

SUPER SMALL

Teacher's
Guide





TITLE: *Super Small: Miniature Marvels of the Natural World*

AUTHOR: Tiffany Stone

ILLUSTRATOR: Ashley Spires

ISBN: 978-1-77164-656-7

GENRE: Juvenile nonfiction

THEMES: Small animals, surprising biology, ocean animals, real-life superpowers, poetry, comics, rhyming words

SUITABLE FOR: Ages 4-8, Grades K-3

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

English Language Arts

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language

R.CCR. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7

W.CCR. 3, 5, 6, 7

SL.CCR. 1, 4, 5, 6

L.CCR. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES:

discussing a topic

making connections

determining the main theme of a book

identifying rhyming words

planning writing

writing poetry

reading comics

writing comics

giving feedback

editing

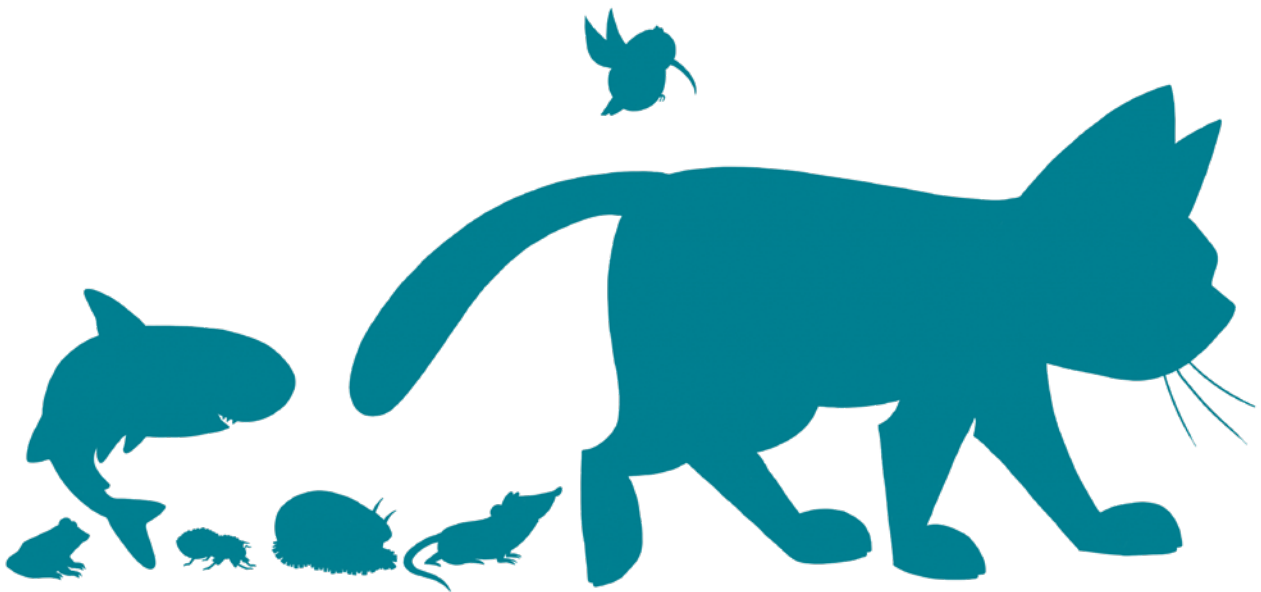
revising

researching a topic



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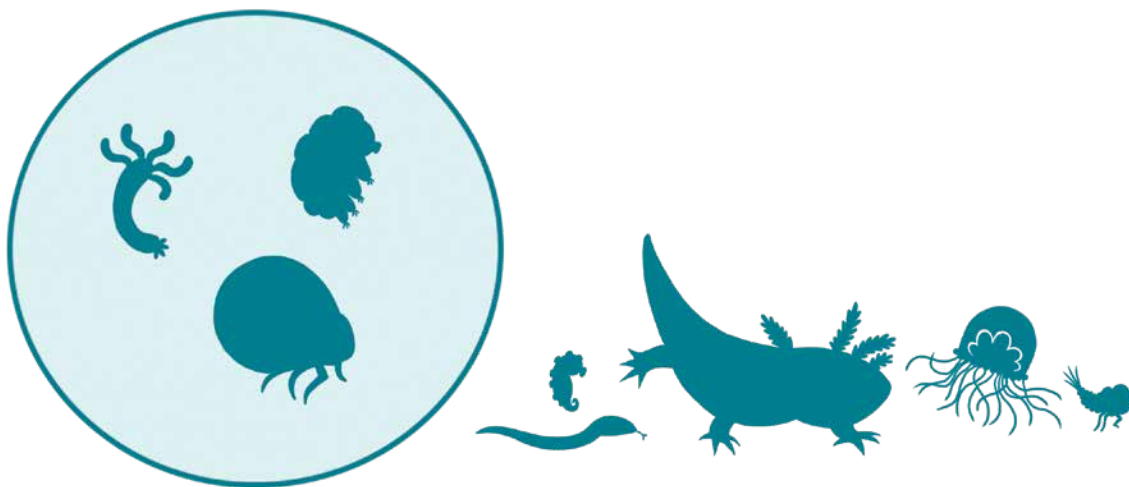
Book Summary

From a best-selling illustrator, this utterly unique comic-style book for kids four to eight explores super-small creatures with astounding abilities.

Did you know that some of the smallest creatures on Earth have real-life superpowers?

The minute oribatid mite can lift more than 1,000 times its own weight. A tiny type of salamander (called an axolotl) can regrow body parts. And the almost microscopic tardigrade? It can survive practically anywhere, even in outer space! Author Tiffany Stone combines comic panels and poems to share incredible facts about our world's miniature marvels, while illustrator Ashley Spires's zany cartoon-style illustrations make these itty-bitty superheroes (and supervillains) pop from the page.

From glow-in-the-dark sharks to immortal jellyfish and tiny cats with lethal aim, *Super Small* shows readers that being small doesn't mean they aren't super—and that sometimes being small can be super in and of itself.



About the Author

TIFFANY STONE is a children’s poet and critically acclaimed picture book author. She lives in B.C. with her family and several sort of small (but very super) pets.

About the Illustrator

ASHLEY SPIRES is the author and illustrator of many books, including the best-selling *The Most Magnificent Thing* and the Binky Adventure series, both of which have animated adaptations. When she is not making books, she enjoys yoga, jogging, and fostering orphan kittens for her local shelter.

About This Guide

This teacher’s guide was created by **BECKY NOELLE**, an experienced teacher with a bachelor of science degree. Use this guide to help your students fully engage with the book and discover how mighty small can be!



Before Reading

Show students some of the special features of the book and find out what they already know about the topic and themes. Use the script and questions below as a guide.

(Teacher instructions are in brackets.)



1. This book is about animals that are super small.
(Flip through the book and show students a sampling of the animals in the illustrations.)
 - What’s the smallest thing you can think of?
 - Do you know of any animals with a special skill or “superpower”?
2. Each animal in the book has a poem and a comic about it.
(Choose any page in the book and point to the poem and then the comic strip to show students the difference in the text.)
 - What do you already know about poetry?
 - What could we look out for as we read the poems together?
(E.g., You could choose a “secret signal” as a class that students can use to show they heard words that rhyme. The secret signal could be putting a finger on their nose or putting their hand on the top of their head. At the end of each page, ask students which rhyming words they heard. You could also write down the rhyming words on chart paper or the whiteboard as you read, to use in the “Rhyming Words” activity on page 10 of this guide.)
 - Who has read a comic book before?
(Have students raise their hands if they have.)
 - What do you already know about how to read comics?
(E.g., reading speech bubbles and panels left to right and top to bottom; using the illustrations to infer what’s happening.)



After Reading

What Is YOUR Superpower?

Have a class discussion about the main themes in the book. Use the following questions as a guide:

- What can we learn from the animals in this book?
- How might small be good?
- Have you ever felt like you were too small to do something?
- Did this book help you to see being small in a new way? Explain.
- What is something that you are really good at?
- Finish the sentence: “Even though I’m small, I can still...”

Poetry

ELEMENTS OF A POEM

title	(the name of the poem)
line	(one line of text in the poem)
stanza	(a group of lines)
space	(a blank line between stanzas)
rhythm	(how a poem flows—created with syllables in a line, punctuation, and spaces between lines)
rhyme	(words that sound the same, usually used at the end of a line—but not always! See, for example, the poem “Black-Footed Cat.”)
scheme	(the pattern of rhyming words. For example, the last word in every other line might rhyme.)

Introduce students to the vocabulary of poetry (listed above) to help them understand the structure of a poem. Choose any poem from the book to use as an example and point out each part of the poem (title, line, stanza, space). Make observations out loud about the poems using the vocabulary listed above. Here are some examples to get you started:





- “This poem has three stanzas: here, here, and here.” (Adjust the number depending on the poem you’re showing students; point to each stanza as you say this.)
- “See the title of the poem at the top? It’s bigger and bolder than the rest of the text.” (Point to the title.)
- “This poem uses em dashes (–) and ellipses (...) to create rhythm.” (Point to the appropriate punctuation as you say this. The introduction poem on the first page and the poem “Black-Footed Cat” both use these types of punctuation.)
- “The two words at the ends of these two lines rhyme.” (Indicate two rhyming words and read them out loud.)



RHYMING WORDS

If you wrote down rhyming words while reading the book as a class, you can use them for the following activity. Alternatively, use the rhyming words from the book that are listed below. Have students come up with more words that rhyme with the words listed. They can use a notebook to record their words or the Rhyming Words worksheet on page 22 of this guide. If you would like students to focus on specific word families used in the book, you can fill in the Word Family column for students before photocopying the Rhyming Words page for the whole class.

The rhyming words below are listed from most basic to most difficult. Use the words that best suit your needs.

BASIC RHYMES: SHORT VOWEL WORD FAMILIES

Rhyming Words from <i>Super Small</i>	Word Family	More Examples
dad/had	-ad	sad, mad, bad, pad, lad, rad, tad, gad, glad, clad
did/kid	-id	lid, hid, bid, rid, Sid, grid, skid, slid
hot/not	-ot	pot, rot, tot, dot, got, lot, jot, bot, cot, blot, clot, plot, shot, slot, spot, trot, snot

BASIC RHYMES: LONG DOUBLE VOWEL WORD FAMILIES

Rhyming Words from Super Small	Word Family	More Examples
frail/pail	-ail	mail, fail, hail, jail, nail, sail, wail, snail, quail, trail
be/me/wee/see/ flee/sea	-e/-ee/-ea	he, she, we, bee, tee, fee, tree, knee, ghee, tea, pea
day/way	-ay	pay, may, ray, bay, lay, hay, nay, jay, say, clay, stay, gray, play, sway, tray
pain/again	-ain	rain, main, vain, fain, brain, chain, drain, grain, plain, Spain, stain, train
meal/deal	-eal	real, seal, heal, teal, veal, steal

EASY RHYMES: MAGIC "E" WORD FAMILIES

Rhyming Words from Super Small	Word Family	More Examples
mite/bite	-ite	rite, site, rite, write, quite, white
strife/life	-ife	wife, fife, knife
hot/not space/pace	-ace	race, lace, place



**INTERMEDIATE RHYMES:
MORE COMPLEX WORD FAMILIES**

explore/more (-ore)

all/small (-all)

dark/bark/spark/shark (-ark)

paws/jaws/claws (-aws)

brute/cute (-ute)

know/glow (-ow)

clever/forever (-ever)

**DIFFICULT RHYMES:
WORDS THAT DON'T SHARE SPELLING PATTERNS**

shrew/do/through/you/too/true

bear/there/anywhere

phone/own

goes/those

polite/might

four/more

kitty/pretty/pity

flier/defier/attire/fire

detector/inspector/selector/collector

buzz/fuzz/because

spaghetti/vermicelli/belly

excuse/use



DISCUSSION

Note that the examples shared for the Basic Rhymes are only single syllable words starting with, at most, two blended letters (e.g., “sl” or “wr”) or a digraph (two letters making one sound, like “sh” or “ph”). Students can take the rhyming further by looking for words with more syllables and three-letter blends at the start of words (e.g., “str”).

Use the following questions and concepts to delve further into rhyme as a class. Feel free to extend the discussion further with questions or observations from your students.

- Do words have to be in the same word family to rhyme? (No. For example, “-ite” words rhyme with “-ight” words and “-ail” words rhyme with “-ale” words. Some of the Difficult Rhymes listed above don’t share spelling at all, like “fuzz” and “because.”)
- Most of the rhyming words shared above would be considered perfect rhymes because they sound the same when you say them. Sometimes poets will also use what is called imperfect rhymes. Can you find an example of an imperfect rhyme in *Super Small*? (E.g., In the “Pygmy Seahorse” poem, “what” and “not” are used in the last stanza as an imperfect rhyme.)

RHYTHM

Poets use a variety of tools to create rhythm. As a class or in small groups, look through the poems in *Super Small* and find examples of the following tools being used to create rhythm.

- line length (e.g., number of words and/or syllables)
- repetition
- punctuation (e.g., dashes, ellipses, and apostrophes)
- space placement

STRATEGIES TO MAKE A POEM EXCITING

- word choice
- fun punctuation (e.g., interrobangs like “?!?” or “?!”—see “Pygmy Seahorse” poem for an example of an interrobang)
- onomatopoeia (words that imitate sounds, like “buzz”—see “Scaly-Foot Snail” and “Plant Hopper” poems for examples of onomatopoeia)
- puns (homophones like “mite” and “might” in the “Oribatid Mite” poem)



WRITE YOUR OWN POEM

Have students use what they have learned about poetry to write their own poem. They can choose to write it about an animal or something else of interest to them. This activity can also be used in connection with the Science Research project described on page 20 of this guide. The steps that students will take are listed below.

1. Use the Poetry Planning Page on page 23 of this guide to plan out the poem.
2. Write a first draft of the poem.
3. Share the draft poem with a partner to get feedback.
4. Revise and edit the poem based on the feedback.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until the poem is just right.
6. Write out a final copy of the poem on a nice piece of paper or using a computer.
7. Illustrate the poem by hand or by using a computer.
8. Add the poem to a class book or poetry wall to share the work.



TIPS

- Younger students may need more support to plan their poems. It may help to give them a topic or allow them to use one of the animals from the book as inspiration. You can use the Example Poetry Planning Page on page 24 of this guide to show students how to use the planning page or as a guide to write a class poem together.
- Older students can use tools like a thesaurus to come up with words they want to use in their poems.
- Students may need reminders that writing is a process, and they may need to draft many versions of their poem before they get it just right.
- Students will likely work at different paces planning and writing their poems. Pair off students to share their drafts with other students who are also ready for feedback.

Comics

ELEMENTS OF A COMIC

Choose any comic in the book to point out the parts of a comic (listed below) as you describe them to the class.

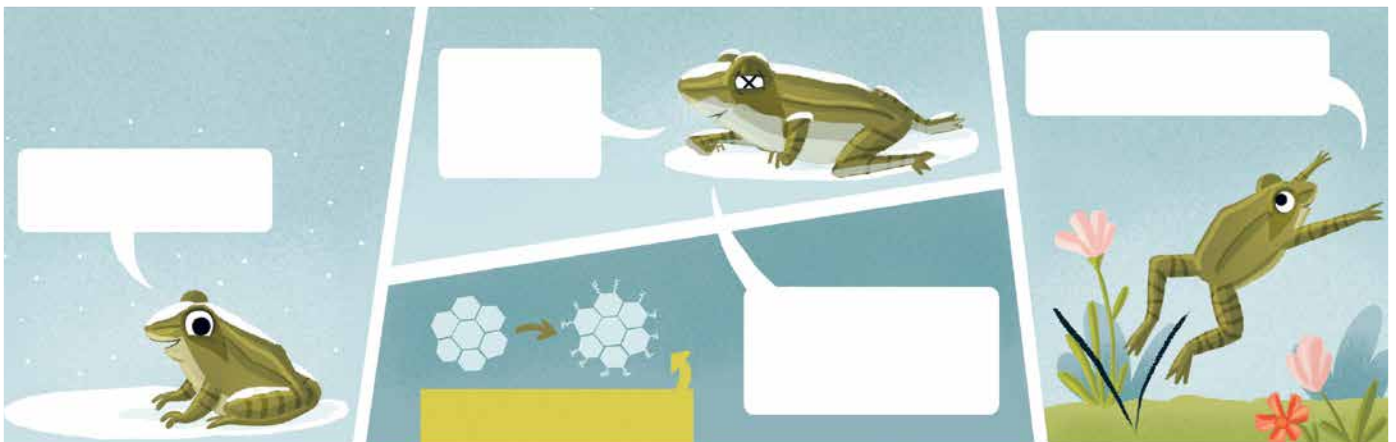
panel (one illustration, including any speech bubbles and captions, surrounded by a border)

gutter (the space between panels)

caption (any text that is not speech—in this book, found in colored rectangles with arrows in all-caps writing)

speech bubble (show what the characters are saying—in this book, in white boxes with rounded corners)

speech bubble tail (the part of a speech bubble that points to the character that is speaking)





HOW TO READ A COMIC

Use the following tips to guide students new to reading comics.

- Read panels left to right and top to bottom.
- Read speech bubbles and other text left to right and top to bottom within each panel.
- Use the illustrations to infer what is happening.
- Look for character facial expressions to see how they are feeling. Here are some examples of strong facial expressions in the *Super Small* comics:
 - oribatid mite in third panel
 - lion in third panel of black-footed cat comic
 - plant hopper in third panel
 - bee in last panel of bee hummingbird comic
 - jellyfish in last panel

STRATEGIES TO MAKE A COMIC EXCITING

- sound effects
 - “Black-Footed Cat” page: “Rumble!”
 - “Barbados Threadsnake” page: “Ssss” on words the snake says
- words and lines showing movement
 - axolotl: “wiggle wiggle” with lines
 - plant hopper: “Wheeeeeeee!” with backwards checkmark showing jump
 - bee hummingbird: “Bzzzzz/Bzzzzz/Zooooom” with loopy and curvy lines in various panels showing that the wings are moving
 - wood frog: “Sproing!” with “v” lines showing jump
- punctuation (exclamation marks, ellipses)
- bold and upside-down words (Use the following prompt questions to start a discussion: How does bolding a word change how you read it? Why do you think the author made this word bold? Use the examples listed below to discuss.)
 - dwarf lantern shark: **bioluminescence**
 - bee hummingbird: **bee hummingbird** and “...and upside down!”
 - immortal jellyfish: **GULP!**
- story arc (beginning, middle, and end of a story, with the middle reaching a climax before being resolved)
- change in background to highlight a panel
 - third panel in oribatid mite comic
 - last three panels in bee hummingbird comic
 - third panel in immortal jellyfish comic
- illustrations with strong facial expressions (see list of examples in “How to Read a Comic” section)
- exclamation words like whew, yikes, ta-da, gulp, and voila

CREATE YOUR OWN COMIC

Have students use what they have learned to write their own comic. They can choose to write it about an animal or something else of interest to them. This activity can also be used in connection with the Science Research Project described on page 20 of this guide. The steps for students to take are listed below.

1. Use the Comic Planning Page on page 25 of this guide to plan out the comic.
2. Write a first draft of the comic using one of the Comic Templates (pages 26-29 of this guide).
3. Share the draft comic with a partner to get feedback.
4. Revise and edit the comic based on the feedback.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until the comic is just right.
6. Write and illustrate the final version of the comic on a fresh template.
7. Add the comic to a class book or comic wall to share the work.

TIPS

- Students may need reminders that writing is a process, and they may need to draft many versions of their comic before they get it just right.
- Students will likely work at different paces planning and writing their comics. Pair off students to share their drafts with other students who are also ready for feedback.





Science Research Project

Super Small does a beautiful job combining interesting scientific information with engaging forms of expression, including poetry and comics. Use the book as an inspiration for students to do the same.

Students can choose either another small animal they know about or any plant or animal to research. If you are studying a specific group of plants or animals in science, this is a great opportunity to combine topics and reach cross-curricular outcomes. Once students have researched their plant or animal, use the Poetry and Comics sections in this guide to support them in creating a poem and/or a comic about their researched animal or plant.

Learn More

- Find out about the science of gears. The plant hopper comic shows how plant hopper nymphs use gears to jump. Use this as a connecting point to explore the physics of gears, and maybe even build something that uses gears!
- Discover more homophones! Search online for lists of homophones together as a class and find ways to integrate them into students' poems and comics to make them more exciting.
- Expand your understanding about the immortal jellyfish by watching the following video:
“The immortal jellyfish: is it possible to live forever? | Natural History Museum” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayOmAJwCMIM&list=TLGGas17cZ7_1S8wOTExMjAyMg&t=65s
- Research the animals from the book online and find pictures and videos of them to see what they look like and how they move in real life.
- Explore the engineering and design concepts that humans could learn from the animals in the book and apply to our own technology (e.g., **building indestructible objects like the diabolical ironclad beetle; health care and medicine to live longer and heal from injuries like the hydra, axolotl, and immortal jellyfish**).





Name: _____

Date: _____

Rhyming Words

Rhyming Words from Super Small	Word Family	3-4 Examples
Example: dad/had	-ad	sad, mad, bad, pad



Name: _____

Date: _____

Poetry Planning Page

My topic:

Rhyming words I might use:

Other poetry strategies I want to use:

(Check off the boxes next to the strategies you want to try.
Then use the space below each strategy to brainstorm!)

exciting words

fun punctuation

onomatopoeia

homophones



Name: _____

Date: _____

Example Poetry Planning Page

My topic:

polar bears

Rhyming words I might use:

bears/hairs

white/bright

sky/lie

Other poetry strategies I want to use:

(Check off the boxes next to the strategies you want to try.
Then use the space below each strategy to brainstorm!)



exciting words

gigantic, formidable, ferocious



fun punctuation

!!! or !?



onomatopoeia

Grrrrr!!!



homophones

bare and bear

Name: _____

Date: _____

Comic Planning Page

My topic:

My story arc:



Comic strategies I want to use:

(Check off the boxes next to the strategies you want to try.
Then use the space below each strategy to brainstorm!)

- sound effects
- words and lines showing movement
- fun punctuation
- bold words
- change in background
- exclamation words



