

## A BUDDY BESTIARY

by Charlie Buck

EDUCATION LEVEL: Kindergarten, Elementary School

TIME FRAME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Paper and pencils, possibly markers, crayons or glitter for additional drawing materials

LITERARY MODEL: Medieval texts and illustrations

<https://blogs.bl.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2014/06/weird-and-wonderful-creatures-of-the-bestiary.html>

***Bestiary: a written or illustrated work that describes real or mythical animals.***

Animals have abilities that we do not—how magical to imagine we can employ them. What care or kindness can we offer in return? Reciprocity and caring are good things to practice, even in our imaginations.

This assignment can be a one-off, or the resulting images and poems can be reproduced and bound into a bestiary for the class.

**Note to Facilitator:** In a class of young writers with wildly varying abilities to write, this is a great project to do in pairs. One can begin drawing while another begins writing, and they can switch back and forth. Even with more assured writers it is fun to pair up: sharing ideas and drawing skills is exciting and inspiring!

### **Sequence of Activities:**

***Intro, 20 minutes:*** Have the students sit in a circle in front of the whiteboard and, while clicking through images from illustrated texts, give a brief overview of bestiaries: how they were first used in medieval times to describe creatures real and imagined that lived in far-off lands, and how they are still being created by poets and artists today.

Invite them to help create a mythical beast: Ask for examples of talented noses in the animal world, and as they call out examples, choose one to draw on the board: say, an elephant trunk. Ask students what they could do with an elephant trunk (shower, dunk basketballs, vacuum up food, tie knots, pick apples, etc). Then ask for ideas for an interesting head, for a useful mouth, for ears, for a neck, a body, legs, tail, toes, and as you draw the creature ask what powers these parts give it: what will it use bird wings, wolf ears, a rattlesnake tail for?

Excitement builds as the creature takes form. Validate all the choices, even if you don't use them, and encourage them to remember their suggestions—they can use them on

their own creature! Once an entire beast has been achieved, and students have said all their creature would do for them, ask how they would thank it and take care of it.

**Writing/Drawing, 20 minutes:** Pair students up, with each pair getting one sheet of paper to draw on and one to write on, and explain that they will take turns so they have the chance to do both. Give them 20 minutes to draw and write about their creature, and describe how they care for it. How does their creature know it is appreciated?

**Show and Tell, 20 minutes:** As students finish, they can come back to the circle and begin sharing.

**Note:** Because this prompt generates a lot of ideas and excitement, and every team wants to share their creature, you could depart from a brisk schedule and do the bestiary over two classes: one for creating creatures (perhaps adding additional art materials such markers, paint, glitter) and writing about adventures they had together, and the next class for a reading, allowing time for classmates to talk about the things they admired about each other's creatures.