



SproutLab

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 4 chapter books from the SproutLab cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The SproutLab cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 4 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Hatch

Making a guess before you look, then checking what really happens



Hatch is a brand-new chick with a bit of eggshell still on top like a little hat. Hatch has one favorite word, and that word is *"I wonder."* I wonder if this leaf floats. I wonder if this rock is heavy. Before Hatch touches anything, Hatch stops and makes a guess out loud. Then — and only then — Hatch looks to find out. Guess first, look second. That is the Hatch way.



Hatch's friend Pip the beetle is holding two cups, one with a stone inside. "Which one is heavier?" asks Hatch. Pip freezes. "What if I say the wrong one?" Pip whispers. Pip does not want to guess. Guessing feels scary, like it could go wrong in front of everyone.



"Here's my secret," says Hatch, leaning in. "A guess can't be *wrong* — it can only be *not-yet-checked*. You say what you think will happen. Then you look. If you were right, hooray! If you were not, hooray — now you learned something you didn't know before!" Pip's eyes go wide. "So... either way is good?" "Either way you find something out," says Hatch.



Pip takes a breath and points. "That one. The left cup is heavier." Then Pip lifts them both. The *right* cup sinks down — the stone was in the right one all along! Pip gasps... and then, slowly, smiles. "I was sure it was the left. But now I *know* it's the right — and I know heavy things pull your hand down." Pip guessed wrong, and learned something real.



Pip wants to guess again right away. And again. Each "I wonder" makes Pip's heart beat a little quicker — not the scared kind of quick, but the excited kind, like standing at the top of a slide. Hatch bumps Pip gently, wing to shell. "That feeling? That's what finding out feels like." And the two of them sit in the grass, wondering about everything, happy and unafraid to guess.

Blink

You can only see an object when light reaches it and bounces to your eyes



Blink is a firefly with a little lantern-tail that glows soft and warm. Blink loves a question: *why can we see?* "We see a thing," says Blink, "only when light reaches it and bounces back to our eyes. No light, no seeing. That's the rule." And to prove it, Blink can make the whole rule appear with one small blink of the tail.



Blink's friend Mo the mole is in the dark burrow, and Mo does not like it one bit. "I can't see ANYTHING," Mo frets, pressing back against the wall. "Where did everything go? Is it gone?" The dark feels big and scary, like the room emptied out.



"Nothing's gone," says Blink gently. "It's all still here — we just can't see it, because there's no light to bounce off it. Watch what happens when I glow." Blink lifts the little lantern-tail, and — *blink* — soft light spreads out. The wall, the roots, Mo's own paws: all there, all along. "See? Light reaches them, and they bounce it to your eyes."



Mo blinks, amazed. "So it was never really gone — I just couldn't see it without light!" Mo notices something else: behind a pebble, where Blink's light can't reach, there's a little dark patch. "What's that?" "A shadow," says Blink. "That's where the pebble blocks my light." Mo grins — the dark isn't scary now, it's *interesting*.



Mo asks Blink to make shadows again and again — a tall one, a small one, a wobbly one. What felt frightening a moment ago now feels like a wonder Mo understands. A warm, brave, curious feeling glows in Mo, steady as Blink's little lantern. Side by side in the burrow, the firefly and the mole light up the dark, one blink at a time.

Rattle

Sound is made by something shaking back and forth; stop the shaking and the sound stops



Rattle is a woodpecker who drums on hollow logs — *tat-tat-tat* — all day long. But Rattle isn't just making noise; Rattle is showing a secret. "Every sound comes from something *shaking*," Rattle says. "When I drum, the log shivers. When you talk, something in your throat shivers. Shaking makes sound. Hold the shaking still, and — poof — the sound is gone."



Rattle's friend Gilly the grasshopper hears a bell ringing and covers both ears. "Where does that even *come from?*" Gilly wonders, a little uneasy. "Sound just... appears out of nowhere. It's spooky." The ringing seems to come from thin air, and Gilly doesn't like not knowing.



"It's not from nowhere," says Rattle. "Come feel." Rattle taps the bell — *rinng* — then lays a wing on it. Gilly feels it *buzzing*, quivering fast under the wing. "It's shaking!" Gilly gasps. Then Rattle presses the bell still. The ring stops at once. "Stop the shake, stop the sound," says Rattle. "Now put your hand on your own throat and hum."



Gilly hums, hand on throat — and feels a tiny tickly buzz. "It's shaking in ME too!" Gilly laughs, delighted. Not spooky at all — sound was a *shiver* the whole time, something Gilly could feel. Gilly hums high, then low, feeling the buzz change. The mystery cracked wide open into something Gilly could touch.



Gilly spends the whole afternoon finding buzzes — the buzz of a plucked blade of grass, the buzz of a tapped leaf, the buzz of a happy hum. Each one a little shake, each one a little sound. A bright, satisfied feeling fills Gilly up, the good feeling of figuring out how the world works. And Rattle drums a happy beat, and Gilly feels every buzz of it.

Frost

Some changes can go back (melt then freeze); some changes cannot go back



Frost is a little ice sprite, pale blue and sparkly, who knows all about *change*. Frost can melt into a puddle in the warm sun — and then, in the cool shade, freeze right back into ice. "Some changes go back and forth," Frost says. "Melt, freeze, melt, freeze. But not every change is like that. Some only go one way."



Frost's friend Dew the ladybug is nearly in tears. Dew's little snow-bunny, built that morning, has melted into a plain puddle. "It's *ruined*," Dew sniffles. "It's gone forever." Dew stares at the puddle, sure that something wonderful has been lost for good.



"Wait," says Frost softly. "Let's find out if it's really gone. Some changes can come back. Water that melted from ice? Move it to the cold shade and — watch." Frost nudges the puddle into a cool, shady dip in the rock. Slowly, the water stiffens, sparkles, and hardens. It's ice again! "It came back!" Dew gasps. "Melting can go back the other way," Frost says. "That's a change that *reverses*."



Then Frost points to a leaf that fell in a campfire earlier, now gray ash. "But not everything. That leaf burned. Burning doesn't reverse — the ash can't turn back into a leaf. And that's okay. Knowing which is which means you don't have to worry when the ones that *can* come back, do." Dew wipes both eyes and thinks about that.



Dew rebuilds a little ice-bunny from the frozen puddle, understanding now: it might melt in the sun, but the water is never truly lost — it can freeze again. The sad, panicky feeling has melted away too, replaced by a calm, settled understanding. Frost sparkles beside Dew in the cool shade, and together they watch the little ice-bunny hold its shape, safe for now.

About Spark & Anvil

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- **CuriosityQuest** — Texas geography exploration through Linger, Notice, and the Lantern in the Dark
- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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