

# The Clever Stick

by John Lechner

## Classroom Activities

The stick has always been clever: it has solved difficult problems, enjoyed poetry, and pondered the music of birds and the beauty of a rose. The one thing it can't do is speak. And because of this, no one can see that the stick is clever; all they can see is a stick.

Is it enough for a stick to be sharp if he can't share his thoughts?

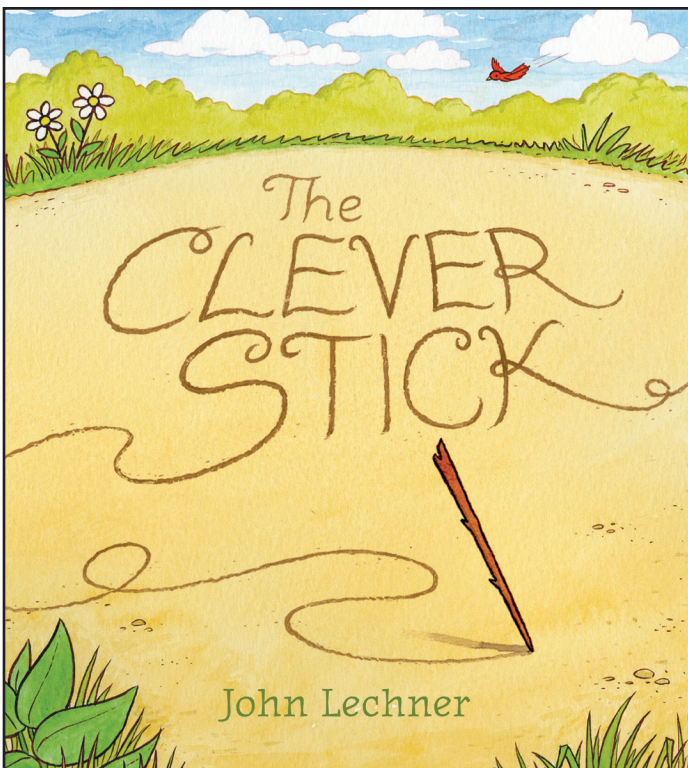
This sweet, simple fable about finding one's voice will inspire creative minds of all ages.

Here are some ideas for sharing it in your classroom.

## Discussion Questions and Activities for Students

The following exercises for individual students may be done in class or at home, in writing or as a discussion. Feel free to adapt instructions accordingly.

- View the front and back cover of *The Clever Stick*. What do you think this story is about? How does the style of lettering give you a clue?
- Can you think of any other stories that begin with the words "Once upon a time"? What genre often uses this phrase? What does this tell you about *The Clever Stick*?
- What does it mean to be clever? Think of some synonyms for *clever*.
- The word *sharp* is an example of a homonym, a word that has more than one meaning. What are the different meanings of the word *sharp*? Can you think of other words that are homonyms?
- List all the clever things that the Clever Stick does in this book.



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- The Clever Stick wonders about his surroundings: “He would listen to the singing of the birds and wonder what made it sound so beautiful.”
  - Walk outside your classroom or house and view your surroundings. Can you think of any questions related to what you see? For example: Why are there clouds today? What type of tree is that? How are the buildings made?
  - How would you go about answering the questions you have come up with? Make a list of possible research methods and explain what you would do to answer the questions you have raised.
- The Clever Stick cannot speak. Why do you think communication is important? Think of some different ways that we communicate. If one of these ways were taken away, how else could we communicate? How would that make you feel?
- The Clever Stick describes the “sun being like a dragon.” This is an example of a simile, a figure of speech comparing two things using the words *like* or *as*. Try your hand at writing some similes for objects at home or around the classroom.
- Create your own drawing using simple lines. What story does your drawing tell?
- What are the different ways that the animals, trees, insects, and flowers communicate their approval to the Clever Stick? If you needed to communicate an emotion such as approval, dislike, happiness, sadness, or anger to someone who didn’t speak the same language as you, how would you do this?



## Discussion Questions for Small Groups

Divide the class into small groups and invite each group to discuss the following questions:

- How does the Clever Stick overcome his problem? Have you ever felt upset because you have not been able to achieve something? Discuss some possible problem-solving techniques. What could you do to help yourself overcome a challenging situation?
- Have you ever wanted to tell somebody something and couldn’t, either because you have felt too shy or haven’t been able to find the right words? Discuss how this makes you feel. Are there any things you could do or say to help overcome this situation?

## As a Class

Here is a fun game that students may play in the classroom using pens and paper, or outside using chalk on a blacktop or a stick in the sand or dirt. Invite students to list a designated number of nouns, writing each word on a separate piece of paper and folding the papers in half so the words are not visible. Divide the class into pairs. Ask each pair to randomly select one of the pieces of paper. One person in each pair looks at the word on the paper, then draws it (using no speech). The other person in the pair tries to guess what the drawing represents and figure out what the word is. In the following turn, the roles are reversed, until all the words are used.



## About the Author-Illustrator

**John Lechner** is an artist, animator, multimedia designer, puppeteer, and author-illustrator of the picture book *A Froggy Fable* and the graphic storybooks *Sticky Burr: Adventures in Burrwood Forest* and *Sticky Burr: The Prickly Peril*. He lives in Massachusetts.