

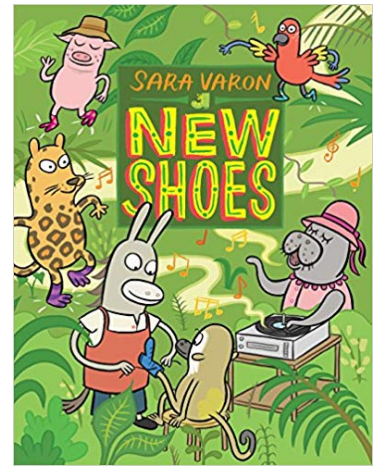


# Kids Book Club Kit | Darien Library

*New Shoes* by Sara Varon

Recommended for grades 2 to 3

**Summary:** Francis the donkey is the best shoemaker in the village. He uses only the finest materials: coconut wood for the soles, goat's wool for the insoles, and wild tiger grass for the uppers. One day he receives a special order from his favorite singer: Miss Manatee, the queen of calypso. But he's all out of tiger grass! To make the perfect pair of shoes, Francis must journey deep into the jungle...and that means leaving his village for the first time. In *New Shoes*, Sara Varon takes us on a vivid journey into the jungles of South America. From the capybara to the jaguar to the three-toed sloth, Francis meets a variety of animals outside his neighborhood. They're not so scary when you get to know them!



## **Discussion Questions:**

1. When Francis leaves to go find Nigel and the tiger grass, he packs supplies for his journey: bread, hay, a hammock, guidebooks, and extra shoes. Why do you think he chose these items? What do you bring on a trip, and why?
2. Francis has never been into the jungle and encounters many new animals. How does he learn more about them?
3. In this story, animals do a lot of things that people do (like making shoes and selling fruit) and some things that animals do (the chickens peck for insects, the snake wants to eat Francis and Rhoda). What do you think about the author choosing to write the story in this way?
4. While Francis and Rhoda are searching for Nigel, they find out that he has been captured. How does this change their perspective and mission?
5. In the end, Francis realizes that Miss Manatee doesn't have feet and can't wear shoes, at least not in the way he's always made them. He has to get creative to make her shoes she can use! What does he do? Have you ever had to be creative like this?

## **Further Resources:**

Learn more about Guyana, where the book is set: <https://dar.to/2O3AU3E>

Interview with Sara Varon: <https://dar.to/2XaZfpq>

## **Activities**

1. Design your own unique "shoes" for Miss Manatee. Can you think of another way for her to travel?
2. Have a Caribbean food taste test and try out foods from the book! See if you can find: pineapples, bananas, mangos, cashews, soursops, and star apples. Bonus: buy some herbal hibiscus tea and have a tea party!