

Before You Read the Poem

Build Background

Tell students that poets often use the sounds of words to help bring the subject of a poem to life. Explain that they will be hearing a poem called "The Snake." Invite students to speculate about the sounds a poet might use to help make the snake in the poem come alive.

Introduce Sound Words

Have students repeat these words after you: *slow and sliding, sly and sleek, slithers and slips*. Guide students in noting how the pairs of words begin with the same sound (*sl*) and how this sound is similar to a snake's hissing. Ask students to listen to the way these words are used in the poem.

While You Read the Poem

Invite students to listen as you read the poem aloud. Then ask them to follow along as you read the poem again, underlining words that begin with the initial *s* sound. Have some volunteers share the words they underlined; others may read the poem aloud. You or a student might list the words on the board; point out how the shape of the *s* even looks like a snake.

After You Read the Poem

Elements of Poetry

Poet's Toolbox: Rhyme Ask students to circle words in the poem that rhyme (*toe/go; glide/hide; know/so; away/today*). Tell students that poets often use rhyme to lighten the mood of what might otherwise be a serious poem. In "The Snake," for example, readers are never frightened that the speaker will be bitten because the irregular rhyme scheme contributes to an almost singsong recitation.

Poet's Toolbox: Alliteration Remind students that poets use sound in many special ways to help make their poems come alive. When a poet puts several words that begin with the same consonant sound close to each other in a poem, it is called *alliteration*. Point out *slow and sliding* in the eighth line, then encourage students to find other instances of alliteration in the poem.

Explain how the repetition of the initial *s* sound paints a sound picture of the snake as it moves through the grass, close to the speaker's foot. Note that the words *slow, sliding, and slithers* evoke suspense as readers wait to see what the snake will do. In the second half of the poem, the number of *s* sounds increases, reflecting the movement of the snake as it slips swiftly away.

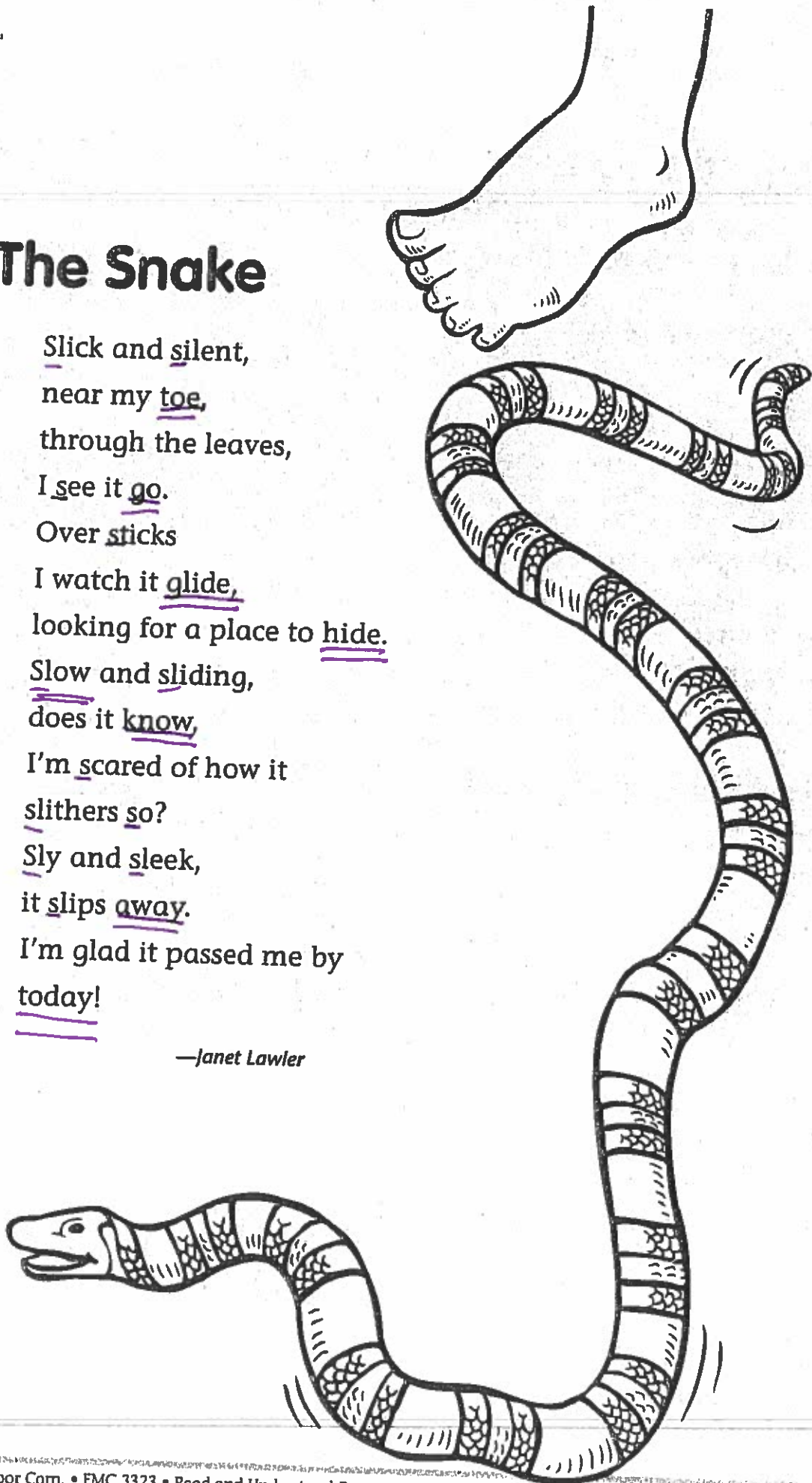
Follow-up Activities

Students may work independently to complete the activities on pages 12 and 13.

The Snake

Slick and silent,
near my toe,
through the leaves,
I see it go.
Over sticks
I watch it glide,
looking for a place to hide.
Slow and sliding,
does it know,
I'm scared of how it
slithers so?
Sly and sleek,
it slips away.
I'm glad it passed me by
today!

—Janet Lawler



Name _____

The Snake**Understanding the Poem**

Read each question and choose the best answer. You may wish to reread "The Snake" as you work.

1. What **slithers** in this poem?

- ☐ (A) leaves
- ☒ (B) a snake
- ☐ (C) a worm
- ☐ (D) the speaker

2. What is the snake trying to do?

- ☐ (A) dig a hole
- ☐ (B) climb a tree
- ☒ (C) find a place to hide
- ☐ (D) make its way home

3. How do you think the speaker feels about snakes?

- ☐ (A) tired
- ☐ (B) upset
- ☐ (C) happy
- ☒ (D) afraid

4. Which of the following does not mean the same as sleek?

- ☒ (A) rough
- ☐ (B) shiny
- ☐ (C) silky
- ☐ (D) smooth

5. How does the speaker feel when the snake is gone?

- ☐ (A) sad
- ☐ (B) angry
- ☒ (C) happy
- ☐ (D) disappointed

Understanding the Poem

1. "The Snake" has many words that begin with the sound of the letter **s**. Read each word. Circle the words that begin with the **s** sound. Be careful! Some words that begin with the **s** sound may be spelled with a different letter!

snake

cycle

sack

cob

city

cry

count

center

slither

circle

sly

safe

2. Some of the words in "The Snake" rhyme. Find words in the poem that rhyme with each of these words, or add rhyming words of your own.

toe

glide

away

go

hide

today

3. When a poet puts words that begin with the same consonant sound near each other in a poem, we call it **alliteration**. Find four lines in "The Snake" that include alliteration. Write the two words from each line below.

sick

silent

slow

sliding

slithers

so

sly

sleek

4. Snakes are just one type of creature you might see outside. Write a complete sentence about other animals, birds, or insects you might see outside.

FREE RESPONSE