

Educator Discussion Guide

MY LIFE IN PICTURES

By Deborah Zemke

Louisiana Young Reader's Choice Nominee 2018-2019

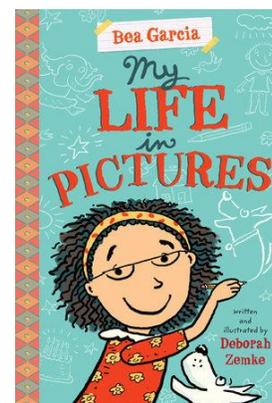
Grades 3-5

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Zemke's first book in her new series is a well-illustrated delight. Beatrice Holmes Garcia (Bea), a budding young artist, gives the reader a peek into a humorous and important stage of her life. The tale is wonderfully illustrated by Zemke and makes the reader feel as though Bea is sharing a portion of her journal. The reader is allowed to explore her experience with her Hispanic-American parents, her brother Pablo, and their dog Sophie. Readers can relate to Bea's wonderfully imaginative doodles as she deals with the loss of her best friend, the new school year, and annoying "monsters."



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah Zemke was born in Michigan and she attended York University in Ontario, Canada. Most of her career so far has been as an illustrator with over 40 books under her belt, 8 of which she authored herself. She creates greeting cards, promotional illustrations, packaging, and publishes fonts for ITC, and she has also produced a doodle app to go along with her many doodle books and card games. Her character Bea Garcia genuinely reflects much of her life's artwork. More of her art is showcased on her website.

Biographical Information is taken from

www.deborahzemke.com

<http://www.deborahzemke.com/deborahzemke/welcome.html>

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/authors/deborah-zemke/>

Accessed September 24, 2017

BOOK AWARDS

The New York Public Library Best of the Year Pick

OTHER TITLES IN SERIES

The Curse of Einstein's Pencil (June 6, 2017)

RELATED TITLES

Narwhal: Unicorn of the Sea, Ben Clanton, Tundra Books, 2016, 64 pages, Eisner Award 2017, Best Publication for Early Readers

My Pet Human, Yasmine Surovec, Square Fish, 2016, 128 pages,

Amelia's Notebook, Marissa Moss, Tricycle Press, 1995, 32 pages

The Judy Moody Totally Awesome Collection Megan McDonald, Candlewick Press, 2007 960 pages (entire collection)

PRE READING ACTIVITIES

Author Recommended Activities

Please see www.deborahzemke.com/files/yourlifeinpictures.pdf

Become the illustrator

Have students illustrate something that happened to them yesterday that they remember distinctly. Students should add text to describe what happened yesterday.

What would you do?

Have students write a letter to their best friend, as if their best friend has moved to a distant country. Give the students an imaginary address so they can actually “mail” the letters.

Technology Alternative: use <https://www.penpalschools.com/> to connect your students to a pen pal they can talk with about specific topics that you can choose and oversee.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How similar are your class rules to Mrs. Grogan's “good behavior rules?”
2. You are a journalist and have to tweet about the book you just read. How would you describe the book using only 140 characters? Make sure to reference the text.
3. Sophie is a prominent character in the book. Uses one moment from the book and in one paragraph describe how the book would read if it were from Sophie's perspective.
4. There are many moments in the book where Judith Einstein could have helped by not being a bystander. Find one moment in the text and explain how you would have helped stop Bert from bullying Bea.
5. Describe what happened while Bea is in “the lowest place on Earth.”
6. Bea uses the word “rotten” many times to describe how she is feeling. Explain this feeling using the text to back up your reasoning.

7. Bea could have avoided being found out by Mrs. Grogan. How would you have avoided getting into trouble if you were Bea?
8. The book does not describe Bert's home life very much. With the text, find as much information about him as you can, then form an opinion about Bert's home life. Make sure your conclusion is supported by the text.
9. If you had a pen pal in Australia, how far would that letter have to travel to reach your pen pal? With programs like <https://www.penpalschools.com/index.html>, you can communicate with people in Australia just like Bea.
10. Have you ever been upset because someone bullied you? What actions caused those feelings? How did you respond to those feelings? Answering these questions could be an excellent way to talk about positive approaches to dealing with difficult emotions like Bea felt when being badgered by Bert.
11. We all have our ideas of how new experiences might go. Through any form of expression (i.e., acting, drawing, writing) share with the class how you feel about going to a brand new school, moving on to a new teacher, moving to a new home, or getting new neighbors.
12. Bea's parents say that she can visit Yvonne in Melbourne. Explore the city of Melbourne's tourist events webpage to find some things they might do for fun there.
<https://whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx>
13. Bert does many things to get Bea's attention. Find one instance and rewrite the story so that Bert could interact with Bea and not come off as a "monster."
14. Bea stands out in her class thanks to her talent for drawing and sees herself as a famous artist 15 years from now. What are some abilities that you have that make you stand out from the crowd? Where could your talent take you in 15 years?
15. Bea is writing and illustrating an autobiography, or a term called "life writing." Life writing is describing your personal life; it can be something simple like a journal. Take time to make a detailed, "life writing." It can be something you share with the class or keep private.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

English Language Arts:

- *My Life in Pictures* is a story of a time in Beatrice Garcia's life. Have students read the novel and create their own narrative. Use any of the three graphic organizers found at Scholastic to help them guide their ideas of their life story.
<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/genia-connell/graphic-organizers-personal-narratives/>
- In Chapter 8 the students explore the most extreme places on earth. Using Google Earth (<https://www.google.com/earth/>), check out the places together both in "street view" and from above as a class. Compare Bea's illustrations to what you find in your search. (Challenger Deep is now the lowest discovered point on earth)

- The Garcia family, Yvonne, Bert, Mrs. Grogan, and Einstein are all characters that are introduced in *My Life in Pictures*. Using a comparison chart of Bert and Bea, have students describe the characters, settings, and actions. Students may handwrite a chart or the chart below can be used.

Technology Alternative: Students will create character scrapbooks of Bea and Bert after a class discussion of character descriptions <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/teaching-content/character-scrapbook-teachers-guide/>

	Bea	Bert
Description -What traits does the character have? -What is the character think of the other?		
Setting -Where does the story take place? -Where do the characters travel to?		
Events -What important things happen in the story to the character?		

- Have students create their own character scrapbook. (See Part III Lesson Directions). <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/teaching-content/character-scrapbook-teachers-guide/>

Social Studies:

At the end of Chapter 11, Bea receives a letter from Yvonne with their addresses written on the front of the envelope. Using Google Maps (<https://www.google.com/maps>) calculate the distance from Bea’s house to Melbourne, Australia in miles.

Visual Arts:

Using the prompts from the author recommended activities at <http://www.deborahzemke.com/files/yourlifeinpictures.pdf> students create a picture of a day in their life or specific moments in the present compared to 15 years from now.

Vocabulary:

Hovel	Pacific Ocean
Nuestra casa	Mount Everest
Crabapple	Himalayan Mountains
Abominable	Nepal
Australia	Death Valley
Explorer	Antarctica
Einstein	Cyclone
Mariana Trench	Melbourne

RELATED WEB SITES

Deborah Zemke

<http://www.deborahzemke.com>

Deborah Zemke's website links to her books, and additional activities for the book are available.

Your Life In Pictures

<http://www.deborahzemke.com/files/yourlifeinpictures.pdf>

PDF of author-generated activity to go along with the book.

Google Earth

<https://www.google.com/earth/>

Google produced map of the earth. In parts of the world, there are interactive experiences and "street views" to best see the world from up close no matter where you are.

PenPal Schools

<https://www.penpalschools.com/>

Free (or paid) program that connects you with other school-aged students from across the globe. With different projects students are assigned specific topics about which to communicate with their pen pals. Teachers can join a project and assign as many students as they wish.