



**Minnesota Storytime
Reading Guide**

Title: *Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems*

Author: Joyce Sidman

Illustrator: Beckie Prange

**Publisher and
Copyright Date:** Houghton Mifflin Children's Books, 2005

**Connection to
Minnesota:** Minnesota author, Minnesota illustrator, Minnesota setting

Summary: This is a collection of poems that looks at animals, insects, and plants found in ponds, with accompanying information about each. Beginning with the first spring peepers and ending with a turtle burrowing in the mud, this book follows the seasons of the pond through the eyes of its inhabitants.

Suggested ages: 4-6, 7-10

Tips for Reading:

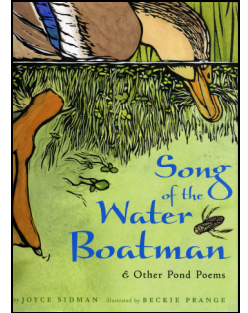
- Select several of the eleven poems in the book to read aloud.
- Have children identify what type of creature (bird, plant, insect, etc.) the poem is about before reading it.
- On each page are pictures of plants and animals common to Minnesota. Before reading each poem, ask if anyone recognizes them.
- Read the nonfiction note after poem.
- Encourage audience participation in reading repeating refrains, as in "Depths of the Summer Pond" and "Song of the Water Boatman."

**Questions
before reading:**

- This is a book about pond creatures. Think about ponds for a minute. What plants and animals do you think might be in this book?
- Have any of you ever been to a pond or lake? What were some sights, smells, & sounds there?
- What is a "water boatman"? With a name like that, what could it be?

**To Introduce
this story say:**

We're going to look at a book of poems about creatures that live in ponds. These creatures are ones that you might see here in Minnesota. The author has tried to imagine what life would be like from their point of view.



**Questions
After Reading:**

- Which creatures hadn't you heard of before? How might you be able to see them?
- What was the smallest creature? What was the biggest?
- Why is Minnesota home to a lot of these creatures?
- How do the illustrations show the passing of the seasons?

RELATED ACTIVITIES

Art:

- Look at the art in "Spring Splashdown" and note its unusual point of view. Try drawing something from an unusual point of view.
- Discuss how life is different for animals underwater. What do they eat? How do they breathe? Have children draw a picture that shows what animals would need to live under water.

Language:

- Review the glossary at the end of the book to discuss the words and their definitions.

Writing:

- Read "A Small Green Riddle" and have each child create a riddle, based on an animal or plant they choose.
- Read "Diving Beetle's Food-Sharing Rules" and each child write their own food-sharing rules, to be posted on their own refrigerator.
- Try writing a haiku about a natural object (shell, pinecone, feather, etc.).

Other:

- Think of other "food chains" and list the plants and animals in them.
- Take a group out to a pond, with buckets, field guides, magnifying glasses & notebooks. Have them scoop up pond water and try to identify the insects they find swimming.

**Suggestions for
English Language
Learners:**

- Talk to the children about insects and ponds in the children's home countries. How are they different? How are they the same?
- Have children draw a picture of a water source (pond, lake, river, well) from their native land, and the animals that inhabit it.

Related Books:

- ***Animals that Walk on Water*** by Patricia Martin, illustrated by Cathy Mania (Franklin Watts, 1997)
- ***A Child's Garden of Verses*** by Robert Louis Stevenson, illustrated by Tasha Tudor (Simon & Schuster, 1999)
- ***Down by the Cool of the Pool*** by Tony Mitton, illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees (Orchard, 2002)
- ***How to Cross a Pond: Poems about Water*** by Marilyn Singer, illustrated by Meilo So (Knopf, 2003)
- ***Earth Verses and Water Rhymes*** by J. Patrick Lewis, illustrated by Robert Sabuda (Simon & Schuster, 1991)
- ***Pond and River*** by Steve Parker, illustrated by Philip Dowell (Doring Kindersley, 2000)

