Lovely Beasts: The Surprising Truth
by Kate Gardner, illustrated by Heidi Smith

Learn more about awe-inspiring animals in the wild: it’s best not to judge a beast until you understand its full, lovely life.


Read Across America this month:
Lovely Beasts will get students thinking about the wonder of biodiversity and how animals, like anything else, can be misunderstood. What do students know and what can they learn about the wildlife in their own community? To help students more fully understand the beauty, uniqueness, and value of local wildlife, take them on a walking field trip to a park or plan a visit to a nearby natural area to observe and identify local birds, animals, and insects. Get students working to help change perceptions of wild creatures in their community by:

• inviting a local naturalist or park ranger to read aloud about the amazing adaptations of local wildlife and generate ideas to break stereotypes with students
• creating masks that show the different sides of animals and performing Lovely Beasts as Reader’s Theater
• writing and sharing their own version of Lovely Beasts featuring animals in your community
Plan ahead for more Read Across America reading fun:

It can be a challenge to put internal biases aside. Help students learn a little about their own preconceptions when you ask them to judge a book by its cover. Provide books that students haven’t read and are not familiar with. Ask them to look only at the outside cover. Then, based on what they see, have them write down what they think the book is about, what the characters are like, and what’s going to happen. This can be a paragraph or a list. Next, have them read the book (or read the book aloud if you are doing this as a group activity) and then write down what the book was really about. Were their first impressions right? Have them talk about how their opinions changed and why it is important to see what’s inside before passing judgment. Use their informed opinions to create a recommended reading list to share for Read Across America.

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