cottage. Can you create a map with a “bird’s eye view” from a location you know well?

## COMPANION BOOKS TO *A BIRD WILL SOAR*

These books pick up threads that you can find in *A Bird Will Soar*: birds, nature, found family, finding your voice, trusting your instincts, and understanding who you are in your family.

### PICTURE BOOKS

#### *We Are Grateful*

By Traci Sorell and Illustrated by Frane Lessac  
Charlesbridge

#### *Beauty and the Beak: How Science, Technology, and a 3D-Printed Beak Rescued a Bald Eagle*

By Deborah Lee Rose and Jane Veltkamp  
Persnickety Press

#### *The Wisdom of Trees: How Trees Work Together to Form a Natural Kingdom*

By Lita Judge  
Roaring Brook Press

#### *A Beach Tail*

by Karen Lynn Williams and illustrated by Floyd Cooper  
Boyd's Mills Press

#### *You Nest Here with Me*

By Jane Yolen and Heidi E. Y. Stemple, illustrated by Melissa Sweet  
Boyd's Mills Press

### MIDDLE GRADE

#### *The Someday Birds*

By Sally J. Pla  
HarperCollins

#### *The Stella Díaz series*

By Angela Dominguez  
Roaring Brook Press

#### *A Boy Called Bat*

By Elana K. Arnold and illustrated by Charles Santoso  
Walden Pond Press

#### *The Bridge Home*

By Padma Venkatraman  
Nancy Paulsen Books

#### *A Soft Place to Land*

By Janae Marks  
Katherine Tegen Books

#### *Fly With Me: A Celebration of Birds through Pictures, Poems, and Stories*

By Jane Yolen, Heidi E.Y. Stemple, Adam Stemple, Jason Stemple  
National Geographic Kids

#### *The Science of Breakable Things*

Tae Keller  
Random House Books for Young Readers

### ADULT

#### *Devotions: the Selected Poems of Mary Oliver*

Penguin Publishing Group

#### *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*

Robin Wall Kimmerer  
Milkweed editions

#### *Diary of a Young Naturalist*

By Dara McAnulty  
Ebury Press

#### *Birds Art Life:*

#### *A Year of Observation*

By Kyo Maclear  
Scribner

