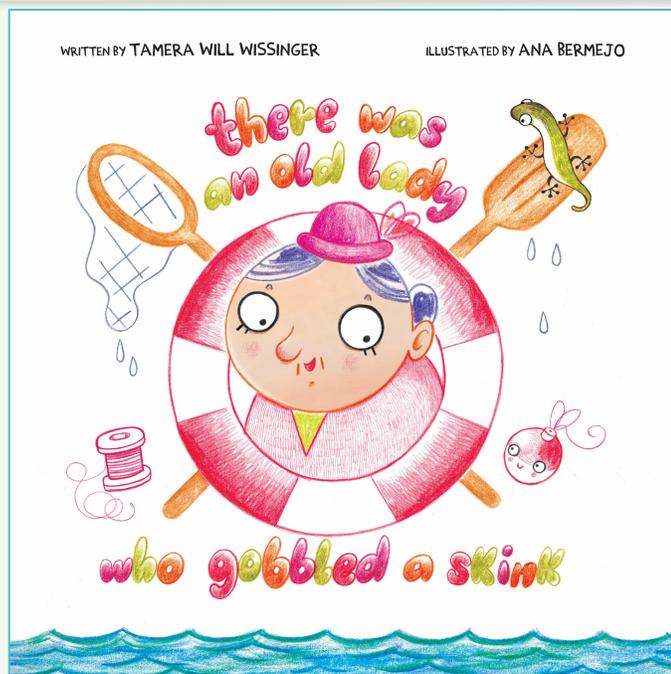


# There Was An Old Lady Who Gobbled a Skink Activity Guide

Written By Tamera Will Wissinger ★ Illustrated By Ana Bermejo

Activity Guide Written By Ed Spicer



THERE WAS AN OLD LADY WHO GOBBLED A SKINK  
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THERE WAS AN OLD LADY  
WHO GOBBLED A SKINK...  
PERHAPS SHE'LL SINK.

The old lady also gobbles a **WORM**...

and a **PAIL**...

and a **BOBBER**...

and an **OAR**...

everything she needs for a successful fishing trip!

But when she licks her lips at one last bite,

she's in for quite a surprise!

## About Tamera Will Wissinger, Author of There Was an Old Lady Who Gobbled a Skink

Tamera Will Wissinger writes poetry and stories for children. In addition to THERE WAS AN OLD LADY WHO GOBBLED A SKINK, Tamera is the author of THIS OLD BAND, also from Sky Pony Press, and GONE FISHING: A Novel in Verse from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, as well the forthcoming GONE CAMPING: A Novel in Verse, also with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Tamera earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Sioux Falls College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and her Master of Fine Arts degree in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Hamline University in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Connect with Tamera online at: [tamerawillwissinger.com](http://tamerawillwissinger.com).

## About Ana Bermejo, Illustrator of There Was an Old Lady Who Gobbled a Skink

Ana Bermejo grew up in the north of Spain. She studied art in Valencia and particularly enjoyed drawing goats, unicorns, and deer during her five years of university. She continued her art education at Saint Martin's in London. She currently lives in west London, where there aren't any goats, deer, or unicorns, but there are plenty of squirrels – and they are nice to draw, too.

## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

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1. Before considering skinks, tell the class that you are going on a trip in a boat to do some fishing. Have each student list and draw three or more items that they will need to take with them. After each student has at least three items, put your class in groups or with a partner to consolidate and add to the list. Have these groups then prepare a recipe for fishing. What steps? What order? Gather the whole class back and prepare a master list of items and the steps their fisher-person would need to follow to have a chance to catch a fish.
2. Depending on where you live, young children may have no concept of what a skink is. There are several fine skink videos available with a search for, “skink videos for children,” especially if you also do not allow (advanced search) the word, “skunk.” The San Diego Zoo has a nice short video about an Australian skink: [San Diego Zoo Kids - Blue Tongued Skink - YouTube](#)
3. To warm up your brains, play a cumulative rhyming game with your students. Take a word like, “at” and have the first student repeat the word and add a new rhyming word. The next student will repeat all of the rhyming words and then add a new one (at, bat... at, bat, hat... at, bat, hat, cat...etc.). Young students may not be able to get past four rhyming words. Set a goal of, say, adding and repeating seven rhyming words, but keep the activity fun regardless of whether your class can or cannot meet the goal.
4. Have some fun by singing something like, Skinamarinky Dinky Dink. There are plenty of audio and video versions of this, if you need one.
5. Since this book will begin with “an old lady,” have students make a graph of the ranges of ages students consider to be old. I like to do this by giving each student a sticky note. Have them write down the age they think a lady would have to be to be called, “old.” Then set up your number line (or create a number line) and have them place their sticky note under the number that matches.
6. Much of the fun of this book is in its verb choices. Ask your students to write a sentence and draw a matching picture showing the sort of things they think old ladies like to do (be prepared to discuss these).
7. Read *There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* by Simms Taback. Listen to the Burl Ives song of this.

## ACTIVITIES TO COMPREHEND AND EXTEND THE STORY

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1. As with any book, it is always a useful practice to share the cover illustration and have the class develop a list of cover items: names (author and illustrator and title), net, oar, skink, lady, line, bobber creature, and water. Make sure to show the back cover too and see if your class notices the dragonflies. Collect predictions for what students think of the book after listing the cover elements. Make sure your students are aware that predictions are neither right nor wrong—they reflect their best thinking (and are NOT random guesses). I find it useful to also have young students predict genre and even the words they expect to find by looking at the cover. Remind students that if their predictions match the text, they’ll need new, more detailed predictions (model this). If predictions do not match, they’ll need new predictions. Encourage students to have an inquiring mind as they listen or read. Do I understand what is happening? Do I recognize any patterns? Etc.
2. Read the book carefully all the way through at a leisurely pace but without stopping. Students need the experience of hearing a whole text and responding to it on their own terms FIRST. Read the book again or revisit pages again. In fact, remove the stigma or the implied deficit toward rereading. Begin to challenge students to see the value (and even joy) of rereading. Trust the pre-reading activities you do and the cover analysis, with its predictions, to supply context. Just read and enjoy the book first!



## Activities To Comprehend and Extend the Story continued:

3. Collect reactions from students about things they noticed about the text and illustrations. This conversation will be essential in guiding the sort of activities you use with your students.
4. Return to your pre-reading activity and compare the class list of fishing items and the sequenced steps for fishing to the order that they appear in this book. Do they need to add steps to the class list or add sections to the book? Depending on what you discover, the class could write a new section for the book or the class could change its list.
5. Look carefully at the title page art. Do the same with the verso page and dedication page artwork. Have students draw and write about the man with the beard, the mailbox, and building. Ask about neighbors? Ask about whether this is in a city or in the country or other? Look at the clothing and ask what season it could be. Are there any leaves? Clouds? [Yes] Do they see the sun? [No] The final page runs into the final endpaper. There are several new animals. How many different animals are there altogether? After the skink on the cover, what is the next animal you see? [Dragonfly on the verso page, unless a very observant student notices the pony in logo on the title page].
6. Have the students look at their list of animals and at the artwork that displays all the animals, including the title page, verso, back cover, etc. and write a persuasive piece on whether or not the setting of the book could be in their neighborhood.
7. Use the library and do research on where in the country you could find the seagull, the dragonflies, the fish, and the otter that are depicted. Research skinks too! Where do they live? What kind of animals are they? What is their habitat like? Would you see skinks with seagulls? Dragonflies? Worms? Fish? Otters?
8. Turn to the spread with the old lady floating and ask why the items that she ate are in the picture, but only if your students don't mention them first. Ask students whether or not there are any mistakes in the artwork or anything unusual about the artwork that does not seem to match the text. You may have a student who wonders about why all the items are on the spread just before the anchor. Don't interject an opinion. Allow students to explore until someone explains that this is a view inside the old lady's stomach.
9. Provide students with red, orange, and green crayons. Also provide them with a black ink pen and plain white paper. Fold the paper into thirds. One column will be for ONLY the green crayon. One column will be ONLY for the red crayon. The third column will be for BOTH the orange crayon and ink pen. The green column will be for writing down the nouns (naming parts). The red column will be for writing down the verbs (action words, except is). The third column will be for all of the words with "ink" in them. Have students use the black pen to write "ink" and the orange crayon to write the onset letters. For example, the word, "skink" would have an orange sk and black pen for, "ink."

For your convenience: the finished **noun section** should have: lady, worm, bobber, line, pole, pail, tale, net, oar, shore, boat, and anchor (not counting skink, which is in the third section or pronouns). The finished **verb section** should have: gobbled, started, squirm, catch, bobble, wobble, caused, slobber, dine, sweat, float, and sank. The **orange** and ink section should have just three words: skink, think, and sink. Faster workers can use the back of the page to list all of the words that are not green, red, or orange/ink.

10. Have fun making Noun Poems! Noun poems are poems that are ONLY nouns. Provide students with a verb like, slobber. Their job is to list all nouns that slobber! It is also fun to take a word like, worm and have students write Verb poems. Students only use verbs to describe the worm (slithers, crawls, inches, moves, wriggles, squirms, oozes, etc.). Play this as a guessing game. The class as a whole does not know the verb or noun and try to guess based on the group's list of words.

## Activities To Comprehend and Extend the Story continued:

11. Look closely at the bobber. It looks like Bobber, a character! What would this story be like if Bobber were telling it? Have students write and draw about how Bobber is feeling. Obviously this can be done for any of the eaten items!



12. This book lends itself very well to math activities. Have students tally the number of times they see the word gobbled or skink, etc. This can be graphed. You may also use the graph to ask how many more times did you see the word *skink* than the word *bobber*. Put the words in order from most to least, etc.

13. The old lady ends up at the bottom of the lake. Now what? Draw and write about what happens next.

14. Get out your instruments, dress your actors, and have your students perform this story for the class or the school or parents or other groups. How will the class act out characters that are getting eaten? Will they need to build a set? Make a special costume?

15. What will you tell the author is your favorite part of this book? What will you suggest to the author to make this story better? What will you tell the illustrator is your favorite drawing? What did you not see that you would have liked to see?

16. Read the story straight through one more time. Then ask the class what would have happened if she swallowed a bat or a pig or a moon or ... You could have groups work on different versions to perform for the class. Set up a rubric: Your person must swallow at least four different items or more.

17. Listen to the Burl Ives version of the song, There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly, again. Have the class work on setting this book to music, too, or as much of this book as they can. If your school has a music teacher, ask whether or not it is possible for your class to work on setting the book to music. Maybe even turn the book into a musical play?

## NOTE TO EDUCATORS ABOUT THIS COLLECTION OF ACTIVITIES

It is always my fear that teachers will think that activities are the only way for students to really understand a story. The most important activity is to share this book with students. Read it, chant it, act it out, sing it, have fun with it! If that is the only “activity” you do, it will be plenty. These activities should be seen as a springboard to your own activities based on your knowledge about the students with whom you work. So pick some of these, adapt them for your students. The BEST activities are the ones that students generate themselves. My hope is that this group of activities will give you ideas for how to motivate your students to fall in love with this book and with reading in general. Enjoy!

*Mr. Spicer*

## About Ed Spicer, Author of this Guide

From graduate students to kindergarten students, Ed Spicer is an educator with a wide variety of experiences during the last two decades. He spends most of his time with his first grade students, but also loves his high school book group with whom he has worked for the last 14 years. Spicer has served on the Caldecott award committee, the Printz award committee and many other committees with the American Library Association. He is a Cool Teacher winner in Michigan. Spicer has also published dozens of curriculum guides for Penguin, Random House, and Houghton Mifflin. Friend him on Facebook: [spicyreads@facebook.com](mailto:spicyreads@facebook.com) Follow him on Twitter: [@spicyreads](https://twitter.com/spicyreads) Visit his website: [www.spicyreads.org](http://www.spicyreads.org).