

A Boy and a Jaguar

by Alan Rabinowitz, illustrated by Cátia Chien. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014.

Summary

The book *A Boy and A Jaguar* is both inspirational and heartwarming. The story is all about a little boy, his stutter, and a promise. The little boy is told that he is not allowed to be around his classmates because his stutter is distracting. This makes the boy upset, but does not stop him from trying to cure his stutter to keep his promise. Talking to his pets and animals at the zoo, are the only times when the little boy can speak without stuttering. The boy also cannot understand why the animals must be kept all alone in a bared cage. That is why the boy makes a promise to the Jaguar at the zoo that he is going to someday use his voice to help the animals find theirs. That is exactly what he works hard to do; the rest of the story explains how the boy achieves his promise as he grows up.

Awards

- Schneider Family Book Award for Children (2015)
- Ezra Jack Keats Book Award Honor Winner: 2015 New Writers Honor
- 2016 Monarch Award book list
- Nominated for a Cybil award
- Named on of the best picture books of 2014 by Published Weekly

Book Reviews

* "In his first book for children, conservationist and adult author Rabinowitz frames his lifelong struggle with stuttering against his equally long-held love of animals...It's a candid and deeply resonant account of a hard-fought battle against societal stigma, and an embrace of one's true talent and calling."

—*Publisher's Weekly*, starred review

* "Moving and sweetly resonant."

—*Kirkus*, starred review

"The emotional resonance of the text, urgency of the issues discussed, and breathtakingly beautiful illustrations make this book a winner...A testament to the fierce beauty of jaguars and the human spirit."

—*School Library Journal*

Author's Website

<http://www.panthera.org/node/247>

Illustrator's website

<http://www.catiachien.com>

Discussion Questions

Before:

1. Based on the cover and title alone what do you think the story will be about?
2. What is your favorite wild life animal?

3. What is the definition of a promise?

During:

1. Do you have any pets?
2. How would you feel if you were isolated alone in a cage?
3. Have you ever been to the zoo before? What animals did you see there?

After:

1. What was the promise the boy made to the Jaguar?
2. How did he keep his promise?
3. How could you use your voice to help others?
4. Why was it so important that the boy save the jaguar land?

Activities

- Reading:
 - In addition to reading *A boy and a Jaguar*, read nonfiction books about zoo animals and about wild animals.
 - Compare and contrast the differences between the animal behavior, lifespan, wellbeing, etc.
- Writing:
 - Student could write theoretical letters as “activists that are trying to save their favorite wildlife animal”
 - Students could write stories about a time that they worked hard to get something they wanted accomplished. (Just as the boy worked hard to save the Jaguar land)
 - Write about a time when they made a promise to someone and kept it.
- Math:
 - Find statistics about how many children around the world are born with stutters.
 - Research how many jaguars there are in the world. Divide that whole number between the number in zoos and how many live in the wild.
- Science:
 - Students can research information about a specific endangered animal with a partner and then give a short presentation about what they learned
- Social Studies:
 - Students can learn about the history behind this story, and the capturing of jaguars in the wild.
- Technology:
 - Use computers to research more information about endangered animals and the rainforest
 - Make PowerPoint presentations about endangered animals
- Physical Education:
 - Students can try to run like a jaguar
 - Calculate how fast they can run a short distance and then compare it to statistics about how fast a jaguar can run.
- Art:
 - Students could create 3-D models of Jaguars or other endangered animals

- Students could draw pictures of animals in the rain forest or at the zoo.
- Drama:
 - Students could pretend to “put themselves in his shoes” by acting out what it would be like to have a physical challenge. Students would have to do a variety of everyday activities without using one body function (ex. Student cannot talk, cannot use left arm, cannot see, etc.)

Related Books

- *Silent Star: The story of Deaf Major Leaguer William Hoy* By: Bill Wise and Adam Gustavson
- *Jaguar: A Day in the Life: Rain Forest Animals* By: Antia Ganeri

Other books by Alan Rabinowitz

- *Jaguar: One Man’s Struggle to Establish the First Jaguar Preserve*
- *Chasing the Dragon’s Tail: The Struggle to Save Thailand’s Wild Cats*
- *Beyond the Last Village: A Journey of Discovery in Asia’s Forbidden Wilderness*
- *Life in the Valley of Death: The Fight to Save Tigers in the Land of Guns, Gold, and Greed*
- *An Indomitable Beast: The Remarkable Journey of the Jaguar*
- ❖ (These are not children’s books: *A Boy and a Jaguar* was his first)

Other books by Cátia Chien

- *The Magician*
- *Things To Do*
- *My Blue is Happy*
- *The Sea Serpent and Me*
- *The Magic Brush*
- *Hereafter*

Related Websites

- Web Earth Online <http://www.webearthonline.com/>
Nature game that teaches students (from an animal’s perspective) some important dangers our environment is currently facing.
- San Diego Zoo Kids <http://kids.sandiegozoo.org/games>
 - Games, activities, videos, and more all about animals typically found in the zoo
- Animal Fact Guide <http://www.animalfactguide.com/animal-facts/>
 - Information about many different endangered animals at a young level, also includes teaching materials.