Reading is MAGICAL
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 rauccous 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, Days that End in Y, Vikki's most recent middle grade novel, Summer Days, Stuffy 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 saxapout.

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...

Pre-Reading Discussion/Activities
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
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?

Common Core State Standards
1. Reading: Literature
   K.2, 1.2, 2.2
   K.5, 1.5
   K.7, 1.7

2. Writing
   K.2, 1.2, W.2.2
   K.2, 1.2, W.2.2

3. Speaking and Listening
   K.1, K.6, 1.1, 2.1, 2.2

Pre-Reading Discussion/Activities
Reading and Literature K.1, K.10, 1.1, 2.1, 2.2
Speaking and Listening K.1, K.6, 1.1, 2.1, 2.2

Follow-Up Discussion/Activities
Reading and Literature K.1, K.10, 1.1, 2.1, 2.2
Speaking and Listening K.1, K.6, 1.1, 2.1, 2.2

Learning Activities
1. Reading and Literature K.1, K.11, 1.7, 2.1, 2.3, 2.7
2. Writing K.2, 1.2, W.2.2
3. Writing K.3, 1.3, 2.3
4. Writing K.2, 1.2, 2.2
5. Writing K.2, 1.2, 2.2

Links
vikkiwinsickle.wordpress.com
cale.ca
penguinrandomhouse.ca

4. 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 manticores chimera
   kraken harpies mermaids
   dragon chupacabras sprites

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