



On a following day, have them pull out the list and revisit (and revise if necessary) the interest choices. Then ask students to:

3. Write ten things they already know about the starred topic.
4. List five things they would like to know about the topic.

As a class, brainstorm ways that a person could learn about a topic. The ideas might include: asking experts, visiting locations, reading books and periodicals, researching online, conducting interviews, observing someone in that job or activity, etc. Take any ideas and make a master list of all ideas presented. Then, instruct students to:

5. Use the master list to create a personalized list of research plans.
6. Become a mini-expert on a specific topic over the next several weeks, and develop a plan for showcasing the learning. Showcases might include writing a book, creating a display, making a video/slide show, developing a skit, etc. One component of each presentation/performance should be a poster titled,

**“I found my information by . . .**

**Reading** (specific book titles and authors)

**Interviewing** (specify person/people)

**Observing** (list places visited, etc.)”

This requirement will help model for other learners in attendance the types of information sources can be used for research, validate the information the students are presenting, and foreshadow the formal citation process.

8. On showcase day, invite other classroom students, parents, grandparents, school community neighbors. Set the presentations up as “stations” so attendees can browse the displays, and come and go. Schedule slide shows, performances, etc. at specific times, and repeat them several times.

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***Sharron L. McElmeel** is director of McBookwords ([www.mcbookwords.com](http://www.mcbookwords.com)), a literacy organization and an instructor of children’s literature and young adult literature in the University of Wisconsin-Stout’s online education programs. She often writes and speaks about authors/illustrators and their books. Visit her online at [www.mcelmeel.com](http://www.mcelmeel.com).*



### About the Author/Illustrator: **Gail Gibbons**

Gail Gibbons began creating books when she was a preschooler growing up in Chicago. But her first published book, in 1975, came after a career in television where she worked as a graphic artist. She turned to the comfort of art after her first husband, Glenn Gibbons, passed away. She left her television job, worked on her art, and moved to Cape Cod. Soon her life and books were blossoming. In 1976, she remarried and moved with her husband, Kent Ancliffe and his two children to a 240-acre farm in Vermont. Gibbons continues to create and to write, and all sorts of experiences influence her book making. Her art is created with pen and ink and watercolors, and she is known for her use of vibrant color.

Gibbons’s children are now grown, and she and her husband divide their time between their farm in Vermont and an island home off the coast of Maine. In 2010 she was honored with the Regina Award for her significant contribution to the field of children’s literature. Visit her website at [www.gailgibbons.com](http://www.gailgibbons.com).

*novemnotata* (nine-spotted ladybug). The other states are usually assumed to have the seven-spotted ladybug as their state insect/bug: *Coccinella septempunctata*. Sometimes Pennsylvania and Iowa (and perhaps others) are erroneously named as having the ladybug as a state insect. Investigate and create a theory as to why this information on state insects has been widely distributed but is not verified on the specific state websites. (Note that each state has had initiatives to name the ladybug as a state insect, but the proposal has not passed the legislatures.)

2. Gardeners find that having ladybugs in their gardens is beneficial, so when the weather gets colder, some gardeners actually construct ladybug houses to provide a place for the insects to hibernate. The ladybug house is built much like a birdhouse, except the front leaves about a 3/4 inch gap at the top and bottom—and of course, there is no entrance hole or perch for a bird. The front can be hinged to allow for cleaning and usually mounted on a pole at least 2–3 feet above the ground to avoid water damage. Locate instructions for building a ladybug house (many are available online), and use them as a hands-on reading comprehension exercise to build a house. Volunteers often will donate material and help with the building project. When the house is finished, donate it to a community garden project or to a neighborhood family with a garden.
3. Older students might prepare to host a “showcase of learning” by learning about ladybugs and the benefits of these and other insects (including pest insects). The topic of their showcase can ultimately be a garden seminar, presented to members of the school community or parents and grandparents. They might emphasize that Autumn is the time to provide some type of hibernation house for the ladybugs that gardeners may want in their garden next spring.

Ask students to develop charts and facts to convey the benefits of encouraging ladybugs to inhabit gardens. As a gift to attendees at the showcase of learning, clay pots (with a plant) might be decorated with small, accurately spotted ladybugs. This might also be a community service project at a local nursing home.

4. Students might wish to craft their own ladybugs using red paper plates, and black and white (for the eyeballs) construction paper. Your student artists must decide if the ladybug will be a 2, 4, 5, 7, or 9-spotted ladybug.



### More Ladybug Reading

- *Are You a Ladybug?* By Judy Allen and Tudor Humphries.
- *A Ladybug's Life* by John Himmelman.
- *Ladybugs and Other Insects* by Gallimard Jeunesse
- Online: [www.ladybuglady.com](http://www.ladybuglady.com)

### Read About Other Insects

- The Butterfly Website at [www.butterflywebsite.com](http://www.butterflywebsite.com) is a great source of butterfly information.
- *Nasty Bugs* by Lee Bennett Hopkins
- *Bug off!: Creepy, Crawly Poems* by Jane Yolen and Jason Stemple.
- *The Best Book of Bugs* by Claire Llewellyn

### Curiosity Fuels Research —A Showcase

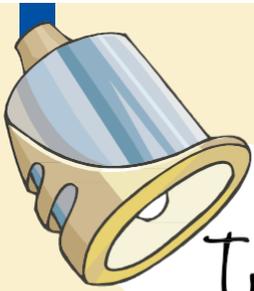
A spark of information gleaned from a single situation or book can ignite a fire of curiosity in a young reader. Nurturing this natural curiosity is a major key to promoting life-long learning.

Gail Gibbons's own curiosity has fueled each of her books. *Trucks* and *How a House Is Built* came about after her family built their Vermont home. Her experiences tapping the maple trees on their farm was used *The Missing Maple Syrup Sap Mystery*. Even a diner in their Vermont community inspired a book: *Marge's Diner*. A visit to New York City where she saw a skyscraper being built inspired *Up Goes the Skyscraper*. She has written about a wide variety of topics—pyramids, photography, soccer, bats, and boats, and over 140 books about a variety of other topics from A (Apples) to Z (Zoos).

### Technique for Identifying an Interest

1. Have students make a list of 20 topics that are of interest to them (any level of interest, from slight to high).
2. Instruct them to circle the three topics that most interest them, and “star” the one that is the top of the list of three.





# In the Spotlight

Grades  
K-3

by | Sharron L. McElmeel

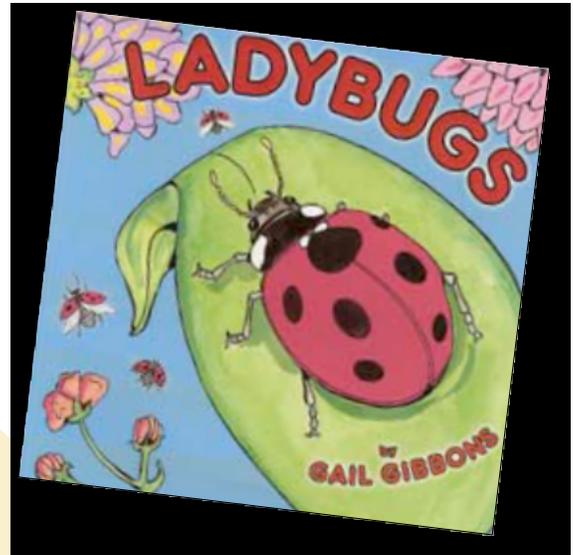
*Ladybugs* by Gail Gibbons. Holiday House, 2012.

## Ladybug, Ladybug

**L**adybugs, known by farmers as effective pest-controllers that consume aphids and other plant-eating insects, are widely recognized as small, red bugs with black dots. Gail Gibbons's *Ladybugs* provides information on how these members of the beetle family help farmers grow crops without having to use chemical pesticides, and shares fun tidbits about different species that young readers will enjoy. For example, ladybugs are not always red and black, and they don't always have spots. Also, the red and black ladybugs are not all alike. Red ladybugs can have two spots, four spots, or seven spots (the most common in North America), and there is even a black ladybug with red spots. Red and black ladybugs generally have a black head, but some have a yellow and black-patterned head. Still other ladybugs are yellow or ash-gray with black spots. Some have no spots at all, or have "bands" or patterns on their backs.

Ladybugs live on every continent except Antarctica. There are approximately 5,000 different species. Some are as small as a pinhead, and others as large as a child's fingernail. Gibbons outlines the four stages of the ladybug's life cycle from egg to adult, discusses their migration and/or hibernation patterns, and explains the benefits of their consumption of mites and aphids.

Ladybugs are important in gardens, but larger farms benefit, too. In the 1890s, farmers regularly utilized ladybugs to protect their crops. Then, pesticides were developed and farmers began to use those chemicals to kill the harmful insects. Over time, farmers have come to realize that there are harmful side effects to pesticides, and the movement to raise food in a chemically free environment has led them back to the use of ladybugs.



*Ladybugs* provides facts about the insect in an accessible narrative positioned at the bottom of color-filled, double-page spreads that depict a myriad of details. Within the pen-and-ink, watercolor illustrations are labels, text call-outs, and boxes with enlarged views of specific details.

Gibbons provides a great deal of information about ladybugs (sometimes referred to as lady birds or lady beetles) in her book, but there is more that can be learned. *Ladybugs* provides enough detail to satisfy the initial curiosity of a young child, while whetting the appetite of the older reader for further information.

### Research and Activity Ideas

1. There are five states that name the ladybug as its official "insect" and one that names it as its official "bug." Name those states and any other facts about the designation. [Answer: Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Ohio, Tennessee, and New York (1989). Delaware is the state that names the ladybug its official "bug." New York is the only state to actually refer to the scientific name *Coccinella*

