

Title/Author: *Verdi* by Janell Cannon

Suggested Time to Spend: 5 Days (five 20-minute sessions)

Common Core grade-level ELA/Literacy Standards: RL.2.1, RL.2.2, RL.2.3, RL.2.4, RL.2.7; W.2.2, W.2.8; SL.2.1, SL.2.2, SL.2.6; L.2.1, L.2.2, L.2.4

## Teacher Instructions

### **Before the Lesson**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis below. **Please do not read this to the students.** This is a description to help you prepare to teach the book and be clear about what you want your children to take away from the work.

#### Big Ideas/Key Understandings/Focusing Question

Why doesn't Verdi go into the forest like the other hatchlings? One key takeaway is that he wants to know what it is like to be grown up, because he likes being young. What is this story trying to teach us? One key takeaway is to accept yourself as you are and don't be afraid of change.

#### Synopsis

This beautifully illustrated book is about a python who deals with issues of accepting himself. Young Verdi doesn't want to grow up big and green. He likes his bright yellow skin and sporty stripes. Anyway, all the green snakes he meets are lazy, boring, and rude. When Verdi finds a green stripe running along his whole body, he tries everything he can think of to get rid

of it...and ends up getting himself into trouble. Even with his best efforts, Verdi turns green. In the end, Verdi is still young at heart and he realizes even though he is big and green now, he doesn't have to stop being himself.

2. Go to the last page of the lesson and review "What Makes This Read-Aloud Complex." This was created for you as part of the lesson and will give you guidance about what the lesson writers saw as the sources of complexity or key access points for this book. You will of course evaluate text complexity with your own students in mind, and make adjustments to the lesson pacing and even the suggested activities and questions.
3. Read the entire book, adding your own insights to the understandings identified. Also note the stopping points for the text-inspired questions and activities. *Hint: you may want to copy the questions vocabulary words and activities over onto sticky notes so they can be stuck to the right pages for each day's questions and vocabulary work.*
4. Consider pairing this series of lessons on *Verdi* with a text set to increase student knowledge and familiarity with the topic. A custom text set can be found [here](#). *Note: This is particularly supportive of ELL students.*

*Note to teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs): Read Aloud Project Lessons are designed for children who cannot read yet for themselves. They are highly interactive and have many scaffolds built into the brief daily lessons to support reading comprehension. Because of this, they are filled with scaffolds that are appropriate for English Language Learners who, by definition, are developing language and learning to read (English). This read aloud text includes complex features which offer many opportunities for learning, but at the same time includes supports and structures to make the text accessible to even the youngest students.*

*This lesson includes features that align to best practices for supporting English Language Learners. Some of the supports you may see built into this, and /or other Read Aloud Project lessons, assist non-native speakers in the following ways:*

- *These lessons include embedded vocabulary scaffolds that help students acquire new vocabulary in the context of reading. They feature multi-modal ways of learning new words, including prompts for where to use visual representations, the*

*inclusion of student-friendly definitions, built-in opportunities to use newly acquired vocabulary through discussion or activities, and featured academic vocabulary for deeper study.*

- *These lessons also include embedded scaffolds to help students make meaning of the text itself. It calls out opportunities for paired or small group discussion, includes recommendations for ways in which visuals, videos, and/or graphic organizers could aid in understanding, provides a mix of questions (both factual and inferential) to guide students gradually toward deeper understanding, and offers recommendations for supplementary texts to build background knowledge supporting the content in the anchor text.*
- *These lessons feature embedded supports to aid students in developing their overall language and communication skills by featuring scaffolds such as sentence frames for discussion and written work (more guidance available [here](#)) as well as writing opportunities (and the inclusion of graphic organizers to scaffold the writing process). These supports help students develop and use newly acquired vocabulary and text-based content knowledge.*

## The Lesson – Questions, Activities, and Tasks

Questions/Activities/Vocabulary/Tasks	Expected Outcome or Response (for each)
<p><b>FIRST READING:</b> Pull students together or use a document camera so that all students can enjoy the illustrations. Read aloud the entire book with minimal interruptions.</p>	<p><b>FOCUS:</b> The goal here is for students to enjoy the book, both writing and pictures, and to experience it as a whole. This will give them some context and sense of completion before they dive into examining the parts of the book more carefully.</p>
<p><b>SECOND READING:</b> <b>Activity: Identifying vocabulary and answering questions about the text</b> <b>(The teacher may choose to record the vocabulary words on an anchor chart for future reference.)</b></p> <p>Today we will be talking about some vocabulary words in our book and answering some questions from the text.</p> <p>*Note: Page one is the first illustration in the book and will</p>	<p><b>FOCUS:</b> The goal is for students to learn new vocabulary used in the book and answer questions about the text. (RL.2.1, L.2.4)</p>

continue to page 42, which is the last illustration in the book.

**Possible Questions:** (After listening to pages 1-8)

- (1) What do you learn about Verdi after listening to page 2?
- (2) What are some of the things that upset Verdi about the older snakes? What does Verdi want out of life?

**Dawdled-page 2**

**Define:** waste time; be slow

**Example:** Sarah dawdled through breakfast.

**Ask:** The author writes, "But Verdi dawdled." What does that mean? What was he doing?

**Chorused-page 11**

**Define:** a group of people say the same thing at the same time.

**Example:** They chorused a noisy amen.

**Ask:** What words did the greens say all together?

**Possible Question:** (After listening to pages 1-14)

- (1) How did Verdi feel about his new skin?

**Possible Answers:**

- (1) Verdi likes the way he looks. He doesn't want to become green.
- (2) Verdi thinks they are boring, lazy, and rude. He wants to have fun and stay young forever.

**Response for "dawdled"**

- Students may respond, he was admiring his skin, he was being slow

**Response for "chorused"**

- Students should respond, "Oh, my."

**Possible Answers:**

- (1) Verdi does not understand why his skin is turning green. He has tried to be the opposite of the "greens" by being fast.

**Frantic**-page 8 of text

**Define:** Highly excited with strong emotion or frustration.

**Example:** My dad was frantic with worry when I didn't get off the bus.

**Ask:** What would 'frantic splashing' look like?

**Possible Question:** (After listening to pages 15-34)

(1) How does the illustration on page 18 help you understand the word murky?

**Murky**- page 17

**Define:** Darkened, clouded, or blurry.

**Example:** I could not see the fish in the murky pond.

**Ask:** The setting of this page is in the 'murky depths', Where is that?

**Possible Question:**

(1) Turn and talk to a partner. Tell each other the ways that Verdi tried to solve the problem of starting to turn green. Why was he so upset? (Teacher should call on some students to share what they talked about.)

**Plummeting**- page 27

**Define:** To fall straight down.

**Example:** The hiker went plummeting down the mountain and broke his ankle.

**Ask:** What words give you a picture in your mind to help you figure out what 'plummeting through the trees' might mean?

**Response for "frantic"**

- Students may respond, crazy splashing with water flying everywhere.

**Possible Answers:**

(1) The water is brown. It is dark. It is hard to see.

**Response for "murky"**

- Students may respond, the very bottom of the pond where it's dark and hard to see.

**Possible Answers:**

(1) Verdi tries to scrub it off with leaves in the water. He leaves the mud on his body after falling in a mudhole. Verdi launches himself into the air, thinking the bright sun and his speed would turn him golden again.

**Response for "plummeting"**

- Students should respond, "Whippety, whappity, fwip, fwap, wham!"

<p><b>Antics</b>-page 29  <b>Define:</b> foolish, outrageous, or amusing behavior  <b>Example:</b> We'll have no more of your antics, so just settle down.  <b>Ask:</b> What were the greens seeing as they watched Verdi's antics?  <b>Possible Question:</b> (After listening to pages 35-42)  (1) What did Verdi learn about being green?</p> <p><b>Marveled</b>- page 37  <b>Define:</b> To be filled with wonder  <b>Example:</b> Tim marveled at how calm his Dad was when he saw the busted window.  <b>Ask:</b> What are some other words that could mean the same as marveled?</p>	<p><b>Response for "antics"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students may respond, "They saw Verdi fall through the trees and land on the log."</li> </ul> <p><b>Possible Answers:</b>  (1) Verdi learns that he blends in with nature and is not disturbed by other creatures. Verdi learns that even though he is green, he can still be himself. =Verdi learns that he is wiser and knows more about life.</p> <p><b>Response for "marveled"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students may respond, "looked at", or "saw".</li> </ul>
<p><b>THIRD READING:</b>  Reread the book again. While reading, stop at the pages indicated and discuss.</p> <p>*Note: Page one is the first illustration in the book and will continue to page 42, which is the last illustration in the book.</p> <p>Activity: Using illustrations to support and deepen comprehension</p>	<p><b>FOCUS:</b> The goal is to for students to glean information from the illustrations the author included in the book to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot. (RL.2.7)</p>

**Show page 8** of Verdi grabbing hold of a limb. (display on a document camera if possible)

**Questions:**

- (1) Describe what you see in the illustration.
- (2) What do you learn about what Verdi is like from the illustration?

After discussing, show page 7 of the text that goes with the illustration. Ask students to show you where the clues are in the text to confirm their thoughts.

**Show illustration on page 16** of Verdi in the water with the fish. (display on document camera if possible)

**Questions:**

- (1) Describe the setting.
- (2) How does the author use the illustration to set a mood for what is happening in the text?

After discussing, show page 15 of text that goes with the illustration of Verdi and the fish. Ask students to show in the text the clue words that help confirm their thoughts

**Illustration on page 8**

**Answers:**

- (1) Students may say they see Verdi holding a limb back like a slingshot. He has his body wrapped around another limb. He looks like he might want to get to the other limb. He might be trying to shoot into the air
- (2) Verdi likes to go fast and have fun.

Students will underline or highlight the text that supports their thoughts.

\*"Verdi gripped one branch with his tail and another with his little snake jaws."

\*The Verdi let go"

**Illustration on page 16**

Possible Answers:

- (1) There is a scary looking fish in the bottom of water. The water is brown and muddy looking.
- (2) Some students may respond that the color of the illustration makes them feel sad or scared because it is dark. Some may respond that the fish looks scary.

Students will underline or highlight the text that supports their thoughts such as murky and depths.

Students will respond by saying "Yummm" "Lunch" in the tone they think he is speaking.

<p><b>Questions:</b> How do you think the fish responded when he saw Verdi in the water?</p> <p><b>Show the illustration on page 26</b> of Verdi laying across a log. (display on document camera if possible)</p> <p><b>Question:</b> How does the author show that Verdi is hurt in her illustration?</p> <p>After discussing, show page 25 of the text that goes along with the illustration of Verdi laying across the log. Ask students to show in the text the clue words that help with their thinking.</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Which word helps show how he flew through the trees? Which word helps show how Verdi felt?</p>	<p><b>Illustration on page 26</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Students respond by saying Verdi is limp looking. He has his tongue sticking out.</p> <p>Students will respond by highlighting or underlining “He couldn’t move” and “Help”</p> <p>Students will respond by highlighting or underling the words “plummeting” and “croaked” in that order.</p>
<p><b>FOURTH READING:</b> Teacher draws a chart divided into three sections titled beginning, middle, and end. Reread the picture book Verdi. Tell students that they will look for clues to show how Verdi has changed from the beginning of the story to the end.</p> <p><b>*Note:</b> Page one is the first illustration in the book and will</p>	<p><b>FOCUS:</b> The goal is for students to determine how Verdi responds to growing old from the beginning of the story until the end. (RL2.3)</p>



continue to page 42, which is the last illustration in the book.

**Using a document camera, show the illustrations and reread the text for pages as marked. Then students will identify ways Verdi feels about himself or the greens from the beginning, middle, and end of the book.**

The students will use a chart divided into three sections marked beginning, middle and end to sort characteristics and actions of Verdi.

**Reread pages 1-4**

Focus Question: How does Verdi’s attitude about growing old change from the beginning of the text to the end?

Beginning	Middle	End
*He thinks the greens are lazy, boring, and rude. *The greens are old. *Verdi is young and has sporty stripes. *Verdi is fast and likes to have fun. *Verdi wants to stay young forever.	*Verdi doesn’t understand why he is turning green. *He tries to scrub the green off. *Verdi thinks having mud on himself is better than being green. *Verdi likes adventure. *Verdi doesn’t think about falling. *Verdi is adventurous.	*Verdi enjoys watching nature. *Verdi is not afraid of being green. *Verdi can still do tricks like he did when he was yellow. *Verdi can still be himself.

So What? So what did Verdi learn about himself at the end of the book about growing old?  
 \*He can still be a green and be himself.  
 \*There are benefits to being a green.  
 \*Even though he is a green, he is still able to do the things he did when he was a yellow.

Responses may include:

<p>After reading and showing pages 1-4, ask students if there are any details about how Verdi feels about himself or the greens on those pages.</p> <p><b>Reread pages 5-10</b> After reading and showing pages 5-10, ask students if there are any details about how Verdi feels about himself or the greens on those pages.</p> <p><b>Reread pages 11-14</b> After reading and showing pages 11-14, ask students if there are any details about how Verdi feels about himself or the greens on those pages.</p> <p><b>Reread pages 15-22</b> After reading and showing pages 15-22, ask students if there are any details about how Verdi feels about himself or the greens on those pages.</p> <p><b>Reread pages 23-28</b> After reading and showing pages 23-28, ask students if there are any details about how Verdi feels about himself or the greens on those pages.</p> <p><b>Reread pages 29-32</b> After reading and showing pages 29-32, ask students if there are any details about how Verdi feels about himself or the greens on those pages.</p> <p><b>Reread pages 33-38</b></p>	<p>Pages 1-4 The greens are green and lazy. They are old. Verdi is yellow with stripes. He is young.</p> <p>Pages 5-10 The greens are boring and rude. Verdi is fast and likes to have fun. He wants to stay young forever.</p> <p>Pages 11-14 Verdi can't understand why he is turning green. He tries to scrub the green off with leaves in the water.</p> <p>Pages 15-22 Verdi thinks having mud on is better than being green.</p> <p>Pages 23-28 Verdi likes adventure. Verdi thinks that his speed would keep him yellow. Verdi doesn't think about falling.</p> <p>Pages 29-32 Verdi realizes the greens used to be adventurous. Verdi knows the greens are wise. He learns the greens used to be fast.</p>
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<p>After reading and showing pages 33-38, ask students if there are any details about how Verdi feels about himself or the greens on those pages.</p> <p><b>Reread pages 39-42</b> After reading pages 39-42, ask students if there are any details about “The Greens” or “Verdi” on those pages.</p>	<p>Pages 33-38 Verdi enjoys watching nature. Verdi is green.</p> <p>Pages 39-42 Verdi feels alright about being green. Verdi is not afraid to be green now. Verdi can still do tricks like he did when he was yellow. Verdi is still himself.</p>
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### FINAL DAY WITH THE BOOK - Culminating Task

Using the information from the first three readings of the text, write a paragraph explaining why Verdi was afraid of getting old.

Sample student response:

Verdi did not want to get old, because all the older greens did was lay around all day. Verdi wanted to have fun and be adventurous. So he decided he would stay young forever. He couldn't stop what was happening to him though. He started to turn green. Verdi tried scrubbing it off, but that did not work. He was determined to stay young. So, he launched himself into the air, but he got hurt when he fell back to the ground. The greens took care of Verdi. He overheard the greens talking about the way they acted when they were young. He couldn't believe his ears. While Verdi was healing, he became greener and started to appreciate nature more.

Then one day a couple of young snakes come by and called Verdi an old green guy. He realizes that he is now what he was afraid to become. Instead of just laying around, Verdi decides he can still have fun. He shows the two younger snakes his figure eight. Verdi discovers that just because he is old does not mean he can't still be himself.

## Vocabulary

These words merit less time and attention	These words merit more time and attention
<p>Page 2-scattered-occurring at widely spaced intervals</p> <p>Page 2- ventured-to take the risk of; brave the dangers of</p> <p>Page 3-droopy-hanging down; sagging</p> <p>Page 3-lazing-to pass time lazily; to idle; a period of ease</p> <p>Page 3-interrupting-to stop in the middle of doing or saying something</p> <p>Page 3-whined-to complain in a self-pitying way</p> <p>Page 5- rude-discourteous or impolite</p> <p>Page 7-gripped-a grasp or hold</p> <p>Page 11-molt-to shed skin</p> <p>Page 13-revealing-to lay open to view; display</p> <p>Page 17-bottomfeeder-a fish that finds food at the bottom of a body of water</p> <p>Page 17-cruising-to travel about without a particular purpose</p> <p>Page 21-gloppy-messy</p> <p>Page 24-budged-to move slightly; begin to move</p> <p>Page 25-startled-to disturb or agitate suddenly as by surprise or alarm</p> <p>Page 25-lofty-extending high in the air</p> <p>Page 27-sprawl-to spread out</p> <p>Page 31-gabbed-to talk; chatter</p> <p>Page 31-astonished-to fill with surprise or wonder; amaze</p> <p>Page 31-perch-a high or elevated position</p> <p>Page 37-patiently-calmly</p> <p>Page 39-basked-to enjoy a pleasant situation</p>	<p>Page 2-dawdled-waste of time; be slow</p> <p>Page 3-fidgeting-to move about restlessly, nervously, or impatiently</p> <p>Page 11-chorused-a group of people say the same thing at the same time</p> <p>Page 17-frantic-highly excited with strong emotion or frustration</p> <p>Page 17-murky-darkened, cloudy, or blurry</p> <p>Page 25-launching-to send forth, catapult, or release</p> <p>Page 27-plummeting-to fall straight down</p> <p>Page 29-antics-foolish, outrageous, or amusing behavior</p> <p>Page 37-marveled-to be filled with wonder</p> <p>Page 39-astounded-shock with wonder or surprise</p>

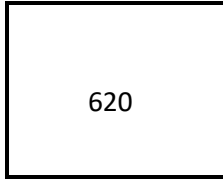
### Extension learning activities for this book and other useful resources

- Do research about pythons, including habitat. One website that is available is <http://www.kidzone.ws/lw/snakes/facts-python.htm>
- Read the last two pages of the book, Verdi. It has interesting facts about snakes and pythons. *Note: This is particularly supportive of English Language Learners.*

**What Makes This Read-Aloud Complex?**

**1. Quantitative Measure**

Go to <http://www.lexile.com/> and enter the title of your read-aloud in the Quick Book Search in the upper right of home page. Most texts will have a Lexile measure in this database.



Most of the texts that we read aloud in K-2 should be in the 2-3 or 4-5 band, more complex than the students can read themselves.

2-3 band	420-820L
4-5 band	740-1010L

**2. Qualitative Features**

Consider the four dimensions of text complexity below. For each dimension\*, note specific examples from the text that make it more or less complex.

<p>The purpose of this book is to teach that growing up does not mean that you have to act a certain way. This story is about a young python who is afraid of growing old and not having fun. In the end Verdi decides that “I may be big and very green, but I’m still me!”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Meaning/Purpose</b></p>	<p>This book is a narrative. The photographs are beautiful and helps embellish what is happening in the text. There is an additional section of in the back of the book which includes factual information about snakes.</p> <p><b>Structure</b></p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Language</b></p> <p>There are a variety of complex and descriptive sentences in the text. “His frantic splashing caught the eye of a large bottomfeeder cruising the murky depths.”</p> <p>The author uses onomatopoeia. “Whippety, whappity, fwip, fwap, WHAM!”</p> <p>Similes – “Quick as lightning!”</p>	<p><b>Knowledge Demands</b></p> <p>Students need to know background knowledge for jungle or rainforest habitats. They need to have some knowledge of snakes and how they molt.</p>

\*For more information on the qualitative dimensions of text complexity, visit [http://www.achievethecore.org/content/upload/Companion\\_to\\_Qualitative\\_Scale\\_Features\\_Explained.pdf](http://www.achievethecore.org/content/upload/Companion_to_Qualitative_Scale_Features_Explained.pdf)

**3. Reader and Task Considerations**

What will challenge my students most in this text? What supports can I provide?  
 The vocabulary will be a challenge for the students. Support will be provided with the second reading.

How will this text help my students build knowledge about the world?  
 Students will learn that every living thing has a life cycle. They will learn that they will eventually grow old themselves, but just like Verdi, they can choose to live their life however they wish.

**4. Grade level**

What grade does this book best belong in?

2<sup>nd</sup> grade

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