

***Daddy Longlegs at Birch Lane* Activity Guide**

Daddy Longlegs at Birch Lane is a picture book by Beverley Brenna (1996 Soundprints/Smithsonian Institution), illustrated by Sandra Blair

Author of Activity Guide: Beverley Brenna

Story Summary: This is a narrative non-fiction story about harvesters (sometimes called daddy longlegs because of their long, skinny legs). The company that published this book has many other books about all sorts of animals, plants, and bugs. All of them follow a pattern. See if you notice the pattern when you read this book.

The beginning of the book reads: “Spring sunshine warms the slender birch tree behind the red brick house on Birch Lane.” Notice the setting? Then the story tells about the tiny eggs under the bark of the tree, and about one little harvester that hatches out. The rest of the story tells about the harvester’s life, ending with her laying her own eggs in the backyard of the red brick house on Birch Lane.

Author Statement: Beverley Brenna

I wrote *Daddy Longlegs at Birch Lane* from my home on the Saskatchewan prairies where I lived with my husband and young family. I have always loved bugs! Finding out more about Harvesters (the proper name for the Daddy Longlegs) was a lot of fun! I was thinking about the little, gray, Canadian daddy longlegs when I wrote the story, but the publisher decided to represent the orange, American daddy longlegs in this book. I love Sandra Blair’s pictures!

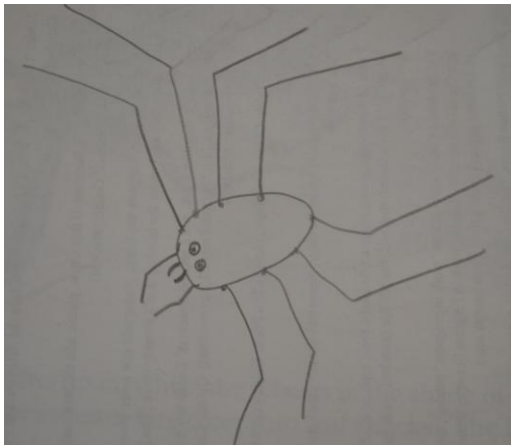
As You Read:

1. Do a picture walk first, to see if you can tell the story just by looking at the illustrations, without using the words.
2. Think about what you know about harvesters (daddy longlegs).
3. Make a list of questions you’d like to find out about harvesters (daddy longlegs).
4. See if this book helps you answer your questions. Maybe you can find other books or websites to tell you more about these interesting bugs!

Art Activities

Draw a Daddy Longlegs

- a. Look carefully at the pictures of the daddy longlegs in this book.
- b. See how it has an oval body. Draw an oval shape to start with.
- c. Look at the two eyes on little bumps on top of the body. Draw them.
- d. Count the long, skinny legs—it starts out with eight of them! Add the legs.
- e. See four little lines coming out of the front. The two longer ones are called palps or “pedipalps” and they work like fingers, pulling things towards the mouth. Draw the palps.
- f. The two shorter ones are the jaws or “chelicerae.” Draw them.



Draw a Nice Garden Where a Daddy Longlegs Might Like To Live

- a. Think about what a daddy longlegs needs to live and grow. Draw a picture of a place that has these things.
- b. Cut out your daddy longlegs picture, or make another one, and put it in your garden.
- c. See if you can pretend to say the things your daddy longlegs might say if he or she could talk.

Drama Activities

Be a Daddy Longlegs

1. Think about how a daddy longlegs would move. Try to move around that way.
2. Think about what a daddy longlegs would think about. What would he or she say?
Say those things.
3. Ask someone else to ask you questions so that you can answer as a daddy longlegs might.
4. What would you see that would make you go and hide?

Conversation Between a Daddy Longlegs and a Red Mite

A Daddy Longlegs has just been jumped on by a Red Mite who wants a ride. What might they say to each other? Act it out. Draw a cartoon with speech bubbles to show their conversation.

A Daddy Longlegs Can Protect Itself

Remember who the enemies were that wanted to eat the Daddy Longlegs in the story? How did the Daddy Longlegs protect itself? Say a speech as if you were the Daddy Longlegs, talking about its special powers. Tell who your enemies are and how you can take care of yourself. Think of a good beginning line and a good ending line before you start.

A Famous Scientist

Pretend that you are a famous kind of scientist called an *arachnologist*. You study harvesters (daddy longlegs bugs). You know that they belong to the family *Opiliones* and that they are arachnids, just like spiders are also arachnids. But the daddy longlegs is not a spider. Think about what you know about the daddy longlegs. Give a speech about what you know. At the end, remember to thank your audience for listening!

Writing Activities

Write a New Story About a Daddy Longlegs

1. Remember that many stories have at least one character, a setting (the place where the story happens), a problem, and a solution.
2. Think or talk about an adventure a daddy longlegs might have in a garden or yard near you.
3. Think about what will happen at the beginning of your story? In the middle of your story? At the end of your story?
4. Draw a storyboard (a set of pictures) to show these things happening.
5. Print or type out your story. Remember that good writers don't get it right the first time. If you have trouble spelling a word, say it slowly, stretching it like an elastic band, and print the sounds you hear.
6. Ask someone to read your story with you. If you want to add something to make it more interesting, or correct your spelling, now is the time. This is called "revising."
7. Make pictures to go with the good copy of your story.
8. Make a cover. Make sure you put your name on it because you are the author and illustrator!
9. Share your book with your favorite people. Maybe you can keep your story in your own personal library of stories you have written yourself!

Write a Poem About a Daddy Longlegs

1. Make a list of good words that describe a daddy longlegs.
2. Choose your best words to write your poem.
3. Use this pattern if you wish:

A daddy longlegs looks...

It moves...

It hears with...

It climbs...

I can see one in...