



# JUST A MINUTE

## TEACHER GUIDE



*Just a Minute* delves into the past, present and future of how humans experience time and how we track, use and try to manipulate it. Learn how our brains measure time and how our perception of time changes. We can't control time, but we can make every second count.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS:



**Kirstie Hudson** is an award-winning writer, editor and journalist. She was a long-time reporter and producer with CBC Radio. Kirstie coauthored two books with Indigenous artist Carey Newman. *Picking Up the Pieces* was a finalist for the City of Victoria Butler Book Prize. *The Witness Blanket* was the winner of the Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction and a finalist for the TD Canadian Children's Literature Award. As an instructor at the University of Victoria, Kirstie shared her love of storytelling with students in writing and journalism. She lives in Victoria, BC.



**Monique Polak** is the author of over 30 books for young people including *Remember This: The Fascinating World of Memory*, *Open Science: Knowledge for Everyone* and *What World is Left*. She is a three-time winner of the Quebec Writers' Federation Prize for Children's and YA Literature, now called the Janet Savage Blachford Prize. Her work has also been nominated for prizes such as the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction and the Arthur Ellis Award. She lives in Montreal.

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:

**Paige Stampatori** is an illustrator based in Kitchener, Ontario. She graduated from Sheridan College's honors illustration program in 2020. Paige is the illustrator of *Why We Need Vaccines: How Humans Beat Infectious Diseases*.



### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES:

#### Chapter One: It All Started with Chronos

1. In Lewis Carroll's book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the Mad Hatter suggests that if Alice was on good terms with Father Time, she could ask him to speed up or slow down time—depending on her wishes. Make a list of five activities or experiences where you wish time could speed up, and another list of five activities or experiences where you wish time could slow down.
2. The term opportunistic time is used to describe when the time is right for something. What is your favorite season? Is it because there are things you enjoy doing during this season? What are those activities? When is the best time of day for you to be creative? Or to get your homework done?
3. Deep time is when we lose track of time altogether. Think back to the last occasion you experienced deep time. Write a short paragraph describing that experience.



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## Chapter Two: Hours, Minutes, Seconds

1. Using only the sun, try to estimate the time of day.. Remember that at noon, the sun will be directly overhead and the shadow cast by the sun will be at its shortest. Write down your estimate. Then, using a clock, check the actual time.
2. On the next sunny day, plant a stick in the earth (or in a flower pot outside) and observe the shadow created by the stick. Make a chart indicating the hour and the position of the shadow.
3. It is estimated that by 2030 there will be new ways to measure a second. Make a drawing of what you imagine a watch or clock will look like by then.

## Chapter Three: Water Clocks and Pocket Watches

1. How many times a day do you check the time? Starting when you wake up tomorrow, keep track of the number of times you check the time in a single day. What can you learn about yourself from this exercise?
2. For Expo 1970, a time capsule was buried in Japan. Make a list of all the items you and your friends would put inside a time capsule so that people in the future would be able to understand the world you live in today.
3. Daylight savings time is observed in parts of Canada and the United States. Organize a debate in which one side is for daylight savings time and the other side is against. Try to come up with at least three points to support your argument.

## Chapter Four: It's What's Inside That Counts

1. Are you a lark or a night owl? What about the other members of your family? If there are larks and night owls in your home, does it ever cause conflict? Write a story in which a lark and a night owl get into a fight.
2. Do you wake up at the same time every day? Or do you sleep in later on the weekend? Imagine that you run a school. Write up a schedule that would be ideal for you.
3. Developing new hobbies is believed to be good for brain health. Make a list of three new hobbies you might be interested in exploring.

## Chapter Five: Can Your Dog—or Your Houseplant—Tell Time?

1. Find the stump of a tree that has been cut. Count the number of rings to estimate the tree's age.
2. The next time you are trying to swat a fly, stop to observe how the fly is able to evade your fly swatter. Watch how the fly is able to perceive more information than a human during the same moment of time. Write a paragraph from the fly's point of view in which the fly shares his perceptions.
3. Monarch butterflies travel great distances. Write a journal entry told from the point of view of a monarch butterfly migrating to the south of the United States.

## Chapter Six: Hurry Up and Slow Down!

1. Try to go a full day without checking the time. Was it hard? Or was it a relief? Or both? Write a paragraph about your experience.
2. Some of us are speedy, some of us are good at slowing down. Which type are you? On your next free afternoon, test out what it is like to be the opposite. Write a paragraph about your experience. Did you learn anything new about yourself?
3. Overwork can be dangerous. Interview someone who is retired. Ask whether they feel they spent too much time working. People talk about achieving work-life balance. Does the person you are interviewing have any advice for you about how you can best spend your time as you grow up?

## Chapter Seven: Running Out of Time

1. You've probably heard of a bucket list—it's a list a person makes of all the things they wish to do while they are alive. Make your own bucket list. Aim for at least ten items.
2. Interview the oldest person you know. Ask the person whether they feel time has sped up with age. Ask the person whether looking back, they might have spent their time differently. Share your interview notes with your classmates.
3. Geologist Marcia Bjornerud coined the term timefulness which refers to thinking about time based on the long history of the Earth. Together with your classmates, come up with a list of five things you can do to leave the world a better place for your descendants.

