

A Common Core Teaching Guide for
THE DAY DIRK YELLER CAME TO TOWN
Kindergarten – Grade Three

The Day Dirk Yeller Came to Town

Written by Mary Casanova

Illustrated by Ard Hoyt

Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011

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Awards and Recognition

2013 [Kansas' Bill Martin Jr. Award](#) winner!

2014 Missouri's [Show-Me Award](#) master list

2014 Arizona's [Grand Canyon Reader](#) master list

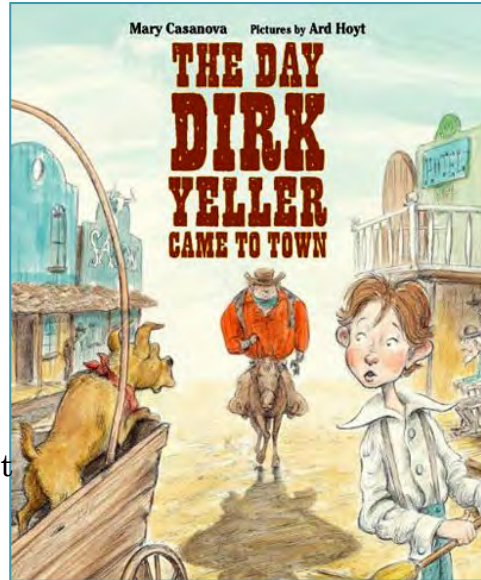
2014 Arkansas' [Diamond Award](#) master list

2014 Minnesota's [Star of the North](#) master list

2012-13 [Florida State Reading List Book Award](#) master list

2013 Montana's [Treasure State Award](#) nominee

2013-14 [South Carolina Picture Book Award](#) nominee



A Peek Inside

The day Dirk Yeller came to town, the wind curled its lip, cattle quit lowin', and tumbleweeds stopped tumblin' along.

Townfolk whispered. "He starts stampedes!"

"He holds up trains!"

"He's trouble!"

When Dirk Yeller scours the town for something to stop his itchin' and twitchin' and jumpin' and rattlin', no one seems able to help. But Sam, who's been following Dirk all day—and who can sometimes be a little fidgety, too—knows the perfect solution.

**Common Core State Standards: Reading Literature Standards
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS**

STANDARD 1

Standard K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

Standard 1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

Standard 2.1 Ask and answer such questions as *who, what, where, when, why,* and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

Standard 3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

Kindergarten and First Grade: Which details in the story do you think are most important? Name one key detail and tell why it is important.

Second Grade: Answer some of these questions about the key details in the text:

- ◇ **Who** is the main character?
- ◇ **Who** are two other important characters?
- ◇ **What** are people worried about when Dirk Yeller comes to town?
- ◇ **Where** does Dirk Yeller go in the town?
- ◇ **When** does Sam realize he ought to do something to help Dirk?
- ◇ **Why** does Sam follow Dirk through town?
- ◇ **How** does Sam help to save the day?

Third Grade: Answer the questions above. For each answer, refer explicitly to the text as a basis for your answers.

STANDARD 3

Standard K.3 With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

Standard 1.3 Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

Standard 2.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

Standard 3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Kindergarten: Who are the two main characters in the story? Who are the other characters? Where does the story take place? List the major events of the story.

First Grade: Who are the two main characters in the story and what sort of people are they? Cite key details from the book that support your claim. Where does the story take place? Describe it using key details from the text and illustrations. Describe the major events of the story using key details from the text and illustrations.

Second Grade: Describe how Sam, Dirk Yeller, and Miss Jenny respond to major events and challenges. For example, how did Dirk present himself when he first arrived in town? How did he respond to the book Miss Jenny gave him at the library? How did Sam respond to Dirk's arrival and the poor reception he received at each destination? How did Miss Jenny respond to the arrival of Dirk and Sam? Cite specific examples from the text to support your claims.

Third Grade: Describe the two main characters in the story, Dirk Yeller and the narrator, Sam. What are their major traits? Are they alike or different? What motivates each of them? How do the actions of Dirk Yeller contribute to the sequence of events in the story? Does Sam ever influence the sequence of events? Cite specific examples from the text to support your claims.

STANDARD 4

Standard K.4 Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

Standard 1.4 Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

Standard 2.4 Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.

Standard 3.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

Kindergarten: Notice that author Mary Casanova uses language from the old West and that these words often drop the final 'g' and use an apostrophe in its place. Which words in the story were unfamiliar to you? Can you guess at their meaning because of the other words in the sentence or the illustrations? Check your guesses in a print or online dictionary.

First Grade: Are there words in the story that express feelings? Which words indicate that Dirk is ornery? Which words indicate that Sam, the narrator, is curious? Are there words that appeal to the senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, or touching)? Can you point out specific details in the illustrations that are related to the senses?

Second Grade: Does author Mary Casanova use particular repeated words, phrases, or ways of speaking that supply meaning to the story? How does the use of words from which the final ‘g’ has been dropped and replaced with an apostrophe affect the meaning of the story?

Third Grade: Make a list of the many unusual phrases author Mary Casanova uses in the story (for example: *you’re a world-o’-trouble* and *curious as a tomcat*). Discuss their meaning and whether they are literal or nonliteral.

STANDARD 5

Standard K.5 Recognize common types of texts, e.g. storybooks, poems).

Standard 1.5 Explain major differences between books that tell stories and books that give information, drawing on a wide reading of a range of text types.

Standard 2.5 Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

Standard 3.5 Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.

Kindergarten: What kind of text is *The Day Dirk Yeller Came to Town*? Is it fiction, informational, poetry, or some other kind of text?

First Grade: What are the differences between *The Day Dirk Yeller Came to Town* and an informational book about the Old West or about libraries?

Second Grade: Describe the overall structure of the story. How does the text on the first two double-page spreads introduce the action? How does the text on the final two double-page spreads bring the story to a satisfying conclusion? What role do illustrator Ard Hoyt’s illustrations play in each?

Third Grade: List the major scenes in the story and tell how each successive scene builds on earlier scenes toward a satisfying conclusion.

STANDARD 6

Standard K.6 With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story

Standard 1.6 Identify who is telling the story at various points in a text.

Standard 2.6 Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

Standard 3.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

Kindergarten: Who is the author of *The Day Dirk Yeller Came to Town*? What was her job in making this book? Who is the illustrator of *The Day Dirk Yeller Came to Town*? What was his job in making this book? Where can you find the names of the author and the illustrator in a book?

First Grade: Revisit the story and re-read the first few pages. Who is telling the story? How can you tell? Does this **narrator** remain the same throughout the story?

Second Grade: Revisit the story and read the first several pages aloud. Change your voice when you read the lines in which Dirk speaks. Now discuss the ways in which the story would change if, instead of Sam narrating the story, Dirk were telling the same story.

Third Grade: Discuss **first-person narration**. When a story is told in first-person, whose point of view do we hear? In *The Day Dirk Yeller Came to Town*, whose point of view do we hear the story told from? Is it different from your point of view? If you were telling the story from your own point of view, how would you tell it?

STANDARD 7

Standard K.7 With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

Standard 1.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

Standard 2.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

Standard 3.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

Kindergarten: Revisit each double-page spread in the book. Describe which moments in the story each illustration shows.

First Grade: Relying on both the text and the illustrations, describe Sam, Dirk, and Miss Jenny, the town and its various locations, and the events of the story.

Second Grade: Explain how specific illustrations, in combination with the accompanying text, help you to understand the characters, setting, and plot of *The Day Dirk Yeller Came to Town*.

Third Grade: Closely examine specific aspects of the illustrations in *The Day Dirk Yeller Came to Town* and explain how they extend the message conveyed by the text. Do they create a particular mood? Do they emphasize traits of the characters? Do they help you to understand specific features of the setting?

Common Core State Standards: Speaking Standards DISCUSSION PROMPTS

STANDARD 2

Standard K.2 Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

Standard 1.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

Standard 2.2 Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

Standard 3.2 Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Kindergarten: What happened in the story? Which character or characters had a problem? How was the problem solved? Do you have additional questions about the story that you’d like to ask? What don’t you understand?

First and Second Grade: What happened in the story? Which character or characters had a problem? How was the problem solved? In what ways are Sam and Dirk alike? Refer to key details in the story to support your claims.

Third Grade: What is the main idea of the story? Which supporting details lead you to that conclusion?

Common Core State Standards Writing Standards WRITING PROMPTS

STANDARD 1

Standard K.1 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book (e.g., *My favorite book is . . .*).

Standard 1.1 Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure.

Standard 2.1 Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., *because, and, also*) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.

Standard 3.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

1. Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure that lists reasons.
2. Provide reasons that support the opinion.
3. Use linking words and phrases (e.g., *because, therefore, since, for example*) to connect opinion and reasons.
4. Provide a concluding statement or section.

Kindergarten: Through drawing and dictating or writing, create an opinion piece about *The Day Dirk Yeller Came to Town*, naming the book by title and stating your opinion of it.

First Grade: Write an opinion piece about *The Day Dirk Yeller Came to Town*, naming the book by title. Did you like the book? Why or why not? Include this opinion. End with a concluding sentence that draws your paragraph to a close.

Second and Third Grade: Write an opinion piece about *The Day Dirk Yeller Came to Town*, naming the book by title. State your opinion of the book and offer clear reasons that support that opinion, using linking words such as: *because, therefore, since, for example, and also*. Write a concluding sentence that restates your opinion.