



Why a Kite Needs a Tail

Extending the Student Reading by Writing & Discussing

1. Extend a discussion of how animal tails function with any of a number of books.

- For primary students, Dorothy Hinshaw Patent's *What Good Is a Tail?* (1994) is very useful as a teacher read-aloud, with good photographs by William Muñoz. Particularly helpful are her points about how birds with long tails use them to steer, soar, and brake.
- Young students will enjoy the guessing-game format of *Animal Tails* (2001) by Ken Kawata and *If I Had a Tail* (2001) by Karen Clemens Warrick. Warrick uses a poem-like structure to introduce each animal: "If I had a tail / a tail like a ... / another line of description / an action / I'd be a... . Use this format to compose a class poem about the tail on a kite.
- In *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* by Steve Jenkins & Robin Page (2003), tails are one of six body parts whose functions are described. The guessing game is fun, the illustrations engaging, and pages in the back give more information about the different animals. This book is useful for emphasizing the tail as one part of the body that contributes to the functioning of the whole.

2. Assemble different kinds of paper, ribbon, yarn, or rags from which kite tails could be made. Reinforce the point from the reading that a kite gains stability more from the length than from the weight of the tail.

3. Discuss as variables the situations mentioned in the reading in which a kite does not need a tail: when other design features provide stability, and when the kite flier wants unstable kite flight. Compare to how human beings function without a tail.