

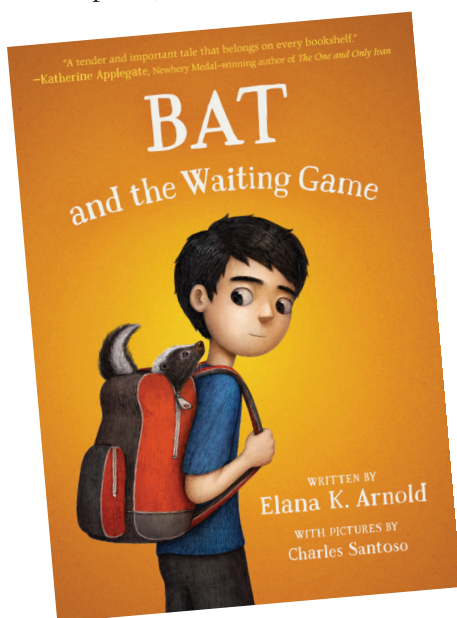
BAT AND THE WAITING GAME EDUCATOR'S RESOURCE

About the Book

For Bixby Alexander Tam (nicknamed Bat), life is pretty great. He's the caretaker of the best baby skunk in the world — even Janie, his older sister, is warming up to Thor. But when Janie gets a part in the school play, it means some big changes. Someone else has to take care of the skunk kit in the afternoons and Bat has to go to a new place after school. Why can't everything just stay the same? Bat can't wait for Janie's play to be over!

Acclaimed author Elana K. Arnold follows her popular first book *A Boy Called Bat* with the second book in this delightful series about a boy who loves animals, his family, and having a best friend but who struggles with everyday challenges. Bat's autism makes learning facts easier than making friends. As famed animal scientist and autistic advocate Temple Grandin once put it, "Autism made school and social life hard, but made animals easy."

Through the support of his parents, teacher, and best friend, Bat is learning to see the world through the eyes of others. The lessons along the way, punctuated by the charming pictures of Charles Santoso, are tender and true.



About the Author

Elana K. Arnold grew up in California, where she, like Bat, was lucky enough to have her own perfect pet — a gorgeous mare named Rainbow — and a family who let her read as many books as she wanted. She is the author of picture books, middle grade novels, and books for teens, including the National Book Award finalist *What Girls Are Made Of*. Elana lives in Huntington Beach, California, with her husband, two children, and a menagerie of animals. She calls the “Bat” series for Walden Pond Press “books of her heart.” You can find her online at www.elanakarnold.com.



In the year since *A Boy Called Bat* was published, I have had the great privilege of connecting with teachers, librarians, parents, and kids across the country. I've gotten letters from young readers asking if I have a pet skunk (sadly, no), emails from parents who want to know if I am connected to the autism community in my real life (gratefully, yes), and invitations to travel to schools to talk more about writing, reading, loving animals, and supporting kids of all kinds.

Writing a book can feel like a singular task, but what has moved me to tears is how sharing a love for a book is the opposite of that. The community of readers that has welcomed Bat into classrooms, libraries, book clubs, and homes is incredible to me.

Bat and the Waiting Game, the continuing story of Bixby Alexander Tam and the skunk kit named Thor, is in many ways the story of community. It's a story of making room for one another. It's about the different languages of love.

I am so glad to be part of the children's literature community, and I'm endlessly grateful that Bat is part of it, too. I hope that Bat's books can be part of discussions about empathy, loving kindness, and fluffy animal friends. I hope that kids see themselves, their siblings, their classmates, and their families reflected in the pages of these books. I hope that meeting Bat prompts readers to ask themselves about the motivations behind others' actions and encourages them to be gentle with one another and with themselves.

As always, I want to thank the grown-ups who are doing the day-to-day real work of being present for our children in libraries and schools.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Elana K. Arnold'.

A Note to Educators:

Bat and the Waiting Game is the second book in the popular middle grade series by Elana K. Arnold about Bixby Alexander Tam (Bat for short), an autistic boy experiencing the ups and downs of school and family life with the added challenges and gifts of his neurodiversity. This latest installment in the story of the lovable Bat provides a valuable classroom resource for discussions of anti-bullying, diverse points of view, and strategies to overcome frustrations common to many students. In his efforts to succeed in daily life, Bat must practice patience and learn to manage his own expectations while navigating the twists and turns of best-friendship, classroom situations, and his role in his family.

Teachers encountering the awesome and complex responsibility of fulfilling the unique needs of every student are finding creative, compassionate ways to accommodate a broad range of learning styles. Many incorporate the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). In addition, increased emphasis on social-emotional learning (SEL), through which students learn empathy and relationship building, has become an important teaching tool in many classrooms.

Bat and the Waiting Game supports these important components of the classroom experience by modeling empathy and inclusivity through an engaging story. Students will root for Bat throughout his adventures and misadventures with his skunk kit, his sometimes-cranky older sister, and his best friend, Israel. The suggested exercises in this Educators' Resource build on the effective ways in which differing perspectives are sensitively depicted in the book.


NEW AND DIFFERENT

Bat's reaction to visiting Israel's house for the first time presents his response to having his senses overwhelmed. For Bat, even good sensory experiences can be hard to handle if he experiences too much at once. While discussing this activity with students, it may be helpful to point out that it's not that each new taste, sight or sound makes him anxious — it's the number of new experiences he's having at the same time.

New and Different

When Bat visits Israel's house for the first time, he gets anxious because the tastes, sights, sounds, and smells of a new place are so different for him. He has to deal with a lot of things happening that he never experiences at home. Do you think the visit made Bat feel better? Why or why not?

Have you ever gone somewhere new and different and felt overwhelmed? If so, describe what happened and how you managed. Did you find a good way to get used to it?




THE WAITING GAME

The Waiting Game

There are many times during the story when Bat has to wait and be patient instead of acting as he pleases. He has to wait until his sister gets home from school. He has to wait until his dad gets home from work so he can tell him about the idea to work together on a project. He has to wait for his skunk kit to be brought to the game on the way to the arena. He has to wait for the lights to be turned on at the game with his dad's team.

Do you think Bat is a patient person? Why or why not? Describe a time when you had to wait and how you felt about it.

When Bat's father explains what he loves about baseball games, Bat asks him for the first time that evening, "Are we going to play?" What does he mean?



Like many children his age, Bat often feels caught in a waiting game: waiting to play with his skunk kit; waiting to be picked up from

school or his father's house; waiting to share big news with a best friend who's late to school; waiting for his sister's play rehearsals to be over; and waiting for the end of a seemingly endless baseball game. Discussion of the book's title and the "waiting" theme offer a chance to work with students on practicing presence and understanding.

The touching scene at the end of the baseball game on page 88 quoted in the activity illustrates this point. Bat gains insight into what his father loves about taking him to a baseball game, and this helps him relax and enjoy himself.

POINTS OF VIEW: BAT AND JANIE

A book written in the third person limited point of view as this one is offers readers the chance to examine the main character's perspective, while still being able to see the situations he is in with a little bit of distance.



In the first example shown in this activity, readers can see Bat's point of view clearly as he tenderly cares for Thor. In the second example, it's evident that Bat does not consider Janie's point of view when he makes the decision to bring Thor to Janie's performance.

Points of View: Bat and Janie

Janie's point of view is shown when Bat makes the bad decision to bring Thor to her performance as a musical theater. What does Thor mean to her? How does she feel about it? What does she think about it?

Bat's point of view is shown when he decides to bring Thor to Janie's performance. How does he feel about it? What does he think about it?

Think about this decision from both points of view. Write a journal entry of at least one page, after taking the big moment seriously. Then end by Bat's bad decision to bring Thor to the play.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

The importance of understanding multiple points of view, a dominant theme of this book, is the foundation of SEL and the basis for character education, classroom inclusion, and the development of emotional intelligence.

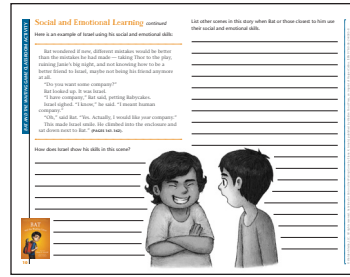
Here are some further examples from the story in which Bat demonstrates his emotional and social skills:

- **on page 36**, Bat scolds Mr. Grayson for scaring Babycakes;
- **on page 88**, he stops himself from correcting his dad;
- **on page 121**, he lets Israel carry his precious skunk Thor because “it is what a good friend would do;”
- **on pages 166-176**, Bat creates a secret project as an apology to his sister that requires him to undertake many tasks and reach out to many different people;
- **on page 170**, he allows Janie to look directly into his eyes even though he doesn't enjoy it.



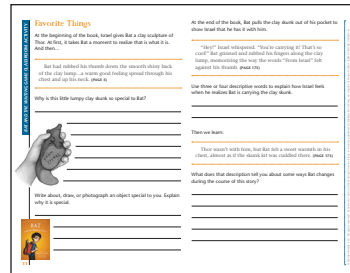
Here are some further examples from the story in which Israel demonstrates his emotional and social skills:

- **on page 94**, Israel reminds Bat to thank the principal for letting them use the copy machine;
- **on page 125**, Israel pretends to be Janie so he can explain her behavior to Bat;
- **on page 127**, Israel tells Bat he would be his friend even if he didn't have a skunk kit.



FAVORITE THINGS

Bat's feelings for the clay skunk that Israel makes for him and gives him early in the story help present Bat's emotional journey. Though he is not at first sure what the figure is, he quickly realizes it is important for him to respond kindly to Israel's gift. And at the end of the story, he shows how much Israel's gift means to him, and even begins to transfer some of the affection he feels for Thor to the little clay version of the kit. This activity can create an opening for a classroom discussion about gifts, friendship, and special/favorite objects.



Books and Websites about Autism Spectrum Disorder

BOOKS:

A Buffet of Sensory Interventions: Solutions for Middle and High School Students with a Spectrum Disorder, by Susan Culp. AAPC Publishing, 2011.

How to Talk to an Autistic Kid, by Daniel Stefanski. Free Spirit Publishing, 2011.

ONLINE:

What Good Representation of Autistic Characters Looks Like: A Three-Part Series in Thinking Person's Guide to Autism: This informative and thorough series by Elizabeth Bartmess offers a survey of exemplary representations of autistic characters in children's books, young adult fiction and science fiction. (The overall site offers a wealth of other necessary information from autistic people, professionals and parents.)

Part 1: Interiority and Neurology

Part 2: Diversity in Autistic Characteristics and Demographics

Part 3: Setting, Plot, and Character Growth (Plus Some Bonus Goodies)

Disability in Kidlit: Disability in Kidlit is dedicated to discussing the portrayal of disability in middle grade and young adult literature, publishing articles, reviews, interviews, and discussions examining this topic from various angles — and always from the disabled perspective.

SEL Resources

BOOKS:

Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ, by Daniel Goleman. Bantam Publishing, 2005.

The Autism Acceptance Book: Being a Friend to Someone with Autism, by Ellen Sabin. Watering Can Press, 2007.

ONLINE:

[Making Caring Common, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Stephanie Jones, Sr.](#)

Advisor: Making Caring Common (MCC) helps educators, parents, and communities raise children who are caring, responsible to their communities, and committed to justice.

[Random Acts of Kindness Foundation:](#) Free K-12 lesson plans, suggestions for leading kindness projects and forming kindness clubs. The curriculum features developmentally appropriate, standards-aligned lessons that teach kids important Social Emotional (SEL) skills.

[Sit With Us:](#) This mobile app is designed to promote a kinder and more inclusive school community.

[We Dine Together:](#) Uniting and empowering individuals to create inclusive environments through the belief that long-lasting relationships are built over the table.

[Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence:](#) The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence uses the power of emotions to create a more effective and compassionate society. The Center conducts research and teaches people of all ages how to develop their emotional intelligence.

UDL Resources

BOOKS:

Universal Design for Learning: Theory and Practice, by Anne Meyer, David H. Rose, David Gordon. CAST Professional Publishing, 2016.

Your UDL Lesson Planner: The Step-by-Step Guide for Teaching All Learners, by Patti Ralabate. Brookes Publishing, 2016.

ONLINE:

[CAST:](#) A non-profit company producing learning tools with access points for all learning styles. Developers of the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

[Do-IT:](#) The Center for Universal Design in Education at the University of Washington in Seattle, WA.

[Universal Design for Learning: Meeting the Needs of All Students:](#) by Patti Ralabate. Published in the Journal of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.



Additional Resources

BOOKS:

How to Grow a School Garden: A Complete Guide for Parents and Teachers, by Arden Bucklin-Sporer and Rachel Pringle. Timber Press, 2010.

ONLINE:

[Leading Research in Skunk Defense Mechanisms:](#) Dr. Theodore Stankowich, The Stankowich Lab, Cal State, Long Beach

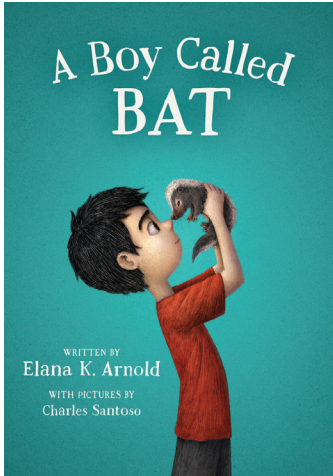
[Pets in the Classroom:](#) A study by the American Humane Association, 2015.

This Educator's Resource was created by Sara Hoagland Hunter, Ed.D. She is the author of ten books for children, including the award-winning Every Turtle Counts about the rescue of a rare sea turtle by a seven-year-old on the autism spectrum. Find her online at sarahunterproductions.com

This Educator's Resource was reviewed by Elizabeth Bartmess, a writer and autistic advocate. Find her online at elizabethbartmess.com

Classroom Read-Aloud Suggestions

A Boy Called Bat by Elana K. Arnold. Walden Pond Press, an Imprint of HarperCollins Children's Books. The first story in the series about the life and times of Bixby Alexander Tam, called Bat, centers on his experiences becoming the caretaker of an orphaned skunk kit he names Thor.



The Real Boy by Anne Ursu. Walden Pond Press, an Imprint of HarperCollins Children's Books. On an island on the edge of an immense sea there is a city, a forest, and a boy. The city is called Asteri, a perfect city saved by the magic woven into its walls when a devastating plague swept through the world years before. The forest is called the Barrow, a vast wood of ancient trees that encircles the city and feeds the earth with magic. And the boy is called Oscar, a shop boy for the most powerful magician in the Barrow, who spends his days in the dark cellar of his master's shop grinding herbs and dreaming of the wizards who once lived on the island. Oscar's world is small, but he likes it that way. The real world is vast, strange, and unpredictable. And Oscar does not quite fit in it. In this National Book Award Longlist finalist, a young boy becomes a hero against all odds.

Other Recommended Titles

MIDDLE GRADE

A Wizard Alone (New Millenium Edition) by Diane Duane. Available [here](#). Kit and Nita join forces against the terrible Lone Power on an unusual battle ground as they fight for the heart and mind of wizard-in-training, autistic Darryl, who has been stuck in his wizardly Ordeal for three months. "A wonderful fantasy that marries magic and wizardry with the natural world." — VOYA

M is for Autism by the Students of Limpsfield Grange School in collaboration with Vicky Martin. Available at [amazon.com](#). A middle-grade book written by students at a school for girls with communication and interaction difficulties.

The Someday Birds by Sally J. Pla. HarperCollins Children's Books. A debut middle grade novel filled with humor, heart, and chicken nuggets. Equal parts madcap road trip, coming of age story for an autistic boy who feels he doesn't understand the world, and an uplifting portrait of a family.

YOUNG ADULT

Rogue, by Lyn Miller-Lachman. Nancy Paulsen Books, Penguin Random House. Kiara has Asperger's syndrome, and it's hard for her to make friends. So whenever her world doesn't make sense — which is often — she relies on Mr. Internet for answers. But there are some questions he can't answer, like why she always gets into trouble, and how do kids with Asperger's syndrome make friends? Kiara has a difficult time with other kids. They taunt her and she fights back. Now she's been kicked out of school. She wishes she could be like her hero Rogue — a misunderstood X-Men mutant who used to hurt anyone she touched until she learned how to control her special power. When Chad moves in across the street, Kiara hopes that, for once, she'll be able to make a friendship stick. When she learns

his secret, she's so determined to keep Chad as a friend that she agrees not to tell. But being a true friend is more complicated than Mr. Internet could ever explain, and it might be just the thing that leads Kiara to find her own special power.

On the Edge of Gone, by Corinne Duyvis. Published by Harry N. Abrams. January 29, 2035. That's the day the comet is scheduled to hit — the big one. Denise and her mother and sister, Iris, have been assigned to a temporary shelter outside their hometown of Amsterdam to wait out the blast, but Iris is nowhere to be found, and at the rate Denise's drug-addicted mother is going, they'll never reach the shelter in time. A last-minute meeting leads them to something better than a temporary shelter — a generation ship, scheduled to leave Earth behind to colonize new worlds after the comet hits. But everyone on the ship has been chosen because of their usefulness. Denise is autistic and fears that she'll never be allowed to stay. Can she obtain a spot before the ship takes flight? What about her mother and sister? When the future of the human race is at stake, whose lives matter most?

CLASSROOM VIDEO SUGGESTIONS

Fourth grader George Yionoulis explains what it feels like to be autistic in this [six-minute video](#).

[Five minutes of highlights](#) of the miracle game of Jason McElwain, a basketball player with autism.

[Thirteen-minute video](#) featuring two boys who followed in Jason's footsteps to play basketball.

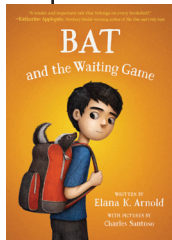
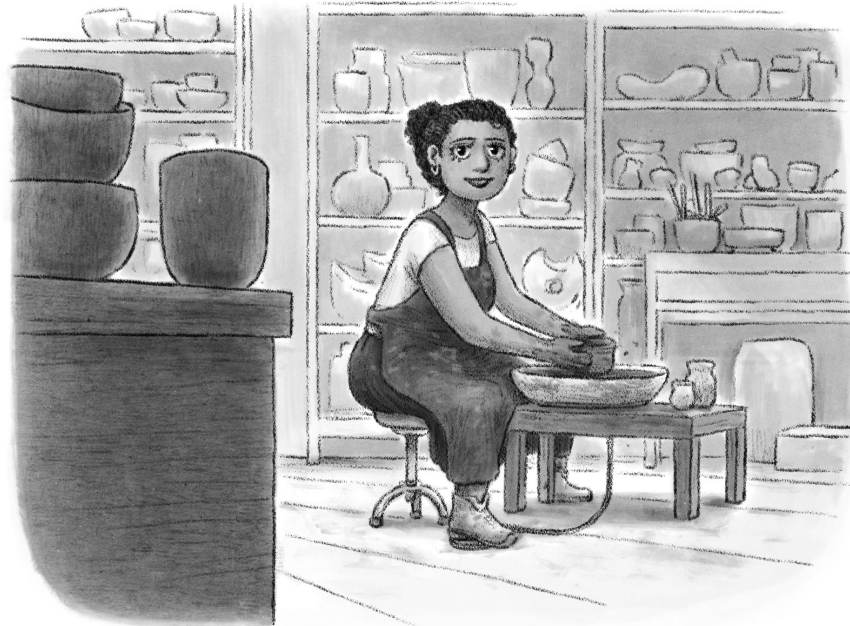
New and Different

When Bat visits Israel's house for the first time, he gets anxious because the tastes, sights, sounds, and smells of a new place are too much for him to take in all at once. Israel brings Bat to his mom's pottery studio when he sees Bat is upset. Do you think this will make Bat feel better? Why or why not?

Handwriting lines for student response.

Have you ever gone somewhere new and different and felt overwhelmed? If so, describe what happened and how you reacted. Did you find a good way to get calm?

Handwriting lines for student response.



The Waiting Game

There are many times during the story when Bat has to wait and be patient instead of acting as he pleases. He has to wait until school gets over to play with Thor. He has to wait for Israel to get to school so he can tell him about his idea to work together on a project. He has to wait for Janie’s school play to take place so he can go back to spending afternoons with her at home.

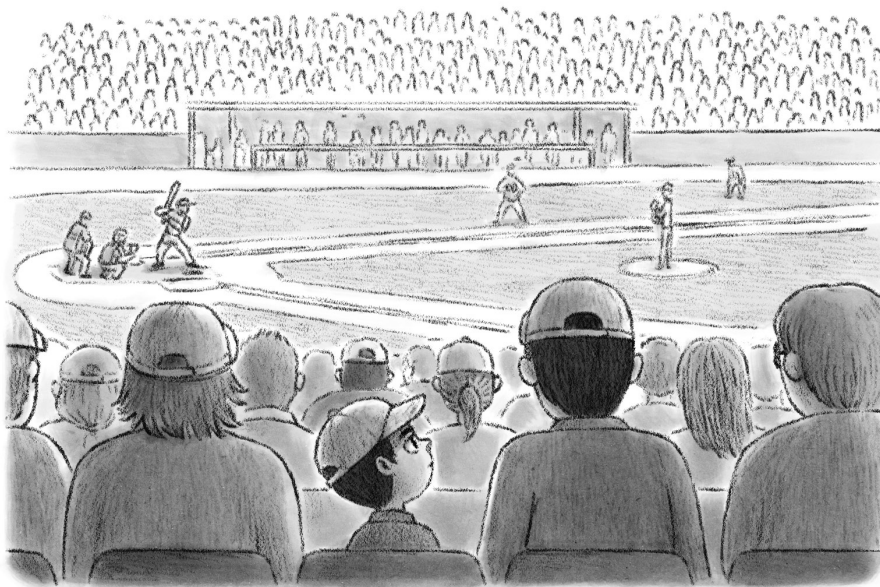
During the course of the story, Bat learns a bit about waiting, being patient, and thinking about other people. One such time is while he is sitting next to his father at a baseball game, waiting for it to end. And it seems like it never will end.

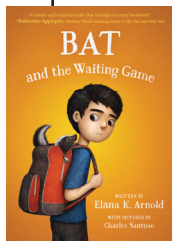
But then Bat’s father explains his favorite thing about baseball.

“It’s this. This, right here. Sitting next to someone I love, having a snack and something to drink....Spending time together. Being with you.”

[Bat] looked out across the field, not trying to keep track of the players or the score. Instead he tried to melt a little, like the cotton candy, and just be happy to be right there at the game with his dad. **(PAGE 88)**

When Bat’s father explains what he loves about baseball games, Bat relaxes for the first time that evening. He no longer feels impatient. What does he learn?



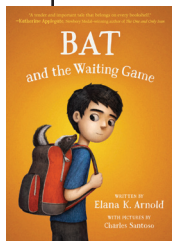


Points of View: Bat and Janie

Maybe, Bat thought, there was something better in the world than cradling a sleepy, just-fed baby skunk in your arms. But at this moment, it didn't seem likely. **(PAGE 1)**



The first sentence of the book tells you through whose eyes you will be experiencing this story. How do you know it is written from Bat's point of view?



Janie's point of view is shown when Bat makes the bad decision to bring Thor to her performance in a musical at school...and Thor escapes...AND sprays his skunk smell for the first time.

Chairs turned over as the audience rushed toward the exits. Bat, panicked, eyes stinging from the odor, dropped to the ground and felt around desperately for Thor.

Oh! What a mistake it had been to bring the kit!

Someone turned the lights on and Bat spied a black-and-white tail two rows up, sticking out from behind an overturned chair...

Bat blinked against the sudden light. He looked up. And there, on the stage, arms crossed, crown listing to one side, stood Janie. **(PAGES 150-151)**

Think about this situation from Janie's point of view. Write a journal entry as if you were Janie, after having her big moment spoiled by Thor and by Bat's bad decision to bring Thor to the play.

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning skills aren't graded in school. These skills include being patient, sticking to something until it is done, communicating clearly, finding a common interest with someone, listening well, and giving good feedback. Learning to use these skills can help someone be a good friend or family member.

Bat shows that he has these skills throughout the book. Here is one example:

With his thumb, Bat gently stroked the white strip of fur that ran up Thor's snout and over his head. Thor closed his shiny black eyes and it looked to Bat like he grinned, short milky whisker hairs curving upward. **(PAGES 17-18)**

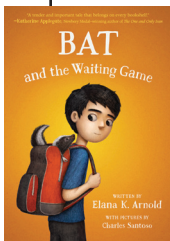
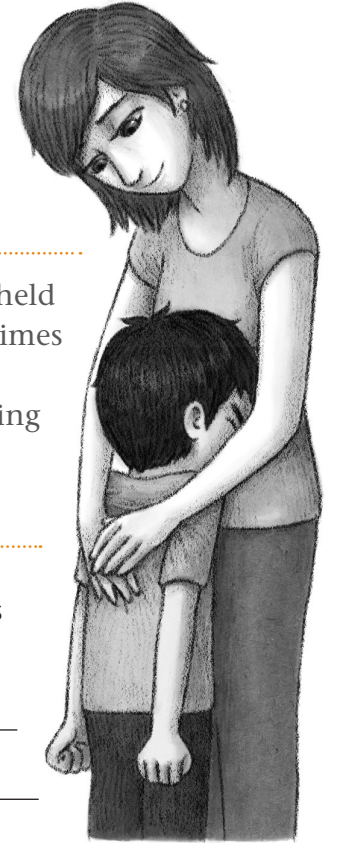
Bat learns to put aside some of his own wishes in order to be a better friend and kinder family member. What are some other scenes where Bat shows his social and emotional skills? Describe and discuss.

Each important person in Bat's life uses social and emotional skills to respond to him at one point or another in this story.

Here is an example of Bat's mom using her social and emotional skills:

Mom came around to his front and held out her arms. She knew that Bat sometimes didn't feel like being touched when he was upset, and this was her way of letting him know that she was there if he wanted a hug. **(PAGE 23)**

How does Bat's mom show her skills in this scene?



Social and Emotional Learning *continued*

Here is an example of Israel using his social and emotional skills:

Bat wondered if new, different mistakes would be better than the mistakes he had made — taking Thor to the play, ruining Janie’s big night, and not knowing how to be a better friend to Israel, maybe not being his friend anymore at all.

“Do you want some company?”

Bat looked up. It was Israel.

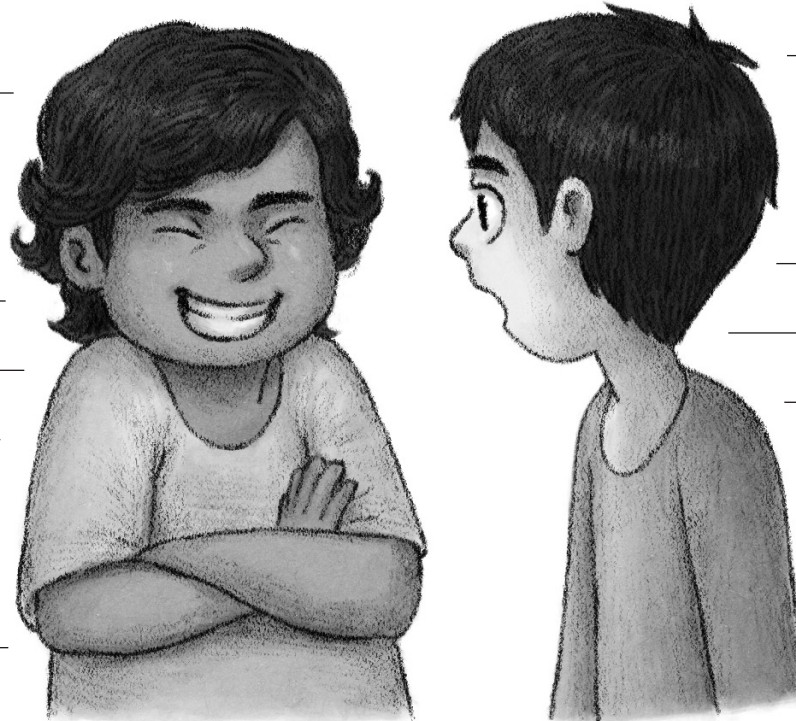
“I have company,” Bat said, petting Babycakes.

Israel sighed. “I know,” he said. “I meant human company.”

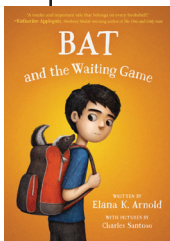
“Oh,” said Bat. “Yes. Actually, I would like *your* company.”

This made Israel smile. He climbed into the enclosure and sat down next to Bat.” (PAGES 161-162)

How does Israel show his skills in this scene?



List other scenes in this story when Bat or those closest to him use their social and emotional skills.

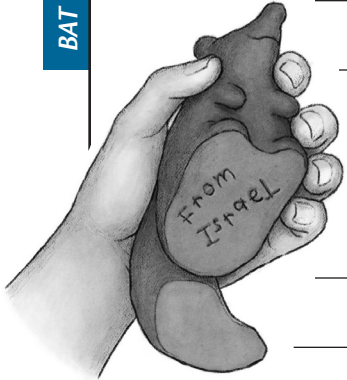


Favorite Things

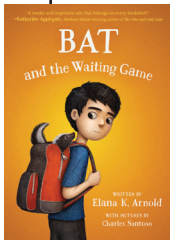
At the beginning of the book, Israel gives Bat a clay sculpture of Thor. At first, it takes Bat a moment to realize that is what it is. And then...

Bat had rubbed his thumb down the smooth shiny back of the clay lump...a warm good feeling spread through his chest and up his neck. **(PAGE 5)**

Why is this little lumpy clay skunk so special to Bat?



Write about, draw, or photograph an object special to you. Explain why it is special.



At the end of the book, Bat pulls the clay skunk out of his pocket to show Israel that he has it with him.

“Hey!” Israel whispered. “You’re carrying it! That’s so cool!” Bat grinned and rubbed his fingers along the clay lump, memorizing the way the words “From Israel” felt against his thumb. **(PAGE 173)**

Use three or four descriptive words to explain how Israel feels when he realizes Bat is carrying the clay skunk.

Then we learn:

Thor wasn’t with him, but Bat felt a sweet warmth in his chest, almost as if the skunk kit was cuddled there. **(PAGE 173)**

What does that description tell you about some ways Bat changes during the course of this story?
