

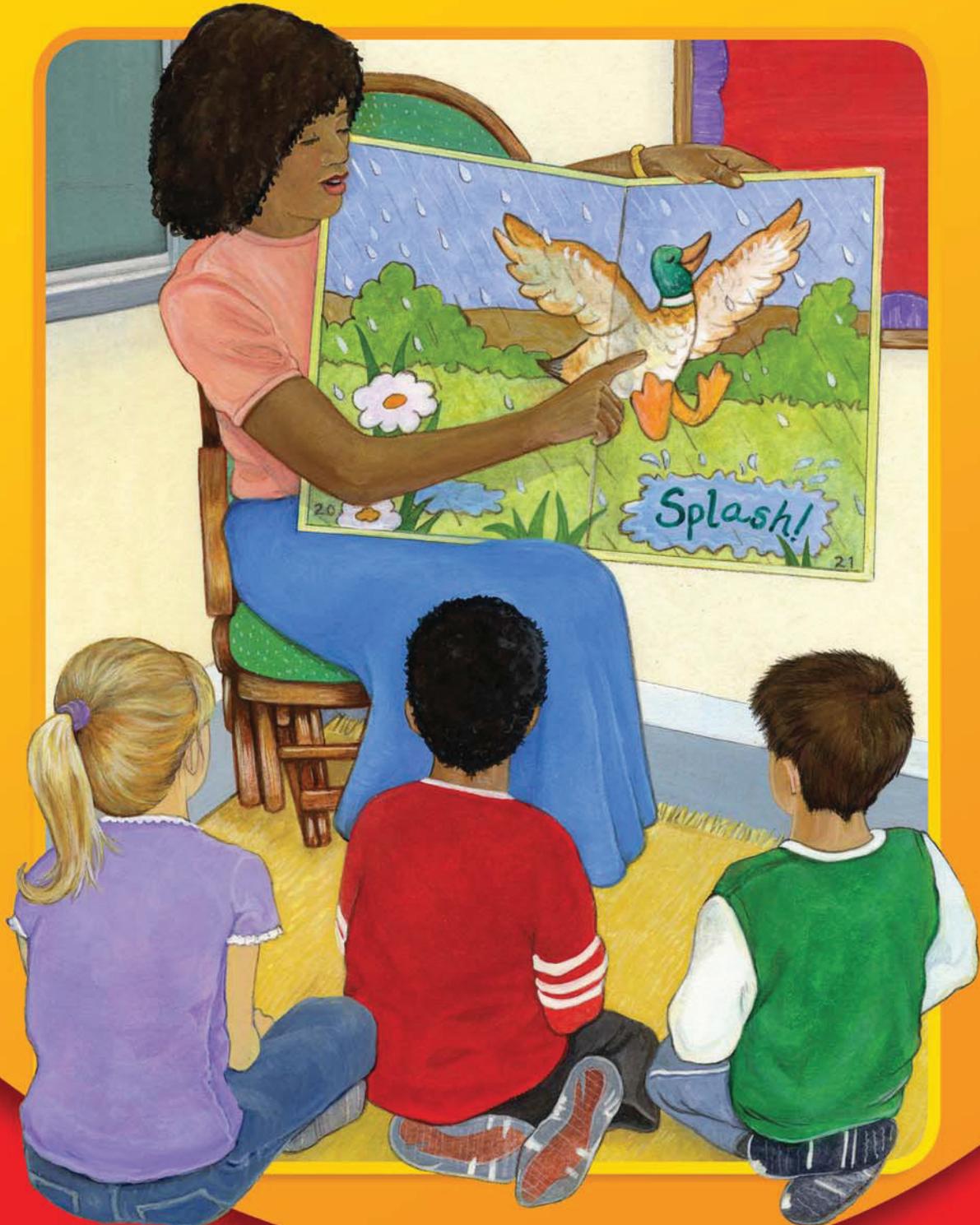
Reading for Every Child **Fluency**

ALIGNED TO

STATE & NATIONAL
STANDARDS!

TeachingStateStandards.com

- Based on Reading First Research
- Activities for Fluency Development
- Includes Assessments and Rubrics



Reading for Every Child **Fluency**

Grade K

by
Anne Vander Woude

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Instructional Fair

Except where indicated, all of the verses are taken from *1001 Rhymes & Fingerplays* by Totline Publications.

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Reading First

Introduction

The Reading First program is part of the No Child Left Behind Act. This program is based on research by the National Reading Panel that identifies five key areas for early reading instruction—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness focuses on a child’s understanding of letter sounds and the ability to manipulate those sounds. Listening is a crucial component, as the emphasis at this level is on sounds that are heard and differentiated in each word the child hears.

Phonics

After students recognize sounds that make up words, they must then connect those sounds to *written* text. An important part of phonics instruction is systematic encounters with letters and letter combinations.

Fluency

Fluent readers are able to recognize words quickly. They are able to read aloud with expression and do not stumble over words. The goal of fluency is to read more smoothly and with *comprehension*.

Vocabulary

In order to understand what they read, students must first have a solid base of vocabulary words. As students increase their vocabulary knowledge, they also increase their comprehension and fluency.

Comprehension

Comprehension is “putting it all together” to understand what has been read. With both fiction and nonfiction texts, students become active readers as they learn to use specific comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.

Fluency in Kindergarten

There are many things I do to help my students get ready to read. I teach them the letter names and sounds. I introduce a few sight words for the children who are ready. I emphasize concepts of print. I work on phonemic awareness activities. The children read from simple emergent readers. By the end of the year, they should have the tools they need to become successful readers.

Even with all this, however, a vital element is missing from my instruction if I do not also help my students to become fluent. Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly and with expression. It has been called the bridge between decoding and comprehension. Reading experts such as Mary Ann Wolf (*Best Teaching Practices*) and Dr. Sally Shaywitz (*Overcoming Dyslexia*) state that fluency can improve only when children have repeated practice orally, using words they can already decode. At the kindergarten level, fluency building begins with practicing individual letter names and sounds.

Defining Fluency

The main reason for reading is to comprehend meaning. When a child must stop often to figure out new words, reading in “fits and starts,” he or she will probably find it difficult to determine meaning. Even when a child reads accurately and has good decoding skills, reading may not be enjoyable without fluency. If this continues into second or third grade, a child’s reading may be so slow and laborious that he or she seldom finishes or understands the material.

At the kindergarten level, the groundwork is laid for future learning. Fluency is one of those skills, which is developed and encouraged through many activities that are already part of a typical kindergarten day. By thinking through some of these activities, a kindergarten teacher can recognize fluency-building tasks and expand on them.

Fluency Instruction

Research shows that fluency must be taught systematically. This book attempts to help you develop an intentional plan for fluency instruction utilizing a variety of techniques. Fluency activities by their very nature must be oral activities. Silent reading will seldom if ever encourage a child toward fluency. Especially at the kindergarten level, almost all of your fluency instruction will be focused on what students hear.

Some fluency goals for kindergarten are listed below:

- identify the alphabet letters accurately and quickly
- identify letter sounds accurately and quickly
- develop phoneme blending and segmenting fluency
- build a base of vocabulary knowledge
- have repeated exposure to teachers and other adults as they model fluent reading

Remember: Fluency at this level is “caught” rather than “taught.”

In this book, activities will involve reading books aloud, choral or echo reading, and reading big books. Chants, poems, rhythm, and rhyme will be used to encourage fluency. As you use this book, I hope that you will have fun with fluency!

Assessing Fluency

Getting Started

One of the first ways to assess fluency in your kindergartners is through observation. Watch the children, especially as they work and play in classroom centers. Listen to their language and see how they relate to others. You may want to keep a clipboard to jot a few notes on each child as you observe. Getting a sense of each child's fluency with oral communication gives you a good starting point for assessing their abilities in language learning.

Assessment of your class's skills in naming letters and initial sounds should be one of your first steps in "formal" assessment. Once you have screened for these two skills, you'll already have quite a bit of information. You will not only have lists of children needing work in some skills, you will be able to target your classroom instruction most appropriately.

- **Whole-group activities** help children who already recognize letters and sounds recall them quickly. They also give repeated exposure so children who don't recognize letters and sounds can gain confidence in their abilities.
- **Small groups** are a good way to work with children who have similar needs. You can target specific letters and sounds and provide games for the group to work on together.
- To meet **individual** needs, teachers might have to arrange for peer work (having a child who knows all the letters point to them for the child practicing, for instance) or time with an older student or aide.

The assessment sheet on page 9 can be used to record a child's progress in letter and sound knowledge. Informal notes can be kept so a teacher knows how quickly a child recalls the letters and sounds. Make two copies of the sheet, one for letter naming assessment and one for letter sound assessment. The information can also be put on a separate sheet for a child to keep track of his or her own progress (see page 10). Reassess often so the child can add more letters to his "fast" animal and cross more off his "slowly but surely" animal.

Using the Assessment

Page 9 contains an evaluation tool that you can use for both letter naming and letter sound assessment. Point to each letter and ask the child to name it. Circle those the child knows. (If you need to reassess later, use a different color ink each time, adding date and comments.) Since most of the letters a child needs to read are in lowercase, only a chart of lowercase letters is given.

Alternate procedure: Copy and laminate the chart. Have the child point to the letters as he or she identifies them. The teacher should have a paper copy on which he or she circles the letters the child knows.

You can also use the assessment to make note if the child is able to identify the letters and sounds quickly and automatically, with some hesitation, or with significant pauses.

Key: **A**—automatically and quickly

H—with hesitation

P—significant pauses

Child's Name _____ Date _____

Letter Naming and Letter Sounds Assessment

o f j m d c

x g v h l n

w r q b e

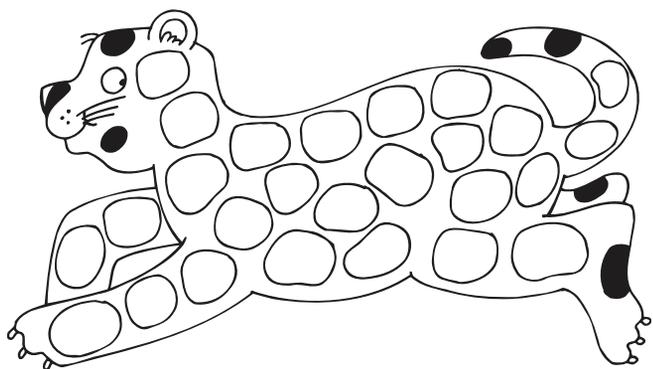
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u t y p

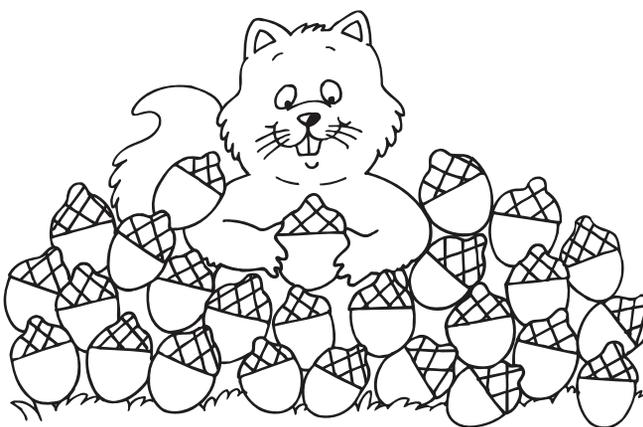
Child's Name _____ Date _____

Student Record Sheet

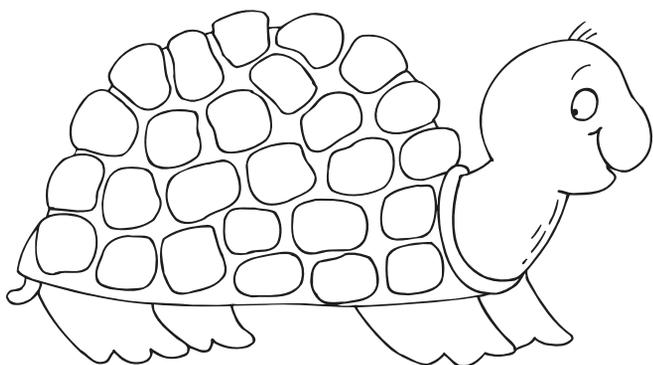
**I am FAST
at naming these letters.**



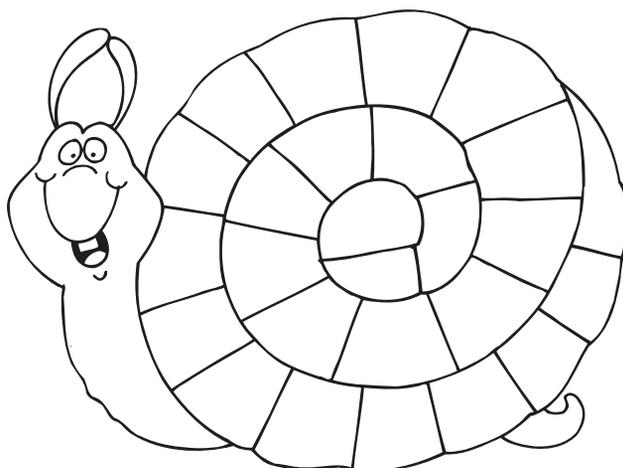
**I am QUICK
to give these sounds.**



**I am SLOWLY
but SURELY learning
these letters.**



**I am SLOWLY
but SURELY learning
these sounds.**



First Steps to Fluency

Letter Naming Fluency

Kindergartners need to be able to identify the names of the alphabet letters. In order to become a fluent reader, the child must know the letter and its sound automatically. So it makes sense to start a book on fluency with activities that encourage children to recall letter names accurately and quickly. Good teaching, however, involves combining the letter recognition with sound recognition as often as possible. Many of the activities in the “Letter Naming” section can be adapted to work with initial sound fluency.

There are many books that give teachers ideas on how to teach a child letter names. There are books full of puzzles, games, and worksheets all geared toward learning letters. The teacher’s edition of many reading series also contains a wealth of ideas. The activities described in the next pages, however, are not the usual cut-and-paste work or blackline masters.

Fluency training is ORAL. Very seldom will a worksheet help in practicing letter naming fluency.

Most of the suggestions given here will involve using charts and can be used with the whole class, small groups, or individuals.

Letter Sound Fluency

Knowing the names of letters is meaningless without also knowing the sound that each letter makes. Decoding has to come before fluency; knowing letter sounds has to come before decoding. The difference between a book giving ideas to teach the sounds and a book on fluency is this: children must not only *know* the sound, but be able to give it quickly. This is an oral process, one not easily practiced with worksheets. The fluency-promoting activities in the following section will help the children recall letter sounds until it becomes automatic and effortless for them.

As you work your way through these activities with your students, be alert to the child who has great difficulty and who makes little if any progress toward letter or sound fluency. This can be a red flag for a variety of different reading difficulties.

Phoneme Blending and Segmentation Fluency

After becoming fluent with the letter sounds, children must learn to blend the phonemes together quickly. A fluent reader automatically takes sounds apart or puts them together to decode words. Fluent readers do this almost effortlessly. Emergent readers, as most kindergartners are, need practice putting sounds together (phoneme blending) and breaking words apart into sounds (phoneme segmentation).

Children can begin phoneme blending and segmenting even before knowing all of the letter sounds. Have them practice with the sounds they already know, even if it's just a few!

Activities for Letter Naming Fluency

Using Alphabet Charts

Materials:

- poster board (or strips if using a pocket chart)
- black large-tipped markers
- pointer(s)

Make two alphabet charts on poster board. Make one in alphabetical order, the other with letters in random order. Make about four rows of letters, with seven letters in two rows and six in two rows. Leave at least two inches between letters.

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| a | b | c | d | e | f | g |
| h | i | j | k | l | m | n |
| o | p | q | r | s | t | |
| u | v | w | x | y | z | |

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| i | s | c | e | j | p | x |
| u | f | m | b | o | r | w |
| t | a | g | n | k | z | |
| v | d | h | l | q | y | |

Using the Alphabetical Order Chart

- **Start with the familiar.** Sing the familiar alphabet song with the children. Sing slowly. Sing again, going faster the second time.
- **Sing backwards.** Try singing the alphabet song from **z** to **a**. This will make the children who simply memorized the song really LOOK at the letter while they sing with you.
- **Shout it out!** Using a pointer, point to the letters rapidly but randomly and encourage the children to “shout it out” as they say each name. (Children love permission to shout in school!)

The above activities can be used with the whole class or with small groups. You could also make small copies on paper and have the children work in pairs. Pair a child who knows all or most of the letters with a child who needs to learn more. Give each child a craft stick or a colored straw for a pointer. Especially encourage reading the alphabet from **z** to **a**.

Using the Random Letter Chart

Make several different charts with letters in random order (see page 13). If the four lines are written on four individual poster strips and used in a pocket chart, you could change the order of the letters frequently without making new charts. Another possibility is to write the letters on individual cards and use the letters in a pocket chart. Then, of course, it would be very easy to change the letter order frequently. Changing the order will make the children look closely at the letters while chanting or singing letter names.



- **Read for speed.** Use a pointer and have the children read the letters with you, slowly at first. Reread one line at a time, going faster each time.
- **Sing the chart.** Use the tune from the traditional alphabet song, adapting for the letters as they appear on the chart. The random order will make the children really pay close attention to the letters. Sing slowly at first and then sing faster the next time. For children who know all or most of the letters, this activity is excellent for fluency practice. For children who don't recall all of the letter names, it is a good activity to help them learn letter names.
- **Add rhythm and sound.** Get a bell, either one large one for you or several small ones for the students. Have the children chant the chart with you. (Using a pointer for this activity is optional.) At the end of the first two lines, ring the bell(s) once. At the end of the last two lines, ring the bell(s) twice. Repeat, faster the next time. (There will be eight beats in each line.)
- **Swat a letter.** Find a small flyswatter and cut a hole in the middle. The hole should be big enough for the letters on the alphabet chart to show through. (Creative teachers could make a chart with letters written on small fly shapes!) The teacher swats a letter and the class calls it out as quickly as possible. You can adapt the activity to be used with small groups or even pairs of students.

To make a small-size activity to use with individual children who still need to learn letters, write the letters a child knows on a sheet of paper and put it in a plastic sheet protector. Make a small fly swatter out of cardboard (with a hole in it) and attach to a craft stick. Have the child call out the letters as a partner "swats" them. You could add more letters to this sheet as the child learns them.

It is important when having students do this activity on their own that at least one student knows all or most of the letters. The children must be accurate; practicing "mistakes" will not help fluency.

- **Call and response.** Simple echo or call-and-response activities are fun for the children. One way to do this is to divide the class into two groups. The teacher (or even a student) uses a pointer to touch a letter on the chart.

Side one chants,
b, b, we see b

Side two chants:
b, b, we all see b

Continue this way with different letters, as time and interest permit.

Activities with Letter Cards

Materials:

pocket chart
letter cards (a set of alphabet cards that fit in a pocket chart)
timers such as a stopwatch or an egg timer (sand type)

Many of the following activities will work well with small groups, individuals, and even a whole class. They can be fun, brief, and effective.

- **Whole-group letter race.** Put up the letters one at a time, and the class or group calls out the letter. This can be a fun activity if you use a two- or three-minute egg timer. See how many letters the class or group can identify before the sand runs out. Some classes may be able to have the teacher put the letters up and take them down again before time is up.
- **Small-group letter race.** Work with one small group at a time, perhaps five children. (The rest of the class can be working on other things or can be the spectators. This race moves so quickly, many children could get a turn in a short amount of time.)

Have the children line up one behind another next to the pocket chart. Have a stopwatch or a watch with a second hand. Say “Go” and start the watch. The first child goes quickly to the chart, says a letter, and takes it down. He or she then goes to the back of the line and the next child removes a letter. (Of course, the child must name the letter correctly in order to take it down!) Keep on going until all of the letters have been removed. Announce the time the letter race took!

- **Letter strands.** To more closely approximate words, put letter cards close together with no space between. Have the children try to read the letters quickly.

zrpno

- **Another song.** The practice of using a familiar tune with different words is often called piggyback songs. This is a useful way to practice letters. Put the cards in the chart as shown below. Then have children practice letter names to the tune of “Are You Sleeping?” (“Frere Jacques”).

Put the letter cards in the pocket chart like this:

xxxx (4 letters)

xxx (3 letters)

xxxxxx (6 letters)

xxx (3 letters)

Example:

Teacher points to the letters and sings:

efmb (children echo)

xtz (children echo)

rqlljgu (children echo)

aws (children echo)

- **Capital/lowercase match.** Interlocking puzzle pieces that you make yourself can be used to have the children match capital with small letters (see example below). You can cut an index card in half and use a different pattern so that each capital interlocks with only its matching lowercase letter. Give the children half the alphabet at a time, unless they know the letters very well. Have them set out the capital letters and then mix up the small letters. Give them an egg timer. As they name (aloud) the capital, they see how fast they can find the small. This could be done in partners, with one child naming the capital and the other quickly finding the small.



- **Poems.** Find a poem and enlarge to poster size. Say it over and over with your children. You can use poems in many ways. Just saying it together as the children memorize it is a way to practice fluency. Keep pointing to the words as the children “read”—sweep your pointer left to right in each row. After the poem has been read several times, give the children their own copy. They should look for and circle the letter you indicate. For example, have them circle each letter **e** in the poem. Give them a small strip of colored poster board as a line marker. Model this activity before using it for the first time. A wide selection of poems can be found in the “Chants and Verses” section of this book (see pages 30–61).

Activities for Letter Sound Fluency

Many of the activities suggested in the previous section can also be used for letter sound fluency, substituting the sound of the letter rather than the name of the letter as the children's response. In this section, the teacher will use the letter symbols along with the sounds to help children gain fluency in both letter naming and letter sounds. Sounds will be practiced in isolation as well as at the beginning of words.

- **Cheerleading!**

Materials:

one set of alphabet cards (small letters)
small tissue or crepe paper pompoms

Use all twenty-six letters when doing this with a whole class. With small groups, you could use fewer letters—a mixture of "known" letters with a few the children still need to learn. The teacher holds up a letter and chants: "Give me the sound." Kids chant: "/b/ /b/ /b/" (or whatever the letter is) and wave their pompoms. Remember, students are giving the **sound**, not the **name** of the letter. Instead of cheerleading, you could also use rhythm instruments. If none are available, each child could tap two craft sticks together.

I encourage teachers to investigate some of the recent CDs with letter sound chants and songs on them, such as those by Dr. Jean Feldman (www.drjean.org). These are good investments for busy teachers.

- **Action Sounds!** Zoophonics® is a program that has an animal and gesture for each alphabet letter. It is worth a look. However, it is possible to make your own cards that link letter sounds with motions. It doesn't take too long and you can choose pictures that fit into other areas of your curriculum.

Choose a key picture for each letter. Make a card with the letter and the picture on it. For instance, the **a** card could have an apple on it and the motion could be pretending to bite into the apple while saying /**a**/, /**a**/, /**a**/. Suggestions for other letters are given below.

- a**—apple—pretend to bite into an apple
- b**—ball—bounce the ball
- c**—cap—pretend to take it off and on
- d**—dice—roll the dice
- e**—egg—crack the egg
- f**—fan—fan yourself
- g**—gorilla—beat your chest
- h**—horse—pretend to be riding
- i**—itch—scratch your head
- j**—jelly—wiggle whole body
- k**—kite—point up
- l**—lollipop—lick
- m**—mouse—wiggle nose
- n**—nurse—take your pulse
- o**—octopus—wave arms to the side
- p**—pirate—put fingers over one eye for a patch
- q**—queen—put on a crown
- r**—rabbit—pretend to hop
- s**—seal—clap hands like flippers
- t**—turtle—lift shoulders to pretend to pull in head
- u**—umbrella—pretend to put it up
- v**—vest—button it
- w**—worm—wiggle index finger
- x**—box—draw a box shape with hands (sound /**ks**/)
(Explain that **x** is the ending sound.)
- y**—yawn—pretend to yawn
- z**—zipper—pretend to zip



You would have to introduce the cards and explain the motions to the class a few at a time. After the whole alphabet has been introduced, rapidly flip through the cards. The children give the sound and the motion at the same time. As they become more skilled at this, you should mix up the cards. Later use cards with just a letter on it (no key picture).

Another way to use these cards is to make them into a song. Use the tune “Skip to My Lou.”

A for apple, /**a**/ /**a**/ /**a**/

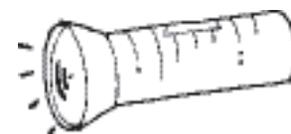
A for apple, /**a**/ /**a**/ /**a**/

A for apple, /**a**/ /**a**/ /**a**/

Skip to my Lou, my darling.

Notice with this song that the children are practicing letter name **and** letter sound fluency.

- **Light it up!** Use a large alphabet chart and get one or more flashlights. (It’s more fun if several children at a time can have a flashlight; everyone in the class can get a turn more quickly that way.) Turn off the lights to slightly darken the room. Give a letter sound and have the children with the flashlights shine their beam on the letter as quickly as possible.



A variation is to have a child shine light on a letter and give the sound. You could use the egg timer and challenge them to “shine and sound” as many letters as they can in two minutes. Some children might be able to read the whole chart!

- **Object/sound match.** This activity can be placed in a learning center. To ensure children are practicing **fluency**, the children should have a timer. However, it is a valuable game for children to use who still have to learn some of the letter sounds.

Get a variety of small objects: plastic apple, a top, a button, crayon, domino, and so on. Put the objects in a basket. Gather twenty-six small cups or plates. Write a small letter on each cup to correspond to the first letter of each object. Be sure to have only one object per letter. To play the game, the child puts out all of the letter cups. Then, as quickly as possible, the child pulls out an object, gives its name and first sound, and puts it in the correct cup.

To make this self-correcting, you could put a number on each object and the corresponding number on the bottom of each cup. To save space, you could make this game with pictures rather than real objects, and draw the letter cups on a piece of poster board. Students would lay the correct picture on the matching letter cup (or stick inside a pocket if you attach one for each cup).

- **Magic hat.** Run off the magic hat pattern (see page 23) on cardstock. Laminate; cut a slit where indicated. Use adding machine tape to write the letters in random order. The whole class watches as you slowly pull the strip of letters through the slit. As soon as a child recognizes the letter, he or she shouts out its sound. Small copies of magic hats could be made for individual children to take home and use for practice.

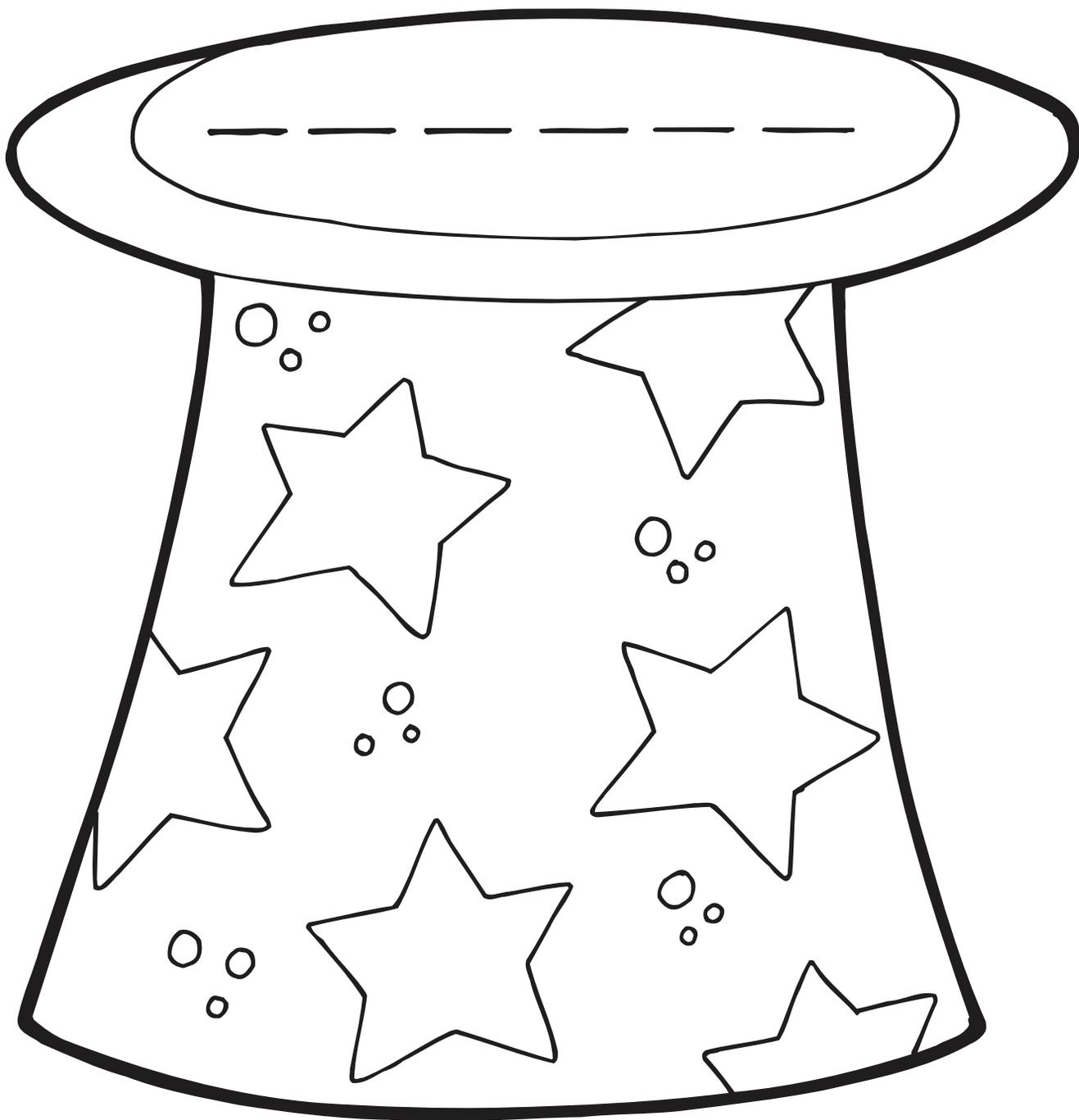


- **The sound ABC song.** Use an alphabet chart. Sing the alphabet song with the sounds of the letters, not the names! This is difficult, so go slowly at first and gradually speed up.

/a/ /b/ /c/ /d/ /e/ /f/ /g/ . . .

- **Penny flip.** Put an alphabet chart on the floor and give the children several pennies or plastic chips. For two minutes, they flip a penny and give the sound of the letter it lands on (or near).

More ideas to practice letter sound fluency will be given in the “Chants and Verses” section (see pages 30–61).





Phoneme Blending and Phoneme Segmentation

Phoneme blending (putting together each individual sound, or phoneme, to make words) and phoneme segmentation (taking the individual sounds in a word apart) are two skills that go together in a fluent reader. These skills are two sides of the same coin. Fluent readers are those who can blend and segment quickly and accurately.

Activities to increase a child's awareness of the phonemes and how to use them in blending and segmenting can be introduced at this level with purely oral activities (phonemic awareness). However, during the course of the year, the written symbols that connect to letters and sounds should be introduced as well (phonics).

A teacher can start very early in the year with the phonemic awareness activities. As soon as the children have mastered a vowel or two, the written form of the letter can be used in the activities. You can adapt the activities described below to match the content of your social studies and science curricula.

Phonemic Awareness Activities

Phonemic awareness activities at the kindergarten level can use vowel digraphs and blends (/l/ /ea/ /f/) and onset and rhyme (/m/ /itten/). When you begin linking the sounds to the letter symbols, the best fluency activities are those with three or four phonemes of one letter each.

- **Chanting/call and response.** These activities can be very brief. You can do them with small groups or with the entire class. You can do them while your class is lined up waiting to go to recess or sitting eating snack. A model activity is on the next page.



Teacher: I'll say the sounds, you do the blending!

Teacher: I say /c/ /a/ /t/, you say . . .

Class: **cat**

Teacher: I say /b/ /a/ /t/, you say

Class: **bat**

Notice that this can also be a way to work on rhyme at the same time! In addition to rhyming words, you could work with "content" words as well.



Teacher: I say /l/ /ea/ /f/, you say . . .

Class: **leaf**

Other fall theme words to use: **f—all, c—old, tr—ees, r—ed, n—ut**. The same activity could be used in segmenting.

Teacher: Take these words apart!

Teacher: I say **cat**, you say

Class: /c/ /a/ /t/

- **Using music.** Do the call and response activity as listed above, but have a xylophone on hand (a toddler's toy is fine). In blending, lightly tap a key as you say each phoneme. Then, when the children respond, you slide over three or four keys, blending the sounds together.



Teacher: I say /b/ (tap) /e/ (tap) /d/ (tap), you say:

Class: **bed** (slide down over three keys)

- **Sing a song.** Use familiar tunes to have fun with blending and segmenting. You often must stretch or skip some beats to fit your words.

Blending—Tune: “Wheels on the Bus”

I can take a word apart, word apart, word apart.

The word I take apart is **bus**

And I get /b/ /u/ /s/.



Segmenting—Tune: “Farmer in the Dell”

I can blend some sounds,

Oh, I can blend some sounds,

The sounds I blend are /b/ /a/ /g/

The word I get is **bag**.

- **Using picture cards.** This simple activity can be used with purchased pictures, workbook sheets, or clip art pictures. The challenge is finding pictures for words with just a limited number of phonemes!

Show the picture and have the class or group take the word apart. Or, say the phonemes, have the class blend the sounds together to get the word, and then show the picture.

Keep a stack of these pictures in a box or bag to pull out as a two- or three-minute time filler. It is also a great activity to give to a classroom volunteer or older buddy to do in a tutoring or small-group situation. (Write the instructions on a card and store in the bag so the helper can easily find them.)

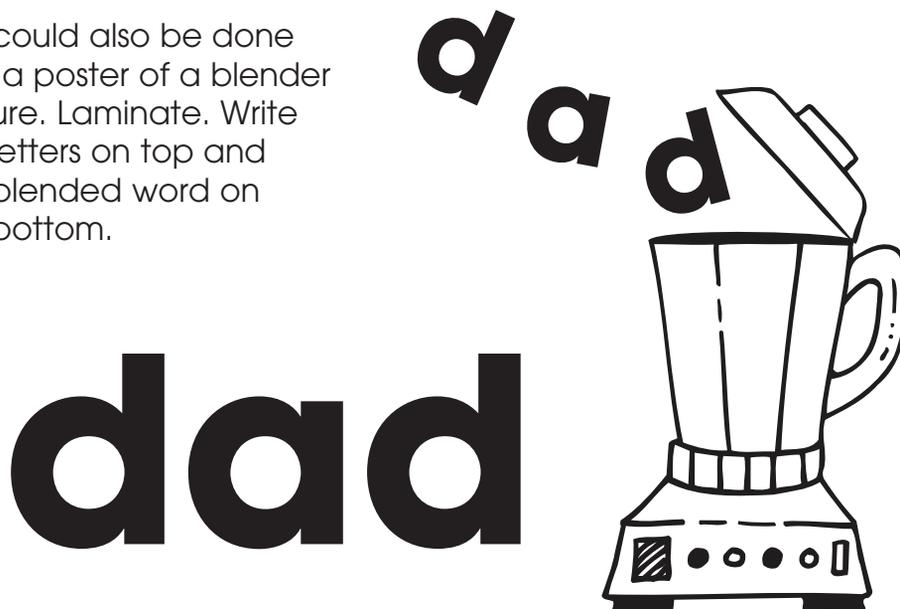
Blending and Segmenting in Written Form

For many of these activities, you will need sets of lowercase letter cards. You should probably have two sets, since you will need more than one of the same letter in some words. Try to think of words that are written with only one letter for each phoneme. Also, avoid using vowel digraphs.

For example: **cat** but not **lamb**
dog but now **cow**

- **Blender fun!** Consider bringing in a blender or making a picture of one. Have the children imagine putting letters in the blender, mixing them up, and coming out with a blended word. You could even make it more fun by having some premade cards for the blender. You drop in one letter at a time (written on individual cards) and have the children make the sounds with you, pull out the correct word card, and say the word together.

This could also be done with a poster of a blender picture. Laminate. Write the letters on top and the blended word on the bottom.



This activity could also be used with segmenting. Introduce this in a tasty way—make chocolate milk in a blender. Then, ask the class if they can take apart the chocolate from the milk. We cannot take apart food once it has been blended, but we can take apart blended words! Repeat the same activity suggested above, but put individual letters in the blender ahead of time. Drop in the whole words; take out the individual letters.

As the children can do this more accurately and quickly, introduce nonsense words. This can be fun for the children and informative for you. If you know they can blend and segment nonsense words, you can be sure that their fluency in this important area is improving.

For example: **nop, zop, dop**
 hig, vig, kig

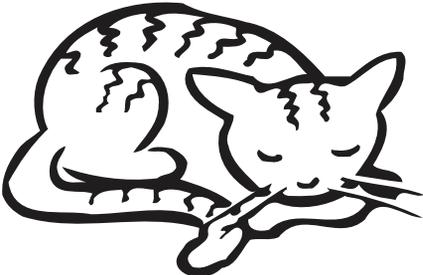
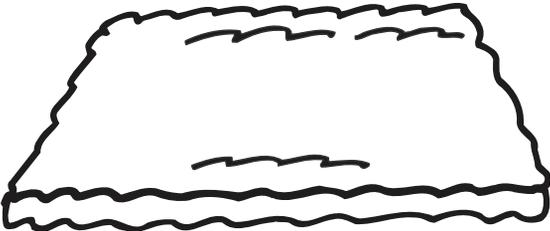
- **Pocket chart activities.** Remember as you use these activities that your fluency goal is accuracy and speed. However, even when the children are new to blending and segmenting, you are helping them practice the skill itself. As they become more adept, you can add the element of speed—with timers, rhythmic beats, etc.
- **Farm theme activity.** Get pictures of the following: cat, hen, nest, dog, rat, pig, milk. Make cards for these words, with a separate card for each letter. Place in a pocket chart with the picture first and the letter cards next to the picture. Leave space between each letter. As the children say the animal name, move the word cards together to show blending. Do the opposite for segmenting.

As children become more skilled, put the words up without the picture card. Move the cards together and put up the correct picture when the word is blended correctly. You could also let a child move the cards together and select the picture. For segmenting, put only the picture up. The children then determine which letter cards to use.

- **Rhyming words.** Use the same procedure as above, but use rhyming words and pictures instead of farm objects. Some words that work well are listed below.

hop, pop, stop, mop, top
man, van, ran, tan, pan, fan

- **Cut it apart.** Use index cards with words printed on them. Show the children how you can cut the letters apart. Separate the cards for segmenting; push them together again for blending. You could make a simple worksheet where children cut out word cards, cut apart each letter, and then match them to a picture.

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Chants and Verses

Teachers of young children have long acknowledged the value of using rhymes and chants with their students. Verses capture children's attention, enhance phonemic awareness, and create a good sense of the cadences of the language. They help build vocabulary, allow children to hear fluent language modeled, and give them a chance to practice speaking fluently themselves. All of these reasons not only justify the use of rhymes, but show how essential they are to a good kindergarten literacy program.

Poems, rhymes, verses, and chants can help build a sense of community in the classroom as well. Children enjoy chanting together as they develop their sense of rhyme, rhythm, and sounds. Most poems for children this age are short and catchy; the children like to listen to them and recite them again and again.

The following section contains verses and poems to use in your classroom. They fit the developmental needs of children and help make the most of the short time we have with the students (especially those of us who are teaching half-day kindergarten).

Each selection is accompanied by an activity page with suggestions for developing fluency as well as other skills kindergartners need, such as letter recognition, letter sounds, identifying rhyme, movement, music, and art. The verses can complement the other things kindergarten teachers teach in multidisciplinary and multisensory units.

Activities suggested help build fluency through:

- modeling
- reciting
- vocabulary building
- reading with expression
- segmenting and blending
- comprehension checks
- paired reading
- guided reading
- shared reading
- timed activities
- listening for sounds
- retelling/telling

One way to use this section is to collect all of the poems into a book. You can use a regular-sized page for individual student books or enlarge the poems to fit on a larger-sized paper to make a big book for read-aloud times.

Some suggestions for using the verses in this section are:

- For reading in front of the class, enlarge the poems to poster size.
- The more frequently you read the poems, the more likely some students will begin to memorize them.
- On occasion, read the poem aloud without the printed form displayed.
- Many verses can be made into fingerplays. Some also encourage movement in other ways. Encourage your kindergartners to get up and move around as they listen to the words!

Except where indicated, all of the verses in this section are taken from *1001 Rhymes & Fingerplays* by Totline Publications.



All by Myself

There are many things
I can do

All by myself.

I can comb my hair
and lace my shoe

All by myself.

I can wash my hands
and wash my face

All by myself.

I can put my toys
and blocks in place

All by myself.



Adapted Traditional



Activities for “All By Myself”

Modeling

1. Read the poem to the class, pointing to each word.
2. Reread the poem several times.

Reciting

3. Ask the children if reciting the words is something they can do “all by themselves.” The children should “read” the words as the teacher indicates.
4. For a very simple form of readers’ theater, assign four different children to say each of the four main sentences in the poem. As they say their line, they can act out the words.

Curriculum Links—Comprehension, Art

5. Have the children draw a picture of something they can do all by themselves. This could be made into a class book. For fluency practice, have the children tell about their pictures.





My Hands Can Clap

My hands can clap,

My feet can tap.

My mouth can talk,

My feet can walk.

My shoulders can shrug.

My arms can hug.

I can do so many things.



Diane Thom



Activities for “My Hands Can Clap”

Modeling, Reciting

1. Read and reread the poem.
2. Have children recite the poem (echoing you or from memory). As they recite, students make up appropriate motions for each line and perform them.

Vocabulary Building

3. What does **shrug** mean? See if students can guess from the context in the poem. Act out the meaning.

Phonemic Awareness

4. Use onset and rime. Children identify the words.

cl—ap

t—ap

t—alk

w—alk

shr—ug

h—ug

Curriculum Link—Rhyming

5. Have the children help you make a list words which rhyme with the words below.

hug, shrug

tap, clap

walk, talk (This one will be challenging!)

6. Try a game of rhyme charades. It is fun to have the children do pantomime rhymes. For example, they pretend to hug and then shrug. This is done silently while the class guesses the rhyming words.



Who Will Feed the Baby?



Who will feed the baby?
Who will go to the store?
Who will cook the dinner?
Who will clean the floor?
Who will wash the dishes?
Who will cut the grass?
Who will wash the car?
Who will get the gas?
If everybody helps,
The work will soon be done.
Then there will be more time
For having lots of fun!

Jean Warren

Activities for “Who Will Feed the Baby?”

Modeling, Reading with Expression

1. Have the children repeat each line after you. Be sure to use expression. Point out to children how your voice rises at the end of each line that is a question.

Reciting

2. Chant to a beat: Using four beats per line, have the children clap with you as you read. Variation: give some or all of the children rhythm sticks. Tongue depressors or craft sticks work if you don't have “real” rhythm sticks.

Curriculum Link—Classroom Community, Literature

3. Use the last four lines as a chant when it is time to clean up the classroom.
4. Read *Another Mouse to Feed* by Robert Kraus. In this book, the mice children do many jobs to help their overworked parents.

Concepts of Print

5. This is an excellent poem to point out punctuation such as question marks and exclamation points.



Hats

Hats on people in the sun,
Hats on people on the run.
Hats on people in a band,
Hats on people on the sand.
Hats on people every day,
Hats on people when they play.
Hats on people at the fair,
Hats on people everywhere.



Jean Warren

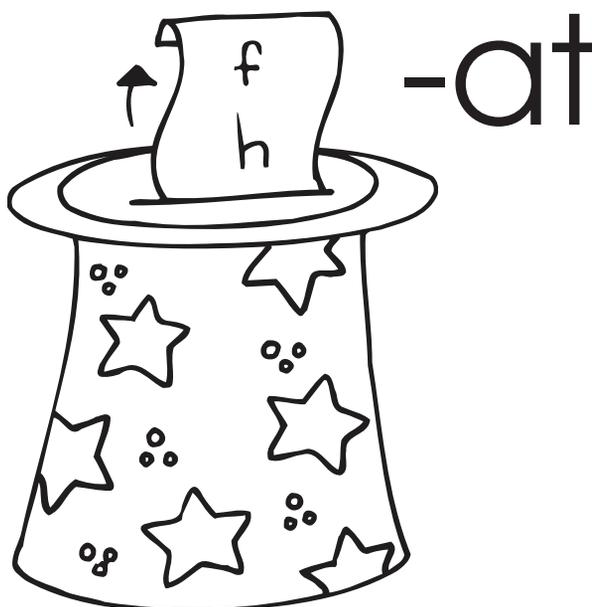


Activities for “Hats”

Blending

1. Make cards for each letter in the following words: **sun, run, sand, hand, hats**. Using a pocket chart or easel, put up the letters of **s-u-n**, separated by at least an inch of space. Have the class say the sound of each letter as you point to the individual cards. Push the letters together and have the children blend the sounds into the word. Do this for the other words as well.

2. Make a blackline master of a hat with a strip to pull through it (or use the pattern on page 23). Pull the strip out and blend with the **-at** ending to make new words.



Curriculum Links—Literature, Math, Cooking

3. Read a good children’s literature book about hats, such as *The Hat* by Jan Brett or *Old Hat, New Hat* by Jan Berenstain.
4. Read *Hats, Hats, Hats* by Ann Morris and Ken Heyman. This book contains photos and descriptions of hats on people worldwide.
5. Get a small hat, such as a baby bonnet or doll’s hat. Make sure the material is not too stretchy. Ask the children to estimate how many Unifix cubes can fit in the hat. Write down their estimates. The children count with you as you put the Unifix cubes into the hat.
6. Make hat cookies for snack. Use a round cookie for the brim of the hat, a dab of frosting and a large marshmallow for the crown.



Five Shiny Marbles



Five shiny marbles lying on the floor,
One shoots away and that leaves four.
Four shiny marbles I can plainly see,
One rolls off and that leaves three.
Three shiny marbles, now just a few,
One spins away and that leaves two.
Two shiny marbles sparkling in the sun,
One wanders off and that leaves one.
One shiny marble sparkling in the sun,
Goes off to find the others and that
leaves none.

Susan M. Paprocki

Activities for “Five Shiny Marbles”

Modeling, Reciting

1. Use this poem as a fingerplay, with the children chanting with you after they become familiar with it. Chant it several times.

Vocabulary

2. Brainstorm with the children: What other things are shiny? Write a list in silver or gold marker if possible.
3. Talk about word meanings for the following: **wanders, rolls, spins, shoots**. What other words could describe how a marble moves?

Curriculum Links—Math, Science

4. Children cut out up to ten circles or use BINGO chips as pretend marbles. Give a variety of story problems orally. “I had six marbles, I lost two. How many do I have left?” Children use their circles to find the answer.
5. Use small round candy as pretend marbles. Have children “eat to zero” as you give story problems about subtraction.
6. For a science connection, try this force and motion (friction) game. Children are given five marbles and a terrycloth towel. The towel is laid on a table or floor. The object of the game is to roll (or “flick”) the marbles one at a time and see how close you can get to the end of the towel without the marble rolling off. You could also put a small block somewhere near the end of the towel and see how close children can roll the marbles to the block.

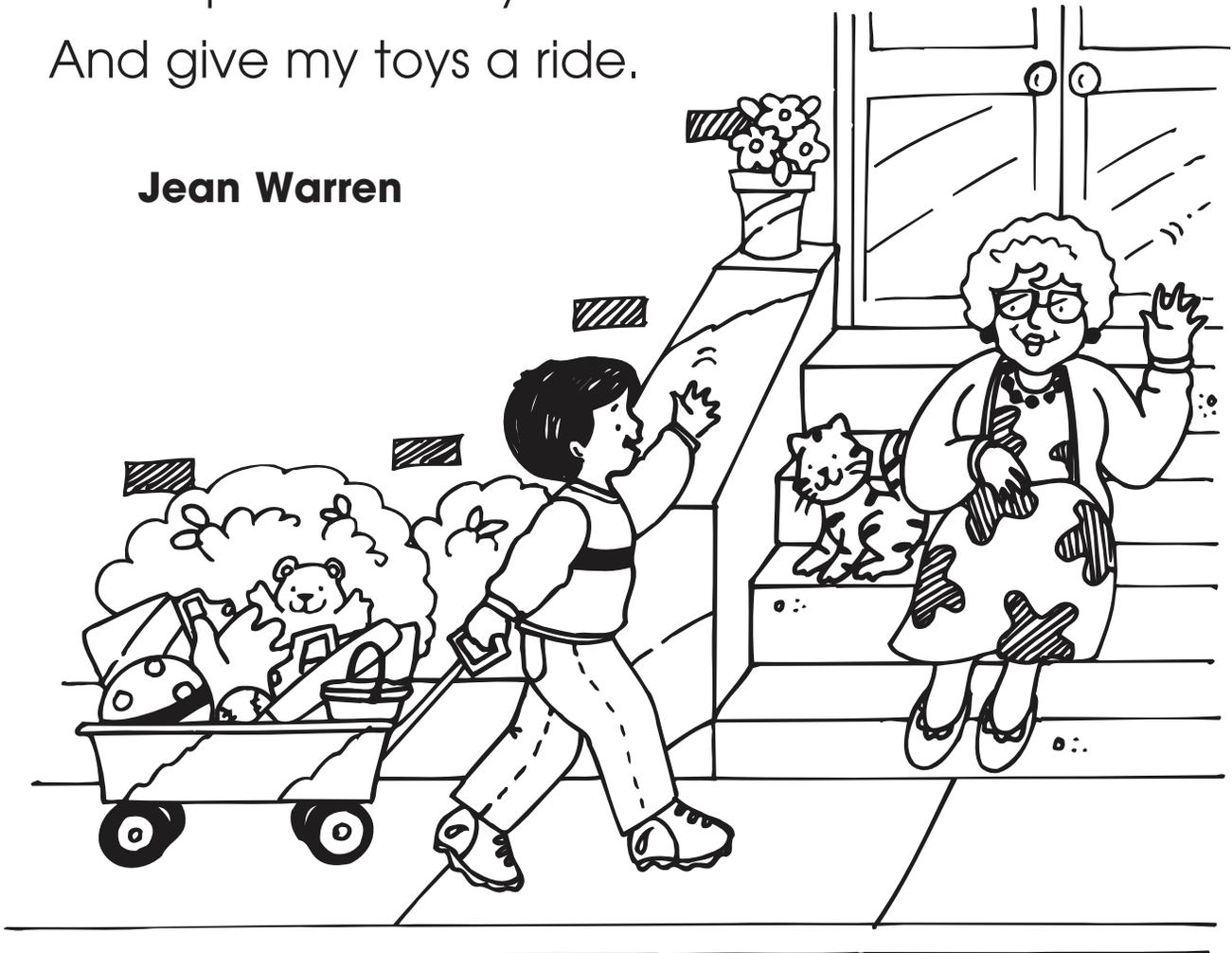




My Wagon

I have a little wagon
I pull around with me.
I fill it with my toys
So everyone can see.
I love my little wagon,
Sometimes I jump inside.
Then I push with my two feet
And give my toys a ride.

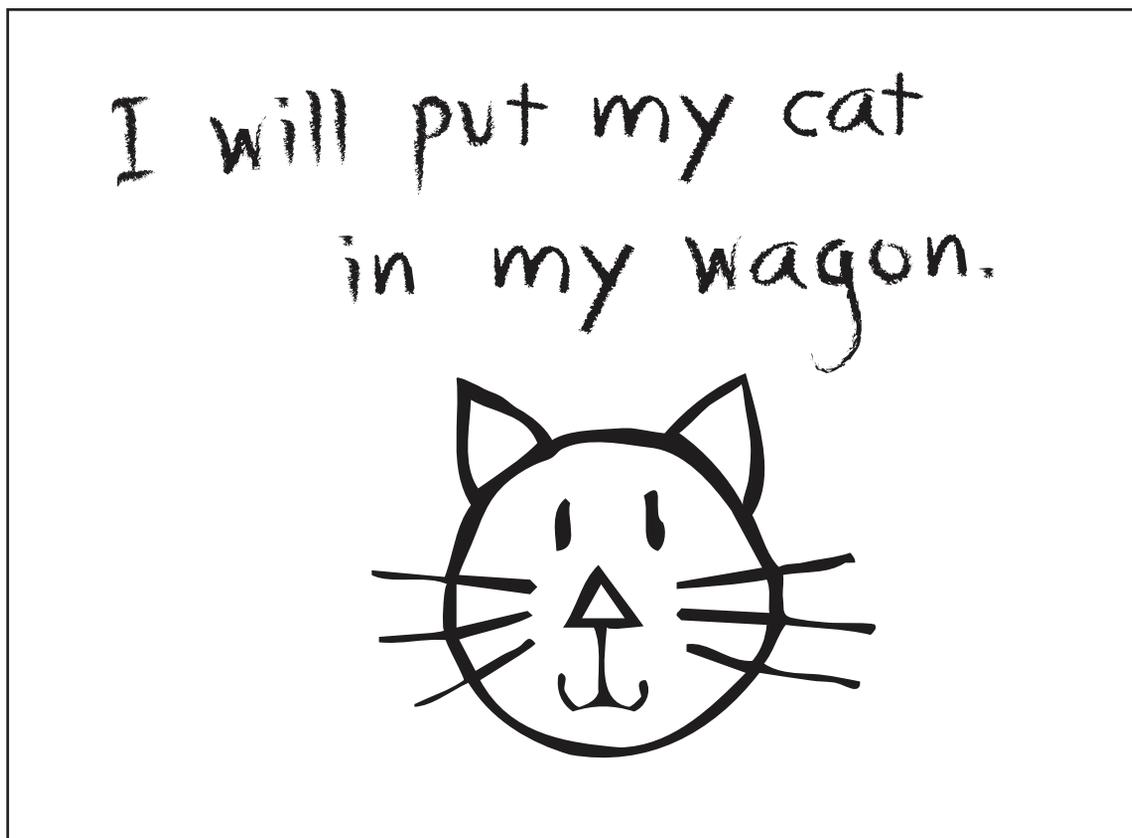
Jean Warren



Activities for “My Wagon”

Retelling, Reciting

1. Have each child make a page for a class book. Each draws a picture of something he or she would put in a wagon.



2. When the book is completed, each child can read his or her page aloud. Once the book is read several times, the children should be able to read it (even if they have memorized it!) independently.

Curriculum Link—Science

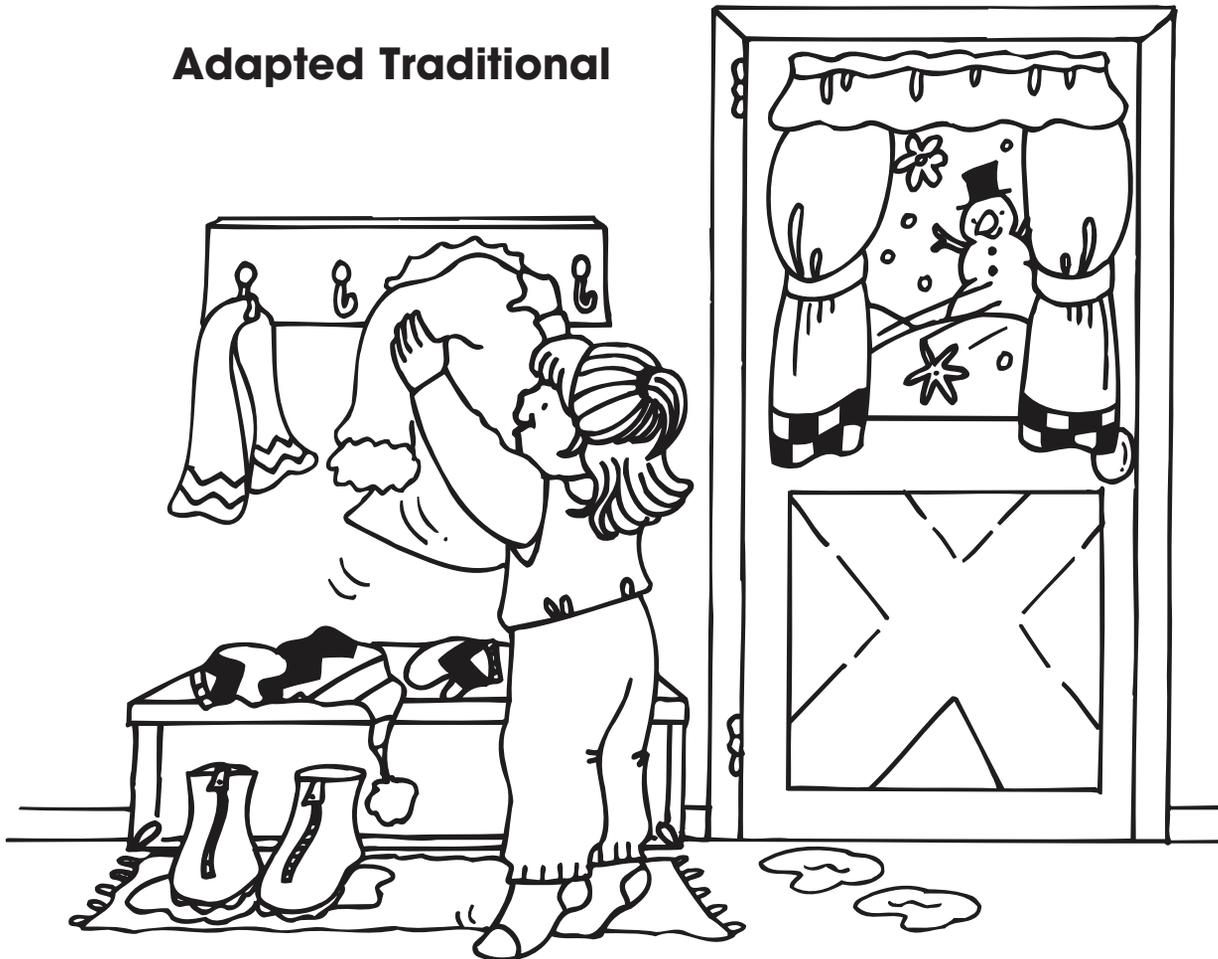
3. Use the poem to talk about pushes and pulls.



Helping

When I come in from outdoor play,
I take my boots off right away.
I place them by the door just so,
Then off my hat and mittens go.
I zip down my coat and snow pants too,
And hang them up when I am through.
I'm a helper, don't you see?
Helping's fun as fun can be!

Adapted Traditional



Activities for “Helping”

Rhyme Supply

1. Focus attention on rhymes by using this sentence completion activity: Put up a large copy of the poem and cover the last word of every other line. (Cut index cards and stick them over each word with poster putty.) When reading the poem, do not say the covered word. The children will say it, figuring it out by context and rhyme.
2. When rereading the poem, leave the last word of every line off, having the children supply it.

Segmentation and Blending

3. Make word cards for several of the words. The words should be short ones that contain no vowel digraphs.

hat

zip

fun

can

just

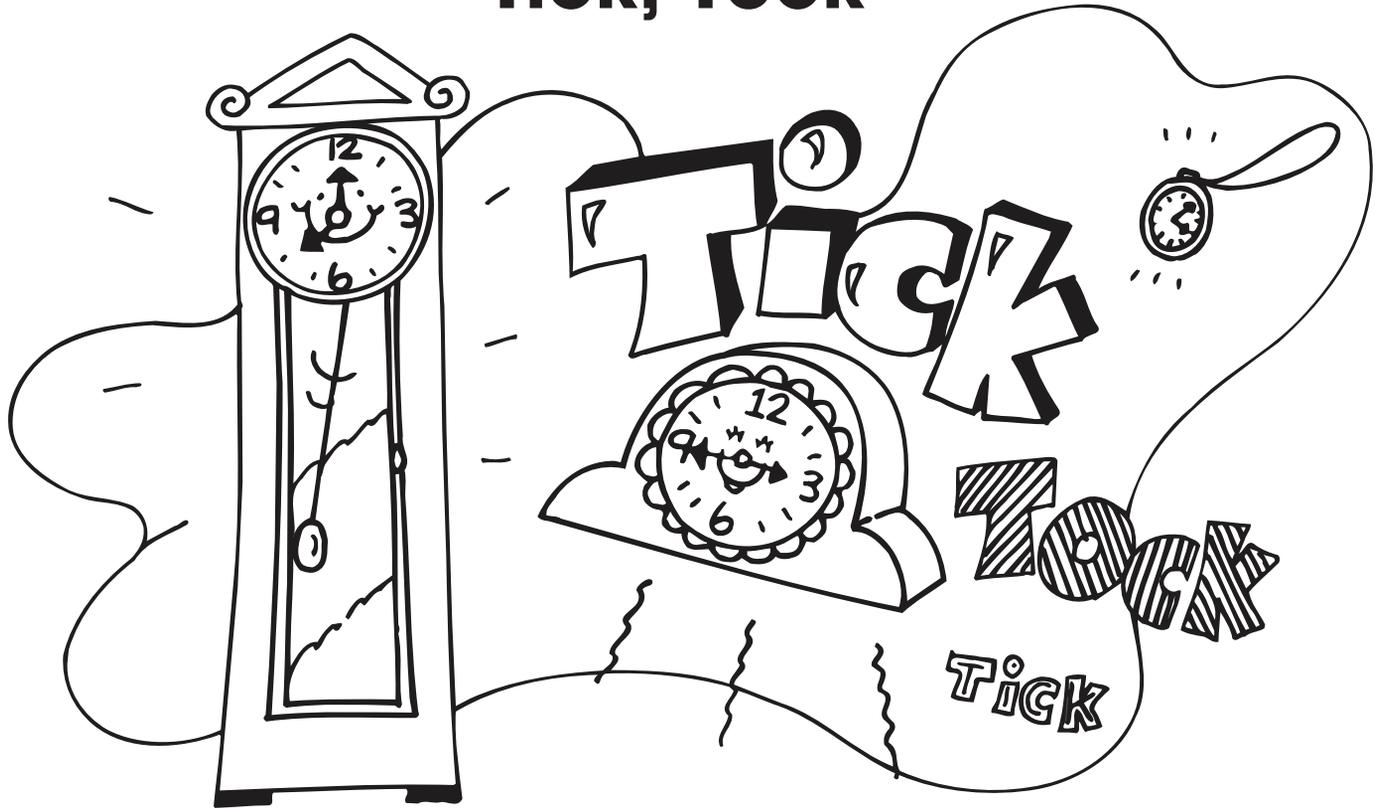
Cut the words apart in front of the children, one at a time. Have them give all the individual sounds and then slide the pieces back together to blend. Use a pocket chart or easel.

Curriculum Links—Social Studies, Literature

4. What kind of clothes do you need to wear in the winter where you live?
5. Read *The Jacket I Wear in the Snow* by Shirley Neitzel. This repetitive, cumulative book is available in big book form and is ideal for having the children read fluently with you.



Tick, Tock



Big clocks make a sound like

“TICK, TOCK, TICK, TOCK.”

Small clocks make a sound like

“Tick, tock, tick, tock.”

And tiny little clocks make a sound like

“Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock.”

Adapted Traditional

Activities for “Tick, Tock”

Guided Reading, Reading with Expression

1. Read this poem together, helping the children read with expression. It should be fun for them to use LOUD voices, MEDIUM voices, and soft (tiny) voices.
2. Add some rhythm. Use a drum for “TICK TOCK,” rhythm sticks for “tick, tock,” and triangle for “tick, tock.”

Concepts of Print, Reciting

3. Point out the print size and how that indicates a change in voice volume. This is a context clue that will help the children become fluent and add to their comprehension when they read independently later on.

Make cards saying

| |
|------|
| TICK |
| TOCK |

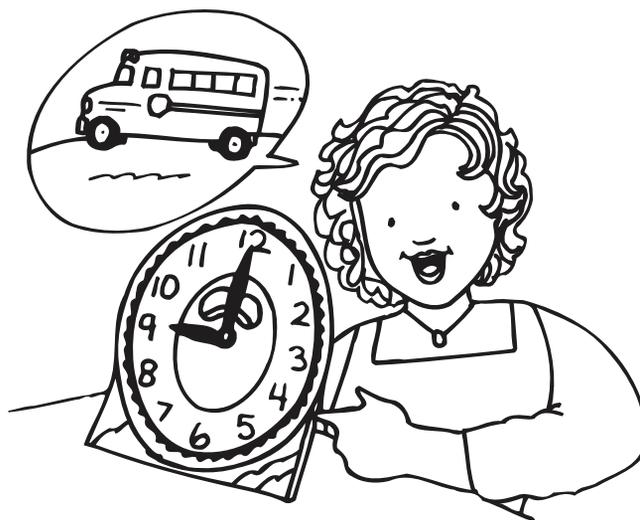
| |
|------|
| tick |
| tock |

| |
|------|
| tick |
| tock |

Hold them up and have the children “read” appropriately while reciting the rhyme.

Curriculum Links—Telling Time

4. Use a small clock (like a student-sized Judy teaching clock) to show different hours on the clock. Relate this to times when students go to gym, recess, have snack, and so on.





“W,” We’ll Wave Today

Waffles that we love to eat,
Watermelons, oh, so sweet.

W, we’ll wave today
When we see you come our way.

Worms and wagons here and there.
Walls and windows everywhere.

W, we’ll wave today
When we see you come our way.

Rebecca McKinnon



Activities for “W, We’ll Wave Today”

Modeling

1. Make a W-shaped card for each child to wave. Reread the poem and have the children wave the card on the line “W, we’ll wave today.”



Beginning Sound Fluency

2. Children draw (or trace) a large letter **W** on a piece of paper. They can decorate their pictures how they wish.

Make a list of words beginning with **w** from the poem. Also have a list of words that do not begin with **w**. (It is probably best not to use any words starting with **r** since many kindergarten children pronounce **r** with a /**w**/ sound.) As you read through the list of words, the children are to wave their **W** papers when they hear a word starting with that sound.

3. A variation on the **W** game is to use pictures instead. Don’t say the name of the picture; have the children look and figure out whether or not it starts with **w**!

Curriculum Link—Science, Literature

4. Get some worms from a bait shop. Give the children shiny plastic plates (so the worms can crawl without sticking), toothpicks to gently pick up the worms, and magnifying glasses to get a closer look.
5. Read a good **w** book, such as *Wonderful Worms* by Linda Glaser.



Alphabet Rhyme

A is for apple, B is for ball,

C is for candy, D is for doll.

E is for elephant, F is for frog,

G is for goose, H is for hog.

I is for inchworm, J is for jam.

K is for key, L is for lamb.

M is for monkey, N is for nail,

O is for owl, P is for pail.

Q is for queen, R is for rose,

S is for scissor, T is for toes.

U is for umbrella, V is for vase,

W is for wind that blows in my face.

X is for X-ray, Y is for you,

Z is for zebra in the zoo.



Marie Wheeler

Activities for “Alphabet Rhyme”

Reciting, Retelling, Paired Reading

1. This alphabet rhyme could be made into a class big book, with children illustrating the pages and then reading the book together. The big book could be laminated so the children can circle certain words or letters on each page with wipe-off markers.
2. Teachers might be interested in making individual alphabet rhyme books, having one for each letter. *Alphabet and Number Rhymes* by Jean Warren (published by Totline) is a favorite of mine. There is a four-page rhyme for each letter. The **Aa** verse is:

A is for alligator.
A is for ants.
A is for apples
On my pants.



There are many different activities to do with these rhymes.

- I have made a class-sized book for each letter and then reduced the size of the page to make individual books for each child.
- We read the class-sized book together, after first trying to guess what pictures will be in the book beginning with that letter. Then the children reread the book without me.
- With their own small copy of the book, children circle with pencil each time they find the letter (capital or lowercase). When the children get quite proficient in this, I sometimes set a timer to see how quickly they circle the letters.
- The final step with the small-sized copies is reading it with a partner. The children take the books home and read it to someone there. I send a letter of explanation to the parents when the first book goes home.



There Once Was a Zebra



There once was a zebra
Who lived at the zoo.
All day long
She had zero to do.
So she planted some zinnias
And zucchini too,
And watched them grow
All day at the zoo.

Jean Warren

Activities for “There Once Was a Zebra”

Beginning Sound Fluency, Phoneme Substitution

1. Make a large card with **oo** written on it.



Make letter cards to put in front of these letters. Don't worry if the resulting words are real or nonsense. This could be made into a flip chart instead, by using a binder ring or plastic binding machine. As you flip to a new beginning sound, the children rapidly read the new word. Before beginning, explain to the children that /**oo**/ often makes the sound you hear in **zoo**. Some possible words:

**zoo, yoo, woo, voo, too, soo, roo, poo, noo, moo,
loo, koo, joo, hoo, goo, foo, doo, coo, boo**

Curriculum Links—Literature, Art, Research, Cooking

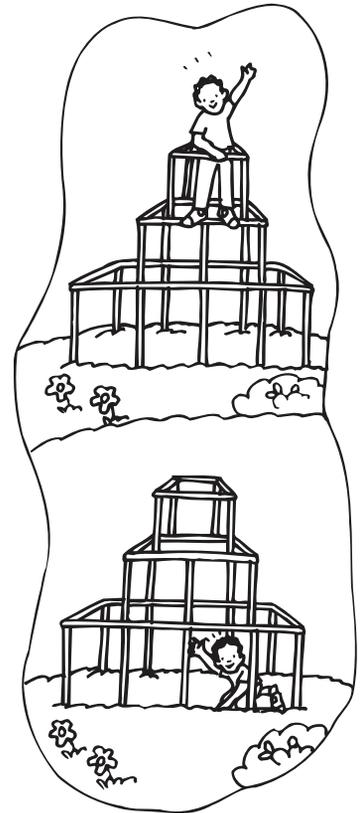
2. Read *Dear Zoo: A Lift-the-Flap Book* by Rod Campbell. This wonderful old book is a favorite with children and they should have no trouble reading it fluently after a few repetitions.
3. To focus on the letter **z**, children make pictures that include zigzags. They could glue on small pieces of rickrack for zigzags.
4. Find out about real zebras using an information book.
5. Make zebra crackers for snack. Children draw stripes on a chocolate graham cracker by squeezing white icing out of a baggie with a small hole in one bottom corner.



Opposites

The opposite of left is right,
The opposite of day is night.
Now we come to short and long,
After that there's right and wrong.
Lost and found, sick and well,
How many opposites can you tell?

Heavy and light are not the same,
Don't you like our opposite game?
Next, I think of stop and go,
After that, high and low.
First and last, fast and slow,
How many opposites do you know?



Mildred Hoffman



Activities for “Opposites”

Reciting, Vocabulary Building, Shared Reading

1. You could easily sing this poem to the tune “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”
2. Make simple drawings to go with the opposites in the poem. Print the opposites on word cards, too. Put the cards in a pocket chart. Hold up a drawing and have the children find the matching word.
3. Make a large copy of the poem and replace the opposite words with pictures, rebus style.

Curriculum Links—Movement and Listening

4. Explain to the children that you will tell them (or an individual child) something to do, but they must do the opposite! This is fun for the children. If you increase the speed, it can get quite silly!!

Examples:

“Everybody sit down.” (They stand up.)

“Say ‘Hello’ in a loud voice.” (They say “Hello” quietly.)

“Open your eyes.” (They shut their eyes.)

“Jump on your left foot.” (They jump on right foot.)

“Jimmy, open the door.” (He shuts the door.)

The opposite of



is





Snack Attack

A snack attack! It's time to eat.

A snack attack! Let's sit in our seats.

Peanuts or raisins or cheese would be great,

Even bananas, we can't wait.

A snack attack! We're ready for treats.

A snack attack! Now let's eat!

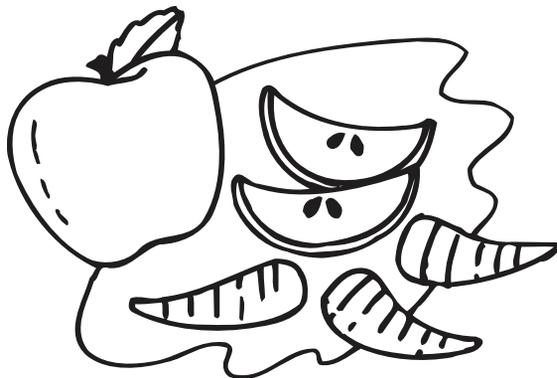
Carol Kyger



Activities for “Snack Attack”

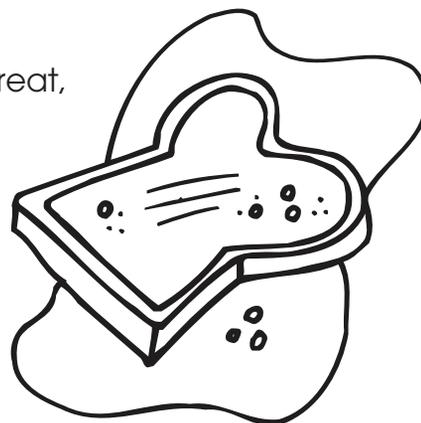
Memorizing and Chanting, Retelling

1. Sometimes poems should be just plain fun for the kids! Teach them this one and use it as a chant before snack. If you use it often enough, many of the children will memorize it!
2. You could rewrite the poem with blanks where the food words go. Have the children help you think of other foods which could go in the poem. Write them in, reread.



Example:

Apples or carrots or bread would be great,
Even crackers, we can't wait.

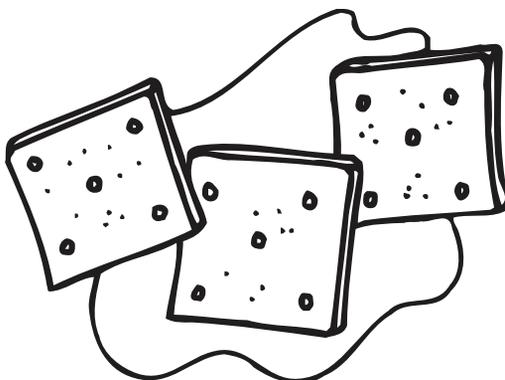


Curriculum Links—Health and Nutrition

3. Talk about nutritious snacks.

Concepts of Print

4. Locate exclamation points. For fun, have the children make exclamation points in the air with a sound effect while reading this verse.





Color Square Dance

Blues, step forward,
Then turn around,
Walk back to your place
And jump up and down.

Reds, hop to the middle
And back again,
Find the yellows
And shake their hands.



Now greens, you slowly
Turn around,
Clap your hands,
And make a sound.

Do-si-do,
Around we go,
All the colors
Heel to toe.

Jean Warren

Activities for "Color Square Dance"

Vocabulary Building

1. Teaching sight words is not a high priority in the kindergarten reading curriculum, but teachers might consider introducing a few words that children will see often. Color words and number words are two categories that you could use at this level.

As children read simple poems and books that contain number and color words, they might learn to read them automatically. Introducing a few sight words at this level, without expecting mastery, is a good idea in another sense. Children who struggle with fluent reading seem to have great difficulty not with the big words, but with the little ones. The sooner some of the words get into their "memory banks," the better.

2. This poem can be used to introduce the color words, while adding movement to a chant. Prepare small cards in four colors: red, yellow, blue, and green. Give each child one of the cards. Say the poem together first; then have the children do the dance.

Do the activity again with the word cards instead of color cards.



Do the dance again, using other color cards: brown, black, purple, and orange (or pink, white, tan, and gray).

Curriculum Link—Art

3. Give the children old magazines. They should work in groups. Each group is given a poster with a color word written on it. They find pictures in magazines showing that color and make a group collage.

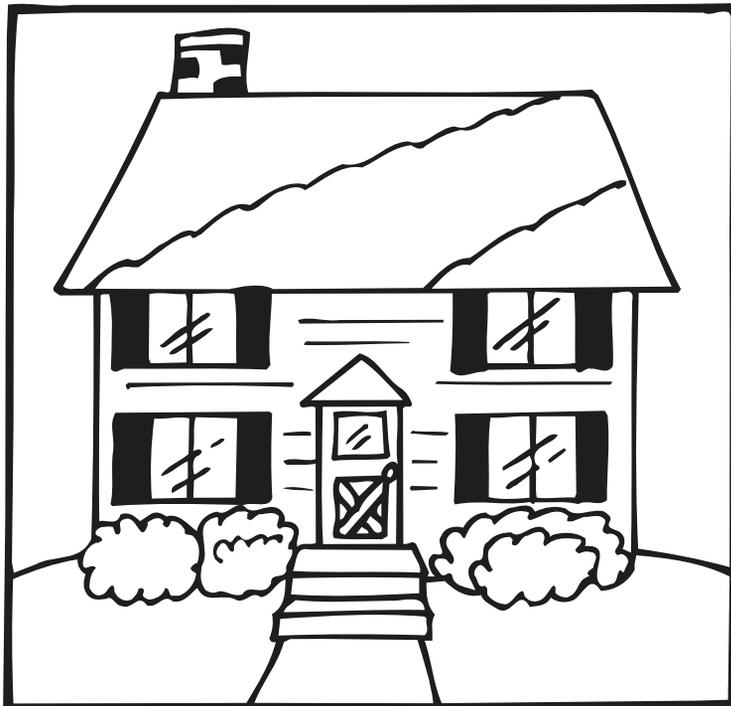


Where Do We Live?

A squirrel lives in a tree,
A snail lives in a shell.
A bear lives in a cave,
It suits her very well.

A fish lives in a fishbowl,
A bird lives in a nest.
Matthew lives in a house,
He thinks his home is best.

Elizabeth McKinnon



Activities for “Where Do We Live?”

Vocabulary Building

1. Think of describing words.

Write: “A bear lives in a _____ cave.”

Brainstorm with the class or a small group. What kind of cave could this be (dark, damp, scary, cold, creepy, etc.)?

The same technique could be used to think of describing words for **tree** or **nest**.

2. Think of words for other places animals live.

Write: “A squirrel lives in a tree.”

Ask: “Where else could a squirrel live?
(field, bush, house, attic, woods, etc.)

Retelling, Partner Reading

3. Make a copy of the poem for each child, perhaps on a house-shaped piece of paper. Leave a blank where the poem says “Matthew” and have the children write in their own name. Leave a blank for the word “his” so that the girls can write “her” and the boys can write “his.”
4. Children read the poem with a partner, each taking a turn to read.

Curriculum Link—Social Studies

5. Read about homes around the world. Here are two excellent books: *This is My House* by Arthur Dorros, and *A World of Homes* by Kari Jensen Gold.

Oral Word Knowledge

Moving from Emergent to Fluent Reading

Emergent readers are not fluent readers. Emergent readers must decode or “figure out” words from context or pictures. This process is slow and can be laborious. When reading simple books, however, most children find that just being able to read independently is exciting. But emergent readers eventually must become fluent readers. With the increased academic content in grades two and beyond, students must move beyond word-by-word reading in order to comprehend and complete their work. This book has already given many ways to help children toward fluency. Oral word knowledge—knowing the meaning of many words, retrieving them quickly, and using them in speech as well as reading—is another important step.

Word Knowledge

Children are interested in words. I have found that kindergarten children love to use big and unusual-sounding words. They delight in learning the word **metamorphosis** while learning about butterflies or frogs. They enjoy telling their parents that new tennis shoes might provide more **friction** so that they won’t slip on the school’s tile floors. Drawing on this natural interest encourages kindergartners to be curious word explorers as they progress in school.

The more words a child hears, the larger the word bank that child has in his or her memory. The more often a child hears a word, the more likely the child can retrieve the word when needed. The more often words are attached to meaning, the easier it will be for the child comprehend.

This section will give you hints on how to teach word meanings and help students increase their vocabularies. While I stated earlier that much of fluency is “caught” not “taught,” this section encourages you to plan lessons to teach vocabulary in a more deliberate, straightforward way.

Activities to Build Oral Word Knowledge

- **Word lists in categories.** Help children think of words that mean the same or almost the same as words they already know. Here are a few examples for you.

Synonyms

Brainstorm with the children to develop lists of synonyms. Explain that synonyms are words that have the same meaning. Don't be afraid to use the actual word **synonyms** if you want to—it's a good word to add to student vocabulary, and as mentioned earlier, kindergartners enjoying learning "big" words!

You could write down these words as a whole-class activity, or do it as a purely oral activity as an informal time filler in those "in between" moments of transition. Some suggestions are below.



"Let's think of other words which mean ____."
(big, small, happy, scared)

"What's another word for make ?"
(build, construct, create)

"A rose is pretty. How else could we say pretty?"
(beautiful, lovely, attractive)

Seasonal Lists

Have the child think of words describing each season (its weather, its smells, its colors). Some examples are listed below.

summer—hot, steamy, yellow, muggy, sweaty, sunny

fall—chilly, cool, windy, orange, red

winter—cold, snowy, freezing, stormy, white, blue

spring—warm, fresh, green, windy, rainy, muddy

Other Categories

Work with **opposites**. Combine this with your synonym list work. As with synonyms, you can introduce children to the word **antonym**.

Another good category for word lists is **feelings**. Learning ways to express their emotions is important for children, and a large list of vocabulary will help them be able to do that.

- **Word of the day.** Choose a word that is appropriate for a unit of study; introduce it verbally and use it in a sentence. Try to use it several times during the school day as well. See if children can “catch” you using the word.

The word can be written on a chart. This could be a daily calendar activity. When enough words are taught, you could make a class book, with children illustrating each page.

Examples of words:

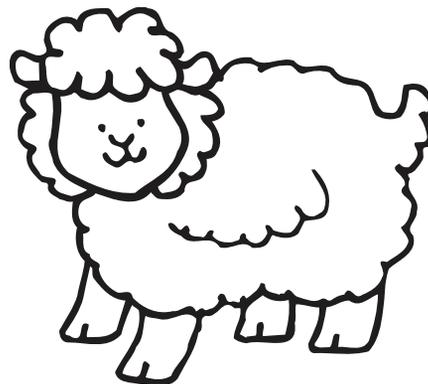
study of plants—foliage, nutrients, roots
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—equality, courage, protest

- **Describing pictures.** Use magazine pictures, pictures from books, calendar pictures, or any other interesting pictures you have available. The children are given a picture to look at. (Pairs work best, but you could also set up groups of up to four students.) Be sure the picture has enough detail in it so that the children can talk about it for several minutes. Model this before doing the activity.

Each group takes turns telling one thing they see in the picture, how the picture makes them feel, or what it reminds them of. Consider setting a timer for about three minutes at first. Challenge children to keep talking about the picture until the timer goes off. (It’s not so easy for children to stay on topic in this setting, so the timer can help them focus.)

- **Change a word.** This can be a small-group or whole-class activity. Get a fairly simple picture, such as a lamb in a pasture. The class is challenged to finish the sentence with different words.

The lamb is _____.
(white, small, soft, eating, fluffy, lonely)



- **Add a word.** The old word game “My Grandma’s Cat” can be adapted. In the original game, each word must begin with the next letter of the alphabet. Each time the sentence is given, you repeat what has been already said. (My grandma’s cat is **adorable, beautiful, creepy, dark, enormous,** etc.)

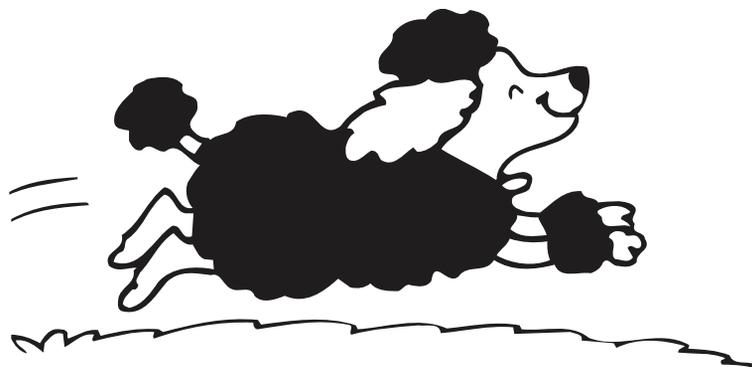
I do a variation on the original game. Remembering each letter in order makes it too difficult for kindergarten. So I have students add any descriptive word to the sentence.

Example:

My dog is a black dog.

My dog is a black, nice dog.

My dog is a black, nice, furry dog.



The children will catch on after you have modeled this a few times. It has become a favorite of my class. Continue while interest (and memory!) lasts. I must admit that I sometimes have to jot down the words so that I don’t forget where we are!

Multiple Meanings of Words

Children are going to run across words that are spelled the same yet have very different meanings depending on context. You will find examples of these as you read books aloud to the children; be alert for them and talk about them when you can. The way a child imagines what you are reading about could be very different from what you think!

While preparing to write this section of the book, I jotted down some words I came across which have multiple meanings. It's simply a beginning of a list, but might give you a place to get started.

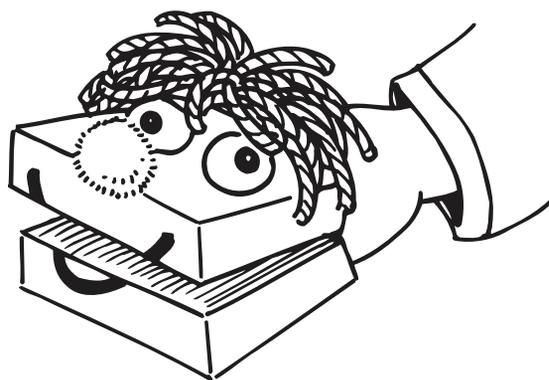
jam, pant, ram, pat (action or pat of butter), **stem, ring, box, pitcher, board, block, bus, lap, story**

A fun way to introduce this to the children is to get the book *See the Yak Yak* by Charles Ghigna. In this book you'll see a yak, yak; a steer, steer; a bat, bat; a swallow, swallow, and many more.

Retelling Stories

Read a story, such as a short fairy tale. Have the children retell it to each other in pairs. A variation is to find two retellings of the same story, such as *The Three Little Pigs* or *The Frog Prince*, which come in many versions. Have the children compare characters and endings. To get even a bit more elaborate and time-consuming, have the children make simple finger puppets to retell stories.

Puppets are a great way for children to practice retelling a story. While creative play with puppets is another fun use of puppets and stages, children often get carried away without the structure of a story. This might be fun for them but is not story retelling in the sense I am referring to here.



Show-and-Tell

With parent cooperation, you can make show-and-tell a way to build vocabulary. Rather than having a child simply bring the latest fad toy or fast-food favor, assign a few children each week to bring something specific to show. Give some guidance to those at home.

Dear _____,

Next week, your child is encouraged to bring an item for show-and-tell. Since we are studying the letter _____, please send something that starts with that letter. Then fill in the blanks along with your child and send this sheet with the object.

This is my _____. It starts with the letter _____.

At home, I use this to _____.

Each child then tells about the object and you have the sheet to refer to as the child talks. You could ask questions to elicit further details from the child.

This special show-and-tell does not have to be limited to letters you are studying. Seasonal changes or units of study can give other topics. A unit on senses, for example, could have the following variations:

- Bring something that feels prickly or fluffy.
- Bring something with an interesting smell.
- Bring something that can be used to make a sound.
- Bring something with a sweet taste. (Can be used for snack!)

Draw-and-Tell

This technique is a way children can record a short sequence of events and retell the event even though they cannot write words. Demonstrate several times yourself.

Today, I am going to write a story in little sketches which shows you how I brush my teeth. I'm going to do this in about two minutes, then I'll tell you the story of my sketches.

Look at your watch before beginning. Say "Go" and start drawing on a large paper so the children can see. Put arrows between the sketches (see below).



First I get out my toothpaste and brush and I put the toothpaste on. Then I turn on the water and wet the brush. Then I brush my teeth and spit. Then I take a drink of water. Then I put everything away.

After you have finished, read aloud to the children (suggested text is given). Most of them will be eager to try it. Many will copy your idea for the first time. You never know what they will come up with, however! When I did this with my students recently, I also had children who drew how to ride a bike, how to plant flowers, how to get to school, and how to catch a fish!

After the drawings are complete, divide the class into small groups so each child gets a chance to tell about his or her work.

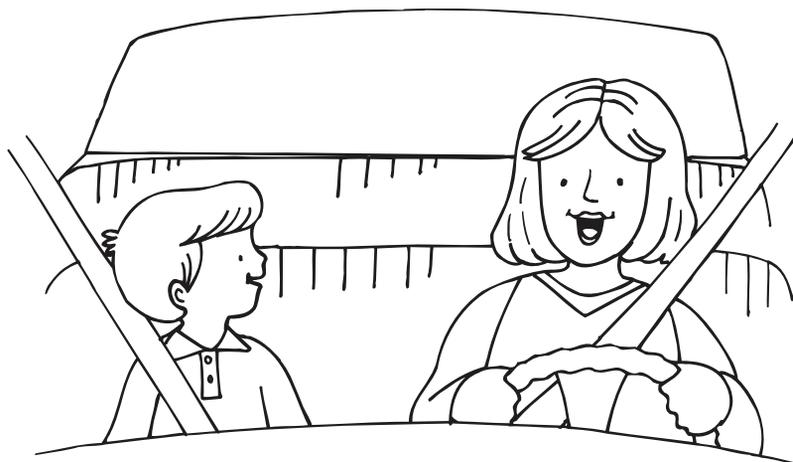
Finish My Story

Have the children listen as you tell them a short story; leave the ending off. Each child then draws a picture of what he or she thinks happened next. It's more fun to figure out a way that children won't copy each other. Sometimes, I spread the class around and call it a "Secret Mission." They really like it if they are given a clipboard and can work in a corner or under a table where no one else can see them. We call it "The Story with Twenty-Four Endings." (I have twenty-four students.) After the pictures are finished, each child gets a chance to tell about his or her ending. This activity has great potential to make a very interesting and popular class book.

Example:

One day, while I was driving to school, I saw the most amazing thing. I was going past the woods, and out of the woods walked a _____.

Try a few of these; you'll all enjoy them and the children will be learning at the same time!





Reading Books Aloud

There can be little argument about the value of reading aloud to children. Research indicates that children who are read to often are more likely to become good readers themselves. Even when children become independent readers, they still enjoy listening to a good story. The purpose for reading aloud can be varied. Spending time together, enjoying a good story, improving listening skills, getting information, relaxing together—all of these are good reasons for reading books aloud. But I wonder how often we think about reading aloud as a time to increase fluency?

Modeling Fluency

Reading books aloud is one of the best ways to model fluency. You are the role model as you read. You show that reading a book is valuable; you model what fluent reading is. Most kindergarten teachers are extremely gifted in their oral reading. No matter how well you read aloud, however, be sure to preview books you plan to use in the classroom. (Some of the tongue-twisting rhyme books can be tough!) While you will do no irreparable harm by reading a book “sight unseen” and stumbling over a few words now and then, your reading should be a good example to these beginning readers.

Having books on tape, CDs, or computer programs is better than nothing, but having a “real live” person reading aloud is the best way to promote fluency. Computer-read books are often read in a sing-song, boring, and decidedly un-fluent way—so beware!

Be sure to consider fluency as you select books to read aloud. Besides allowing you to model fluent reading, books can also help children build vocabulary, tune in to rhyme and rhythm, and build letter naming and letter sound fluency. There are excellent vocabulary-controlled emergent readers to use in paired or partner reading.



Big Books for Fluency

Don't neglect big books as you consider read-alouds. These books are excellent for fluent rereading by children. They help the children read with expression, too. Many of these are available in student-size copies in addition to the large class-size reader. Some old favorites of mine are *Mrs. Wishy Washy*, *Annabel*, and *The Farm Concert* (Wright Group).

Suggestions for Read-Alouds

Favorite Authors

Choose books by favorite authors: they have become popular for a reason! You can hardly go wrong reading books by Eric Carle, Mercer Mayer, Marcus Pfister, Robert Munsch, or Robert Kraus. Add your favorites to the list.

Poetry Books

Poetry books are usually filled with rhyme and rhythm and can be a good way for children to listen to rich language. The rhymes and chants in this book are only a start. Be sure to have the children just LISTEN to poetry. You do not and should not have pictures available for each poem. In fact, a good activity is to have the children listen to a poem and then draw a picture of what they heard. This involves the next step in reading—comprehension. Remember that fluency is a bridge between decoding and comprehension.

Here are some suggestions for poetry books—old and new.

- *Poems Children Will Sit Still For*, by Beatrice De Regniers
- *Eric Carle's Animals, Animals*, by Laura Whipple
- *Yummy! Eating Through a Day*, by Lee Bennett Hopkins
- *If There Were Dreams to Sell*, by Barbara Lalicki

This list is nowhere near exhaustive. Lots of humorous poetry books are available, too, such as those by Jack Prelutsky or Shel Silverstein.

Alphabet Books

There are so many good alphabet books available that it's hard to choose which ones to read. The following list contains many that have a story line. I did not include any books that are mostly a visual "feast." The following are all good for **oral language** and better than many alphabet books to introduce word meanings.

A My Name is Alice, by Bayer and Kellogg

Aardvarks, Disembark! by Ann Jonas—The animals come out of the ark from **z** to **a**. Includes lots of animal information, too.

Alphabet Garden, by Lauren Jane Coats

Antics! by Cathi Hepworth

Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom, by John Archambault

D is For Dolphin, by Cami Berg et al.—The text and illustrations enhance the rich language.

It Begins With an A, by Stephanie Calmenson

Martha Speaks, by Susan Meddaugh—Fun! A dog speaks after eating alphabet soup.

Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten, by Joseph Slate—There are five in this series now, all good! *Miss Bindergarten Stays Home* is really fun—and great for a substitute to read.

Old Black Fly, by Jim Aylesworth

Pop! by Monica Weiss

Ridiculous Rhymes from A to Z, by John Walker

The Alphabet Tale, by Jan Garten

The Dinosaur Alphabet Book, by Jerry Pallotta—He has many others: *Bird*, *Butterfly*, *Icky Bug*. All of his books have good vocabulary and information.

The Great Alphabet Fight, by Joni Eareckson Tada, Steve Jensen—A book about getting along with others.

The Hole by the Apple Tree, by Nancy Polette

Picture Books

So many high quality children’s picture books are available that is nearly impossible to choose just a few to recommend. The following books are some that I feel could be used after the first reading to help promote fluency. The first reading should be done without stopping to talk about rhyme, word meanings, and so on.

A Plump and Perky Turkey, by Teresa Bateman—This is a nontraditional Thanksgiving tale, with lots of practice of the /p/ sound in a rollicking rhyme. The children will love the unusual ending.

How Do Dinosaurs Say Good Night? by Jane Yolen—Are your kindergartners fascinated by dinosaurs? This wonderful rhyming book will also resound with children who try to delay going to bed at night. Dinosaur “experts” will enjoy the pictures of stegosauruses, trachodons, and more in their pajamas.

Just for You, by Mercer Mayer—This book, as well as many other Little Critter books by the author, are very good for simple readers’ theater responses.

Milo and the Magical Stones, by Marcus Pfister—This book has good language use and is great for comprehension—it has a happy and a sad ending.

One Hundred Hungry Ants, by Bonnie MacKain and Elinor Pinczes—This book is available with a wonderful tape recording. I highly recommend it; it is a wonderful example of fluent reading. You could read this many times with your class, even adding rhythm instruments at times.

Phil the Ventriloquist, by Robert Kraus—Use this book to help the children learn about ventriloquism in a humorous way.

Some Smug Slug, by Pamela Duncan Edwards—Wonderful for word meanings and most words begin with the /s/ sound. Examples of words: *succulent*, *sinister*, *suspicion*, *shattering*, *shrieked*.

The Gigantic Turnip, by Alexei Tolstoy et al.—Good language and vocabulary in this one (*pulled, heaved, tugged, and yanked*). Use “Still the turnip would not move” as the children’s response.

The Little Red Hen, by Paul Galdone—This is one of many good versions of the familiar folk tale. Have the children take the parts of the animals when you reread. (“Not I” or “I will” could be written on cards and the children could “read” when indicated.)

The Wolf’s Chicken Stew, by Keiko Kasza—This book is great for the children to use on the hundredth day of school as they can speak together the words of the wolf who is trying to fatten up a chicken for stew.

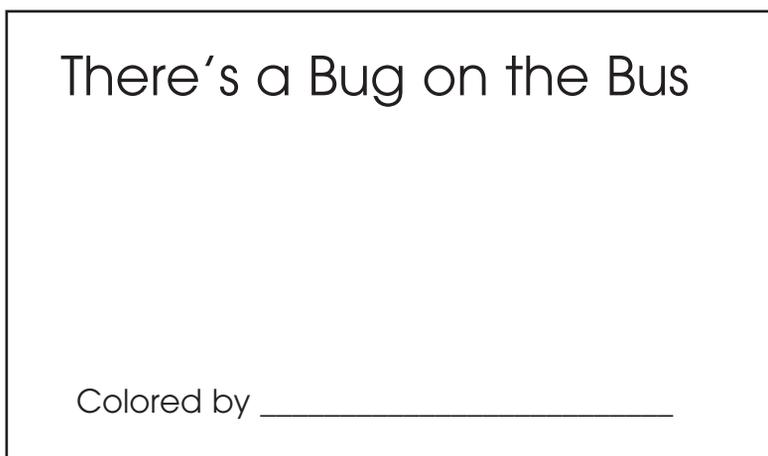
Tough Boris, by Mem Fox—Boris, the pirate, is not *all* bad. This book is touching, but also good for children’s response. (He was _____. All pirates are _____.)

Where’s the Cat? by Stella Blackstone—This book repeats the title question on each page. The children will soon be able to “read” this rhyming book, either independently or in class guided reading.

The list and suggestions above are just a few examples to whet your appetite for finding books that promote fluency. Yes, teaching fluency can be fun!

Using Mini-Books

There are many ways to use mini-books in class in ways that help develop fluency. Use the book on pages 77–80 to get started working with mini-books. Copy the book for your class. Add a blank page for cover and a blank page on the end. The children could color the pages if desired.



Enlarge the mini-book on a copy machine to make a big book for shared reading. Bind the book with a plastic binder or loose leaf rings. Color the pictures if desired—black and white is fine! Laminate.

Shared Reading

Introduce the story using the big book as you read aloud to the children. Use a pointer as you read. Have the children echo lines. Reread often.

Paired Reading or Partner Reading

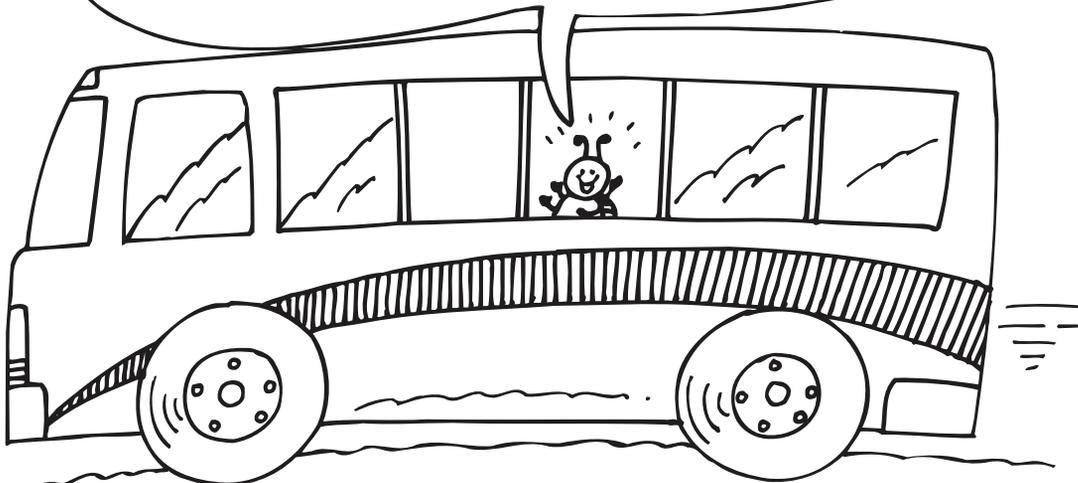
Give each child a small book of his or her own. Let students who are emergent readers read together in pairs. Children who are not quite at that level can read with an adult or older child by doing paired reading. For paired reading, the first reader points and reads; then the child does exactly the same thing.

Working in Student Mini-Books

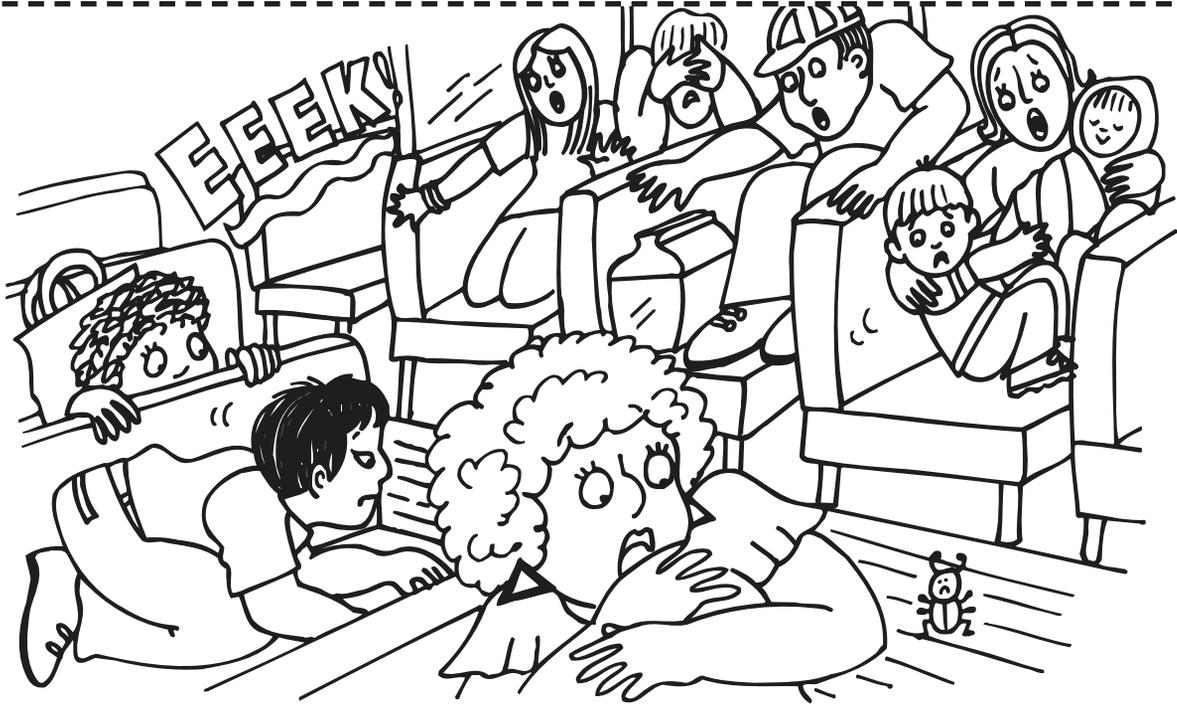
- **Letter naming fluency practice.** In groups or pairs, have the children read the *letters* on each page as quickly as possible.
- **Letter hunt.** Have the children circle certain letters in the book. (They could circle each time they see a letter **Bb**, for example.)
- **Sight words.** Introduce the sight words **on, the, by**. Call children up to circle each time they see one of these words. If your copy of the book is laminated, you can use wipe-off markers.
- **Rhyming word lists.** Start with words from the story and brainstorm a list of additional rhyming words.
- **Blending and segmenting.** Do some blending or segmenting activities choosing words from the book.
- **Rhythmic reading.** Use piggyback tunes or rhythm instruments while reading the book.



There's a Bug on the Bus!



There's a bug on the bus! Don't let it get away.



There's a bug on the bus! Oh, no! He can't stay.

2



There's a bug on the bus.
Now he's coming to me.

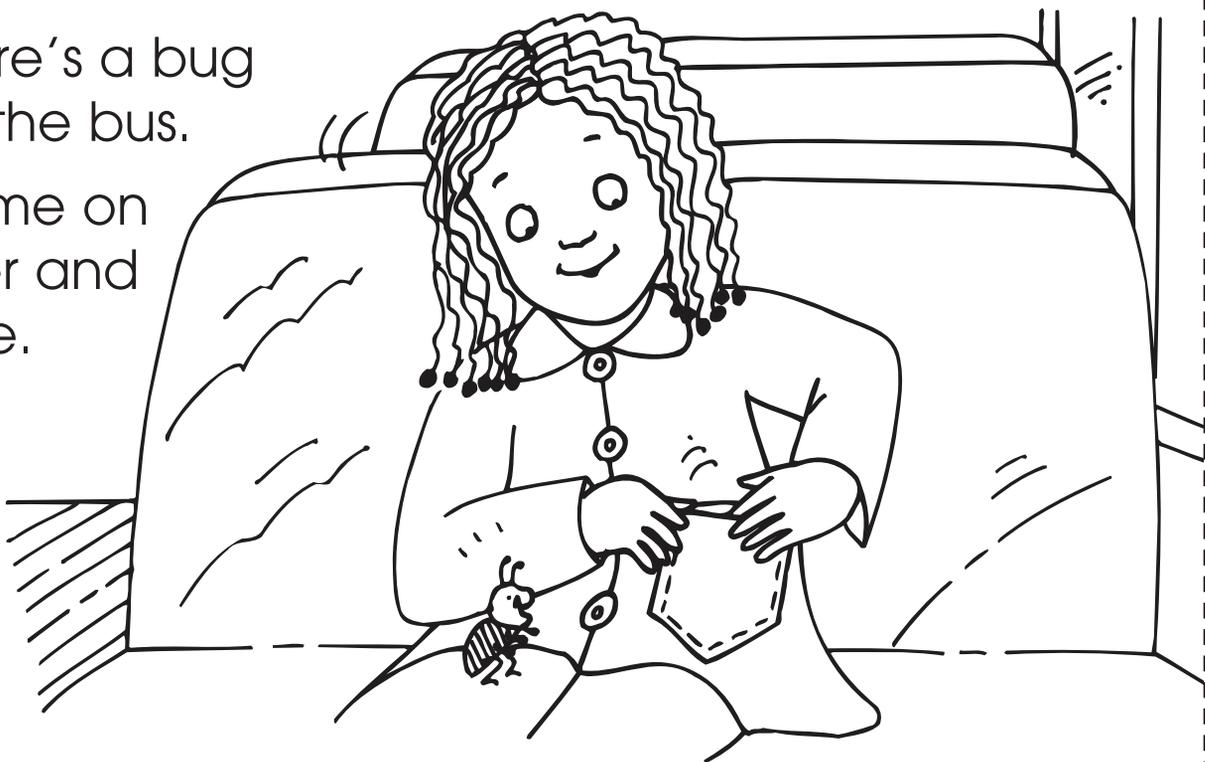
3



There's a bug on the bus
sitting close on my knee!

4

There's a bug
on the bus.
Come on
over and
hide.

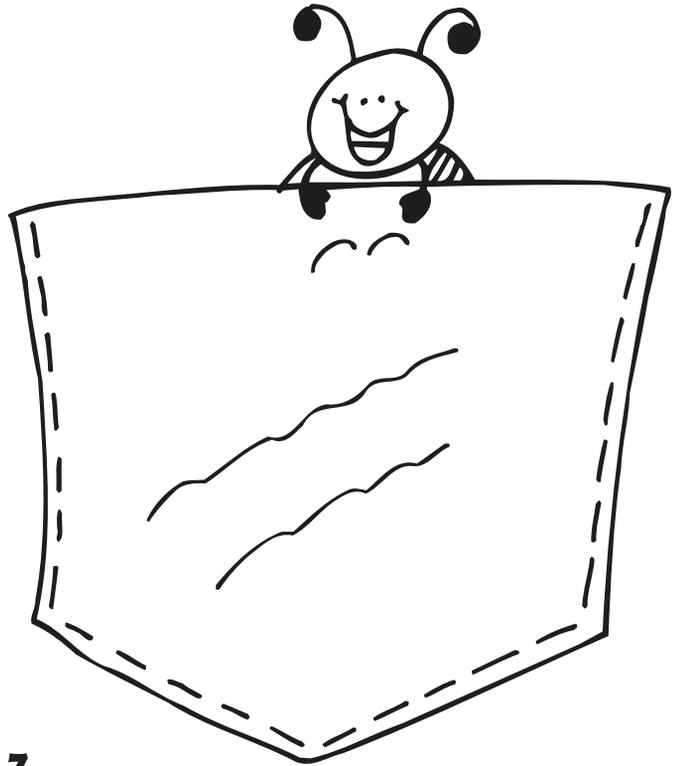
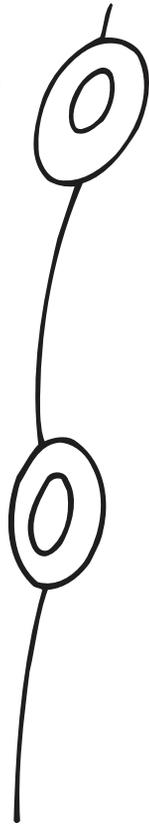


5



This little bug
on the bus.

Might just
need a ride!



7



_____ I can find the letter **b** in
this story.

_____ I can remember one line
of the story.

_____ I can say a line after
someone reads it to me.

_____ I know what the story
means.

8