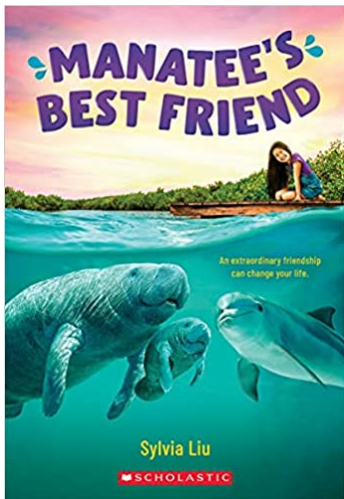


A Curriculum Guide for Educators & Readers



Discussion points, activities, and writing prompts to help educators use *Manatee's Best Friend* as a classroom read-aloud or as a selection for independent reading. Great for book clubs, too!

Sylvia Liu

Sylvia Liu is a children's author inspired by oceans, ghost crabs, and kraken. She grew up in Caracas, Venezuela, attended Yale College and Harvard Law School, and practiced environmental law for a decade at the U.S. Department of Justice and the nonprofit environmental group Oceana. Her picture book, *A Morning with Grandpa*, illustrated by Christina Forshay, was a New Voices Award winner. She lives in Virginia with her husband, two daughters, and cat.

This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a BA in English Education from Oswego State and a MA in Educational Theater from NYU. Marcie can often be found writing books of her own at home in San Diego, California. Visit her at www.thisismarciecolleen.com.

Guide content © Copyright 2021 by Marcie Colleen. Available free of charge for educational use only; may not be published or sold without express written permission.

Common Core Aligned for 3rd-7th Grades

3rd: ELA.RL.3.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; W.3.1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8; SL.3.1, 2, 3, 4
4th: ELA.RL.4.1, 2, 3, 4, 5; W.4.1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8; SL.4.1, 2, 3, 4
5th: ELA.RL.5.1, 2, 3, 4, 5; W.5.1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8; SL.5.1, 2, 3, 4
6th: ELA. RL.6.1,2,3,4,5,6,9; W.6.3a-e,4; SL.6.1a, 3,4,5; L.6.1,2,3
7th: ELA. RL.7.1,2,3,4,5,6,9; W.7.3a-e,4; SL.7.4,5; L.7.1,2,3

Before You Read...

1. Take a close look at the cover of *Manatee's Best Friend*. What do you see? Describe who you see. Can you guess what the story might be about? What clues can you find in the cover art to support your prediction?
2. Read the text on the back of the book. What do you learn from this blurb? What questions does it raise about the story?
3. List at least five statements about Becca Wong Walker. List at least five questions you would ask Becca.
4. Using all this information, can you make any predictions about what might happen in the book?

Chapters 1-4

1. Using chapters one through four as evidence, who is Becca Wong Walker? Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Becca, on a large piece of paper.
 - a. Write any known details about Becca inside the outline. Outside of the outline, discuss and write any questions about Becca that you might have.
2. We meet several characters, besides Becca, in the first four chapters. Choose three, based on who you think might be more important. Draw three outlines of human figures, which will represent each of the three characters, on a large piece of paper.
 - a. Using chapters one through seven as evidence, write any known details about each chosen character inside the outline. Outside of the outline, discuss and write any questions that you might have.
3. Who is Missy?
 - a. Why does Becca refer to Missy as her best friend?
 - b. What does Becca learn when Missy comes to visit in chapter one?
4. Pretend to be Becca and write one paragraph about manatees and why you like them so much.
 - a. Write another paragraph pretending to be Amelia. Discuss what you know about manatees and why you are excited about your science project.

- b. Write another paragraph pretending to be Deion. Discuss what you know about manatees and why you are excited about your science project.
5. Describe, in your own words, Becca's struggles with making friends. Why does she have difficulty?
 - a. What is Becca's first impressions about Amelia?
 - b. How does Becca feel about Amelia at the end of chapter four?
 - c. What is Becca's first impression about Deion.
 - d. How does Becca feel about Deion by the end of chapter four?

Making Connections:

Using chapters 1-4, make a list of all the facts about manatees that Becca shares.

Then, do your own research and learn more about manatees like Missy and Sunny.

Information to be gathered should include:

- What manatees eat
- Where they live
- Draw a picture of a manatee
- Write 3 words that describe a manatee
- Interesting fact #1
- Interesting fact #2
- Interesting fact #3

Once all the needed research is done, create a poster visual with all the necessary information and present your findings to the class.

If you were part of Becca, Amelia, and Deion's group in school, what would you suggest their manatee-themed science project be about? Why?

Chapters 5-8

1. What struggles are Becca having with the group project?
 - a. What consequences do Becca, Amelia, and Deion face if they do not pick a project for class?
2. What special guest does Becca see in the river along with Missy and Sunny?
 - a. Describe in your own words how this unlikely guest behaves toward the two manatees.
3. Amelia's mom says her philosophy on most things is "pair unusual things together, and you get something magical." Look at the following pairs and explain how something magical could come from them:
 - a. Becca and Amelia
 - b. The manatees and the dolphin
4. There is talk over dinner about development of the area of Florida that Becca and Amelia live. What are the pros and cons of such development according to this conversation? How do the following people react to this idea:
 - a. Becca
 - b. Becca's dad
 - c. Amelia's dad
 - d. Amelia's mom
 - e. Becca's grandma
5. How does Amelia act when her parents argue?
 - a. How do you think she feels?
 - b. How does Becca try to be a good friend to Amelia and help cheer her up?
6. What idea does Becca come up with for the project?
 - a. What does Ms. Amato tell Becca that sparks this idea?
 - b. Why is Becca hesitant to show anyone her videos of the manatees?

- c. How do both Deion and Amelia respond to Becca’s videos?
 - d. How does their response make Becca feel?
7. Becca calls herself a world-famous sociologist who is observing the behavior of twelve-year-olds. What do you think she is learning about kids her own age?

Making Connections:

“Pair unusual things together, and you get something magical.”

Becca, Amelia, and Deion are alike in some ways, but very different in others. Finding what you have in common with people who are different from you can be a good way to start a meaningful relationship. Here is a way to learn what you have in common with your classmates, while also celebrating what makes each of you different and unique.

Finding Commonalities and Differences

Materials: A pen and two pieces of paper.

- This activity can be done as a class or in pairs.
- On one sheet of paper, you will have ten minutes to come up with a list of things in common. Completely obvious answers such as “we both have hair” or “we are both in _____ class” are not allowed!
- After ten minutes, switch to the other paper. You now have ten minutes to come up with a list of things that are unique to each person.
- Share both lists with the class when finished.

Chapters 9-12

1. Becca makes two signs to let boaters and jet skiers know about manatees and the danger they face from fast traffic in the river. What do her signs say?

- a. If you were to make additional signs for Becca and Amelia to post, what would your signs say and how would you design them?
 - b. Create three sign designs to help protect the manatees.
2. Amelia, at first, doesn't want to ask her dad to take her and Becca up the river. She says, "I'll see what kind of mood he's in tonight." What are your impressions of Amelia's parents and her relationship with them, based on what you have read?
3. At the end of chapter one, Becca says, "I pushed back and nothing terrible happened." What does she mean by this? Explain in your own words, using evidence from the book to support your response.
4. Amelia's dad says, "My guests don't need to be pestered by environmental issues when they just want to relax." Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
5. Becca and Deion approach the two guys who are staying in Amelia's parents' rental house. Imagine you are the following characters and write about this interaction from their point-of-view:
 - a. Becca
 - b. Deion
 - c. Amelia
 - d. The guys
 - e. Amelia's dad
6. Explain in your own words the amazing moment that Becca witnesses at the water at the end of chapter twelve.
 - a. How do you think the video of this event will help the science project?

Chapters 13-16

1. What is Becca's concern about her dad's festival that he is planning?
 - a. Becca says her parents are "on the wrong side of the manatees." Explain in your own words what she means.
2. List some of the information that Becca, Amelia, and Deion learn at the wildlife sanctuary about manatees.

- a. How does Becca react to hearing about the toll road and the petition to help the manatees and other wildlife from the development? Why does she choose to take this action?
 - b. Do you think Becca was right in acting as she did? Explain your answer.
 - c. How do Amelia and Deion react to Becca's action?
3. What is Ms. Amato's response when she sees the viral video Becca uploaded online?
 - a. Why does Ms. Amato's response make Becca feel like she betrayed Missy and Sunny?
 - b. Becca doesn't want to talk to a marine biologist about the video. Why?
4. If you were Becca, would you delete the video and help the dolphin stay in the river? Or would you talk to the scientist and tell them the location of the dolphin so they can return it to saltwater? Explain your answer, using evidence from the text to support your opinion.

Chapters 17-20

1. List some of the pros and cons of Becca's video going viral.
2. How do the following characters react to Becca's video going viral:
 - a. Becca
 - b. Becca's dad
 - c. Amelia and Deion
 - d. Other kids at school
3. Amelia says that Becca "complicated everything" when she made the video viral. Do you agree? Explain your answer using evidence from the book.

Making Connections:

Becca seems to have trouble communicating to her parents, her teacher, and her friends about how she really feels and what she really wants.

Ask your students if they know what “persuade” means. If not, can they make any guesses?

Discuss:

- What it means to persuade
- Times you might want to persuade someone (e.g., persuade your parents to let not host a boating festival that might harm manatees, persuade your friends that it was a good idea to post a video without telling them.)

Writing to persuade tells the reader what you believe, gives the reader at least three reasons why you believe it, and has a good ending sentence. You want to try and convince the reader to agree with you.

Pretending to be Becca, write a persuading letter to another character in the book that is not understanding where you are coming from.

Use the following TREE structure:

T = Topic sentences

The topic sentence tells the reader what you think or believe. Example: I am writing to you because I believe strongly that _____.

R = Reasons

The reasons why you believe what you believe. Write at least two to four sentences giving three reasons. Use evidence directly from the text.

E = Ending

Wrap it up with a conclusive sentence.

E = Examine

Look closely. Do you have all your parts?

Share your essays with the class. Which is the most persuasive? Why do you think so?

Chapters 21-24

1. What are the many concerns that are bothering Becca as she kayaks with her grandma?
 - a. Does kayaking help Becca sort out some of her problems? How?
2. What do Becca, Amelia, and Deion plan to do at the city council meeting?
 - a. Why is Becca nervous about the city council meeting?
3. How does Deion help the new PSA video get views?
4. Becca says, "It turns out teamwork and having friends make things so much better." Explain what she means, using evidence from the book to support your answer.

Chapters 25-27

1. Becca doesn't tell her father that she is coming to the council meeting to speak out against the Boating Extravaganza. Why?
 - a. What would you do if you were Becca? Would you tell your father or no? Explain your reason.
2. Social activist Maggie Kuhn said, "Stand before the people you fear and speak your mind—even if your voice shakes." How do you think this quote relates to Becca at the city council?
3. What last minute proposal does Becca make to counter the proposal of the boat festival?
 - a. How does Mr. Carlson react?
 - b. How does Becca's dad react?
4. What is Becca's answer when asked if she supports the scientists taking the dolphin back into the ocean?
 - a. Do you agree or disagree?
5. How much has changed for Becca through the course of the novel? Make a list, using evidence from the book to support your answers.

After You Read... Here are a few extension activities to further the learning and the fun!

1. Several themes run through *Manatee's Best Friend*.

Friendship	Environmental Activism	Speaking Up
Overcoming anxiety	Family	Risk-taking

Choose one of these themes on which to base a 500-word essay. What can readers take away from *Manatee's Best Friend* in relation to this theme?

2. Choose one character and explore how she or he has changed from the beginning to the end.
3. Create your own book trailer.

Save the Manatees ACTION Plan

Even kids can have a voice in helping manatees. No one is too young to get involved. Missy and Sunny would appreciate it.

- Write Letters or Send An E-mail to Your School or Local Paper. Tell them about manatees, why you think it is important to protect them, and how people in your school or community can help.
- Work with private organizations, including the Save the Manatee Club and its Adopt-A-Manatee program, to support unreleasable manatees who live in sanctuaries throughout Florida.
 - www.savethemanatee.org
 - www.defenders.org/florida-manatee/how-you-can-help
- Organize a bake sale or craft sale or other fundraiser for the manatees.
- Design posters to hang within the school, raising awareness about saving the manatees.
- Create a short documentary about manatees which encourages other kids to help save them.

In addition, there are always a number of issues affecting manatees and their habitat that involve local, state and federal governments. Visit the Take Action page of the Save the Manatee Club web site to find current information on these issues.

<https://www.savethemanatee.org/how-to-help/take-action/>