



Animal Tails:

explorations of the animal world through connections to literature



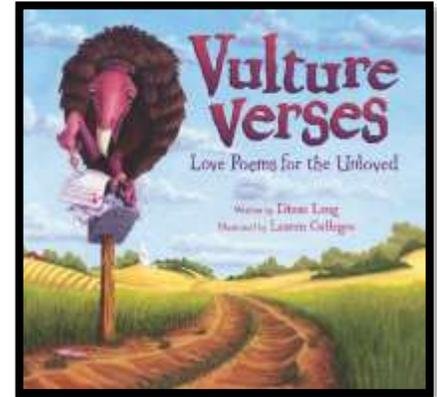
Vulture Verses: Love Poems for the Unloved

by Diane Lang

Age: PreK-2nd grade

Gather your Gear

- Vulture Verses book
- Plain paper or construction paper
- Pen/pencil
- Markers, crayons, or paint



Get Ready

You can help your child make connections by thinking about concepts before reading the story.

Think about an animal that you think is creepy or scary and tell me about it.

- How does that animal make you feel?
- Why do you think it makes you feel that way?
- What do you know about that animal?

Have you ever felt different or know someone who is different?

- How does that make you feel?
- How should we treat people that are different from us?

Read

Read the book, stopping to explore key story ideas. Below are some prompts to help guide you.

Some things to talk about during the story:

- What does this animal eat?
- Where does it live?
- Why is this animal important?

Reflect

Briefly discuss what was important or what we learned. Below are some questions to guide you.

Some things to talk about after the story:

- Which animal from the book was your favorite and why?
- Did you learn anything new about any of the animals?
- How did the poems make you feel?



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- What animal(s) from the book do you want to learn more about? Help your child learn more by doing online research about the animal, look at photos, or watch videos of the animal in action together.
- All animals are important, even the ones we might think are creepy or scary. They might not seem so scary after we learn more about them and understand their behavior.
- Talk more about vultures, the bird from the title of the book!
 - There are two groups of vultures: **Old World and New World**.
 - **New World:** are found in North, South and Central America. They all have bald heads, have weaker feet and primarily locate food by smell.
 - There are black vultures and turkey vultures in Georgia. Turkey vultures have such a good sense of smell that they've helped natural gas companies detect gas leaks!
 - **Old World:** are found in Africa, Asia, and Europe. They aren't all bald, have very strong feet with large talons that help them grasp. They also primarily locate their food by sight.
 - **What do they have in common?** Large wingspan, a sharp, hooked beak for ripping meat. Many have bald heads and necks that allows them to avoid infections and tangled feathers when eating carrion! (Decaying meat).
- Vultures have a very important role in our environment. They are *scavengers*, or nature's clean-up crew. They eat other animals that have died and have specialized digestive systems so they can do this without getting sick. This is important because it can help prevent the spread of diseases to humans and other animals.

Relate

Create connections to the idea through activities

Grab your materials: Paper, construction paper, markers, crayons, or paint

Have your child create an artifact that they can share with others

- Write a poem or a letter to an animal that might be considered creepy or scary. In your poem or letter, include a reason why the animal is important and should be appreciated. Get creative, decorate it, or draw an illustration to go with it.
- For younger children have them draw a picture of an animal that they might consider creepy or scary. Discuss why that animal is important and should be appreciated. Have them tell their family.

It takes a team.... join ours

Help us save species by joining the "Zoo Conservation Core" and raise awareness about wild animals, their habitats and why conserving both is so important. Post your pictures and poems on your social to share with your family and friends what you have learned, use the hashtag #onlyZooATL so that we can see all your great work!

Want to know more....

- Zoo Atlanta, "Lappet-Faced Vultures," <https://zooatlanta.org/animal/lappet-faced-vulture/>
- Zoo Atlanta, "King Vultures," <https://zooatlanta.org/animal/king-vulture/>
- Vulpro, Saving Africa's Vultures, <https://vulpro.com/>
- Audubon, search for "vultures," <https://www.audubon.org/>
- Peregrine Fund, East Africa Vulture Project, <https://peregrinefund.org/projects/african-vultures>
- IVAD, International Vulture Awareness Day, <https://www.vultureday.org/>