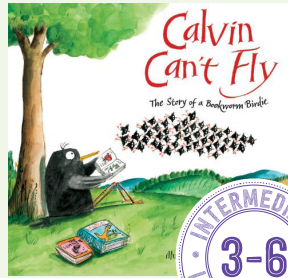


# Calvin Can't Fly

by Jennifer Berne and ill. by Keith Bendis

## Themes

Do Your Best  
Never Give Up  
Uniqueness of Me  
Self-Acceptance  
Following Dreams  
Team Work



Calvin is a bird with 3 brothers, 4 sisters and 67,432 cousins. All the little starlings learn to swoop, hover, and fly figure eights but Calvin has different interests, different skills and different goals. Calvin eventually learns that he *can* do what the other birds do but that what he does best is just as important.

### Key Vocabulary

**Starling:** a black bird with dark, shiny feathers

**Eaves:** the lower part of the roof – usually sticks out beyond the wall of the building, making the perfect spot for a bird to build a nest

**Swoop:** to dive down suddenly from above

**Hover:** to stay very near to

**Soar:** to fly high with little effort

**Flutter:** to wave quickly back and forth or up and down

**Migration:** when a group moves away at the same time

**Formation:** a grouping (of birds)

**Teacher Note:** NED reminds kids that we each have our unique differences!

*“Just because we like to do different things and may even be better than other people at doing certain things – we each have things that we are best at. Sometimes we are able to get more done together because we each have unique strengths. Even if you can’t do something as great as someone else – you should always try to do your personal best. That’s what makes you a Champion!”*

## Before Reading: Discussion Starters

1. Have you ever felt different from those in your family?
2. Do your friends/family members do some things better than you do? Do you do some things better than your friends/family members? How does it feel?

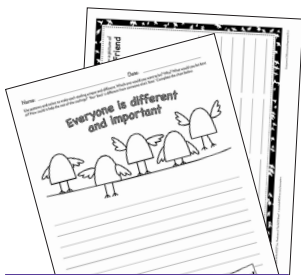
## After Reading: Discussion Starters

1. How did Calvin’s discoveries differ from the other young starlings?  
*The starlings all discovered the same things-worms, grass, dirt and water. Calvin was the only one that discovered a book.*
2. What were the disadvantages of being different? Calvin wasn’t prepared to do the basic things birds do – fly! How did it impact Calvin? He was unprepared to migrate with the rest of the birds when it came time. Remind students that sometimes we have to do things – even if we don’t like them or want to – and it’s smart to “Do Your Best” at everything you do. How did it benefit Calvin? He was excited (his heart fluttered) to learn about all sorts of things. He loved what he was learning. He learned things that no one else knew. It made him happy to be in the library. How did it benefit all the starlings in the end? His book knowledge allowed him to identify storm warning signals and save the birds from disaster.

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3. How did the starlings react to Calvin being unique? What was Calvin's response? They called him names. How did it make Calvin feel? Calvin ruffled his feathers (talk about how that phrase means to be upset). He was sad and escaped to where he was happy – the library. How could NED have encouraged Calvin? If the birds had been NED-like, they would have encouraged his desire to want to read about all those topics but talk to him about why he needed to learn how to fly NOW. They did tell him he only had a couple of days to learn. When the formation took off – Calvin felt lonely. He had a tear roll down his cheek.
4. Have you ever felt lonely because what you could do best was so different from what your friends could do best? Answers will vary.
5. Why did Calvin's brothers, sisters and cousins come back for him? Answers will vary as kids make inferences. They loved him. They cared for him. They didn't want him to be mad at them. They thought maybe they might need him in the future. They were told to. It was the NED thing to do!
6. Did Calvin do his best to learn the important things a starling needs to do? What could he have done differently? Calvin did not do his best. He did not practice swooping soaring. He did not attend his lessons. Calvin could have done both – some bird practice and book reading.
7. In the end, what Calvin did best (read and gain knowledge) saved the rest of the birds. How did they feel about Calvin? They believed him and listened to his advice. After the storm passed, they honored Calvin. They celebrated together when Calvin realized that he too could fly.
8. Do you think Calvin kept being the best at reading? Why or why not. Answers will vary. Maybe – he loved it so much! Other starlings might have learned to read as well – maybe even better than Calvin! It wouldn't matter as long as Calvin did HIS personal best.



PRINTABLE:

Everyone is Different and Important -2 pgs

### Writing Prompt

"Oh, how the wounding words of scorn do sting!" Write about a time that someone's words hurt you. What would you tell them about being more NED-like?

### Activities

**Everyone is different and important!** Write and draw your response to the questions, using the double-sided printable.

**Move Like a Bird!** Give your brain a break and do some movement that is most likely not what you would typically do:

- Ruffle your feathers
- Jump, hop, dance, flap wings
- Loop-de-loop left with your head
- Dipsy-doodle right with your arm

### "I Did My Best" Button

NED buttons are a great reward when students do their personal best! Visit [www.ShopNED.com](http://www.ShopNED.com) to purchase.





Draw a picture of

**Starlings**

Draw a picture of

**Calvin**

Draw a picture of

**You**

Draw a picture of

**A Friend**

What 67,432 starlings do best:

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What Calvin does best:

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What you do best:

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What he/she does best:

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