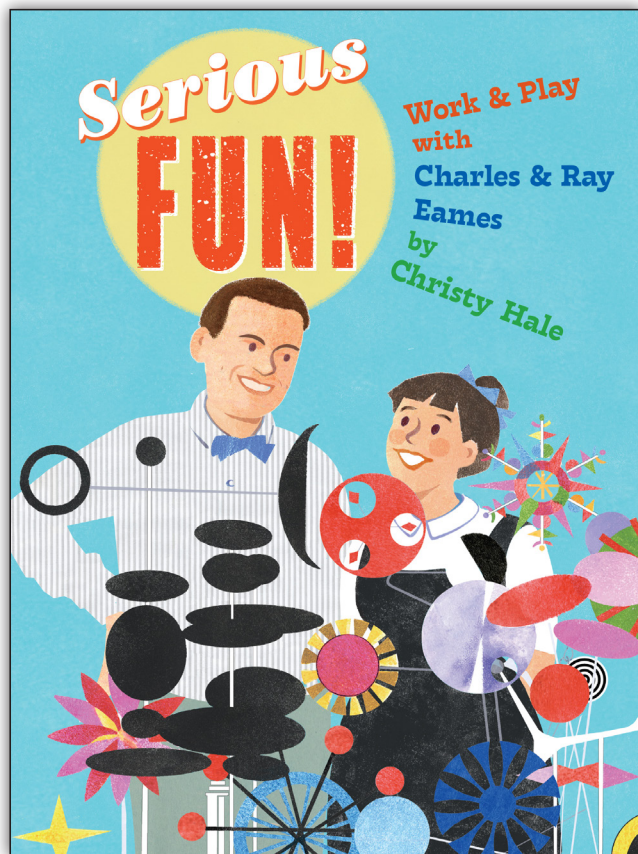


HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Neal Porter Books • HC: 9780823456604

Serious Fun!

Work & Play with Charles & Ray Eames
by Christy Hale

★ “[A]n ambitious undertaking for a picture book . . . Pull up a chair—molded-plywood or otherwise—and enjoy some serious picture-book-biography fun.”

—*The Horn Book* (starred review)

ABOUT THE BOOK

Mid-century modern is fun for the whole family in this picture-book about the importance of play for the designers of the iconic Eames chair.

Twentieth-century design duo Charles and Ray Eames had serious fun experimenting and solving problems. In all that they did, they let fun lead the way; the only rules were no rules, no limits, and no getting bored.

Though best known today for their timelessly iconic leather lounge chairs, the Eameses were always trying something new. They made furniture in every shape they could think of, bending and layering plywood on a homemade contraption. They made short films, designed textiles and arranged museum exhibits, dabbled in architecture and photography. They even tried their hand at toy design, wanting to give kids tools to foster free thinking and exploration—the same principles that fueled their own work.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students work toward various Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. These include the Reading Standards for Informational Text in the “Key Ideas and Details,” “Craft and Structure,” and “Integration of Knowledge and Ideas” strands, and the Speaking and Listening Standards in the “Comprehension and Collaboration” strand. Questions can also be used as writing prompts related to the Writing Standards “Text Types and Purposes” and “Production and Distribution of Writing” strands.

ACADEMIC AND CONTENT VOCABULARY WORDS

Serious Fun! includes many general academic vocabulary words and specific content vocabulary words. Discussing the meaning of these words can help readers better understand the text.

Academic Vocabulary Words

collaboration, design, process, curious, discipline, accomplish, experiment, zest, modern, solutions, laboratory, afford, failure, inexpensive, complicated, simple, exhibition/exhibit

Content Vocabulary Words

Note: Check the book's back matter for explanations of some of these terms.

furniture, architecture, textile, graphic, photography, film, engineering, metalworking, mass production, contraption, plywood, splint

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- This book is a biography of Charles and Ray Eames. What strategies did the author use to share information? In what ways does the book feel like a narrative story? Write your ideas in a list with two columns titled "Informational Writing Strategies" and "Narrative Writing Strategies."
- What life events and experiences helped shape Charles and Ray as individuals before they met one another?

 **Write about it:** Display the events and experiences on a timeline with Charles's on top and Ray's on the bottom. Along with the description of each one, write a sentence about how it impacted Charles or Ray.

- Choose either Charles or Ray to describe as a person, using evidence from the text. What traits did they have? What were their strengths? What work habits or actions contributed to their success?

 **Write about it:** Write your answer or create a visual representation that shows your thinking, such as a character map or a portrait with captions.

- The text gives information about many projects that Charles and Ray Eames worked on during their careers. How did their various projects differ? How were they similar?

 **Write about it:** Make a list of at least five of the Eames's projects that interest you. For each one, write a sentence about what that project shows about them as designers and/or people.

- What role did collaboration play in the work of Charles and Ray Eames? In your answer, include evidence from the text that shows how they collaborated with each other and with others.
- How did Charles and Ray Eames react to failure? How was this reaction an important part of their design process?
- What is one main idea of this text? What details did the author include to support this main idea?
- How did the illustrations help you understand this text? Give an example of an illustration you remember. Explain what it showed and how that helped you make sense of the information the book shared.
- Throughout the book, the author includes real quotes from Charles and Ray. What was one quote that interested you? What does it mean to you, in your own words? Why do you think the author included it? How could it relate to your own life or the wider world?

 **Write about it:** Put the quote you chose on a poster and decorate it to show its meaning.

- In the book introduction, the author describes Charles and Ray Eames as "eager learners." What evidence does the book give to support this? What does it mean to you to be an "eager learner?" How do you demonstrate this in your own life, or how would you like to in the future?

- Consider the book title: Serious Fun! What does the word “serious” mean to you? Based on the information in the book, why do you think the author chose to pair the words “serious” and “fun?” How does the title fit the ideas in the text?
- Based on the information in the text, what do you think Charles and Ray Eames would say to students your age about how to achieve success in life?
- What’s something related to this book that you are still wondering, or a topic or idea you would like to learn more about?

 **Write about it:** Write an imaginary letter or speech as if the Eameses were giving advice to your class. Include examples they might share, based on information in the text.

 **Write about it:** Write your idea as a research question. Write a sentence explaining why you’re curious about this question. Make a list of possible sources or strategies for finding out more.

Guide created by Lindsay Barrett, experienced elementary teacher, literacy specialist, and curriculum writer.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Christy Hale is the author and illustrator of several acclaimed children’s books. An art director, designer, and educator, Hale offers programs for all ages. Like Charles and Ray Eames, she loves to blend work with play, designing and making all kinds of things. She lives with her husband in Palo Alto, California.

Date: _____

CHAIR TESTING

CONS

[illegible]

Name: _____

Date: _____

BE A TOY DESIGNER

Charles and Ray “created toys that encouraged imaginative, open-ended play, freethinking, and problem-solving.” Look at the diagram about design thinking at the end of the book. Using recycled materials, art supplies, or even parts of old or broken toys, work through this process to design and test a new toy in the spirit of Charles and Ray Eames. Use the space below to draw your design plan before you create.

CREATE A MULTIMEDIA EXHIBITION

Re-read the section near the end of the book that describes some of the exhibits that Charles and Ray Eames designed. Choose a topic that is meaningful to you, or a topic your class has recently studied. Work with one or more classmates to design and construct an interactive exhibit about this topic that includes images, objects, words, and activities to explore, just like the Eameses did. Use the space below to plan your exhibition.

Find additional free downloadable activities at <https://www.christyhale.com/serious-fun>.

