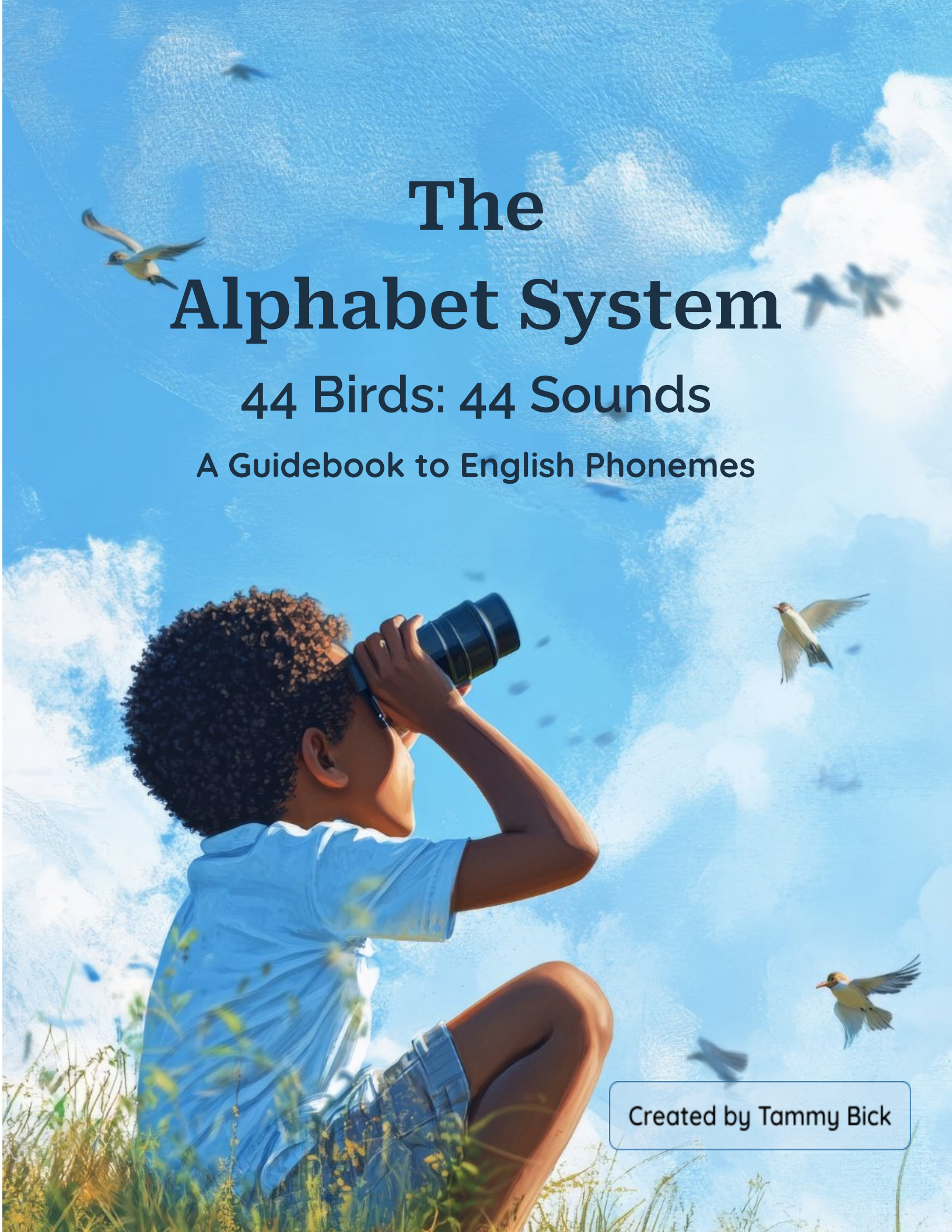




# The Alphabet System

44 Birds: 44 Sounds

A Guidebook to English Phonemes

Created by Tammy Bick

|                                                       |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Joy Bird /oy/</b>                                  | <b>171</b> |
| <b>Blackbird /er/</b>                                 | <b>181</b> |
| <b>Shearwater /ear/</b>                               | <b>191</b> |
| <b>Fairywren /air/</b>                                | <b>201</b> |
| <b>Murre /ure/</b>                                    | <b>211</b> |
| <b>The Consonant Bids Weavers of Meaning and Form</b> | <b>220</b> |
| <b>The Consonant Birds</b>                            | <b>221</b> |
| <b>Pelican /p/</b>                                    | <b>223</b> |
| <b>Bluebird /b/</b>                                   | <b>231</b> |
| <b>Tern /t/</b>                                       | <b>239</b> |
| <b>Dove /d/</b>                                       | <b>247</b> |
| <b>Kite /k/</b>                                       | <b>255</b> |
| <b>Gull /g/</b>                                       | <b>265</b> |
| <b>Chickadee /ch/</b>                                 | <b>275</b> |
| <b>Fledge /j/</b>                                     | <b>285</b> |
| <b>Falcon /f/</b>                                     | <b>295</b> |
| <b>Vireo /v/</b>                                      | <b>303</b> |
| <b>Thrush /th/ unvoiced</b>                           | <b>311</b> |
| <b>Thaloray /th/ voiced</b>                           | <b>321</b> |
| <b>Swallow /s/</b>                                    | <b>331</b> |
| <b>Zebra Finch /z/</b>                                | <b>341</b> |
| <b>Shrike /sh/</b>                                    | <b>351</b> |
| <b>Vision /zh/</b>                                    | <b>361</b> |
| <b>Hawfinch /h/</b>                                   | <b>371</b> |
| <b>Myna /m/</b>                                       | <b>379</b> |
| <b>Nuthatch /n/</b>                                   | <b>389</b> |
| <b>Kingfisher /ng/</b>                                | <b>399</b> |
| <b>Lark /l/</b>                                       | <b>407</b> |

# From Classroom to Creation:

## *My LAUNCH Journey*

This didn't begin with a system.  
It began with a question.

I was a special education teacher, tasked with teaching high school students how to read—  
but I had no map.

I administered assessments like the Woodcock Johnson IV and WIAT.  
I stumbled over nonsense words I was meant to evaluate.  
And I asked myself—  
How have these students made it this far without what they need?  
And how are teachers expected to guide them without being shown how to teach reading?

Then Gail entered.  
A speech pathologist with deep roots in structured literacy.  
Through her mentorship—LiPS, LETRS, Wilson, scope and sequence—I saw language anew.  
We grew together.  
I earned my reading endorsement.  
And today, we co-host *Living Letters* to share the stories that shaped us.

This is how The Alphabet System™ began:  
not with answers—but with listening.

## **A New Question Emerged: *How Do I Teach the Whole?***

In Saudi Arabia, I saw what language could do.  
UK students often leapt ahead.  
Multilingual learners brought brilliance but stumbled over English.

I remembered my promise:  
**Never pull students from the classroom.**  
**Bring the system into the classroom instead.**

Then came Katie Garner's *Secret Stories*.  
Not a fixed scope and sequence—  
but a dance of sound and story, led by student curiosity.

Then COVID.  
Then the LAUNCH Cycle.  
It became my mirror.

# Materials & Resources

## Instructional Materials:

- Pigeon /ə/ phoneme card
- Word cards with schwa (e.g., about, pencil, banana, animal, sofa) and similar-sounding stressed vowel words for comparison
- Pigeon Sound Collage or Feather Word Display template
- Sound pattern anchor chart for schwa spellings (a, e, i, o, u, y) in unstressed positions

## Resources:

| Teacher Aides                                                                                                             | Books                                                                                                            | Storyline Online Video                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Spelling Pattern Table: Schwa /ə/ Sound                                                                                   | <i>P is for Pterodactyl</i> by Raj Halдар & Chris Carpenter                                                      |  <a href="#">Carla's Sandwich</a>                                                                                                                             |
| How to Draw Birds<br><i>A Step-by-Step Guide for Realistic Drawing Projects</i><br>Paperback   November 30, 2021          | <i>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</i> by Bill Martin Jr. (Author), John Archambault (Author), Lois Ehlert (Illustrator) |  <a href="#">Stellaluna</a>                                                                                                                                   |
| How to Draw Birds Again<br><i>A Step-by-Step Guide for New Realistic Drawing Projects</i><br>Paperback   October 23, 2024 | <i>Banana!</i> by Ed Vere                                                                                        |  <a href="#">Strega Nona</a><br> <a href="#">The Hula-Hoopin Queen</a> |

## Assessment

### Formative:

- Guide students in identifying schwa in multisyllabic words
- Introduce flexible thinking about vowel letters making the schwa sound

### Summative:

- Pigeon Sound Collage or Feather Display  
Students choose and illustrate 5–10 words with schwa, highlighting unstressed syllables with soft tones or airy visuals that reflect the quiet presence of the pigeon
- **Poetry or Sentence Prompt:**  
“The pigeon perched above the parade with a peaceful kind of \_\_\_\_.”  
(Encourages rhythm, quiet clarity, and attention to subtle sound patterns.)

/ā/

## Spelling Patterns

a\_e ai ay ei eigh ey



Jay

*"I wait. I display. I say my name."*