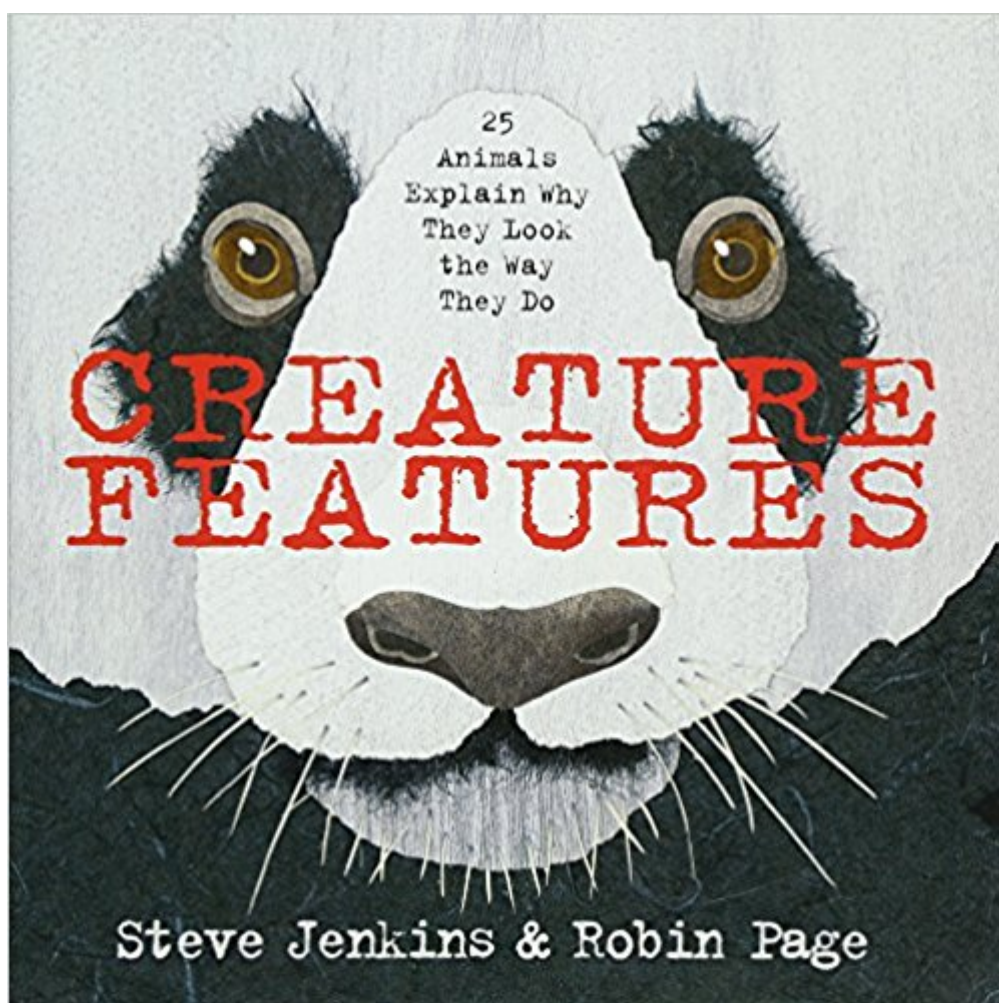


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# Creature Features: Twenty-Five Animals Explain Why They Look The Way They Do



## Synopsis

Dear Axolotl: Why do you have feathers growing out of your head? Axolotl: They aren't feathers—they're gills! They let me breathe underwater. Let's face it. Even as babies, we humans pay close attention to faces. Observing another person's features and expressions tells us whether they are happy, angry, excited, or sad. And when we look at an animal, it's hard not to imagine that its face is communicating human feelings. This isn't true, of course. Squinty eyes, an upturned mouth, or another odd expression is probably there because, in some way, it helps that animal survive. Packed with many cool facts and visuals on where certain animals live and what they eat, this book captures twenty-five humorous and very true explanations of why animals look the way they do in order to exist in this world.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD580L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers (October 7, 2014)

Language: English

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ISBN-13: 978-0544233515

Product Dimensions: 9 x 0.3 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #37,286 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #19 in Books > Children's Books > Science, Nature & How It Works > How Things Work #20 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Biology #71 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Zoology

Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

**A Look Inside How the Book Was Made** Note from Steve Jenkins: Over the years, Robin Page and I have worked on 16 books together, so we're used to tossing ideas back and forth. For every book that gets produced, however, there are probably a dozen concepts that we've considered then rejected for one reason or another. One of us suggested making a book of animal portraits, and I started thinking about portraits I've done for other books. Animal portraits

make interesting illustrations, but our books are nonfiction. We want them to include real information. What science could we share in a book about animal faces?

## Research and Sketching - The Start of the Process

## Observing the Subjects

We began by tacking up photos of animals with unusual faces, and an interesting thing happened. Visitors to our studio often commented on how this or that creature looked friendly, or scary, or sad.

It's difficult not to ascribe human qualities to an animal when we look at its face. But the fact is, the appearance of animal faces and the arrangement of their eyes, nose, mouth, and other features is determined by the way these animals live — how they find food, escape their enemies, and thrive in their environment.

**Hitting the Books** Now we knew what to look for in our research: animals with unusual facial features that contribute directly to their survival. How to find them? We look at a lot of books. We go to the library, and we use our own collection of books about animals. We watch nature programs on TV. And we consult web sites, sites with trustworthy facts, including those of universities and natural history museums, government research organizations, and the National Geographic Society.

**Sketching the Animals** Our books start out as pages of little sketches known as thumbnails - quick and rough, which makes it easy to try out a lot of ideas and not worry about throwing out the ones that don't work. The next step is to add text to a more finished sketch. If the text hasn't been written yet, we'll use Latin "dummy" copy so we can see how the type will work with an illustration.

## Creating The Art - From Sketch to Final Piece

## Step 1: Make a Sketch

The illustrations in the book are cut-and torn-paper collage, but they start out as pencil sketches. The sketches are templates for cutting out the pieces of color paper that will become the illustration.

**Step 2: Cutting and Inserting Color** When a sketch is finished, I make several Xerox copies of it. I sandwich each copy with a piece of color paper and cut through both at the same time with an Exacto knife. Many of the illustrations in *Creature Features* are symmetrical, full-face portraits. This allowed me to take a short cut: I sketched just half of an animal's face, then duplicated and flipped my drawing to make a complete portrait.

**Step 3: Choosing the Right Paper** Now it's time to pick the papers I'll use in my collage. These are the papers I used to make the Egyptian vulture. There is often an element of surprise when I choose paper —

it's one of the things that makes this kind of illustration so much fun. **Step 4: Voila! Final Art** Here's the final illustration.

We designed the book using InDesign, a computer desktop publishing program. The illustrations are scanned and placed on the pages and the text is copied from a manuscript and added to the layout. The finished file is called a digital mechanical. Then we print out each page on a color printer. The print-outs are trimmed, folded, and bound into a dummy "a handmade book that shows us how the finished volume is going to look. Creating the Mechanical The final digital file with all images and text in place "the mechanical " is delivered to the publisher. There an art director and copy editor check it over, then send it to the printer. The illustrations are converted into a pattern of tiny dots that are either cyan (blue), magenta (pink), yellow, or black. These dots combine to make all of the colors and detail in a printed illustration. Sheets of paper are passed through a large printing press, where the four colors are laid down one at a time. Finally, the sheets are put in order, bound together, and a cover is attached. A Book Is Made! Almost exactly two years after we start work on the book, we receive our first copy of Creature Features.

Pres-Gr 2 "Did you ever wonder why an Egyptian vulture has feathers on his face, or why a frilled lizard has extra skin around his neck? These curiosities are explained in a Q & A "style interview as 25 unique animals offer up their personal insights (for example, "Dear Tapir: Why is your nose crooked?" "My nose isn't always twisted. I bend it when I want to reach some tender leaves or fruit."). Loaded with nuggets of information and layered in humor, this is a winning picture book that is sure to inform as well as entertain. The illustrations are designed in torn- and cut-paper collage and depict each animal with texture and style. Background colors are bold and bright and provide a balanced backdrop to each animal. Back matter includes a chart of each animal's geographical location and diet for additional research."Melissa Smith, Royal Oak Public Library, MI

Have aliens invaded Earth? No, it's just another stellar partnership for Jenkins and Page, this time presenting 25 unusual animals. In a question-and-answer format, each animal speaks in the first person to explain the purpose of its bizarre features. When asked, "Have you ever thought about getting braces?", the toothy mole rat replies, "Not really. I dig tunnels through the earth with my teeth." To "What is that weird thing growing on your face?", the star-nosed mole answers, "I use the tentacles on my snout to feel my way in the dark." Two show-stopper portraits are the pink-tinted blob fish's smushed head against a brilliant azure background and the toothless horned frog's head with its "ginormous" mouth. The flat, brightly colored backgrounds make the nuanced cut-paper and collage faces pop. Back matter includes a

bibliography and silhouettes of the animals compared to humans, as well as their geographic range and diet. It's a splendid introduction and a memorable read-aloud for young children.

Preschool-Grade 3. --Lolly Gepson

My grandson loves it.

This is a wonderful book for kids. Very fun to figure out why animals have certain colorations or features. Super well written but short and to the point.

Steve Jenkins books are such high quality. This one is beautiful and full of information presented in an appealing way.

Really fun book about animal adaptations from each Animal's point of view. Steve Jenkins has a gift for hooking kids into books!

bought the e-reader version of this for my 3 year old grandson. He requested it over and over, a big hit!

Wonderful look at animals telling their own information about why various features of their bodies are important.

My 3-year-old LOVES this book! It has piqued her curiosity about new kinds of animals, and the witty, jovial tone has her cracking up.

I love this author!

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