

## About the Book

Sam just got a hamster for a pet. But the hamster is kind of boring ... he just eats and sleeps and gets his shavings wet. Inspired by her book of mythological creatures, Sam longs for a more exciting pet. But she soon realizes that taking care of these magical beasts might not be as wonderful as she thought. Sasquatches are messy, unicorns are shy, hippogriffs scare the dogs at the dog park, and having a fire extinguisher handy at all times makes dragons seem like an awful lot of work.

This raucous rhyming read-aloud about fantastical beasts in everyday situations and the increasingly beleaguered heroine who has to deal with them can be used in a number of ways including:

- Exploring themes and concepts such as responsibility, connection, imagination, advantage, disadvantage, compare, contrast and culture
- Studying word play and the impact of word selection
- As an engaging and fun read-aloud experience

Where applicable, activities have been aligned with Common Core State Standards.

# About the Author

VIKKI VANSICKLE is the author of the acclaimed Clarissa books, including Words that Start with B, Love Is a Four-Letter Word and Days that End in Y. Vikki's most recent middle grade novel, Summer Days, Starry Nights, has been called "summer reading at its best" and was a finalist for the Red Maple Award. After obtaining an MA in Children's Literature from UBC, Vikki's career began in bookselling at The Flying Dragon Bookshop, which earned her the 2011 CBA Young Bookseller of the Year award. Currently Vikki balances writing with her duties as the Marketing and Publicity Manager for Young Readers at Penguin Canada. Vikki lives with a cat named Barb who would prefer not to have to share the house with a sasquatch.

ILLUSTRATION © CALE ATKINSON

# About the Illustrator

**CALE ATKINSON** is an illustrator and animator living lakeside with his family in Kelowna, British Columbia. Believing in tea more than sleep, Cale is constantly working on numerous projects. His work can be found in children's books, including To the Sea which he wrote and illustrated, animated shorts, television and games. If he had to choose, Cale would probably want a hippogriff as a pet, to go on adventures and solve mysteries with. Or maybe just a goldfish ...

Links vikkivansickle.wordpress.com cale.ca penguinrandomhouse.ca

#### Pre-Reading Discussion/Activities RL SL

- 1. Brainstorm a list of common domestic pets. Do you have a pet?
- 2. Select one of the pets from the list. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of having this pet?
- 3. If you were allowed to keep any pet, which one would you choose? Why?
- 4. Brainstorm a list of qualities that a person should have to be a good pet owner.
- 5. What is a mythological creature? Can you think of any examples of mythological creatures?

### Follow-Up Discussion/Activities RD SL

- 1. Vocabulary to introduce/review: mythological, exotic, "starry sheen," burly, temperamental, sturdy
- 2. How does Sam feel at the beginning of the story about her new pet hamster? How does she feel at the end of the story? Why does her thinking change?
- 3. If you could choose any of the mythological creatures in the story as your pet, which one would it be? Why?
- 4. What happens on the last page of the story? If the story were to continue, what would happen next?
- 5. Review the mythological creatures Sam considers in the story. For each creature, Sam thinks of a disadvantage or problem associated with owning it as a pet. Can you imagine any advantages of owning each of these pets?
- 6. Do you think there is a lesson to be learned from this story? If so, what?

### Learning Activities

1. Look carefully at the illustrations in the story. Locate instances in the story where Sam appears to be feeling the following: excited, proud, scared, worried, tired, frustrated, unhappy, bored, angry. Select one of these examples and in a simple sentence, explain why Sam is feeling this way. Can you think of a time when you felt the same emotion/feeling?



2. The mythological creatures mentioned in the book come from a wide selection of cultures and regions around the world. Conduct a quick search to determine which part of the world each creature is associated with. On a world map, note which region each creature is connected to. Select one of the creatures that you would be interested in learning more about. Research the part of the world and/or culture that the creature is associated with and sketch, draw or paint your own interpretation of this creature. Write a short story with this mythological creature as one of the main characters.



3. Create and name your own mythological creature. Begin by sketching out what your creature would look like and/ or write a brief description of how it looks, sounds, feels and smells. Select a region of the world that would make sense for your creature to be connected with. In writing and/or pictures show three things that would make your creature an ideal pet and three things that would make your creature a problematic pet.



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4. Based on Sam's imagined challenges for owning exotic, mythological creatures, what do you think the characteristics of an ideal pet are? Make a list of five essential qualities of the ideal domestic pet. Create a how-to guide that describes how best to care for this animal.



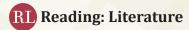
ILLUSTRATION © CALE ATKINSON

- 5. Use the list of mythological creatures below to complete the following tasks:
  - Alphabetize the list of creatures.
  - Sort the list according to the number of syllables in each creature's name.
  - Sort the list according to the number of letters in each creature's name.
  - Sort the list according to big, medium and small-sized creatures (use the illustrations in the story to help you).
  - Divide the list into two groups: familiar and unfamiliar creatures.
  - Divide the list into two groups: creatures you would want as a pet and those you would not want as a pet.
  - Select one of the creatures from the list and compare/ contrast it with a hamster using a Venn diagram to organize your thoughts.

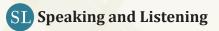
unicorn	kirin	fairies
hippogriff	jackalope	kelpies
sasquatch	phoenix	basilisk
gryphon	manticore	chimera
kraken	harpies	mermaids
dragon	chupacabras	sprites

- 6. What is the rhyming pattern in the story? For each of the following pairs of rhyming words, think of another word that rhymes. Locate the instances in the story where the author chose not to use rhyming words. Circle the pairs of words below that belong to the same word families (i.e., pet, wet).
  - pet, wet powers, hours mane, rain shy, try fetch, stretch scary, hairy fur, burr
- feather, weather snout, out wide, ride bite, light scratch, catch sweet, feet sea, me
- 7. Locate the following phrases in the story and explain their meaning in your own words.
  - "while away the hours"
  - "things could get quite hairy"
  - "a temperamental snout"
- 8. Fill in the following with your own words, using the rhyming pattern from the story. Draw a picture to accompany your work.

Common Core State Standards



W Writing



Pre-Reading Discussion/Activities

Reading and Literature K.10 Speaking and Listening K.1, K.6, 1.1, 2.1

#### Follow-Up Discussion/Activities

**Reading and Literature** K.1, K.10, 1.1, 2.1, 2.3 Speaking and Listening K.2, 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2

#### Learning Activities

- 1. Reading and Literature K.1, 1.1, 1.7, 2.1, 2.3, 2.7 Writing K.2, 1.2, W.2.2
- 2. Writing K.3, 1.3, 2.3 Speaking and Listening K.5, 1.5
- 3. Writing K.2, 1.2, 2.2
- 4. Writing K.2, 1.2, 2.2

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