

# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

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**FARM FRIENDS SERIES**  
FEATURING POPPY AND  
VINCENT VAN GOAT

**WRITTEN BY KIMBERLY DERTING  
AND SHELLI R. JOHANNES**

**ILLUSTRATED BY KRISTEN HUMPHREY**



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The activities in this guide align with Common Core Standards and fit into the curriculum for Grades K - 3.

A smart story full of humor, puns, girl power, and grit with a STEM appeal and girl-power focus! We hope this guide will help you incorporate a reader-friendly engineering story into your class curriculum. Each of the classroom activities is aligned with the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts for grades K-3.

Thank you!

Shelli R. Johannes and Kimberly Derting



## PRAISE FOR KIMBERLY & SHELLI'S OTHER BOOKS

*"Harrison's clean, bright illustrations add expression and personality to the story. ...this endearing protagonist earns a place on the children's STEM shelf. A good introduction to observation, data, and trying again." (Kirkus Reviews on Cece Loves Science)*

*"A worthy message about girls embracing science." (Publishers Weekly on Vivi Loves Science)*

*"Joining the ranks of strong girls in STEM [is] Libby . . . Brightly colored artwork bubbles with Libby's enthusiasm . . . This book is a natural fit for classroom science units and home use." (Booklist - starred review for Libby Loves Science)*

*"Younger logophiles may savor the wordplay and appreciate the "Defino-Dino" who occasionally pops into view with a helpful definition." (Kirkus Reviews on Theo TheThesaurus by Shelli)*

# ABOUT FARM FRIENDS

## First four books:

- **Blue-Ribbon Radishes**
- **One Stubborn Goat**
- **Poppy's Chicks**
- **The Big Soap-rise**

Farm Friends is an early S.T.E.M. chapter book series that follows the adventures of Poppy, a young girl who lives on a farm with her family, a variety of friendly animals, and her mischievous pet goat, Vincent Van Goat.

The series explores the joys and hard work of farm life, family, and friendship. It combines fun and education, introducing young readers to the wonders of farm life, the importance of determination, and the bonds humans have with animals and nature.

Each book will focus on Poppy and her adventures with Vincent and will captivate early readers, leaving them eagerly anticipating the next farm-tastic story.

Be careful. It will also make them want a pet goat of their very own.

# BLUE RIBBON RADISHES

**Book #1 in the Farm Friends series**

## **About the Book:**

Poppy is determined to win a blue ribbon for her cucumbers at the county fair. But Vincent Van Goat is always butting in—as goats do. He gobbles up her cucumbers before the big day! Poppy must come up with a new plan. Luckily, she knows a lot about fast-growing vegetables—and Vincent's eating habits. If Poppy works hard enough, she might be able to present something at the fair after all. But will it be enough to win a blue ribbon?

Poppy must use her creativity and gardening knowledge to develop a new plan that will not only showcase her radishes but also outsmart her goat companion.

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Explore the basics of gardening, including soil preparation, planting, watering, and harvesting, focusing on radishes.
- Explore the challenges that happen in gardening.
- Learn about other root vegetables and investigate the plant lifecycle of radishes.
- Learn about determination and problem-solving in the face of adversity.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. What role does Vincent Van Goat play in the challenges that Poppy faces? How does he impact Poppy's story?
2. How do you think Poppy feels when she finds out Vincent ate her cucumbers? How does she deal with it?
3. How does Poppy come up with a new plan? How does she show determination?
4. How do you think Poppy feels when she doesn't win? How does she handle it?
5. Has there ever been a time in your life when you were disappointed because things didn't work out the way you planned? How did you handle it?

**Quiz:**

1. What was Poppy growing for the festival?
2. What type of vegetable is a radish?
3. What three things did Poppy collect to grow her radishes?
4. How long did it take for her radishes to grow?
5. What vegetables were also in the contest with Poppy's radishes?

**Bonus:** What prize does G.O.A.T. really stand for?

**Answers:**

1. Cucumbers
2. Root vegetable
3. Pots, dirt, seeds
4. A few weeks
5. Carrots, turnips and rutabagas

**Bonus:** Greatest of All Time

**Art and Writing Activities**

1. Tell the story from Vincent Van Goat's point of view. How would the story unfold if Poppy were mischievous and Vincent was determined to win the blue ribbon?
2. Illustrate a scene from the book or create their interpretations of the characters.  
Idea: Draw a picture of what happened to the cucumbers.
3. Plan your own County Fair. What events and competitions would you have? What other events would Poppy and Vincent be a part of?
4. Use radishes as a creative tool! Cut them in half and dip them in paint to make fun and unique prints.
5. Draw the plant life cycle of a radish.

**Fun Facts about Radishes**

- Radishes grow best between March and September and only take a few weeks.
- Radishes need 6 to 8 hours of sunlight each day.
- The root of the radish is the part we eat.
- Radishes come in a variety of colors, shapes, and sizes.

# ONE STUBBORN GOAT

**Book #2 in the Farm Friends series**

## **About the Book:**

The annual Pumpkin Festival is only one month away! This year, Poppy is in charge of the goat races. There's only one problem: Vincent Van Goat isn't interested in racing—or even running, for that matter. He's more interested in eating grass, chasing butterflies, and napping with the pigs. Can Poppy find a way to celebrate Vincent's hidden talent for stretching?

Poppy discovers the importance of patience and teamwork, even with a stubborn goat.

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Explore the behavior of goats, focusing on why they may act stubbornly or independently.
- Learn about problem-solving skills and adaptability by exploring different strategies to encourage Vincent Van Goat's participation.
- Experiment with different yoga poses and the balance of a person practicing yoga.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. How does the story show the importance of embracing and celebrating individual differences?
2. Is Poppy frustrated with Vincent? How would you handle Vincent in this situation?
3. Explore the setting of the Pumpkin Festival. What other events could they have next year? And what animals could they use?
4. Why was Poppy determined to have Vincent participate in the race and be a star?
5. Has there ever been a time in your life when someone disappointed you, either a friend or family member? How did you deal with it?

**Quiz:**

1. What is the name of the goat racetrack?
2. Where did Poppy find Vincent before the race?
3. What did Fern, Mom, and Dad all do for the festival?
4. What were the names of the other goats?
5. What poses did Poppy and Vincent do?

**Bonus:** What is the name of the county they live in?

**Answers:**

1. Scapegoat Speedway
2. On top of the chicken coop
3. Sold sunflowers, made pecan pie, Judged the pumpkin contest
4. Woolly, Curly, and Stormy
5. Downward goat, goat stand, happy goat pose.

**Bonus:** Boar County

**Art and Writing Activities**

1. Create your own paper goat, complete with a name and unique characteristics.
2. Draw a new scene from the Pumpkin Festival about something else that happened.
3. Pick an animal and research it for key facts.
4. Write a short story or poem set in the "Farm Friends" world.
5. Design your own Scapegoat Speedway.

**Fun Facts about Goats**

- There are more than 300 different breeds of goats around the world, and they have different sizes, colors, and horn shapes.
- Goats have hooves that help them climb and scale steep, rocky surfaces.
- Goats have rectangular-shaped pupils, which gives them a wide field of vision.
- Goats are not picky eaters. They are herbivores and enjoy eating grass, leaves, shrubs, and bark.
- Male goats are called bucks and often have a beard—a tuft of hair on their chin.

# POPPY'S CHICKS

**Book #3 in the Farm Friends series**

## **About the Book:**

Poppy can't wait for her hen, Dottie, to have chicks. But when Poppy checks the chicken coop, she realizes Dottie's eggs aren't going to hatch. Poor Dottie! Poppy is determined to help. She and her mom visit the feed store, and Poppy comes up with a new plan—she'll hatch her own eggs. Will Poppy's eggs hatch?

Poppy learns valuable lessons about responsibility, nurturing, and the circle of life on the farm.

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Learn about the life cycle of chickens, including the stages from egg to hatching to adult.
- Examine the responsibility of caring for the eggs and nurturing the chicks.
- Learn about the incubation process and the steps in egg incubation.
- Explore farm life, focusing on the role of hens in laying eggs and the incubation process.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. What responsibilities does Poppy take on when she decides to hatch her own eggs?
2. What scientific concepts about animal reproduction and the incubation process are introduced in the story?
3. In what ways does Poppy grow, learn, and demonstrate a sense of responsibility?
4. Can you share a personal story when you had to care for an animal?



**Quiz:**

1. How long does it take for eggs to hatch?
2. How many eggs did Poppy have?
3. What supplies did Poppy and her dad need to build an incubator?
4. How many times do eggs need to be turned every day? Why?
5. What was Vincent's chick called?

**Bonus:** What did they buy Vincent at the feed store?

**Answers:**

1. Three weeks
2. Six (Poppy chose five, and Vincent chose one)
3. Tank, shavings, light bulb
4. Three-four times
5. Peep

**Bonus:** Apple Treats

**Art and Writing Activities**

1. Students can write diary entries from Poppy's perspective, documenting her thoughts and feelings about hatching eggs.
2. Students can make a flip book illustrating the life cycle of a chicken.
3. Using magazines, colored paper, and other collage materials, students can create nests for chickens.
4. Build your own chicken coop using different materials like legos, clay, recycled materials, or playdough.

**Fun Facts about Chickens**

- Chickens lay eggs in different colors, like brown, white, blue, and green. The color depends on the breed of the chicken.
- A healthy chicken can lay around 300 eggs per year.
- Not all eggs turn into chickens. They have to be fertilized by a rooster.
- Chickens grow quickly. They grow from a fluffy chick into a feathered bird in a few weeks.
- Chickens have excellent eyesight and can see a wide range of colors.

# THE BIG SOAP-RISE

**Book #4 in the Farm Friends series**

## **About the Book:**

Teacher's Day is Monday! At first, Poppy and her best friends, Ollie and Cassie, are excited. They love their teacher, Ms. Green. But soon, they run into a problem. They don't have a present for her! Maybe they can make something on the farm. Can Poppy and her friends come up with a gift in time?

Poppy learns the value of teamwork, creativity, and the joy of having a soap-filled adventure.

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Develop creative problem-solving skills by using resources available on the farm.
- Understand the importance of teamwork and collaboration.
- Learn to make soap using farm ingredients like herbs, flowers, and oils that enhance the soap-making process.
- Learn the step-by-step process of making soap.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. Imagine you were making a homemade gift for your teacher. What would you make and how?
2. If you were on a farm, what other ingredients would you add to your soap?
3. How did Poppy and her friends demonstrate teamwork while they were making the soap?
4. Explain the importance of brainstorming solutions.
5. Why are teachers important? Why is it important to show appreciation?

**Quiz:**

1. What did Poppy's mom make for a snack?
2. What did Poppy and her friends do on the farm to have fun?
3. What ideas did they brainstorm before they made soap?
4. What supplies do you need to make soap?
5. What did Poppy put in her soap?

**Bonus:** How long do they stir the mixture after they heat it?

**Answers:**

1. Bread, pears, and goat cheese
2. Played with chickens, did goat yoga, tried garden vegetables
3. Make bread or pick flowers
4. Base, molds, herbs, flowers, mixing bowls, and spoons (and oils!)
5. Daisies and lavender

**Bonus:** 30 seconds

**Art and Writing Activities**

1. Draw your own appreciation card for Teacher's Day.
2. Draw the story in comic strip creations. Each panel can represent a big moment in the soap-making adventure.
3. Write a short story about Poppy and her friends if they decided to pick flowers instead.
4. Write about a time when they made a gift for someone special. What did they create?
5. Create interview questions for Poppy, Ollie, or Cassie, and have them "respond."

**Fun Facts about Soap**

- Soap has been around since 2800 BC.
- There are different types of soap, including bar soap, liquid soap, and powder soap.
- Soap is made from a chemical reaction called saponification. This involves combining fats or oils with an alkaline substance, such as sodium hydroxide or potassium hydroxide.
- Soap doesn't kill bacteria, but it helps remove them from surfaces.
- Soap is mostly biodegradable and breaks down into natural components over time.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

KIMBERLY DERTING SPENT HOURS AS A CHILD DRAWING INTRICATE "WORM CITIES" BECAUSE HER ART SKILLS DIDN'T ALLOW HER TO DRAW ANYTHING WITH ARMS OR LEGS. IN COLLEGE, SHE STUDIED BIOLOGY, BUT HER REAL EXPERIMENTS ARE DONE IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, WHERE SHE WRANGLES THREE KIDS, ONE HUSBAND, TWO DOGS, TWO CATS, AND A RABBIT NAMED THUMPER—SERIOUSLY, SHE'S PRACTICALLY A ZOOLOGIST! YOU CAN FIND HER OTHER BOOKS AT [KIMBERLYDERTING.COM](http://KIMBERLYDERTING.COM).



SHELLI R. JOHANNES LIVES IN ATLANTA WITH HER PACK OF UNICORNS: A BRITISH HUSBAND, TWO TEENS, ONE SASSY BIRD, AND TWO CRAZY GOLDENDOODLES ALONG WITH THE HUNDREDS OF CHARACTERS LIVING IN HER HEAD. SHELLI IS ADDICTED TO EXCLAMATION POINTS, PUNS, UNICORNS, AND ANYTHING SCIENCEY. YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON HER TO LAUGH AT HER OWN JOKES, AT LEAST ONCE. YOU CAN FIND HER OTHER BOOKS AT [WWW.SRJOHANNES.COM](http://WWW.SRJOHANNES.COM).



# AUTHOR VISITS

## **In-Person or Virtual School Visits:**

At your school, there is a young reader who wants to write. We hope to have the opportunity to tell that young reader that he or she can do it, too. We can offer discounted rates if you have our books available for sale prior to the event. Please let us know if you need other ideas on how to make an author visit affordable and/or effective! If you're interested in either bringing us in to meet your students, or in hosting a virtual visit, shoot us an email. You can contact Shelli at [shelliesrjohannes.com](mailto:shelliesrjohannes.com) or Kimberly at [kim@kimberlyderting.com](mailto:kim@kimberlyderting.com) to discuss further.

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**"YOU KNOW YOU HAD A SUCCESSFUL ASSEMBLY WHEN A WEEK LATER THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ARE STILL TALKING ABOUT IT AND ASKING WHEN THE AUTHOR IS COMING BACK!" —JULIE STOKES  
(LITERARY COORDINATOR, DALTON MS)**

**"KIM DERTING WAS FANTASTIC! SHE'S ENGAGING, AUTHENTIC, AND FUNNY. SHE KNOWS HOW TO RELATE TO KIDS, AND SHE THOUGHTFULLY ENCOURAGES YOUNG WRITERS." ERICA SAGE  
(NORTH TAPPS MIDDLE SCHOOL, WASHINGTON)**

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