



Where's Burgess?

Laurie Elmquist

Illustrated by David Parkins

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About the Book

Reece Hansen is missing two things: his father and his frog. His parents are newly separated, and his dad is now living in another city, fighting forest fires. Reece struggles to get used to daily life without him. When he loses his pet frog, Burgess, Reece puts posters up around the neighborhood. But frogs are difficult to track down. It takes an unusual classmate, the boy who wears a bathrobe to school, to pull Reece's attention away from Burgess. Through his new friend and a camping trip with his mom, Reece learns that friends can come in human form and that families are resilient even when things change.

About the Author

Laurie Elmquist holds an MA in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Windsor in Ontario. She enjoys writing for kids and is also the author of *Beach Baby* and *Forest Baby*. *Where's Burgess?* was inspired by a *Lost Frog* poster she saw on a camping trip. Laurie teaches at Camosun College in Victoria, British Columbia, and is an online instructor with the University of Calgary in Alberta. For more information, visit laurieelmquist.com.

About the Writing

It's not often you see a *Lost Frog* poster. Laurie wanted to write a story about the person behind the poster. Nine-year-old Reece is not only looking for his frog, but is also trying to come to terms with his parents' recent separation. To write this story, Laurie researched frogs, wrote about her fear of learning to ride a bike and thought a lot about what it is like to have your dad live in another city. She tried to make readers laugh while also providing moments of tenderness and insight. Laurie likes how realism allows her to do all these things.

Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections

Prereading Idea

Reece is part of a family. He's part of a neighborhood. He's a good friend to Aaron, the boy at school who always wears a bathrobe. What groups are you a part of? How do people in a group help one another? If someone was going through a tough time, what could you do to help so they would feel less alone? If someone you knew lost their pet, what could you do or say to make things better?

Classroom Discussion Questions

1. Has anyone had an amphibian (frog, toad, salamander or newt) for a pet? How about a reptile, such as a lizard or turtle? What did you like about it? What was challenging for you?
2. In the book, Reece meets a boy who needs his help. He has to get really creative and come up with a bunch of different ways to teach Aaron to ride a bike. What is the best advice you can give someone if they're afraid to do something?
3. Two of Reece's favorite activities are camping and hiking. They take him many places, like Ruckle Park on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia. Do you like to camp and hike? Where have you gone? Where would you like to go?
4. Reece meets a singer-songwriter on the ferry, and together they make a song about his frog. It helps Reece feel better and remember all the things he likes about his amphibian friend. Music is a big part of people's lives. If you were going to write a song about something, what would it be?
5. Reece is getting used to his dad living in another city. He texts him and talks to him on the phone. What are some of the other ways technology has helped us connect with each other even when we are far apart?

Suggested Activities

- Research project: Burgess is a northern red-legged frog. What kind of frog is in your area? Research frogs and see if you can answer any of these questions: Do frogs have good eyesight? How long does a frog live? Do frogs wear camouflage? Why is a frog cold-blooded? What is the main predator of frogs? What environmental problems do frogs face? What can we do to help?
- Comic: Take a page and fold it into six squares. Each of these squares is called a panel. In this one-page comic, retell the story of Reece looking for his frog. You could show him putting up posters, talking to people and taking the ferry to Salt Spring Island. If you'd like to try another one-page story, you could retell the story of Reece teaching Aaron to ride a bike. This part of the story is called a subplot.
- Leapfrog poem: Close your eyes and imagine a box, any old box, and just start pulling things out of this box. It could be a sock and then a necklace. Let your mind leapfrog from item to item. Put each item on its own line. At first the list will seem random, but if you give it a chance, some of these things might have a strange and beautiful connection to each other.

- How-to guide: In the story, Reece helps his friend learn to ride a bike, but he has to think hard because Aaron is a reluctant rider. Imagine you are teaching someone to do something they're afraid to do. Maybe it's public speaking or riding an escalator. It can be something you find really easy. Let's give them a simple five-step approach. Each sentence is a step that will take them closer to their goal.
- Letter: Imagine you are Burgess, and you are out having an adventure. You want to tell Reece that you are okay and, in fact, having the time of your life. Maybe you've gone to Disneyland, or maybe you are touring Paris. Who knows where Burgess has gone? Write a letter home from the frog's point of view.

Other Titles and Websites of Interest

BC Frogwatch Program: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/frogwatch/publications/factsheets/frogs/red-legged.htm>

Why Do Families Change? Dr. Jillian Roberts. Orca Book Publishers, 2017.

A Boy Named Queen. Sara Cassidy. Groundwood Books, 2016.

Dear Sylvia. Alan Cumyn. Groundwood Books, 2008.

Silas' Seven Grandparents. Anita Horrocks and Helen Flook. Orca Book Publishers, 2010.

Other Books by the Author from Orca Book Publishers

Beach Baby (board book)

Forest Baby (board book)

Reviews and Awards

"A gentle, realistic early chapter book." —*Kirkus Reviews*