



GIRAFFES CAN'T DANCE

AUTHOR: GILES ANDREAE

ILLUSTRATOR: GUY PARKER-REES

See a video of the book read aloud here: [Giraffes Can't Dance](#)

**** REMEMBER: HAVE FUN AND THE KIDS WILL TOO! ****

OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE BOOK

All the jungle's got the beat, but Gerald the giraffe has four left feet. Such is the dilemma in this British team's bouncy if didactic picture book about self-esteem. As a multitude of fleet-footed beasts eagerly "skip and prance" at the annual Jungle Dance in Africa, Gerald feels sad "because when it comes to dancing, he was really very bad." Jeered by waltzing warthogs and cha-cha-ing chimps when he attempts to cut a rug, Gerald hangs his head and leaves the celebration behind. Luckily, a friendly cricket appears in the moonlight, chirping a morale boosting song of self-confidence that soon sets Gerald in graceful motion. ([Publishers weekly.com](#))

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Giles Andreae (born 16 March 1966) is a British artist, poet and greeting card writer, creator of the "Purple Ronnie" and "Edward Monkton" series. In 2006 Andreae worked alongside Blunderbus Theatre Company (Nottinghamshire) to adapt his story Giraffes Can't Dance to bring it to stage. The company toured this story across the UK.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

One of my earliest memories is of a huge Kudu antelope sticking his neck in the car window to try and gobble up our sandwiches. I was born in Zimbabwe and I can still remember the smell of the huge, hot granite rocks. My family and I moved to England when I was three. I earned a degree in English and Philosophy at York University, where I spent a lot of time painting and doodling. I worked as a mural painter, an arts and crafts teacher and an art therapist, among other things, before finding out that I really wanted to illustrate children's books. ([Gyparkerrees.com](#))

THE READ ALOUD

BEFORE READING

Use these before reading the story to help students activate background knowledge and make predictions:

- Look at this cover. (Show front and back) What do you notice?
- What does it make you wonder about the story?

GIRAFFES CAN'T DANCE

TOPICS & THEMES:

- Individuality
- Celebrating who you are
- Rhyming

Tips for every book!

POWER PHRASES:

I WONDER...

I NOTICE...

TELL ME MORE...

DIGGING DEEPER:

"Tell me more, why do you think that?"

"How do you know that?"

"Why do you think they feel like that?"

"Interesting, did you notice anything else?"

- Can you tell anything about the setting of the story by looking at the cover?
- Why do you think giraffes can't dance?
- Read the dedication and explain what it is.
- Who do you think these people might be and why did the author/illustrator dedicate to them?

DURING THE STORY

Use these while reading the story to help students interpret the action and content.

- (p.3) I wonder what buckled at the knees means? What clues from the picture help you figure out the meaning?
- (p.9) Are you noticing anything about the language in this story? (Rhyming)
- Reread (p.8-9) Listen for the rhyming words. What other words rhyme with reel and feel?
- (p.12) What does "rooted to the spot" mean? Why is Gerald frozen?

AFTER READING

Use these after reading the story to help students understand what they just read.

- Why do you think the author wrote this book? What was his message?
- At the end Gerald says, "We all can dance, when we find the music we love!" What do you think this means?

BRINGING THE BOOK TO LIFE!

- (p.17) In your seat show how you would sway to the music of the moon. (Model slowly swaying for the children.) Do you think this is dancing? Why or why not?
- (p. 18) Use your arm to show how Gerald's tail would swish!
- (p. 21) Show me with the expression on your face how you think Gerald is feeling now!

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

- (p. 10) Turn to a neighbor and talk about how you think Gerald is feeling? Why do you think he is feeling that way? Share back with whole group

SMALL-GROUP IDEAS

1. DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

- Do a picture walk through the book, having students retell story.
- Have students point out rhyming words they see or hear.
- Look at details in the illustrations. (p. 4-5) Ask students to tell you what they notice in the picture. What is Gerald feeling here? How do you know?
- (p. 26-27) How do the illustrations show how the animals are feeling watching Gerald dance? How do you think Gerald felt when the other animals called him clumsy and weird? Have you ever felt like that?
- What was happening that made you feel that way? What did you do?
- Why do you think the author chose to use a giraffe as the main character?
- How would the story have been different with another animal?
- The cricket says to Gerald on p. 15 "Sometimes when you're different, you just need a different song." What do you think he meant by this?
- What lesson do you think Gerald learned from this book?
- What lesson did you learn from this story?

Suggested Optional Activity:

- Download pictures of the animals in the book. Print out. Play 'Who am I?' Model giving 3 clues to guess the animal. Cricket: I am small. I am an insect. I come out at night. Pass out other animals (lion, wart hog, rhino, giraffe,

chimpanzee. Zebra, etc.) Have children keep their animal a secret and take turns giving clues for other students to guess the animal.

2. WRITING ACTIVITY

- Giraffes CAN dance. Write a few sentences about something you can do and why it makes you happy! Illustrate your writing.

3. EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- Create a cover for a book that shows another animal and what they might not be able to do – e.g., Ducks Can't Swim!

COMMON CORE LINKS

Common Core links CCSS.ELA-Literacy. 1.1,1.2,1.3, 1.4,1.7

Giraffes Can't Dance is a great read that promotes confidence and positive self-esteem in children, as well as empathy and respect for people who are different. The book is about a giraffe named Gerald who wants to dance, but is continuously made fun of and shunned by other animals. He finally meets a cricket that tells him that everyone is capable of accomplishing their dreams in their own unique way. Gerald is a tall giraffe who every year dreads the jungle dance. Embarrassed that he can't dance like the other animals, Gerald hides away after he gets laughed at for being bandy legged with two left feet when it come to dancing. Then suddenly one day Gerald over hears a cricket playing the most wonder tune and finds himself bopping and boogying away, much to all the other animals surprise.