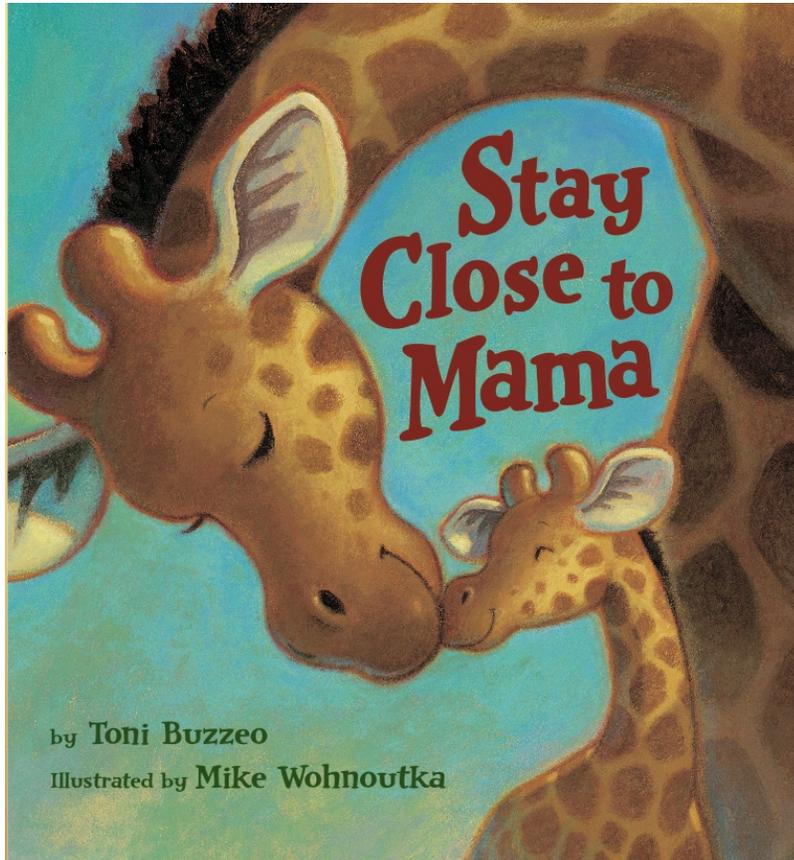


## ***STAY CLOSE TO MAMA*** **CURRICULUM GUIDE**



### ***Stay Close to Mama***

by Toni Buzzeo; illustrated by Mike Wohnoutka  
Hyperion Books for Children, 2012

## **Author Toni Buzzeo**

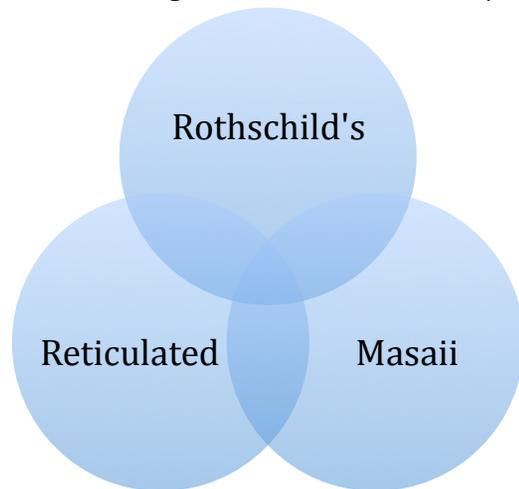


Toni Buzzeo is the *New York Times* Best Selling children's author of sixteen picture books with three more forthcoming. For sixteen years, she worked as a school librarian in Portland where she honed her knowledge of children's literature. Combining this knowledge with her love of children, Toni writes about characters of all stripes (including giraffes, dinosaurs, loons, ducklings, kids, teachers, and librarians) who explore their worlds, their relationships, and themselves in settings that include East African savannahs, peaceful Maine lakes, rocky lighthouse islands, as well as aquariums and the interiors of fictional public and school libraries. Toni is well known for her lively spirit and her sense of humor.

## GIRAFFE INVESTIGATIONS

There are three subspecies of giraffes in Kenya. Ask students to examine the photographs of these three types of giraffes at The Rothschild's Giraffe Project website <http://www.girafferesearch.com/#/giraffe-subspecies/4537723666> to determine which type of giraffe Twiga is. (Twiga is a Rothschild's giraffe.)

Then, ask your students to undertake an exploration of giraffes. Read resources aloud to very young children or let older children explore on their own, asking them to be on the lookout for interesting facts about the animal's body, its behavior, and its status in the wild. Post facts about giraffes around a triple bubble diagram that includes a drawing of each of the subspecies.



An excellent source of information is the San Diego Zoo website at <http://www.sandiegozoo.org/animalbytes/t-giraffe.html>.

## WHO LIVES ON THE SAVANNAH?

Twiga and his mother live on the East African savannah in Kenya with many other animals, some of which we meet in *Stay Close to Mama*. Beginning with giraffes, ask students to make a list of all of the animals they see in the book. When the list is complete, choose one animal at a time to explore further. First, ask children what they know about the animal by carefully examining the illustrations and re-reading the text. Now, using child-friendly websites (such as Cheetah Kids <http://www.cheetahkids.com/> or National Geographic Kids Creature Feature about the spotted hyena <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/animals/creaturefeature/spotted-hyenas/>) and nonfiction books from the library collection, explore further information about each of the animals in the book.

## SO CURIOUS

Curiosity is an important giraffe trait in this story because it is curiosity that makes Twiga wander away from his mama and land in dangerous situations. Like Twiga, children are also intensely curious.

Begin this activity by creating a list of things that students are curious about. Give each child a turn to complete the phrase:

*I am curious about . . . or I am curious to know . . .*

Once each child has had a chance to list at least three things he/she is curious about, plan an expedition to the library nonfiction shelves or an adult-and-child visit to the Internet to find information that will satisfy the child's curiosity.

If time allows, invite each child to draw a picture of what he/she learned and, if he/she is developmentally ready, to write a sentence or a paragraph about that new knowledge on a sheet labeled

\_\_\_\_\_ WAS SO CURIOUS!  
(name)

## FOLLOW YOUR NOSE

Throughout Twiga's trek through the savannah, his mother follows him and warns him to avoid danger. Begin this activity by introducing or reviewing directional prepositions. Then, re-read the story and record each of these words that you find on a matrix with their modifying noun phrase following it as follows:

beneath	the bright yellow sun
in	the high dry grass
under	his tall, tall mama

Now, create a savannah "map" on the wall. Hang a large sheet of chart paper on which you draw or glue a picture of a termite mound, a downward slope, a whistling thorn tree, a water hole beneath a long slope, a crocodile in the water hole, and a sausage tree with a cheetah in the branches.

Also, create a series of oaktag strips on which you write all of the prepositional phrases from your chart. Then, with the book closed, read out one directional prepositional phrase at a time, in order, and ask students to place the oaktag strip on the savannah "map" using the directional prepositional phrases as clues.

## GET MOVING!

Build on the Follow Your Nose activity by giving kids an opportunity to move while following directions. First, create a duplicate chart that lists only the directional prepositions. Ask kids to brainstorm a modifying noun phrase that makes sense if you are outside on the playground or at a nearby field or park. For instance, "under the climber" or "beneath the oak tree."

Then, once you are outside, instruct kids to follow your verbal directions as you read out the directional prepositional phrases they have created.

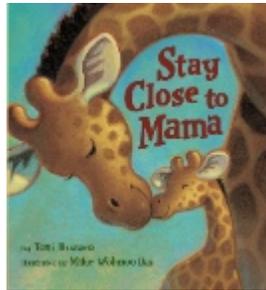
To further extend the activity, ask each child to create a list of directional phrases that will take the group on a journey in an approved location, whether inside the school building, around the neighborhood (if you are in a city school), or in the play yard. On the day that his or her directions are chosen, allow that child to be the leader of the activity, reading out directions for his/her classmates to follow.

## STAY CLOSE, STAY SAFE

Every parent tries to keep a child safe from danger—and every child pushes the limits sometimes, wandering away to explore. Begin a conversation with students in which you ask them to recall the things they weren't allowed to do when they were toddlers and preschoolers because their parents considered them to be unsafe. Make a list.

Now discuss which things continue to be dangerous. Place a check next to the items on the list that their parents still don't want them to do and list possible negative consequences.

## SIX TRAIT WRITING GUIDE



### *Stay Close to Mama*

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#### **IDEAS: How Do Ideas Change?**

Toni Buzzeo's original story was about a young giraffe who fell into a swimming pool in Kenya, Africa, and had to be rescued by the humans living at the wildlife ranch. It was based on a real event the author learned about on a trip to Kenya. But as students will see, there's no sign of a swimming pool in *Stay Close to Mama*. Share the author's original idea with students and ask them how it changed to become a part of this story of several dangerous adventures. (Clue: the swimming pool incident became the water hole scene.) Then challenge students to discuss why the author might have decided to revise her original story.

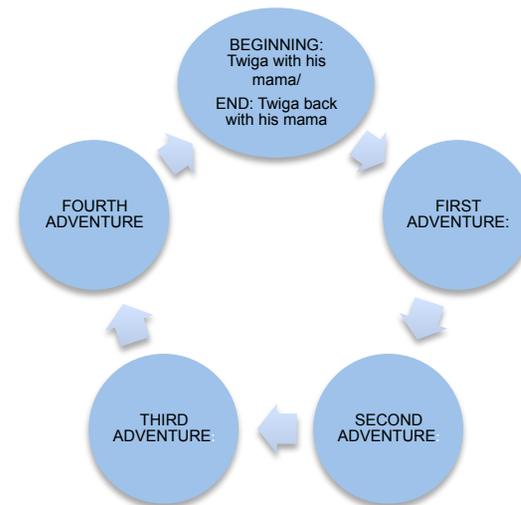
#### **VOICE: How It Feels to Me**

While the stinging ants, hyena, crocodile, and cheetah are portrayed as threats to Twiga in the book, each of them is an interesting animal in its own right, worth investigation. Share information about each of the other animals in the story with children. Once they are more familiar with each of the other animals in the story, ask them, individually or as a whole group, to write a scene, narrated by a chosen animal, in which that animal encounters Twiga.

#### **ORGANIZATION: All Over Again**

Much like the author's other circular story, *No T. Rex in the Library*, the reader suspects that there are other, similar adventures ahead for Twiga. Ask students which line at the end of the story tells them that Twiga has more adventures in store and Mama shouldn't be too sure he's by her side to stay.

Invite students to complete the following "circular story" graphic organizer, identifying and then adding each dangerous encounter in the story



#### **SENTENCE FLUENCY: Three-Four-Five**

Ask students if they can find a sequence of sentences in *Stay Close to Mama* that have the following pattern:

Three words

Four words

Five words

Do students find these sentences enjoyable to repeat aloud? Ask them why they think that is. Then, invite them to rewrite the three sentences in a more ordinary, conversational manner, using many more words. Is the they have created more or less fun to repeat aloud? Why?

**WORD CHOICE: Interesting Verbs/Descriptive Adjectives**

Author Toni Buzzeo employs two types of words to bring the setting and the action of *Stay Close to Mama* to life. She employs specific verbs and verb phrases to deliver the action of the story. Then, she uses specific adjectives to bring the setting and characters into clear focus.

Take your students on two successive tours of the story, scouting first for verbs (adding a star to those that are especially strong) and then for adjectives (again adding a star to especially well-chosen ones). Finally, invite your students to choose one strong verb and one or more especially descriptive adjectives and create a sentence of their own.

**CONVENTIONS: Insert a Comma**

Whenever Toni Buzzeo introduces a sentence with a prepositional phrase that refers to direction (such as "Up ahead, . . .") she follows the phrase with a comma. Re-read the story, searching for these phrases and create a list. Now, ask students to create a sentence of their own that begins with one of these phrases followed by a comma.