



This activity guide was written by Peggy Howell—Fairfax County Public Schools

Robert Sabuda

Robert Sabuda was born on March 8, 1965, and raised in Pinckney, Michigan, a small town surrounded by lakes. When young, he developed an interest in both art and reading. He says that he was one of the lucky artists; children draw in elementary school, but Sabuda was able to continue to draw when he was older. When he was young, Sabuda spent hours cutting, gluing, coloring, and painting. He contributes his artistic ability to his father, who was a mason and a carpenter. His mother ran a dancing school, and Robert became involved in storytelling while working on scenery for the dancing recitals and shows. The sets for these shows were often decorated with glitter and paint.

Sabuda's artistic talent followed him to school, where his teachers, who were probably very grateful, asked him to design their bulletin boards. It was while doing bulletin boards that he became interested in cutpaper collages. He followed this with cutting out and fastening paper together to make books with movable parts. He met his first pop-up book while visiting a new dentist. He discovered a pop-up book in the basket of books in the new dentist's office. Imagine how a visit to the dentist, which is not usually a favorite child's activity, led to his interest in producing the lovely books he makes today. His mother continued his interest in pop-up books and images by bringing home manila file folders from work that he could use to make simple books of his own.

Sabuda continued to pursue art in middle and high school and at the Pratt Institute in New York City, where he received a scholarship to study art. His first job working with books for young people was illustrating coloring books based on Rambo. He illustrated books by other authors and poets, including works by Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman. In 1992, he started writing his own books, concentrating on biographies or nonfiction and illustrating them in the style of the period about which he was writing. For instance, his book on the Middle Ages looks like stained glass, and his book on ancient Egypt is done in the style of Egyptian art. He was still interested in pop-up books and perfected his style. In 1994, he began producing the books we see today, from the elegant rewriting of the *Wizard of Oz* to his books for the holiday season, including counting books, *The 12 Days of Christmas*, and his newest, *Twas the Night Before Christmas*. Sabuda says that he spends half his time creating picture books and the other half concentrating on pop-up books.

Robert Sabuda lives in New York and is an associate professor at Pratt. He reads widely and loves to go to movies. He personally supervises the production of his pop-up books. His books have been named ALA Notable Books as well as Notable Books in the field of Social Studies. His titles have also appeared on the New York Times list for the year as well as the Boston Globe Horn Book list.

His web site, www.robertsabuda.com, gives more information on his life as well as some directions for easy to make pop-up books that the reader can create.



Using Robert Sabuda's Books in the Classroom

Robert Sabuda's books fit well with early civilization curriculums for students at any age. His book about a Chinese dragon would make a perfect read-aloud book when introducing ancient China. Reading Tutankhamen's Gift would make a good introduction to Ancient Egypt as well as to the pharaoh and the art of the time. *Young Naturalist's Pop-up Handbook: Butterflies*, though suited to more advanced readers than many third graders, is a lovely pictorial representation of butterflies. Each of these books could be used to introduce text-to-text strategies; the reader could be asked to think about what he or she has read in nonfiction books about the period and how this relates to what he or she is hearing in the Sabuda books. Questioning techniques could be used as these books are read. A question that the teacher could introduce would be, "Why did the illustrator use this type of illustration?" With the help of the art teacher, the illustrations of his books could be compared, concentrating on the style and medium used, as well as his portrayal of the human figure.

The pop-up books could also be used to illustrate how to make pop-up books. *The Big Book of Books and Activities* by Dinah Zike (Dinah-Mite Activities, 1993) is a good simple introduction to making pop-up and other books, as is *Pop-o-Mania* by Barbara Valenta (Dial Books, 1997). Ellison Press (800-253-2238) has 3-D dies that children can use to make their own books.

Suggested Activities for Specific Books by Robert Sabuda

The Blizzard's Robe

Using batik illustrations, Mr. Sabuda tells a story about the origin of the Northern Lights. The story is set in the Arctic, where the people are kept cold by the coming of Blizzard. In this tale, a young robe maker, Teune, builds a fire to keep her warm as she works on her robes. The sparks from her fire go up through the smoke hole of the tent as she works and destroy Blizzard as he flies overhead. Because Blizzard has made life hard for the people of Teune's tribe, they are happy to see him destroyed. She, however, is sad at what she has done and so begins to make another robe for Blizzard out of ice. She must work outside to do this, and all the people are amazed at the robe's beauty. They are also angered, however, that she would help Blizzard, but she assures them that he has promised something good for them. When the robe is finished and Blizzard rises up wearing it, the people are amazed to see the Northern Lights that have resulted from the many colors that Teune included in the robe.

1. Students can work with the art teacher to research batik and to make batik prints of their own.
2. Students can research the Northern Lights and locate their sighting on a map.
3. Compare this story with either a Raven story from the Northwest or a tale by Goble that explains another natural event.
4. Use a Venn diagram to compare this story with *Aurora: A Tale of the Northern Lights* by Mindy Dwyer or *Ulaq and the Northern Lights* by Harriet Taylor.
5. Compare this Native American legend with other American Indian legends using a chart with the following headings.
 - a. Name and describe the characters.
 - b. What is the problem?
 - c. What is the solution?
 - d. What is the moral or lesson or what is the explanation?
 - e. Ask children which character they liked best and why.



6. Direct students to write their own stories explaining a natural event.

The Movable Mother Goose

This pop-up book includes some popular and some not-so-well-known Mother Goose rhymes. It is good to share with kindergarten students when introducing rhymes. The book could also be used with ESOL students after reading standard books of rhymes, such as *My Very First Mother Goose* by Iona Opie, *Tomie's Little Mother Goose* by Tomie de Paola, or *Mother Goose* by Marguerite De Angeli.

1. Before reading the rhymes, ask students to recite their favorite nursery rhymes.
2. When introducing Sabuda's book, ask students to look at the pictures and try to predict what the rhyme will be. Discuss any differences from the rhyme as the children know it.
3. Direct students to make their own pop-up illustrations of rhymes using samples from the Sabuda web site or from the books cited above.
4. Ask each student to illustrate his or her favorite nursery rhyme using a flat surface and the medium of choice.
5. Play a guessing game by telling selected students to describe themselves as nursery characters and directing the other students to guess who they are.
6. Direct students to bring in their own nursery rhyme books, share them, and distribute them around the room
7. Older students can write additional verses to the rhymes telling what might have happened next or what could have led up to the event in the rhyme. Examples can be read in *Humpty Dumpty* by Daniel Kirk, *Mary Had a Little Lamb* by Iza Trapani, or other titles by Iza Trapani.
8. Introduce rhymes from other cultures by using *Dragon Kites and Dragonflies, a Collection of Chinese Nursery Rhymes* by Demi.
9. Additional lesson plans for using nursery rhymes are available online at *Discover Nursery Rhymes*, www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-5521.html, and *Enchanted Learning*, www.enchantedlearning.com/Rhymes.html.

Tutankhamen's Gift

This is the biography of Tutankhamen—from his childhood as the smallest child of the pharaoh until he became pharaoh upon the death of his brother, Amenhotep IV. The book includes information about the work he did to restore the worship of the gods, which had been changed by his brother. It is told in a narrative story form but does include notes about Tutankhamen and about his reign and his death. The book is illustrated in the colors of Egyptian art and with forms typical of Ancient Egypt. Cats are prominent in the illustrations, as well. Unlike other books of the period, hieroglyphics are not used.

1. This is a good story to introduce younger students to this period. Point out the details of the pictures of the building and decorating of the pyramids. Ask students research the art of the period.
2. Use the book as a conclusion to a unit on Egypt. Lead students in making text-to-text and text-to-world connections. This strategy lesson is detailed in *Strategies That Work* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (Stenhouse, 2000 ISBN: 1571103104). Students are instructed to use sticky notes to make and record the following connections: Quote or picture from the text and "This reminds me of..." If they are writing down the connections, this can be a way of assessing what they remember from their reading about the pharaohs and gods of Egypt.
3. Cats are shown throughout Sabuda's book. Students might read *Temple Cat* by A. Clements or *The Winged Cat: A Tale of Ancient Egypt* by Lattermore and then write a story about Tutankhamen's cat.



4. Students can research the gods that Tutankhamen restored to prominence in Egypt. A good site for this is www.ancientegypt.co.uk/gods/explore/listpics.html. Students can make flip books listing some of the gods of ancient Egypt and showing what they stood for.
5. This is a good book for visual literacy. Without reading the words, show the pictures to the children and ask them to describe Tutankhamen's life as a child.
6. Use a Venn diagram to compare Tutankhamen to another pharaoh.
7. Direct students to make a pyramid book to illustrate important events in Tutankhamen's life.
 - a. Fold down one side of an 8 1/2 x 11 piece of paper to make an enlarged triangle.
 - b. Cut off the extra end to make the triangle.
 - c. Open the triangle to make a square and fold it the opposite way to make a pattern.
 - d. Cut up one of the folds to the center of the x and stop
 - e. Glue one fold to the other to make a pyramid.
 - f. The three sides can be used to write about three important events in Tutankhamen's life.
 - g. Glue two pyramids together to make a larger comparison.
8. Ask students to read *Tutankhamen* by Robert Green and other books about the pharaoh. Direct students to prepare a web about the pharaoh, including information on:
 - a. Dates he lived.
 - b. Location of his tomb.
 - c. Artifacts found there.
 - d. Major achievements.
 - e. Major events during his reign.
 - f. Family history.
9. As a class, prepare a newscast on an event in Tutankhamen's life. Brainstorm important events, such as his assuming the throne, his work restoring the gods, his death, or the finding of his tomb. Assign students to the following tasks:
 - a. Prepare a set for the newscast.
 - b. Write script.
 - c. Tape the production.
10. Compare Sabuda's book with other books about Egypt and Egyptian life.