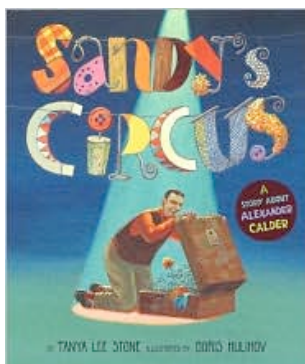


SANDY'S CIRCUS: A STORY ABOUT ALEXANDER CALDER

By Tanya Lee Stone, Illustrated by Boris Kulikov

READING/TEACHER'S GUIDE



ABOUT THE BOOK

Alexander Calder, or Sandy to those who knew him, was a joyous playful man who did not call himself an artist. But oh, what an artist he was! His gigantic, colorful metal sculptures and his amazing mobiles can be seen in public places all over the world. One of his first creations was a wonderful, whimsical circus that he made out of found materials such as wire, cork, and paper.

Imagine a big bear of a man down on his hands and knees, making his clever creations leap, run, and dance to the delight of everyone who watched.

This is the story of Sandy's magical, moveable circus.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tanya Lee Stone began her career in publishing as a children's book editor, developing and editing hundreds of nonfiction books for kids. She was an editor for 13 years before becoming a writer. Since then this award-winning author has written nearly 90 books for young readers including Young Adult fiction, nonfiction, and picture books. *Elizabeth Leads the Way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Right to Vote* received starred reviews and was named a Top Ten Youth Biography and Best New Books of 2008. *Sandy's Circus* and *Up Close: Ella Fitzgerald* have also earned starred reviews. Other recent books include *Abraham Lincoln*, *Amelia Earhart*, and *Laura Ingalls Wilder*.



Forthcoming books include *Barbie: For Better, For Worse*, which will examine the history of the Barbie doll and girl culture in America, a picture book about Elizabeth Blackwell, the first female doctor in America, and *Almost Astronauts: 13 Women Who Dared to Dream*. About her, *Publishers Weekly* says: "Stone fires up readers."

Author's website: www.tanyastone.com

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Boris Kulikov is an award-winning illustrator, painter, and costume designer. Some of his books include *The Castle on Hester Street* by Linda Heller, *The By Who Cried Wolf* by B.G. Hennessy, and *The Giants of Science* series by Kathleen Krull. A graduate of the Institute of Theatre, Music And Cinema in St. Petersburg, Russia, Boris has lived and worked in Brooklyn, New York, since 1997.

To learn more about Boris Kulikov and his work, please visit the Illustrator's website:
www.boriskulikov.com

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

Q: What first inspired you to write about Alexander Calder?

A: Ever since I was a kid, I've been intrigued by Alexander Calder and his art. He was an artist who didn't call himself an artist. He trusted that voice inside. He didn't set out do something "important"—he was simply playing and following his own instincts. I think that is such a cool concept to share with kids so they can see how much their own play matters.

Q: What was your biggest challenge in writing this book?

A: My greatest challenge was containing such an enormous spirit and life in one picture book story. The circus was the key to being able to do that. Calder's passion for his art was contagious and sparked my fire for writing this book. I hope *Sandy's Circus* sparks kids to trust their instincts as they shape their lives as their own.

Q: What was your favorite part of the research?

A: Definitely going to New York City and looking at the circus exhibit at the Whitney Museum, and watching the movie of Alexander Calder actually performing his circus. I also loved reading all about his life and what a character he was. And discovering that he INVENTED the mobile! I mean, think about that, without Calder there would not be mobiles above baby cribs! Amazing.



PRE-READING:

- ∞ What do you think this story is about? What makes you think so?
- ∞ In what time era do you think this takes place? Why?
- ∞ What role does art play in your life?
- ∞ What is your favorite kind of art to make?

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

- ∞ What kind of jobs did Sandy have before he decided to become an artist?
- ∞ How did Sandy's parents help him on his path to becoming an artist?
- ∞ Why do you think Sandy went to Paris?

- ∞ What kind of a person do you think Sandy was? Support your ideas with evidence from the book.
- ∞ What do you think it meant when someone said his art "has the force of an ocean?"
- ∞ If you could be any kind of artist when you grow up, what kind of artist would you be?
- ∞ Do you think playing is important? Why?

PROJECTS

(can be combined for multiple curriculum connections):



ART

Collect re-usable materials from home and school that you could use for an art project. Think about the materials Sandy used and add some new items to that repertoire.

Create a sculpture using your found materials. If you like, your sculpture could reflect an environmental theme—but it doesn't have to because the green materials you are using already make your art project environmentally friendly!

If an entire class makes art from found materials (or school), alert the media and put together a gallery showing of your green art.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Using the first part of the Art project, collect found materials to use. You may want to choose smaller items as Calder did. One or two larger pieces can also work. Now use the materials you have gathered to create your own character. It can be a person, animal, or any kind of fantastical creature you can imagine.

Once you have created your character, tell us about it. Is it a girl or boy, an animal, or an imaginary creature? What is its name, where does it live, what does it eat? Write or share a short description of your character.

To extend this activity, kids can write a short story based on their character. They can even gather with other kids and put on a play using several of the characters. Perhaps you will even put on your own circus act!

HISTORY

Alexander Calder started to make his circus in Paris during the 1920s. Go to the library to see what else you can learn about Paris during this time. Share what you find with your classmates.

Calder was not the only artist changing the art world at this time. Use the resources in your library to find out about another artist and their work. Share what you find with your classmates.

SCIENCE

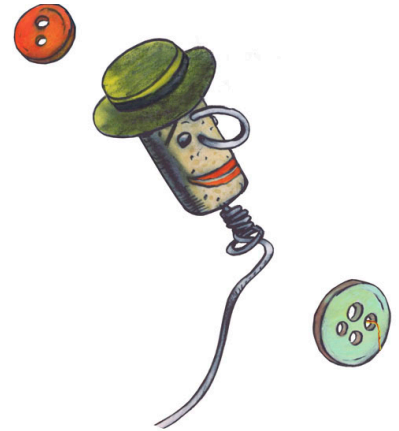
Do you think Alexander Calder's background in engineering helped him with his career in art? How?

What are found materials? How can found art help the environment? Find out what your school's recycling program is and how you can help. Are there any materials your school sends off to a recycling center that the school could re-use instead?

What do you do at home to recycle? Can you re-use any of the materials you collect instead of recycling them?

Sandy's Circus: A Story about Alexander Calder has received:

- ∞ Starred Review, *Kirkus*: "The lively text shines with apt details."
- ∞ Starred Review, *School Library Journal*: "Stone and Kulikov spin out a fast-moving tale that is in keeping with their high-energy subject."
- ∞ *Horn Book*: "Stone's narrative is as animated as Calder's figures...Kulikov's [art] vibrant with energy and color...would pair interestingly with [Brian] Selznick's *Hugo Cabret*."
- ∞ *Booklist*: "beautifully illustrated...spare, direct...Kulikov's elegant, fanciful multimedia collages extend the story...will ignite curiosity in Calder."
- ∞ A Junior Library Guild Selection
- ∞ A 2008 New York Public Library's 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing list.



This guide was written by Tanya Lee Stone and Mollie Coons. All art © Boris Kulikov, 2008