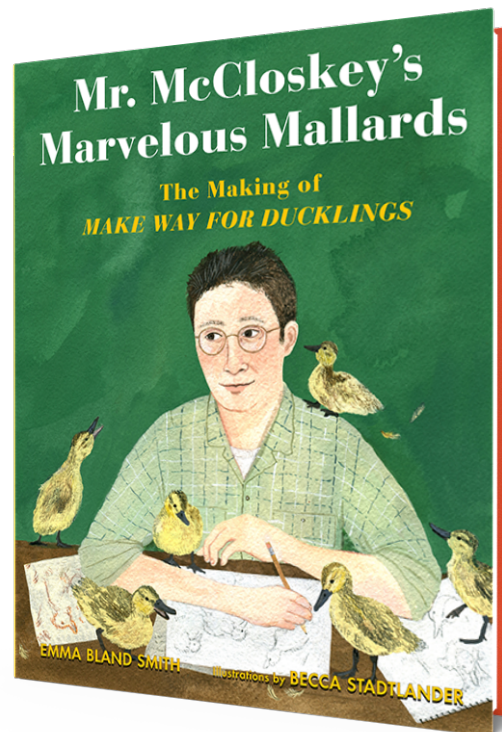


# DISCUSSION GUIDE

Written by Emma Bland Smith  
Illustrated by Becca Stadlander

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Grades: 2-5  
Ages: 7-10



## ABOUT THE BOOK

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While writing and illustrating the beloved picture book *Make Way for Ducklings*, Robert McCloskey brings a flock of ducklings into his tiny New York City apartment. But an artist + a bunch of ducklings in his apartment = chaos! There are ducklings in the bathtub and ducklings in the kitchen, quacking at dawn, and sitting on his desk. Can he learn to draw them just right before they grow too big?

This glimpse into the creation of a much-loved story for kids is a must-read for fans of children's books, or for anyone who is interested in the creative process and the importance of persistence.

## PRAISE FOR MR. MCCLOSKEY'S MARVELOUS MALLARDS:

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★ "[T]his stand-alone account of how young illustrator Robert McCloskey filled his urban studio with live ducks in order to get his depictions of them 'better than just okay' will give readers of all ages a sense of the dedication that went into creating the timeless classic *Make Way for Ducklings*. Make way for a comical episode that offers insight into the hard work of creativity, in general and in the case of one picture book that has been admired and loved for generations." —*School Library Journal*, starred review

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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Where did Robert McCloskey get the idea to write and illustrate a book about ducks?

What challenges did McCloskey face when he started to illustrate his book? What did he decide to do to help his situation?

Who did McCloskey visit after completing the sketches for his book? How did his visit go?

What decisions did McCloskey make in order to improve his drawings of ducks?

In one word or phrase, describe McCloskey's life at home with the ducks.

McCloskey says to himself: "*I can do better . . . I have to do better!*" several times in the book. How would you describe McCloskey's personality?

After living with the ducks for some time, what happened when McCloskey brought his book back to his editor?

Who are the "toughest judges of all"?

Are you surprised by how long it took McCloskey to finish *Make Way for Ducklings*? Why or why not?

What ultimately happened to the ducks?

## EXTRA CREDIT

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On the opening pages of the book, a quote from Robert McCloskey says: “You can’t draw ducks unless you live with them.” How does this quote give you an idea as to what this book is about? Do you think all artists and illustrators share McCloskey’s sentiment about their subjects?

Read “A Word from Jane McCloskey” in the back matter of the book. What important lessons did Jane learn from her father through the years?

*Mr. McCloskey’s Marvelous Mallards* is a true behind-the-scenes look at how a children’s book is created, and Emma Bland Smith’s author’s note provides many more details about Robert McCloskey and the book. What else did you learn about Robert McCloskey after reading her note?

“About May Masee” gives background on Robert McCloskey’s longtime children’s book editor. Why do you think author Emma Bland Smith decided to include this information the back matter of the book? How did May Masee guide and help Robert McCloskey through his career as a children’s book writer and illustrator?

*Mr. McCloskey’s Marvelous Mallards* has themes of persistence and creativity. Discuss the parts of the book where these themes are most evident.