

# LESSON PLAN

## Girl Versus Squirrel

By Hayley Barrett, illustrated by Renée Andriani

★ “A compelling and generous addition to picture book collections that can inspire young naturalists and builders, and create a well of empathy in storytimes.”

—*School Library Journal*, Starred Review

### ABOUT THE BOOK

One resourceful girl. One determined squirrel. Great minds meet their match in this tale of persistence and of learning that compromise can be a wonderful thing.

Pearl has built three bird feeders—one looks like a house, one looks like a tube, and one looks like a teacup because it *is* a teacup. After she fills the bird feeders, she sits back to enjoy the show—until a squirrel scares the birds away and gobbles up all the peanuts in the teacup.

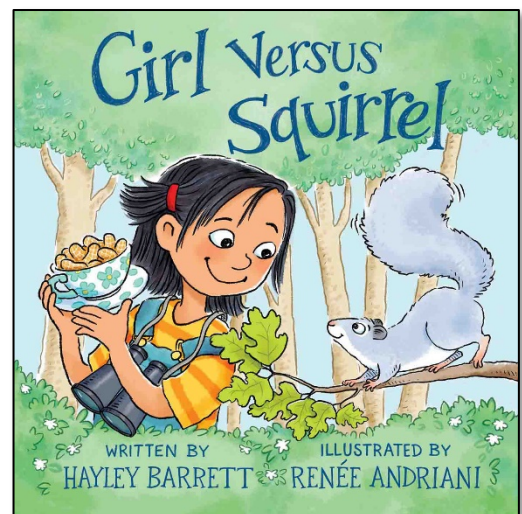
This will never do, and Pearl declares that girl versus squirrel is on.

**Guided Reading Level: N**

**Grade Level Equivalent: 3**

**Interest level: K–5**

**NGSS: 3-PS2-1 Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions, 3-LS1-1 From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes, 3-LS2-1 Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics, 3-LS3-2 Heredity: Inheritance and Variation of Traits, 3-ESS3-1 Earth and Human Activity, 3-5-ETS1-2 Engineering Design**



MARGARET FERGUSON BOOKS

### BEFORE READING

1. Discuss the title and cover illustration. What do the title and cover illustration tell us about the book?
2. In the title, explain what *versus* means or implies.
3. Identify which items the girl is carrying.
4. Why do people carry binoculars?
5. What do you think the girl in the story is going to do?
6. Why would a girl and a squirrel be competing against each other?
7. What do you already know about squirrels?



**WORD WORK—VERBS AND VERB TENSES**

*Verbs* are action words that tell us what the characters are doing. In books, a narrator will often use the present, past, and future tenses of a verb to describe the behaviors of the characters.

**EXAMPLES**

Pearl will climb the tree.

Pearl climbs the tree.

Pearl climbed the tree.

Find the different tenses in the book for the following words: *sail, dash, groan, twist, ponder*

**FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE—ALLITERATION**

*Alliteration* is a poetic device in which certain sounds are repeated at the beginning of words in a sentence or phrase. Authors use alliteration to make stories more interesting, to draw attention to certain phrases, and to provide rhythm and musicality.

Brainstorm examples of alliteration using the word *squirrel* (i.e., Silly, sassy squirrel steals seeds.) Create an “alliteration chart” using words from the book.

**DURING READING**

Think about the following questions:

1. What is the setting? Where does the story take place?
2. Who is the main character? How does this character develop throughout the story?
3. What is the problem in the story? How does the girl try to resolve the problem as the plot moves toward resolution? What is the “network of obstacles”?
4. How does the book make you feel? How does the girl feel at different points in the story? What are her motivations? What is Pearl trying to accomplish? How do her motivations and feelings contribute to the sequence of events in the story?
5. How would you describe Pearl? (i.e., determined, motivated, innovative, a problem solver)
6. Identify action words as you read. Distinguish shades of meaning among related words as they relate to actions in the story.
7. Explain how specific aspects of the book’s illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in the story. How do the pictures enhance the meaning and tone?
8. Make predictions as you read. What do you think will happen next?
9. The author uses alliteration in the story. Find examples of alliteration as you read the story.
10. At what point in the story does Pearl’s attitude change? Why is Pearl dazzled?
11. How does the story change from the beginning to the end of the book? Were you surprised by the outcome?
12. What is the central idea and message of the story?

**AFTER READING**

Go back to the story and complete the following tasks:

1. Create a list of verbs from the book.



2. Create a sequence chart on how Pearl’s feelings change throughout the book. Include why she was feeling that way. Consider the following emotions: *happy, content, frustrated, angry, surprised, dazzled*

In the beginning . . .	Then . . .	After . . .	At the end . . .

3. Consider the following questions:
- What does Pearl mean when she calls the squirrel a “fearless, fluffy, sister?”
  - Find parts of the story where Pearl shows she is determined. What words does the author use to let the reader know that Pearl is unstoppable? How is Pearl innovative?
  - What does the squirrel teach Pearl? Why are squirrels important? How do they help our environment?

### GET INNOVATIVE

1. Look around your home and neighborhood for items that you can recycle and use to build a unique bird and squirrel feeder.
2. Design a bird and squirrel feeder using recycled items.
3. Plan this design on paper.
4. Build your feeder.
5. Write a paragraph explaining what materials you used, why you chose them, and how you think this will be useful.

Guide written by Marla Conn, MS, Ed., reading/literacy specialist and educational consultant.

### ABOUT THE CREATORS



**Hayley Barrett**, author of *Girl Versus Squirrel*, is the author of children’s books such as *Babymoon* illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal and *What Miss Mitchell Saw* illustrated by Diana Sudyka. She lives outside of Boston, Massachusetts.

**Renée Andriani**, illustrator of *Girl Versus Squirrel*, has illustrated more than twenty-five books, including *Bunny Romero’s White House Adventure: The Whole Megillah!* written by Margie Blumberg and *A Gefilte Fishy Tale* by Allison and Wayne Marks. She works as an illustrator of books and cards, and as a graphic recorder, drawing in real time for audiences! She lives in the Kansas City area.

