

**A Teacher's Guide for  
*Jack of All Tails*  
A Picture Book by Kim Norman  
illustrated by David Clark  
Published by Dutton Children's Books**

***Jack of  
All Tails*  
is an  
Accelerated  
Reader  
Book!**

### ***About the book:***

Kristi's great idea of all time is convincing her family to be a bunch of animals. Really! They start a business posing as people's pets! They train kids in puppy ownership by tugging on socks and fetching tennis balls, but Kristi's idea of making puddles on the floor gets her fired. They help a family adjust to their new kitten by curling up on the piano and pouncing on string, but Kristi's in trouble when she climbs the drapes. Will she ever find her perfect pet job?

Occupational hazards include crickets for lunch and a trip to the vet in this imaginative and hilarious story about learning to use your natural talents.

---

This Study Guide is designed to meet Va. Standards of Learning.

*Jack of all Tails* has been recommended by Rutgers University as a useful supplement to elementary economics lessons about entrepreneurship, services, jobs and training. "Live" link below:

[http://www.fas.rutgers.edu/cms/econkids/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=354&Itemid=203](http://www.fas.rutgers.edu/cms/econkids/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=354&Itemid=203)

---

### ***About the author:***

Kim Norman is a poet, singer, and artist, as well as the author of this, her first picture book. She lives with her family in Virginia. At her house the *pets* have jobs, including a yellow labrador retriever, named Anna, who fetches the paper every morning. Learn more about Kim, her other books and her author visits at [www.kimnormanbooks.com](http://www.kimnormanbooks.com)

And to SEE that Anna fetch the paper, visit Kim's *Jack of All Tails* blog at [www.jackofalltails.com](http://www.jackofalltails.com)

### ***Author interview:***

#### **If you had to choose a job for Jack of All Tails which one would you choose?**

I like Mom's cat job. Cats don't feel obligated to DO anything for anyone! And yet they're a bit more adventurous than, say, a lizard or hamster. I like the way they find cozy, hidden places to sleep.

#### **I've got to ask: Where did you get the idea for this wacky book?**

I sto... ahem... borrowed it. I have an old book of letters written by P. G. Wodehouse, the early 20th century author of the "What, oh Jeeves" stories. In one letter, he talks of a weekend visit from Lord Dunsany, who would, in the next decade, become a successful playwright. At the time, though, he was having a hard time convincing producers to buy one of his plays about a man who loses his job and becomes a watch dog. That's about all I know of the plot. Don't know the title or if Dunsany ever sold it. But the idea really stuck in my mind as a funny premise.... someone making a living posing as an animal.

#### **What advice do you have for young writers?**

Read as much or MORE than you write. Read everything: books of all sorts, short stories, magazines, the backs of cereal boxes. You've got to read a lot of different types of books/stories to find out what you'd be good at writing.

***Pre-reading:***

If you were a pet which would you be? Why? What is the best part about having a pet? What is the worst? Do most people realize what they're getting into or not?

***Questions to consider:***

- What does “for the right price” mean? What would you do for the right price?
- How did the family get started in the business?
- What naughty thing did Kristy do at the Deener’s house?
- How do they train people?
- List the things they did to get people to know about their new company. Have you ever started a business? How can kids make money?
- Describe what Kristi’s family does to help the McGinn family prepare for a new cat. What would you do? What kind of response does Kristi get for her help?
- How does Kristi learn more about animals? What else could she have done?
- Why didn’t things go well for Kristi when she acted like a pot-bellied pig?
- What positions do the other family members accept? Which one would you want?
- In the end, what did Kristi decide would be her job?

***Projects:***

**LANGUAGE ARTS:**

Kim Norman uses fun verbs to bring her story to life like snuffle, snuggle and snort! Create a list of other verbs she uses and then try them out as you write a few sentences about your own pet (or parents!)

Snuffle	
Snuggle	
Snort	

## DRAMA:

Play pet charades! All slips should be of common household pets and the kids take turns acting out animals without sound.

## MATH:

**Solve these word problems and then create four more based on the book:**

If Kristi makes \$5.00 an hour as a person trainer then how many hours will she need to work to buy a \$20.00 hamster wheel?

Dad has \$15.00 in his wallet after working for Mrs. Philpott. If he also makes \$5.00 an hour, how many hours did he work that day?

Mom wants to buy a tabby inspired sweater for \$30.00. How many hours should she work for the Osawa's if she gets paid \$10.00 an hour?

Eddie has \$25.00 after a week of lizarding. If he makes \$5.00 an hour, how many hours did he work?

## SCIENCE:

See graphic organizer on page 5.

## ART:

Write your name in animal inspired letters like the title of the book! Be sure to use color and pattern to create your letters.

## SOCIAL STUDIES:

Entrepreneurship: Talk about the ways Kristi's family promotes their business.


Have students create posters and ads for the Kibbleman family's "Jack of All Tails" business.


They could also write scripts for radio or TV commercials, (and perform them, of course).







If facilities permit, record the commercials.

Of have them think up a wacky class business and create promotional items for *that* business.

## CRAFTS & GAMES

 Draw & color various animal tails on large sheets of paper. Cut them out and attach them to ribbons to tie around the students's waists so they can wear the tails. Of course, they'll want to behave like the animals whose tails they're wearing!

 Alternatively, tape the cut-out tales to a cloth or paper ribbon. Tape the ribbon to a stick or toilet paper roll, (for a handle) and run around playing "swirly tails!"

-  On large paper, trace around students' bodies, then label the silhouettes as "Mom," "Dad," "Eddie" and "Kristi." Now hang the silhouettes on the wall and -- using some tape & the tails from the activity above -- play "pin the tail on the FAMILY."
-  Create mix & match cards showing animal heads and tails for students to match up. Students could create the cards themselves by cutting the images from magazines.
-  Make animal footprint "stilts" (Aluminum cans with oversized footprints taped on the bottom)
-  Jack-Toss game:  
Stand children in a circle.  
First child tosses ball to another child, calling out the name of an animal  
Receiving child makes animal sound as he/she catches the ball
-  Play "Kristi says" (Simon says)  
Same rules as "Simon Says." Players are "out" if they perform a command not preceded by "Kristi says."  
Example:  
LEADER: "Kristi says, 'Be a monkey!'" (Players leap around making monkey noises)  
LEADER: "Kristi says, 'Be a cat!'" (meow, lick paw)  
LEADER: "Be a dog" (Players don't move because leader did not say, "Kristi says.")
-  Play Pet "Bowling"  
Arrange a batch of stuffed animals in a cluster, (or in a line)  
Roll a rubber ball at them to see how many you can knock down at once!

**This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her website to find hundreds of guides to children's literature.**

# Science

Fill out the following chart on the pet you have or wish you had!

The diagram consists of a central circle labeled "Pet" surrounded by four other circles. Each surrounding circle is labeled with a category: "Habitat" (top-left), "Food" (top-right), "Exercise" (bottom-left), and "Grooming" (bottom-right). The central "Pet" circle is surrounded by a decorative border of various pet icons including a dog, a cat, a bird, and a fish. Each category circle is also decorated with an icon: a fishbowl for "Habitat", a bone for "Food", a dog collar for "Exercise", and a paw print for "Grooming".

**Habitat**

**Food**

**Pet**

**Exercise**

**Grooming**

# JACK OF ALL TAILS Find-the-Word PUZZLE!

You can find all of these words in Kim Norman's picture book, *Jack of All Tails*.  
Can you also find them in the puzzle below?

- PIG
- MOM
- DAD
- SUNLAMP
- DOILY
- CAT
- MEAN
- AFRAID
- GAS
- VET
- SNUFFLE
- SNUGGLE
- SNORT
- PERFECTLY
- PITIFUL
- LOUSY
- PUPPIES
- BUTTRESS
- LIZARD
- REPTILE
- PELLETS
- FROLICKED
- FRISKY
- BASK
- TALENTS
- PIANO
- MUSIC
- CRICKET
- POUNCE

N A E M B F R I S K Y J Z  
 S N O R T G S Q D D L A C  
 T M T A L E N T S S T F L  
 E P I T I F U L Z U C R I  
 L R O P R Z G A S N E A D  
 L M P U P I G K C L F I E  
 E U V I N D L I Z A R D K  
 P S X W A C E Y L M E O C  
 B I K D Q N E U A P P I I  
 K C S T V L O U S Y T L L  
 R O A T E K C I R C I Y O  
 W C B U T T R E S S L V R  
 C Z R V S N U F F L E I F

**Solution:**



*Jack of All Tails*, by Kim Norman  
 Illustrated by David Clark  
 Published by  
 Dutton's Children's Books, 2007

[www.kimnormanbooks.com](http://www.kimnormanbooks.com)