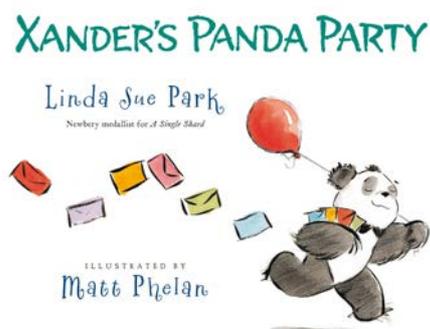




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XANDER'S PANDA PARTY

Written by Linda Sue Park
Illustrated by Matt Phelan



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising primary school teacher librarian
in context with the Australian Curriculum

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SYNOPSIS

Xander is planning a party. After inviting all of the bears in the zoo, he soon realises that the other animals want to come too. Should he invite the marsupials? The birds? The reptiles? In a story that explores friendship and inclusion, Xander sends more and more invitations as his guest list continues to grow and grow!

This is a delightful story that introduces readers not only to the animal kingdom but to the fluidity of social boundaries.

THEMES

Friendship:

- Xander invites all of his friends to his party; he is inclusive.
- Xander is friends with many different types of animals.

Animals:

- Readers are introduced to the animal kingdom.
- Symbiosis is introduced.
- Humans are part of the animal kingdom.

Poetry:

- The text uses poetic devices including rhyme and alliteration.

WRITING STYLE

Xander's Panda Party is written in third person, past tense. It uses the poetic devices of rhyme and alliteration. Younger readers will easily identify with Xander and his plight to have a wonderful party with *all* of his friends.

STUDY NOTES

- As you read *Xander's Panda Party*, keep a list of the different animals who are invited to Xander's party. Classify the animals into their species, for example, mammals, reptiles, birds, amphibians etc. What unique features does each species have?
- Choose an animal that is invited to the party on which to research and complete an information report. Include information such as habitat, diet, reproduction and behaviour. Select a creative way in which to present your information, such as a Prezi, or use an app, such as, Explain Everything.
- In small groups, construct a hierarchy of the animal kingdom.
- Discuss the themes of friendship and acceptance in the text. Use examples from the text to support your ideas.
- The rhinoceros wants the bird that lives on his back to be invited too. The rhino and bird help each other. This is called symbiosis. Find out more about this unique cooperation that takes place between different species. What are some other examples of symbiosis in the wild?
- What are the key features of an invitation? Create your own invitation for a party.
- Read the text, taking time to appreciate and identify the poetic devices of rhyme and alliteration throughout.

- As you read, make predictions about the party. After reading, reflect on whether your predictions were accurate or were you surprised like Xander? Discuss how readers speculate; sometimes our predictions are accurate, sometimes they are not. This is part of the joy of reading.
- Pandas along with many other animals are endangered species. Select another endangered animal. After researching and taking notes, create a brochure to inform readers of threats to this animal's survival and steps being taken to protect it.
- Visit the website of the San Diego Zoo to watch videos of pandas: <http://www.sandiegozoo.org/pandacam/>.
- Create a story graph to map the structure of the text. Discuss the orientation, complication and resolution.
- Create a Cloze activity using some of the text from *Xander's Panda Party*. Use this as a formative way to assess students' understanding of vocabulary, rhyme and context.
- Create text for the textless page openings. Why did the author and illustrator decide to leave these pages textless?
- Investigate the ways in which birds and reptiles were once related.
- Write a synopsis or review of *Xander's Panda Party*.
- Create a class blog about the themes and concepts addressed in *Xander's Panda Party*.
- The illustrations have been created using water colours. Try illustrating your own page in a style similar to that of Matt Phelan.
- View the book trailer for *Xander's Panda Party* at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2t3Ta3J-TFs> . Create your own book trailer for this text.
- After reading the Author's Notes at the end of *Xander's Panda Party*, write a reflection that discusses the main messages being conveyed in the text.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda Sue Park is the acclaimed author of more than a dozen books for young readers. She received the Newbery Medal for her novel *A Single Shard*. She has worked as a food journalist, a public relations writer and a teacher of English as a second language. She now writes full time and travels widely, including visits to India, Russia and Korea, to meet readers and promote reading. She lives in Rochester, New York, with her husband and they have two grown children.

<http://www.lindasuepark.com/>

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Matt Phelan lives a short distance from the Philadelphia Zoo. He has had fun drawing pictures for a living since 2004. His illustrations appear in numerous picture books, some of which he also wrote.

www.mattphelan.com.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

Stories come to me in many different ways. In the case of *Xander's Panda Party*, a first line popped into my head: "Xander planned a panda party." I loved the sound of it, but I had no story to go with it!

I kept that line in my head for years, mumbling it every once in a while at odd moments during the day. Finally a story idea came to me, and because it had been 'incubating' for so long, the drafting and revision process went fairly quickly. So I guess you could say that the time it took me to write the book was either three days-- or seven years!

ILLUSTRATOR MOTIVATION

For *Xander's Panda Party*, I was primarily concerned with getting the character right and through that being able to show his emotions and predicament. I wanted the art to be loose and appealing and to have energy in the line to carry the reader through the story. I sketched the final art very lightly in pencil leaving out most of the detail. Next I drew the final picture with ink and a brush, using the sketched lines as a guide. I used a drybrush technique, which simply means that you get your brush to have only a bit of ink left and then you scrub it across the paper. The grain of the paper and the drybrush create interesting textures. Since pandas are black and white, I kept the colour palette minimal throughout, gradually bringing more colour in at the end.