

CCSS-Aligned Lesson Plan

3rd Grade

My Brother Needs A Boa By Anne Weston Illus. by Cheryl Nathan

Text Complexity Analysis of MY BROTHER NEEDS A BOA:

Quantitative.

Lexile: 640L (Grades 2-3: 420-820)

AR/ATOS: Book Level 3.2

Qualitative.

Knowledge Demands: The story is about Benito solving a problem, a plot device that will be familiar to many readers. Students will need to have basic knowledge of rainforest animals and the food chain.

Meaning/Purpose: The story addresses community, problem-solving, and perseverance. Students will be able to figure out the purpose from the text. It is also multicultural. Students will learn about a tropical Latin American village.

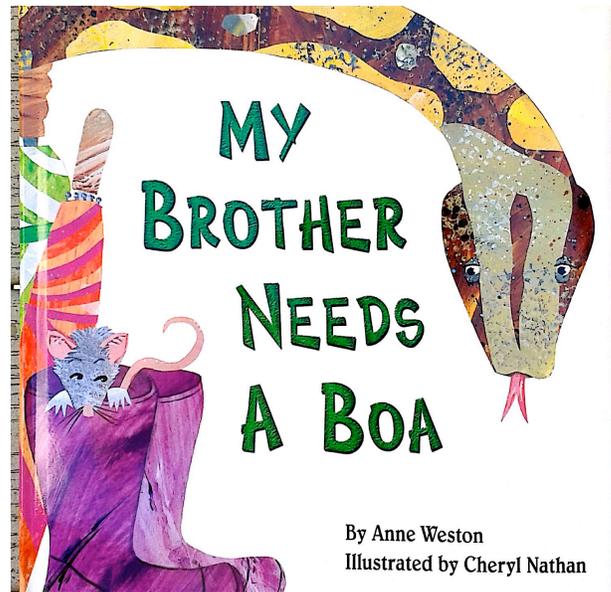
Text Structure: The author uses a linear, narrative story structure. The author also employs a familiar story device used in the *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* stories.

Language Features: The author uses some challenging vocabulary words related to the topic and culture. Dialogue and simple sentence structures help support readers' comprehension.

Visual Supports: The illustrations are very helpful; they clearly support the text. Readers will be able to determine the text's meaning and context from the illustrations.

Reader and Task Considerations. This book would be a great addition to a unit on the rainforest, snakes, and/or problem-solving.

Text Placement: Based on this text complexity analysis, *My Brother Needs A Boa* is moderately complex book for third graders and complex for second graders. This book is also appropriate for fourth and fifth graders who will most likely be able to read this book independently.



Summary of MY BROTHER NEEDS A BOA (Star Bright Books, 2005):

Benito owns the only store in the rainforest. When a pesky rat invades his shop, it drives all the customers away. Benito tries to catch the rat but fails. His sister tells him that a boa constrictor would help solve his problem. He looks and he looks until the perfect snake finds him.

Author of MY BROTHER NEEDS A BOA: **Anne Weston**

Anne Weston lives in a remote corner of Costa Rica where she and her husband established a rainforest preserve. In fact, this story is based on an actual incident that happened in her village. Anne enjoys observing wildlife as well as caring for her pet chickens, turkeys, and geese. Anne grew up in San Diego and has also lived in Minnesota and North Dakota. Anne writes both fiction and nonfiction. She began writing soon after moving to Costa Rica. She lived without telephones or internet and depended on a kerosene lamp for night-time light.

For more information, visit her website at www.anneweston.com or email her at westonincr@aol.com.

Lesson Plan: Before Reading

Making Predictions:

Inform students that they will be reading a story entitled My Brother Needs a Boa and that the story takes place in a Latin American rainforest community.

Conduct a picture walk with the students. Review the content on the front page: title, author, and illustrator. Show students the illustrations on each page and facilitate a whole-group discussion by asking questions like: “What do you think is happening here? What does this illustration reveal to you? Why do you think so? Why do you think the illustrator included this image here?”

Next, prepare students to do some informal writing. Tell students to complete this sentence: “I think this story is about ____ because ____.” Tell students they will revisit their predictions after they read the book. [After reading, tell students to re-read their predictions. Tell students to complete this sentence on the same piece of paper: “My prediction was ____ because ____.”]

Accessing Background Knowledge (if students have studied the rainforest):

Tell students the book takes place in a Latin American rainforest. As a whole group, create an acronym poem to organize their prior knowledge about the rainforest. Ask students, “What do you know about the rainforest inspired by the letter, ___?” (Example below.)

R	Rain falls much of the time.
A	The Amazon Rainforest is well-known.
I	Its climate is hot and humid.
N	Native people live in the Amazon.
F	The Four main layers are emergent, canopy, understory, and forest floor.
O	Over half of the world’s plants and animals live there.
R	Rubber comes from the rainforests.
E	Extinction and deforestation threaten rainforests.
S	Six percent of Earth’s land surface is rainforests.
T	There are two types: Temperate or Tropical.

Make sure students use parallel structure, meaning they write using all nouns, all adjectives, all verbs, etc. Model writing and speaking in complete sentences.

Next, have students work in pairs to complete acronym poems about another relevant topic like snakes, rats, or boa constrictors. Pick a topic about which your students have knowledge. (Option: Students can illustrate their poems.)

CCSS:

RL.3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

RL.3.7: Explain how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting)

W.3.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

W.3.8: Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

SL.3.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 3 topics and texts*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

W.3.8: Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

SL.3.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 3 topics and texts*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.3.6: Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

Lesson Plan: During Reading

Building Comprehension:

Read aloud *My Brother Needs A Boa*. Inform students that they are to listen carefully to determine the gist.

Read each page and then ask students: “What is happening?” or “What did we learn from this page?” or “What do we know now?” Follow up with: “How do you know?” or “What makes you think so?” (Make sure students are supporting their answers with details from the text.) As you read aloud, explain vocabulary words and concepts that might be difficult for your students.

Create this chart and ask students about each character as he/she comes up during the read-aloud: “For each of the main characters, how would you describe him/her? Why do you think so? What is his/her problem and how did he/she solve it? How do you know?” For each response, ask them for textual evidence. Record their responses:

Characters	Traits	Problem	Solution
Benito			
Mrs. Murrillo			
Vilma			

Tell students to turn to a partner and talk about the central message of the story. (Ask students: “What do you think is the moral of this story?” or “What is the lesson that you learned?”) Convene as a whole group and ask students to share their thinking. Ask students: “What is the central message of the story and how do you know?” Record their responses on chart paper.

Building Content Vocabulary:

Tell students to read the book a second time in pairs. Have them write down all the vocabulary words from the book that relate to living in a rainforest community. Convene as a whole group and have students share the words. Record the words on chart paper. Work with students to sort and label the words. (Example of categories or labels: animals, people’s names, village, plants, homes, activities, etc.) Help students determine meanings of unfamiliar words by using similarly-grouped words as context.

Have students work in pairs to write a paragraph explaining what it’s like to live in a rainforest community as presented in the book.

CCSS:

RL.3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

RL.3.2: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

RL.3.3: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

RL.3.10: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 2-3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

SL.3.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 3 topics and texts*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

RL.3.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

W.3.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

SL.3.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 3 topics and texts*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Lesson Plan: After Reading

Demonstrating Comprehension: Sequencing

As a whole group, work with students to complete this chart:

	How did Benito feel?	Why did he feel this way?
Beginning		
Middle		
End		

Tell students to turn and talk to a partner and discuss how and why Benito changed in this story. Re-convene as a whole group and have students share their thinking.

As a whole group, have students list the major events of the story in the order they happened. Then, ask them, "Who are the characters involved? What happened? Why is the event significant to the story's central message?"

Major Events	Who are the characters involved?	What happened?	What is its significance?

Tell each student to select three events that they think were most significant to Benito's character development. Have them create a foldable with the following information

Event #1: (Illustration and Caption)	Event #2: (Illustration and Caption)	Event #3: (Illustration and Caption)
This event is significant because _____.	This event is significant because _____.	This event is significant because _____.

Examining Themes

Tell students that a theme is a specific position an author takes on a topic. (For example, a topic is friendship. A theme is: A true friend sticks with you through the good and the bad.)

Tell students that a topic addressed in the book is community. Have students work in pairs to discuss how the story demonstrates community. (Students can graphically organize their thoughts using a cluster map.) Then, have them formulate a theme. Make sure students can justify their thinking with evidence from the text.

Option: Have students create a list of other topics discussed in the book. They can repeat the same activity for each topic.

CCSS:

RL.3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

RL.3.2: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

RL.3.3: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

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RL.3.2: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

W.3.8: Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

SL.3.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 3 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.3.2: Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Science-Related Activities (Consider aligning to NGSS)

Learning About Snakes:

Remind students that they have learned some facts about boa constrictors from My Brother Needs a Boa. Prepare students to conduct research about snakes.

Have students create a class book entitled, “Snakes: From A to Z.” Assign each student a letter of the alphabet, from A to Z. Have each student research a type of snake that begins with his/her assigned letters. (Examples: Asp, Bushmaster, Cobra, Dwarf Beaked Snake...Zebra Snake.) Provide students with a guiding worksheet for their research; for example, you could prompt students to study the following: Description, Size, Diet, Habitat, Behavior, Fun Facts.

After they have conducted research, prompt students to draft, revise, and polish an informational paragraph. Have students create an illustration with a caption to accompany their text. Have each student share his/her paragraph with the whole group. Put all the students’ entries together in a book and share as a finished product.

Learning About Food Chains:

Convene as a whole group and ask students, “What is the relationship between the boa and the rat In My Brother Needs A Boa? What makes you think so?”

Tell students that the boa and rat are both part of a food chain. (Make sure students understand the concept of food chain.)

Using a webtool like prezzi, create a food chain featuring the rat and boa (Example: Sun-Grass/Grains-Rat-Snake-Hawk). Add visual and audio features. Also, discuss and explain the concepts of prey and predator. Ask students, “When is the rat a prey and when is it a predator? When is the boa a prey and when is it a predator?”

Direct each student to choose an animal and research its food chain. Using your model, have students use a webtool to present their food chain to the whole group.

Option: In some cultures, people eat snakes and rats. Have students research more about this.

CCSS:

RI.3.7: Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

W.3.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

W.3.7: Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

SL.3.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

RL.3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

RI.3.4: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 3 topic or subject area*.

RI.3.7: Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur)..

W.3.7: Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

SL.3.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

SL.3.5: Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.

Working Across Texts

Comparing to a Fairy Tale

Convene as a whole group and ask students, “What do you recall about the fairy tale, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*?” Record students’ responses on chart paper.

Next, ask students, “How does *My Brother Needs A Boa* compare to *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*?” Working with the students, complete a Venn Diagram comparing the two stories.

Comparing to Informational Text

Convene as a whole group and ask students, “What did you learn about boa constrictors from this book?” Chart students’ responses.

Read aloud the informational article written by Anne Weston and provided in this Teacher’s Guide. Model annotating as you read-aloud. Make sure to note how the author supports her main ideas and uses text features. Also, stop and ask questions during your read-aloud to ensure students are comprehending. After reading aloud, ask students, “What more did you learn about boa constrictors from this text?” Chart students’ responses.

Tell students that both of these texts are written by the same author and both texts are about boa constrictors. Prompt students to compare and contrast these two texts. Ask questions such as: “How and why are the texts different? How are the messages and purposes presented in each text? How would you define each text type? How does each text support you as a reader in learning new content?”

Prepare students to research boa constrictors. Tell students to find two more informational texts about boa constrictors. Direct them to write an informational paragraph describing what they learned about boa constrictors. (They can use Anne Weston’s informational text as a mentor text.) Support them as they draft, revise, and polish their writing.

Option: Have students create an illustration for their paragraphs in the style of the illustrator, Cheryl Nathan. Cheryl used a collage technique. Encourage students to study the illustrations for ideas and inspiration.

CCSS:

RL.3.2: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

RL.3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

RL.3.9: Compare and contrast the themes, settings, and plots of stories written by the same author about the same or similar characters (e.g., in books from a series)

RI.3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

RI.3.2: Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

RI.3.5: Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.

RI.3.7: Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

W.3.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

W.3.5: With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

SL.3.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 3 topics and texts*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

About the Curriculum Designer: Dr. Virginia Loh-Hagan is a curriculum designer, university professor/teacher educator, published author (Sleeping Bear Press, Cherry Lake Publishing, Guilford Press), former K-8 classroom teacher, and educational consultant. She serves on several book award committees and is the Cover Editor and columnist for *The California Reader*. She lives in North County San Diego with her very tall husband and two very naughty dogs.

BOA CONSTRICTORS

By Anne Weston

Imagine you're visiting a **tropical rainforest**, which is a tall, dense forest close to the **equator**. It's hot and humid. You see a snake eye. A boa constrictor is hiding under leaves, waiting for dinner. Should you be scared?

What are boa constrictors? They are large snakes. The boa constrictor is one **species**, or type, of boa. (Another boa species is the emerald tree boa.) Its "scientific name" is *Boa constrictor*, just like the common name. There are different kinds of boa constrictors. For example, *Boa constrictor nebulosa* is from Dominica. It's different from *Boa constrictor imperator*, a boa from Costa Rica.

Where do boa constrictors live? They live in different **habitats** like rainforests, grasslands, or overgrown pastures. They can be found in southern Mexico through Central America and much of South America. They even live on islands off the coasts. Boas spend time on the ground and, especially when young, in trees.

How do boa constrictors grow? Young boas are born alive. There are about ten to fifty boas born at a time. They take care of themselves right after they're born. As they grow, they occasionally **molt** or shed their skin. Wild boas live about twenty years. Most adults are five to thirteen feet long. They typically weigh about thirty to a hundred pounds.

Did boa constrictors live in the time of dinosaurs? Sixty million years ago, the largest snake known to have lived on earth was *Titanoboa*. It was longer than a school bus! Its closest living relative is the boa constrictor.

What do boa constrictors eat? A boa isn't **venomous**. It won't bite unless it feels it's in danger. Even though boa constrictors are **carnivorous**, or meat-eating, they are more interested in eating small animals than humans. They mainly eat bats, birds, rodents, and iguanas.

How do boa constrictors hunt? They're **nocturnal**, or active at night. They're also **crepuscular**, active at dusk and dawn. Their patterned skin is excellent **camouflage**, which means they blend in with their surroundings. They can stay still for a long time, waiting for an animal to come by. The boa will seize the **prey**, coil around it, and squeeze or **constrict** it. The boa swallows the dead prey whole.

What happens after boa constrictors eat? After a meal, a boa likes to find a warm place to lie while it **digests**. It may get under the roof of a house. (In **native** communities, people use boas to catch pests like rats.) An adult boa can go weeks, up to a month, between meals.

What eats boa constrictors? Many young snakes are eaten by hawks and eagles. Adult boas may be eaten by jaguars or crocodiles. In the wild, only a few boas live a long life. This creates a healthy, balanced **ecosystem**. However, when irresponsible pet-boa-owners turn boas loose in a place where they have no natural enemies to keep their numbers down, far more boas become adults—and they want to eat. This causes problems.

Are boa constrictors in danger? Over the last hundred years, there are fewer boa constrictors living in the wild. Many have been caught and sold for their skin, for meat, or as pets. Much of their native habitat has been changed to towns and farms. Boas get run over on highways. Some people kill boas because they're afraid of them or because they think snakes are "bad." Help boa constrictors and other reptiles by learning more about them and how important they are.

Glossary:

Camouflage - to blend in with surroundings
Carnivorous - meat-eating
Constrict - squeeze
Crepuscular - active at dusk or dawn
Digest - to take food into the body
Ecosystem - relationships among living things
Equator - halfway between north and south poles
Habitat - place where living things live
Molt - to shed skin
Native - belonging to and originating in a particular place
Nocturnal - active at night
Prey - animal hunted or caught for food
Species - types of living things; groups
Tropical Rainforest - tall rainy forest close to the equator
Venomous - able to inject a poison by biting or stinging

Think About It!

*Why are we scared of boa constrictors? Should we be scared of them?
*Should we be allowed to keep wild animals like boas as pets?
*Rats can spread diseases. They would also eat our food. What if there were no snakes to keep rats under control? Why do we need snakes?
*Are boa constrictors more harmful or helpful to humans?

*CONNECTION TO TEXT: In *My Brother Needs a Boa* by Anne Weston, Benito (who lives in a rainforest community) needs a boa constrictor to get a rat out of his grocery store. His neighbors bring him several boas. But none is right. So, Benito tells the neighbors to turn the snakes loose in the rainforest. Why is it okay for Benito to say this? Why is it NOT okay for your neighbor to let loose his pet boa in a nearby woods or park?