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Top 25 Easy-to-Make Books, Word Walls, and Charts

FOR BUILDING LITERACY

A Teacher Shares Her Favorite Teaching Tools
That Really Make a Difference in Building Skills in
Reading, Writing, Spelling, and More

S C H O L A S T I C
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dedications



This book is dedicated to my son, Jackson, whose reliable sleep schedule gave me time to write, and to my husband, Marc, who made me feel like an author.

I'd like to thank all the teachers, children, and parents with whom I have worked, especially those at the Greenacres School in Scarsdale, New York. Special thanks to the children who contributed their work to this book; Ellen Citron, from whom I inherited the activity "Mascot Diary;" and Jim Sullivan and Ed Grossman, who gave me so much confidence as a teacher. My deepest gratitude goes to my principal, Francine Ballan, who encouraged me to write this book and to be the best that I could be, and to my editor, Liza Charlesworth, whose patience and guidance made this book possible.

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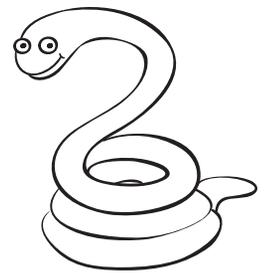
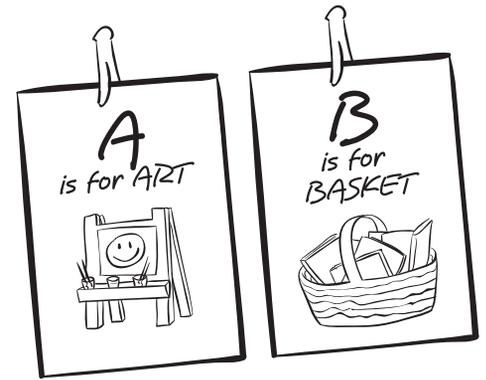
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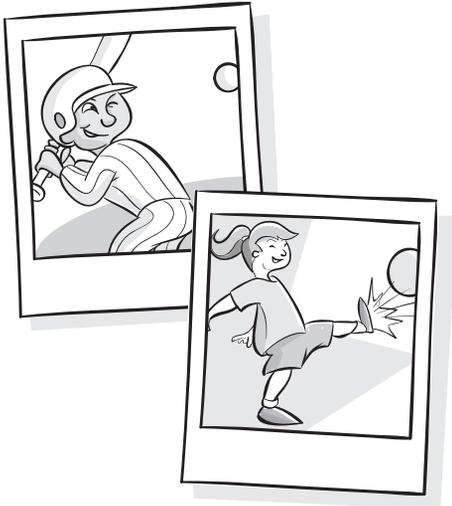
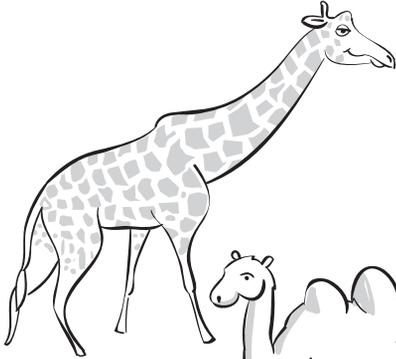
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Dear Readers:

This book is very special to me because it represents some of the most rewarding and exciting times I have spent in the classroom. Over the years, and with much collaboration with colleagues, I developed and adapted these projects to complement, support, and enhance the reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies curricula.



Perhaps what is most significant about these projects is the way in which they impact children's learning. In many cases, the activities are ongoing and are woven into the fabric of the classroom culture, providing children with continuity and encouraging their independence. I have found students' responses to the activities to be overwhelmingly enthusiastic, and that makes my teaching much more rewarding.

I hope you enjoy this book and that you find it helpful in your teaching!

Heather Getman

Introduction

Each of the activities in this book is designed to strengthen your students' reading and writing skills. The activities are meant to enrich your language arts program and to complement the existing curriculum. They were developed based on the following premises:

 **Literacy can be encouraged anywhere.**

This book is filled with ideas on how to promote literacy across the curriculum — not just during reading time. Most importantly, as your students complete the activities, they will discover that reading is important in all subject areas.

 **Children learn best when what they are learning is meaningful to them.**

Teachers take risks when they allow students to be active participants in their learning, but the rewards are well worth it. The activities in this book are structured yet child-centered, encouraging students to be engaged and motivated learners. When teachers value their students' ideas and opinions, children gain confidence and become greater risk-takers.

 **Collaboration helps all children grow.**

Many of the activities in this book require children to work with a partner, a small group, or the entire class. Collaboration skills are critical to children's success in school and in life. When students collaborate they are excited by the process of learning, as well as by the final product of their efforts.

 **Variety is the spice of life.** Because these activities are based on students' ideas and interests, each year your projects will be as different as the personalities in your class.

 **Your time is precious.** In some cases, the activity preparation is done only once and then can be recycled for future use. In other cases, templates are provided so that all you have to do is photocopy them.

 **Skills and standards reinforcement is important.** In addition to teaching reading and writing, each of these activities teaches and reinforces the following NCTE standards:

- Students read a wide range of texts (fiction and nonfiction).
- Students apply a wide range of strategies for comprehending and interpreting texts.
- Students adjust their spoken, written, and visual language to communicate with a variety of audiences.
- Students use of a wide range of strategies for written communication.
- Students conduct research by generating ideas and questions and by posing problems.

How to Use This Book

Each chapter in this book is comprised of different sections that will help you to navigate the contents easily and to determine how best to integrate the information into your teaching. Here is a brief description of each section:

SKILLS:

List of specific skills, in addition to reading and writing, that the activity promotes

PURPOSE:

Summary of the activity and explanation of how it will benefit your students

MATERIALS:

A list of the specific materials needed for the activity

DO THIS:

Step-by-step instructions for preparing materials for the activity and teaching the lesson

WHY I LIKE THE ACTIVITY:

My personal rationale for implementing the activity with your students

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

Helpful hints that come from my own experience with the activities

REPRODUCIBLES:

In addition to these sections, I've also included reproducible templates (whenever applicable) to assist you in the preparation of the activities.

Welcome to Our Class! Sign-in Book



Skills:

- Responsibility
- Independence

Materials:

- Sign-in Sheet (page 10)
- Large three-ring binder (approximately two-inches wide)
- Three-hole punch



Purpose:

The first few minutes of school can be hectic. It's helpful to have a routine that students can follow independently to ease the transition from home to school. This special sign-in attendance book not only makes students feel welcome to the class, but also helps promote literacy as students read a question and then write their responses.

Try This:

1. Write students' names in alphabetical order on the sign-in template.
2. Photocopy the template 180 times.
3. Punch holes in the sign-in sheets and put them in a binder.
4. Before students arrive in the morning (or the evening before), think of a question you would like them to answer. Write the question at the top of the sign-in sheet. (See sample questions, page 9.)

5. Place the sign-in binder on a table or desk that is easily accessible to students when they arrive in the morning. Leave a pencil on the table for them to write their answers. Before you begin teaching, check the sign-in book to make sure everyone has signed in and answered the question.

Sample Questions:

- When is your birthday?
- How many people are in your family?
- What is your middle name?
- What is your favorite color?
- What is your favorite holiday?
- Name a state other than the one we live in.
- What did you eat for breakfast today?
- What is your favorite dessert?
- What is your favorite part of the school day?

Tips for Success:

- ✎ It can be easier for students to find their names on the sign-in page if they are alphabetized by first name rather than last.
- ✎ Start the sign-in book at the beginning of the year so that it becomes a part of students' morning routine.
- ✎ Start with simple questions that require one- or two-word answers at the beginning of the year and progress to more complex ones.
- ✎ Choose questions that have more than one correct answer. For example, "Can you show me a number sentence for the number 10?" is better than "What is 4+6?"
- ✎ Put out only one pencil so that only one child can write at a time.

Why I Like This Activity:

Children learn responsibility and independence when they sign in without being reminded. You also may find students cooperating by helping each other read and answer the questions. This book is a great assessment tool because you can quickly see who is having trouble or who is copying someone else's answer. Once you have used the sign-in book for a year, you will have 180 questions from which to choose the following year.



Poetry Anthology



Purpose:

This is a bound collection of poems that each student receives at the beginning of the year. It includes a poem per week with space for students to add their own illustrations. Over the course of the school year, this collection will help strengthen students' reading skills while building their appreciation for poetry.

Do This:

1. Choose and organize poems so that they will be appropriately matched to your students' reading levels throughout the year. TIP: It may be easier the first year to write out one poem each week, rather than trying to get them all done before the school year. After the first year, however, you will be all set for years to come.
2. Type each poem on its own page, with the title and author included at the top of the page.
3. Leave space at the bottom of each page for students' illustrations. Draw a frame around this space so students have a boundary for their drawings.
4. Photocopy a poetry packet for each student. Bind the packet with a front and back cover. Choose a title for the collection (e.g., "First-Grade Poems" or "My Poetry Anthology") and write "Illustrated by" at the bottom for students to add their own names.
5. Using colorful permanent markers, rewrite each poem on a large piece of oaktag or chart paper to make them classroom posters. Punch a hole at the top of each sheet so that you can hang it.
6. Introduce a new poem on Monday morning. Display the poetry poster prominently so that each child can read it from his or her seat. Each day, as part of your morning routine, have a student come forward and lead the class in reading the poem aloud. Ask the student to point to the words as the class reads along.



Skills:

- Fluency
- Improving vocabulary
- Spelling
- Rhyming
- Recognizing contractions
- Understanding homonyms
- Recognizing sight words

Materials:

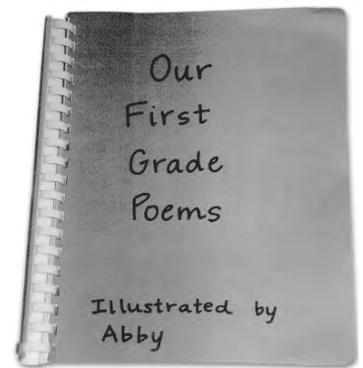
- 37 children's poems
- 37 pieces of oaktag or chart paper
- Permanent markers in assorted colors
- Hole puncher
- Pointer
- Colored pencils
- Binding machine (optional)

😊 Why I Like This Activity:

I have found that teaching children poetry greatly enhances their fluency, reading comprehension, and confidence, not to mention their acquisition of sight words. By focusing primarily, though not exclusively, on poems that rhyme, students benefit from the predictability of the text. Most students genuinely love learning poems and feel a great sense of satisfaction in memorizing them, even if that was not the purpose of learning them. I have found that many students read the poetry anthologies recreationally, and that struggling readers appreciate them the most.

Do This continued:

7. Initiate discussion about the poem. Discuss imagery, vocabulary, spelling, rhyming, contractions, homonyms, and sight words. You might want to point out sight words or the rhymes. You could also cover certain words and have students predict what would make sense.
8. As the week progresses and students become more familiar with the poem, you could ask for volunteers to read in groups or in pairs; invite someone to come in and listen to the class recite the poem; or have the class recite the poem from memory.
9. At the end of the week, have a discussion about how students might illustrate the poem. Then give them time to do so in their own books.



Tips for Success:

- ✎ Poem selection is crucial for success. Choose poems that cover a variety of topics, such as seasons, holidays, friendship, and animals. Choose a variety of poets who write in different styles. Authors you may want to consider for this project include: Jack Prelutsky, Shel Silverstein, Langston Hughes, and Aileen Fisher.
- ✎ Plan your schedule of poems carefully. For example, if you would like to study poems about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln before President's Day, you will have to begin the project two weeks before the holiday.
- ✎ Make a few extra anthologies in case children join your class in the middle of the year.
- ✎ If you don't have a real pointer, you can make one from a chopstick or similar stick object and perhaps paint it gold. Students love the idea of a "magic pointer."
- ✎ To involve parents, send home a copy of the week's poem with each student on Monday. Include a note with the first poem explaining your yearlong project and how parents can help their children by reading the poems with them.

★ ★ Star Word Wall ★ ★



Purpose:

In order for students to become independent readers and writers, they need to learn the most frequently used words, many of which have irregular spellings. A word wall is a useful way for children to access new words and to become confident in their ability to copy, and eventually internalize, word spelling.

Do This:

1. Create the Star Word Wall by placing the cards for each letter of the alphabet on the bulletin board or wall, leaving space underneath each.
2. Make a list of frequently used words. (See list on page 14.)
3. Write each word on an index card or a sentence strip using a bold black marker. Students should be able to read the words clearly from across the room.
4. Affix a star sticker to each card or strip, if you'd like.
5. File the words alphabetically in a box so that you can access them easily throughout the year.
6. Choose four words each week. Emphasize these words throughout the week during different activities. Have students read the words together, spell them aloud, and make sentences using the words in context.



Skills:

- Spelling
- Alphabetizing
- Building sight word recognition

Materials:

- Card for each letter of the alphabet with a picture that illustrates each sound (A/apple, B/ball, etc.)
- Large bulletin board or wall space
- Index cards or short sentence strips
- Bold black marker
- Thumbtacks or tape
- Shoebox to hold unused words
- Large star stickers (optional)

Why I Like This Activity:

I discovered that this activity conveys to students the importance of conventional spelling. I would not expect them to look up words in a dictionary, but I would expect them to use the word wall, which teaches beginning dictionary skills. As each word on the word wall becomes familiar, students are made accountable for spelling the word correctly in their own stories. When children begin to edit their stories, they are responsible for correcting misspelled star words.

Do This continued:

- Place each of the four words under the appropriate letter on the word wall, for children's reference throughout the year.
- Begin the next week by introducing four new words. By the end of the year you will have taught more than 120 new words!

Tips for Success:

-  Spend the first four weeks of school demonstrating how to use the word wall. Say, for instance, "Listen for the first sound in the word, find that letter on the top of the word wall, and look at the words beneath that letter." This may be difficult at the beginning of the year when some children do not yet have a solid sound/symbol correspondence. Be patient. Model how you would refer to the word wall to spell a word when you are writing on the chalkboard.
-  To involve parents, tell them which four words you're introducing that week and ask them to review the words at home.
-  Choose each week's star words in a meaningful way. If you are studying the "silent e" rule, you might choose the words "like," "time," "make," and "came" in the same week to reinforce your phonics lesson. Similarly, you will want to group words with irregular spellings so that they make more sense to students, such as "some/come," "find/kind," or "would/could."
-  Remember that even at the end of the year, there will be students who have not mastered all the 100+ words that were taught. Mastery of the most common words should be a goal for all students. Exposure to the rest is a helpful head start for the following grade.

FREQUENTLY USED WORDS LIST:

A and, a, are, as, at, all, an, about, after, around, another, also, any	D do, did, down, day, dear, does, different	H he, his, have, had, how, has, her, him, help, here	M many, more, make, my, made, most, much, man, me, must, may, maybe	R right	U up, upon, use
B be, by, but, been, back, because	E each, even, every	I I, in, is, it, if, into	O of, on, or, one, out, other, over, our, only, once	S said, so, see, some, same, such, she	V very
C can, could, called, came, come	F for, from, first, find	J just	P people, put, place, part	T to, two, time, too, take, the, that, they, this, there, their, them, then, think, through, than, these, three	W write, words, water, was, with, were, we, will, would, way, work, well, what, when, which, where, why, who
	G get, go, good	K know			Y your, you

Star Word Books



Skills:

- Spelling
- Listening

Materials:

- Star Word Book cover template (page 17)
- Star Word Book template (page 18)
- Paper cutter
- Stapler

Purpose:

Learning to read and say new words is only part of understanding them. It's also very important for students to learn to write new words. Use this activity in conjunction with the Star Word Wall (see page 13), starting about two months after you introduce your word wall. Give students their own Star Word Book that includes enough pages for one spelling drill each day of the month.

Do This:

1. Determine how many school days are in the month.
2. Photocopy that number of Star Word Book templates to create a packet for that month. Each Star Word Book page and cover template makes two books. Photocopy enough pages for half the number of students in your class.
3. Cut the packet across the middle with the paper cutter so that each packet makes two books.
4. Staple each book with a Star Word Book cover.
5. At the same time each day, ask students to take out their Star Word

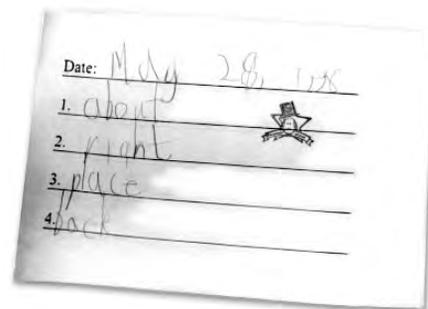
😊 Why I Like This Activity:

These books are an excellent form of assessment. Because the activity is done every day, it does not have the weight of a spelling test, yet it still demonstrates who can use the word wall effectively and who cannot. Children who have consistent difficulty using the word wall will need help developing other strategies for learning the star words.

Do This continued:

Books and write the date at the top of the page. Next, choose a word from the word wall and say it out loud on its own and use it in a sentence. Ask students to write the word either by looking at the word wall or recalling its spelling from memory. Try to have the students write four words each day. Be sure to keep your own Star Word Book to track the words you've used.

6. Ask for a student volunteer to collect the word books. Review and correct misspelled words before returning the books the next day. If a word is misspelled, write the word correctly on a line next to the child's word so he or she can see the difference. Share these books with parents each month.
7. At the beginning of the year, words will be repeated often because there are not many words on the wall. This will change as the year progresses. Revisit difficult words periodically. TIP: Combining new words with previously mastered words helps students build confidence.



Tips For Success:

- ✍ Wait to introduce the Star Word Books until the second month of school. By then there will be at least 16 words on the Star Word Wall and students will have had time to learn how to use the word wall effectively.
- ✍ At the end of each month, make a note of which children had difficulty spelling the star words so that you have a record for report writing.
- ✍ Encourage students and provide a time for them to review their previous day's Star Word Book page before turning to the next page. This private reflection on their work allows them to internalize any corrections that you made.
- ✍ Choose words that you notice students often misspell. You may have taught the word "was," yet you continue to see a number of children spelling it "wuz." Assign this word for a few days in a row. Then bring it back for review in a couple of weeks.
- ✍ Make all the packets for months with the same number of days in advance, clipping them together and labeling them by month. This will save you time making the packets each month.

**My
Star Word Book
for**

(Month)

Name:

Top 25 Easy-to-Make Books, Word Walls, and Charts for Building Literacy © Heather Getman

**My
Star Word Book
for**

(Month)

Name:

Date: _____









Date: _____









Rhyming Word Wall

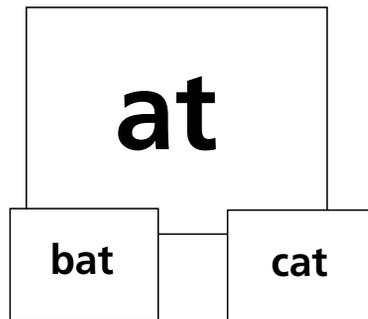
Purpose:

English-language spelling rules are often complicated, and there are many exceptions to these rules. This exercise covers 32 word endings that are consistent in their spellings, making them the most important for young readers and writers to learn. Teaching students to recognize these word endings will help them spell more complicated words down the road.

Do This:

1. Write each of the following word endings on an index card using a colored marker so that it can be read easily from across the room. (See "Tips for Success" about using the colored markers.)

at, an, ap, ack, ash, ank
 ot, op, ock
 it, ing, ip, ick, in, ill, ink
 ug, ump, unk
 est, ell
 ate, ame, ake, ale, ay, ain
 ine, ice
 oke, ore
 eat



2. File the word endings in the box alphabetically so that you can access them easily throughout the year.
3. Choose one word ending to study each week, posting the appropriate index card on your Rhyming Word Wall. (This is a good exercise to begin on Monday and continue throughout the week.) Ask students to think of words that end with those letters. If the word ending is "at," students might say "cat," "hat," "bat," "Nat," or "that." They might also say "attack" or "attach," which is fine. The word ending doesn't have to be at the end of the word, but it often is with the simplest words.
4. Give students time to think about and write additional words using the particular word ending in their notebooks. At the end of the day (or the next morning), post the words students generated on the Rhyming Word Wall. Keep the words up for the entire week.



Skills:

- Spelling
- Rhyming

Materials:

- 32 5- by 7-inch index cards, with a box to hold them
- Large bulletin board or wall space
- Colored markers (optional)

Why I Like This Activity:

This is a fun, easy activity that helps students understand different spelling patterns. Rather than memorizing a list of words that you give them, the students create their own lists and an interactive bulletin board that includes a range of words, from easy to difficult. I have found that students like the challenge of filling the bulletin board by the end of the week, and everyone gets involved in discussing and spelling new words.

Do This continued:

5. Emphasize the rhyming words throughout the week in your different lessons. By the end of the year you will have taught all 32 word endings.

Tips for Success:

-  Begin with the easiest word endings and work up to the most difficult (these will vary depending on your students' levels). When possible, coordinate the word ending with the vowel sound you are teaching so that the sound is reinforced. Stick with word endings that share the same vowel sound before moving on to the next vowel sound. You might also choose to teach the word endings with short vowel sounds before those with long vowel sounds.
-  To help reinforce the sounds, write each word ending with a marker whose color has the same vowel sound. For example use:
 - black for short "a" word endings
 - pink for short "i" word endings
 - purple for short "u" word endings
 - orange for short "o" word endings
 - red for short "e" word endings
 - gray for long "a" word endings
 - white for long "i" word endings (either outline the letters leaving a white space in the middle, or use chalk on a black piece of 5- by 7-inch paper)
 - gold for long "o" word endings
 - green for long "e" word ending(There are no long "u" word endings.) Some of these color/sound connections are a bit of a stretch, but the colors can really help struggling readers remember the sound.
-  To involve parents, tell them which word ending you're teaching that week and ask them to review words with their child.
-  Remember that even at the end of the year, there will be students who have not mastered all 32 word endings. But, students should recognize the connection between the way words sound and the way they are spelled, and many children will articulate, "I know how to spell 'cat,' so I know how to spell 'hat,' because the two words rhyme."

Rhyming Word Books

Purpose:

The Rhyming Word Books are a written record of all the words students discovered for each word ending. Students can review the words at their own pace. Most importantly, the books are a source of pride for beginning readers who find that they can “suddenly” read.

Do This:

1. Photocopy each word-ending template (pages 23-26) at least 50 times.
2. With the paper cutter, cut each page into eighths so you have a stack of slips with a word ending on each slip (these will be called rhyming word slips).
3. Put the rhyming word slips into a box next to your Rhyming Word Wall. Leave an empty box labeled “New Words” next to it. Have pencils available for students, and a table or desk on which they can write.

4. During students' free time, invite them to write as many words as they can think of that rhyme with the word ending of the week. Show them how they only need to write the additional letters (since you've already written the word ending), being sure to put these letters in their correct places. For instance, if the word ending is “ap” and a student would like to write “tap,” he must put the letter before the word ending, but if another student would like to write “apple,” she must put the letters after the word ending.

5. Once their word is spelled, students should drop their slip into the box labeled “New Words.” Each day read the words students wrote the day before. Use the word in a sentence or ask a student volunteer to do so.



Skills:

- Spelling
- Rhyming

Materials:

- Word-ending templates (pages 23-26)
- White photocopy paper
- Paper cutter
- Two small boxes
- Pencils
- Thumbtacks
- Stapler
- Decorated shoe box

Why I Like This Activity:

This activity involves all students. In addition, it encourages cooperation as students support each other to think of and spell new words correctly. The books are very easy to make, yet they represent a great deal of learning. I have found that students begin to take ownership and show pride in the books as they are challenged to think up new words.

Do This continued:

6. If the word is spelled correctly, tack it to the board. If it is not spelled correctly, correct the spelling and explain how and why you did this. Do not put duplicate words on the board.
7. At the end of the week, take down all the words and staple them in the corner with a plain word ending slip as a cover and write "Words with...." Put these little books in a decorated shoe box that is easily accessible to students.

Tips for Success:

-  Ask students to write only in pencil so corrections are easy to make.
-  Encourage students to work on word endings when they finish another activity early. I have my word endings wall where students line up, so they have something to do while they are waiting.
-  For crowd control, put out only enough pencils for the number of children that the area can comfortably accommodate.
-  When you place the words on the board, do it in a meaningful way. Put similar words (such as play, playing, played, and playful) together, and make a separate column for words with blends (like spill, twill, still, trill, and thrill).
-  Make all the word ending templates at the beginning of the year and file them so you can pull them out each week to make the slips.
-  To avoid word duplicates, encourage students to read the words already on the board before writing a new word.
-  Provide a large stack of word-ending slips at the beginning of each week, but don't feel obligated to replenish it. If students think there is a never-ending supply of slips, they might get silly and write nonsense words. If you have extra slips at the end of the week, save them for next year.
-  Be prepared for those students who get a kick out of writing inappropriate words. Discourage students from doing this.

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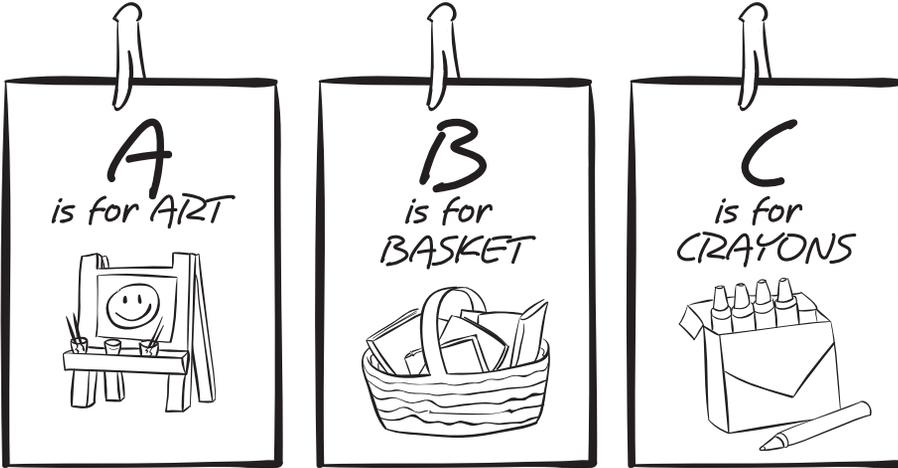
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Alphabet Books



Purpose:

Knowing what each letter sounds like is critical to learning how to read. It is not uncommon for students to think that the letter “w” makes the “d” sound because it is called “double u,” or that the letter “y” makes the “w” sound because it is called “why.” Reading alphabet books and creating your own alphabet book helps reinforce students’ awareness of correct letter sounds. This is a great activity to do at the beginning of the year.

Do This:

1. Take out a variety of alphabet books from your school library. Invite students to bring in their favorites from home (be sure to clearly label each book with the student’s name). Read a few alphabet books each day. Discuss the different book themes, and invite students to make predictions about a page before you read it.
2. Invite the class to make its own alphabet book. Each child will illustrate one page. On chart paper, list each letter of the alphabet. Discuss a theme for your book. A good theme for the beginning of the year is “All About School.”

Once you’ve selected the theme, ask the class to help you make a list of appropriate objects to illustrate each letter. If there is more than one good idea for each letter, hold a class vote on which object should be illustrated. Ask for volunteers to illustrate each letter.

Skills:
• Phonemic awareness

Materials:

- Chart paper
- 11- by 17-inch white paper for each child, plus extras
- Pencils
- Box of permanent black markers
- Newspaper
- Watercolor paints and brushes
- Cups of water
- Clothesline and clothespins or three-hole punch and book rings

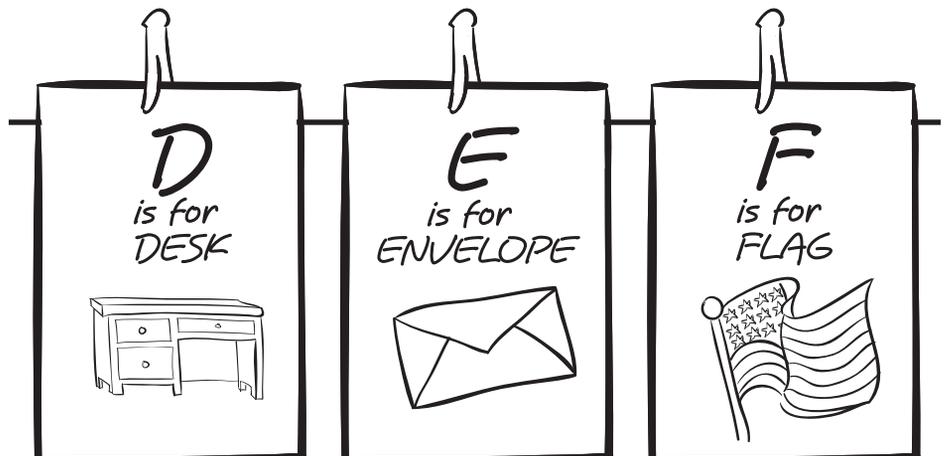
Here are some recommended titles:

- ***Eating the Alphabet***
by Lois Ehlert (Harcourt Brace & Co., 1989)
- ***The Graphic Alphabet***
by David Pelletier (Scholastic, 1996)
- ***The ABC Bunny***
by Wanda Ga'g (Putnam and Grosset Group, 1933)
- ***Flora McDonnell's ABC***
by Flora McDonnell (Candlewick Press, 1997)
- ***Amazon ABC***
by Kathy Darling (Lee and Shepard Books, 1996)
- ***The Birthday ABC***
by Eric Metaxas (Simon and Schuster, 1995)

Do This continued:

Ask students to have more than one letter in mind because they might not get their first choice.

3. After school, take the sheets of 11- by 17-inch paper and with a pencil lightly draw a line about four inches from the bottom of each sheet. Below the line, write a sentence for that page using a thin black marker. (For instance, "A is for Art Room" and "B is for Blacktop.") Be consistent with the sentence wording.
4. Next, read each page of the book to the class. After you hand out the pages, explain to students that they should first draw their picture using pencil. Later on they will color in their illustrations with watercolors. Encourage students to make their drawings as big as possible. Students shouldn't draw below the pencil line.
5. Before students start painting, you might want to have them draw over their penciled lines with a black marker. (I found that the permanent marker helps control where the paint goes.) Set up a table (or a few desks) with newspaper, watercolor paints and brushes, and cups of water. Have a few children at a time paint their drawings.
6. When the pictures are dry, either hang each page in order on a clothesline for all the class to see or punch holes in the pages and use book rings to make a book. If you plan to make a book, you may want to laminate the pages to make them more durable.
7. Read the class's book aloud. Be sure to include a title page and an author page with all the children's names. If you'd like, students can also add a dedication page.

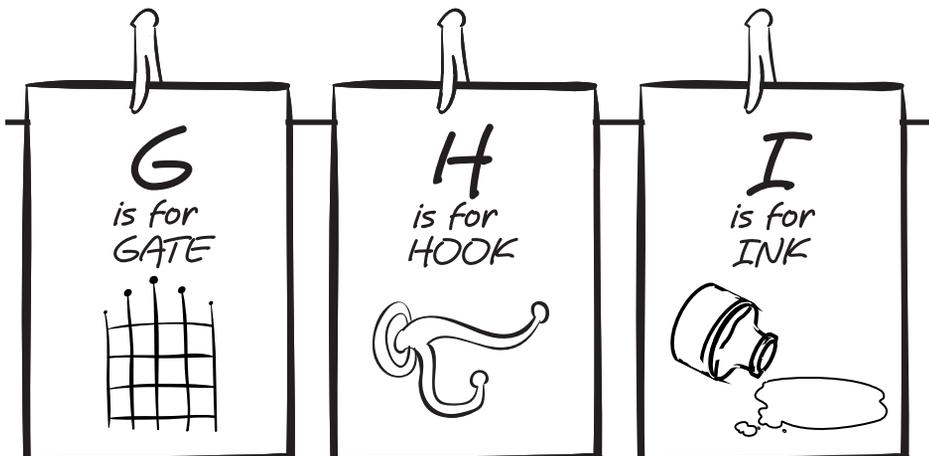


Tips for Success:

- ✎ Alphabet books are designed for many different reading levels. It is important to have a wide variety of alphabet books so that readers of all levels can find an appropriate book to read. Encourage children to “read” the pictures aloud if it is a book without printed words. This is an important pre-reading skill.
- ✎ When choosing a theme for your class book, take suggestions from the class and vote if you’d like, but use your judgment as to whether or not you will be able to think of an object for each letter. Some topics are so specific that it will be difficult to fill every page.
- ✎ I often make a consonant and/or vowel book instead of an alphabet book and discuss the differences between a consonant and a vowel. This works particularly well if you have 21 children in the class. If you have 22 children, have one child illustrate the cover of the book. If you have more than 26 children in your class, you could make more than one page for each vowel since the vowels have more than one sound. For example, you could make both an “A is for Alligator” page and an “A is for Ape” page.
- ✎ When discussing ideas for each letter, encourage students to think of it as a collaborative class activity so that no child takes ownership of a particular letter. You want to emphasize that you are making a class book and that every child is an author and an illustrator.
- ✎ This project can be done over the course of a week, not including the time it takes to read the alphabet books and familiarize children with the format.

😊 Why I Like This Activity:

Alphabet books are predictable and easily accessible to young readers. You can have students make their own individual alphabet books, but the class book serves an important function beyond teaching the sounds of letters. Writing and illustrating a class alphabet book helps create class unity at the beginning of the year, and it also serves to model the collaborative process that will be revisited throughout the year. If you choose to hang the pages of the book, it makes a nice display for open house night.



Stories That Teach Vowels



Skills:

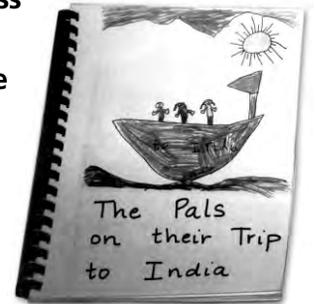
- **Phonemic awareness**
- **Writing**
- **Rhyming**

Materials:

- Chart paper
- Marker
- Photocopy paper
- Thin black markers
- Colored pencils
- Binding machine (optional)

Purpose:

When teaching vowels, it is important to approach the topic in a variety of engaging ways while also reviewing what has already been taught. One way to do this is through creative writing and rhyming. At the conclusion of each vowel study, your class will write a story that relies heavily on that vowel sound. Each student will illustrate a page and finally take a copy of the book home to practice and review sounds. By the end of the year, each student will have five vowel stories that were written and illustrated by the class.



Do This:

1. Review the vowel sound your class has been studying. Explain to students that they are going to write a class story using this sound as much as possible.
2. Begin by coming up with a list of characters for your story. Ask, "Who will be in the story?" (We always use names from our class.) On the chart paper with a marker, write students' ideas under the heading "Characters."
3. Discuss the setting of your story. Ask, "Where will it take place?" "Where should the characters go?" (The stories tend to flow much easier when there is an adventure and the characters are going somewhere.) "What month is it?" "What day is it?" Under the heading "Setting," write the students' ideas.
4. Make a list of words you can use in the story that have the vowel sound you have been studying. Keep reinforcing the sound as you go. Ask, "Do we want any animals in our story?" "Which ones could we have?" "Do we want any food in our story?" "What food could they eat?" "What other words have the sound we are learning?" Write their ideas in columns according to the topic.
5. After a few minutes of brainstorming, your list should begin to show the potential for a story, albeit a silly one. Mold the children's ideas so that their story will make sense. Although you want most of the words in the book to have the vowel sound you are learning, you will need other words, too. Remember, though, that ultimately you want the children to read the

book, so you should keep all the words very simple, using as many one-syllable words as you can.

From your lists of words, you can begin to suggest a plot for the story. You may find that students will continue to make changes and additions as you write the story on chart paper. Try to write one page for each child in the class to illustrate. Be sure each page has something that can be easily illustrated.

- As you are writing (really transcribing) and revising, keep rereading what you have so far so that all students can keep up with what has been done. Once your story has a clear beginning, middle, and end, your brainstorming session is over.
- Invite the class to choose a title for the story and a person to whom to dedicate it. Take suggestions for the title and then have the class vote; do the same for the dedication.
- Hold a piece of white photocopy paper vertically and draw a line lightly in pencil, about four inches from the bottom of the page. You should make one page for each student. Copy the story onto the pages below the penciled line using black permanent marker.
- Reread the story to your students once, asking them to think about which pages they are interested in illustrating. They should have more than one choice. Then go back and reread each page, assigning each student one page to illustrate with a pencil. Later, they can go over their drawings with a thin black marker. (Remember to include the cover, the dedication page, and the “The End” page.) The illustrations should be outlines so students can color their drawings with colored pencil later.
- When all the students have finished their illustrations, put the pages in order and photocopy them so that each child will have a black-and-white copy of the book. If you have a binding machine, bind the copies. Do not bind the original. Give students their original drawings back so that they can color them in. When all the pages of the original book are colored, laminate and bind them.
- Read the class’s story aloud and commend your students on their wonderful cooperation and creativity. Put the book on an easily accessible shelf and encourage your students to read it. Give each child a black-and-white copy to take home. Invite them to color their books.



😊 Why I Like This Activity:

This activity helps students learn and practice the writing process (brainstorming, writing, editing, revising, and rereading). It is valuable for students to experience this process in a group setting and to participate with the guidance of an adult. The organized way in which the brainstorming occurs actually teaches children about the elements of story writing. By collaborating, students learn to value each other’s ideas and to cooperate with their peers. I have found that students take a lot of pride in the finished product, and by taking the book home, they share that pride with their families. Ultimately, this project allows students to see and hear the sounds they have learned in a meaningful and child-centered context.



Tips for Success:

- ✎ Brainstorming is inherently a very free and creative experience, but it can become hard to control with a large group of children. Don't be afraid to slow down the process and to use editorial license when necessary. In essence, you are the editor of the book, and you will inevitably have to make some hard decisions about the plot of the story.
- ✎ Your enthusiasm and excitement are critical in keeping the creative juices flowing. You will discover that students respond immediately to your encouragement and need to hear a lot of, "What a fabulous idea," and "I can't wait to hear what might happen next!" When things get too riled up, you can always say, "Wait, wait, wait! I'm too excited! I can't think about so many great ideas at once!"
- ✎ Remember that you will do this activity five times throughout the course of the year and there will be significant growth in the children over this time period. The first two times you do the activity, you will be teaching them the process. By the third time, they should be much more independent, not to mention more knowledgeable about the sounds.
- ✎ I recommend using students' names in the appropriate books to give them ownership and make them feel special. Also, students remember the sounds much better when they associate the sound with a friend's name. To be fair, use a child's name in only one story.
- ✎ During brainstorming, don't worry if your handwriting gets messy. I am a big proponent of modeling good handwriting, but if you slow yourself down to write neatly, you will certainly miss some of their wonderful ideas. If you ask students to "hold that thought" as you are writing, they will lose enthusiasm and, most likely, the idea as well. Explain that this is a very rough draft and that you will rewrite their ideas more neatly when you make it into a book. It is actually healthy, I feel, for children to see your sloppy writing occasionally, so they appreciate the effort you make when your writing is neat.
- ✎ Illustrating with marker can be a risky proposition, but explain to students that pencil will not photocopy well. Encourage them to work slowly and carefully and explain that if they make a mistake, they will need to make it into a design because you will not be using white-out on this project. Once you begin to use white-out with children, they'll want to use it on everything!

Part 1: Language Arts

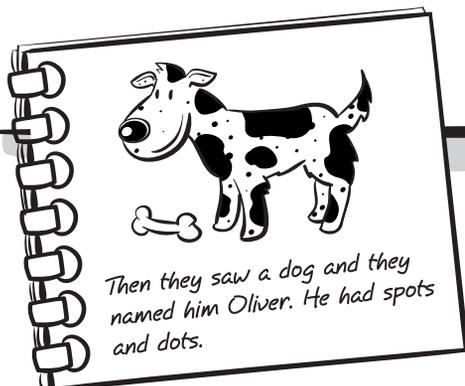
Here is the text from my class's short "o" vowel book. It was our third vowel book, following the short "a" vowel book, *The Pals and the Yak in Africa*, and the short "i" vowel book, *The Pals on Their Trip to India*.



The Pals, the Dog, and the Popcorn

This book is dedicated to Dr. Murphy

Roxie, Joshua, and Molly were friends.
One day in October they went to Roxie's house.
They made popcorn in a pot.
The pot got too hot.
The top popped off.
Then Roxie dropped the pot and...
The kitchen got sloppy!
They went to Yonkers to shop for a mop.
They stopped to take rocks out of their socks.
Then they saw a dog and they named him Oliver.
He had spots and dots.
He was lost and hungry.
They took Oliver home to eat the popcorn.
Oliver ate all the popcorn and got sick!
They took Oliver to the doctor in the hospital.
Oliver got a shot and took a nap on a cot.
Oliver's mom got him and took him back home.
Roxie, Joshua, and Molly looked at the clock.
As they ran home, they saw a dock and a flock of seagulls.
At home, they knocked on the door
and Roxie's mom let them in.
Then she locked it.
Then they played with their blocks.
The End



Hurray for Homonyms!

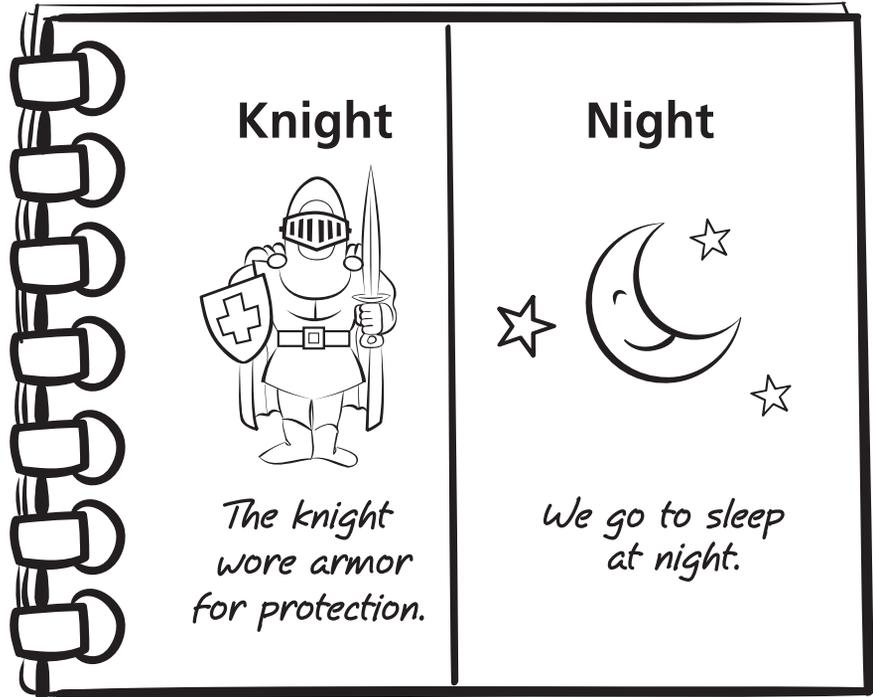


Skills:

- Understanding homonyms

Materials:

- Chart paper
- Thick black marker
- Photocopy paper
- Markers or crayons
- Binding machine (optional)



Purpose:

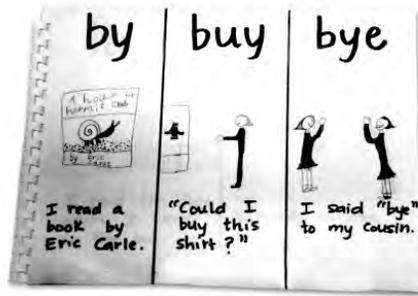
Students are fascinated by word play and love to find humor in words that have multiple meanings. As they learn to spell more words, they begin to notice words that sound the same but are spelled differently. This book of homonyms can familiarize students with these unusual words and make learning homonyms more fun.

Do This:

1. Write the word "homonym" on the top of the chart paper using a thick marker. Explain that a homonym is a word that sounds like another word but is spelled differently. Give an example and a sentence to go with each word, such as "We go to sleep at *night*" and "The *knight* wore armor for protection."
2. Ask students to think of other homonyms. Add their ideas to the chart paper. Continue asking for examples, supplying your own if necessary, until you have enough homonyms so that each student can illustrate one.

Part 1: Language Arts

3. Take a piece of paper for each child and fold it in half horizontally. If a homonym has three spellings divide the paper into thirds. Write one homonym on the top left-hand side of the page and write the sentence beneath it on the bottom left-hand side of the page. Leave space in the middle for an illustration. Repeat with the other homonym on the right-hand side of the page.
4. Reread each page of the homonym book and then give a page to each student. Have them illustrate the homonyms on their page using the colored markers or crayons.
5. Laminate the original pages and bind them into a book. Reread the final product to the class and display it in an easily accessible place.



😊 Why I Like This Activity:

The project is an easy way to capitalize on students' interest in homonyms and expose them to different spellings and meanings of words. Plus, it's a great way to have fun with language as students challenge themselves to think up homonyms on their own.

Tip for Success:

- ✎ Try this activity whenever the topic of homonyms naturally comes up. You will discover it's not at the same time every year. I've found that discussions about homonyms frequently occur when studying word endings.



Author! Author!



Skills:

- **Comparing**
- **Contrasting**
- **Analyzing texts**
- **Improving vocabulary**

Materials:

- Colored butcher paper (on the roll)
- Thick black marker
- Yardstick
- Several books by a single age-appropriate author
- Chart paper
- 5- by 7-inch index cards
- Markers or crayons
- Masking tape

Purpose:

Reading multiple books by the same author teaches children a great deal about the elements of writing, as well as the valuable skills of comparing and contrasting texts. Through the use of author studies, children learn to express their opinions and give examples to support their theories, both of which are important skills.

Do This:

1. Cut a large piece of colored butcher paper at least five feet long. Put the paper on the floor.
2. With a black marker and a yardstick make and label a chart as shown on page 37. Hang the chart in your classroom where students can easily access it.
3. Next choose an author that you think is appropriate for your students. You may want to start with Eric Carle, Ezra Jack Keats, Tomie de Paola, Rosemary Wells, or Marc Brown. Go to the library and select as many books as you can by your chosen author.
4. Display the books so students can see them. Students may recognize some of the books and be surprised by an author's less popular titles. Students often don't realize that authors write many books. Encourage children to read and look at the books during independent reading. This free exploration helps students become committed to the books on their own level while motivating them for the author-study project.
5. Select five or six stories that you think show a trend in the author's choice of subject, plot, character, or theme. Explain to students that you will use the Author Study Chart to take a close look at a handful of books by a particular author.
6. Show students the Author Study Chart and discuss each of the headings. Define each of the headings on chart paper. Review these definitions often over the course of the project.
7. Read one of the books to the class, keeping the index cards and a black marker handy. You will need five index cards for each book. When you have finished reading, ask the class the title of the

Part 1: Language Arts

book. Write the title on an index card (held horizontally) and underline it. Then ask who the main character was and write his or her name at the bottom of the next card, leaving room for an illustration above. Repeat for each of the chart headings.

- Ask for volunteers to illustrate each of the index cards. Only four children will be able to do this each day (the title card does not get illustrated).
- Using masking tape, hang the students' illustrations in the appropriate boxes on the Author Study Chart. After reading the first book, the first row beneath the headings will be filled. By the time you have read all the books, the entire chart will be full.

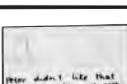
😊 Why I Like This Activity:

This project is a good way to build students' vocabulary. As the chart's headings are defined and discussed, the terms eventually become part of the students' own language. Understanding the vocabulary (title, main character, setting, conflict, and resolution) helps students structure their thinking when they are asked to summarize a story they have read or heard. If you ask students to identify the title, main character, setting, conflict, and resolution after reading stories aloud, they will begin to think this way on their own when they are reading and writing their own stories.

AUTHOR STUDY CHART

← 9" →

↑
7"
↓

	Title	Main Character	Setting	Conflict	Resolution
1	<u>Whistle For Willie</u>	 Peter	 New York City	 Peter couldn't whistle.	 He kept trying until he finally learned.
2	<u>The Snowy Day</u>	 Peter	 Outside in the snow on the city.	 The other boys didn't want to play with him.	 Peter had fun playing alone and with a friend.
3	<u>Peter's Chair</u>	 Peter	 In Peter's apartment.	 Peter didn't like that his baby sister was getting all his old stuff and... ...the chair.	 Peter realized that he was too big for his old chair so he got it to Sissy.
4	<u>A Letter To Amy</u>	 Peter	 Outside in the city on a stormy day.	 Peter was afraid that Amy wouldn't come to his birthday party.	 Amy came to his birthday party.
5					

Tips for Success:

- ✎ When choosing the author, make your decision based on your students' literacy, their prior exposure to literature, and the time of year in which you will be doing the author study. I like to begin the year with an author study and often choose books by Eric Carle or Ezra Jack Keats.
- ✎ Choose an author who has written a number of books so that you have more books to choose from.
- ✎ You might want to choose an author that is also the illustrator, so students can compare both the text and the illustrations.
- ✎ As an extension activity, discuss what a copyright is and check the date on the books to calculate how old the books are.
- ✎ Since only four children can illustrate an index card each day, read enough books so that each child will be able to do one illustration for the chart. Keep track of who has illustrated.
- ✎ A good author study might take a couple weeks. Aim to read one book and to complete that row on the chart in a day or two. Schedule enough time for students to explore other books by the author in addition to the ones you are studying.

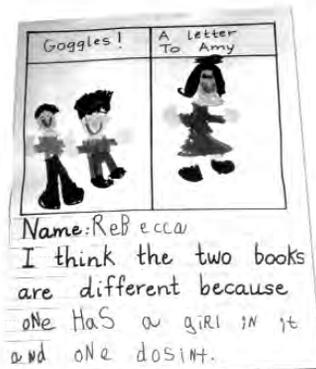
Comparing Stories

Purpose:

By creating the Author Study Chart (see page 37), students learn how to summarize a story by referring to the main character, setting, conflict, and resolution. In this activity, students will compare two stories they read during Author! Author! and decide how they are alike or different. This activity requires more independence than the author study and is also a good tool for assessing students' understanding of terminology, their listening comprehension, and their memory.

Do This:

1. Begin this project after you've completed Author! Author! (page 36). Photocopy the three different templates for each student. NOTE: You will have extra templates because each student will use only one or the other.
2. Ask each student to choose two of the stories that were read aloud during Author! Author! and decide if they are similar or different. They can be stories that are not on the chart, but must have been read aloud to the entire class and written by the same author. Explain that two books can be similar for one reason and different for another reason. Students will have to give examples from the books to show why they think the books are similar or different.
3. Give students time to think about the books that they would like to compare. Some children will know immediately what they want to say. Others will need more time to think. Have the books available so students can refer to them during this period.
4. On one piece of chart paper write the heading "Similar," and on another write "Different." As you call on each student, have the student first tell you if he or she thinks the books are similar or different and why. Write the student's reasons on the chart paper. Since this activity takes more than one day, use these charts to keep track of students' ideas.



Skills:

- Listening comprehension
- Memory
- Comparing
- Contrasting

Materials:

- Compare and Contrast Similar template (page 41)
- Compare and Contrast Different template (page 42)
- Compare and Contrast Illustration template (page 43)
- Horizontal-lined writing paper
- Chart paper
- Black permanent marker
- Markers or crayons, and pencils
- Glue stick

Why I Like This Activity:

This activity gives students the opportunity to express their ideas verbally, pictorially, and in writing. The Comparing and Contrasting Literature Bulletin Board gives you a good insight into your students' level of listening comprehension and their ability to synthesize texts. The project expects a lot from students, but I have found that they rise to the challenge beautifully when given support and guidance.

Do This continued:

5. After school, take the "Illustration" pages you photocopied and write each child's name on the back of one page and each of the titles that he or she chose in the boxes at the top of the page. The next day, ask students to draw a picture to show their ideas. Show them a sample "Illustration" page with the titles written in. Give them an example: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *The Grouchy Ladybug* are similar because they both have main characters that are insects. So under the title *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, the child would draw a caterpillar, and under the title *The Grouchy Ladybug*, the child would draw a ladybug.
6. Review students' ideas, distribute their "Illustration" pages with the titles written in, and ask them what they will draw to show their ideas. Make sure they know where each drawing should go.
7. The next day, give each student a copy of either the "Similar" or "Different" page. Review their ideas from the chart paper. Work with a few students at a time, assisting them as they use inventive spelling to explain their ideas using either the "Similar" or "Different" page.
8. After school, go over the students' pencil writing with a black marker so that their text can be read from the bulletin board. Use a glue stick to affix each child's "Illustration" page to the top of his or her "Similar" or "Different" page. Hang the students' work on a bulletin board or a clothesline.

Tips for Success:

-  Encourage students to refer to the books when illustrating.
-  If a student draws an illustration under the wrong title, simply white out the titles and reverse them, rather than having the child redo the drawing.
-  If you think this activity will be difficult for your class, use a simpler version that invites all the children to compare the same two books that have been read aloud. Chapter books work well because there is enough information for each child to choose a unique theory.
-  You can easily adapt your "Illustration" template to suit the whole class by writing the titles before you photocopy it.

Title:

Title:

--	--

--	--

Name: _____

I think the two books are
similar because...

Title:

Title:

Name: _____

I think the two books are
different because...

<p>Title:</p>	
<p>Title:</p>	

Classroom Classics

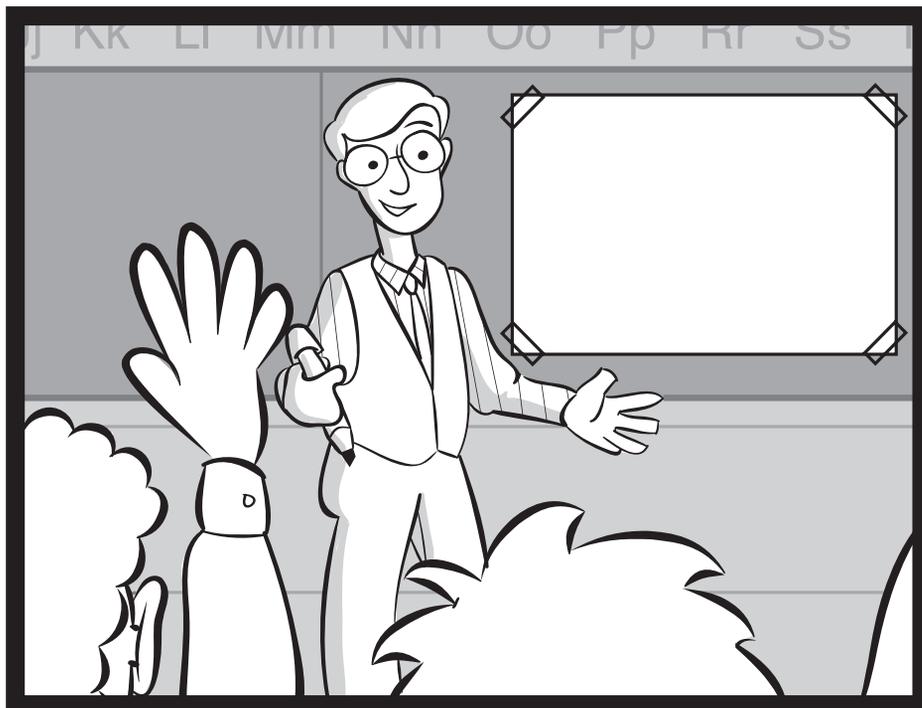


Skills:

- Learning how to retell a story
- Improving vocabulary
- Creative writing

Materials:

- A story to read aloud
- Chart paper
- Black marker
- Several sheets of 11- by 14-inch white tagboard or oaktag
- Markers or crayons
- Laminating machine
- Three-hole punch
- Book rings



Purpose:

Listening to stories read out loud helps children develop reading comprehension and vocabulary. After you have read a story aloud, have your class collaborate and write their own version of the story, changing certain aspects to make it more relevant to their lives. The class version of the story becomes a vehicle for developing students' reading and writing skills. (I often do this activity in conjunction with a fairy tale unit since there are so many versions of fairy tales.)

Do This:

1. After reading a story aloud, discuss ways in which you could change the story by using different characters or events. For example, if you read *One Monday Morning* by Uri Shulevitz, you could change the characters from the king and the queen and their entourage visiting a little boy, to the principal and the teachers visiting your classroom.
2. Write students' ideas for changing the story on the chart paper with the marker. Then go through the story page by page, asking students which words you will have to change to make your new version. Transcribe the new text on another piece of chart paper.

3. After school, take the pages of tagboard and rewrite the book with the new text.
4. The next day, reread your students' version of the story. Ask for volunteers to illustrate each page. Collect the finished illustrations and laminate the pages.
5. Punch three holes in each page and use book rings to bind the book. Read the finished product to the class. Invite students to read along with you. If students are interested, have them break into small groups and take turns visiting other classrooms to read their book aloud.

Tips for Success:

-  I recommend using a big-book version of a classic story. Big books are easier for students to see when they are altering the text.
-  This activity works best when the story is repetitive, so that only a few words need to be changed on each page.
-  If the story is not long enough for each child to illustrate a page, let students work together on a page.

Why I Like This Activity:

Students see humor in altering a classic. As they benefit from exposure to good literature, they open their minds to new possibilities for their own creative thinking and writing.

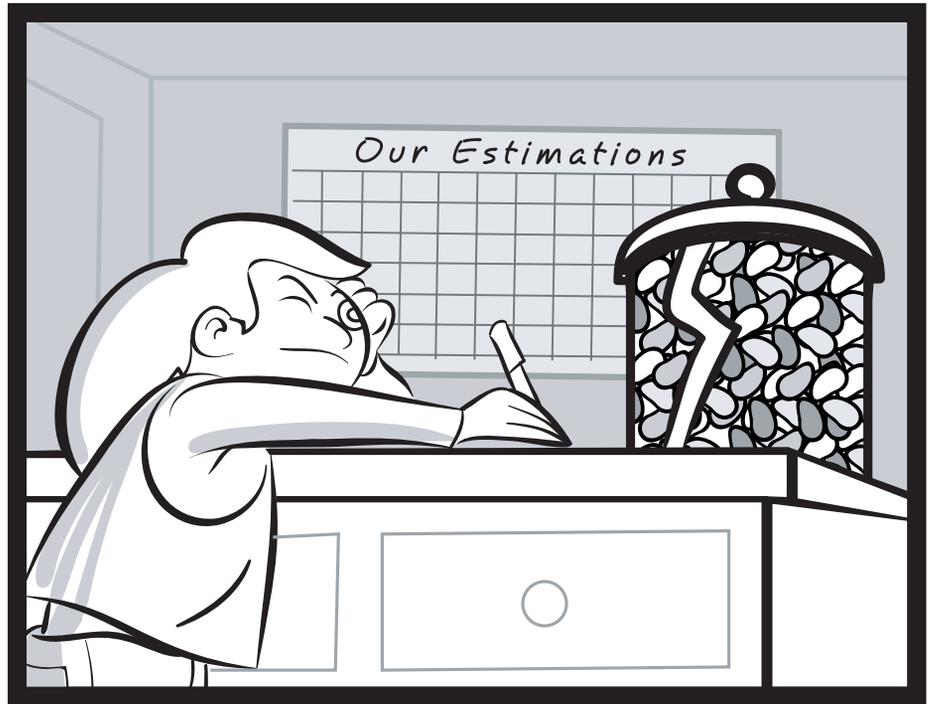
How Many? An Estimation Book

Skills:

- Estimating
- Number sense
- Place value
- Writing numerals
- Counting by 1s and 10s
- Understanding volume

Materials:

- Binding machine or a three-hole punch and three book rings
- 37 copies of the How Many? template (page 49)
- Two pieces of colored construction paper for book covers
- Black marker
- One large piece of tagboard or oaktag
- One large clear plastic jar with a lid (this is the Estimation Jar)
- Black dry-erase markers
- 37 different types of the same small items to fill the jar (see list, page 48)
- At least 40 white paper plates
- Gallon-sized plastic bags
- Large storage box with a lid



Purpose:

Estimating is an important skill that children acquire with practice. By offering students a weekly opportunity to estimate and record their estimations, you provide them with a strong and meaningful foundation in number sense and logic. They also gain familiarity with large numbers.

Do This:

1. With the binding machine or three-hole punch and book rings, bind the 37 How Many? template pages, using the two colored pieces as the covers. Write "Our Weekly Estimations" on the cover with the black marker.
2. On the large piece of oaktag, draw lines to create boxes that are about 2- by 3-inches each.
3. Laminate the piece of oaktag. This will become your Estimation Board. Place the Estimation Jar, the dry-erase markers, and the Estimation Board in an accessible place in your classroom. Each Monday fill the jar with a new item.

- Throughout the week, invite students to write their estimation of the number of items in the jar on the Estimation Board. Estimations should be made anonymously so no one is embarrassed and feels like they're in a contest.
- Each Friday invite students to gather in a semicircle around the Estimation Jar. Ask for volunteers to count out 10 items, putting each group of 10 on its own white plate. Line the white plates (of 10 items) in a row in front of the class. Together count the filled plates by 10s. When there are 10 plates in a row, begin another row of plates so that there are never more than 100 items in a row. Continue to count by 10s as new plates are added to the row. For example, if there were 220 items, you would count: ... 80, 90, 100, 200, 210, 220. You want students to see a set of 100 as a whole unit.
- When there are less than 10 items left, you cannot fill another plate. Line these "leftover" items on the floor next to the last plate of 10 items so that they are easy to count. If there were 227 items in the final count, you would count: 100, 200, 210, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227.
- Look at the Estimation Board and see which number comes closest to the actual number of items. Remember, it doesn't matter who guessed the number correctly. Discuss some of the other estimations that were close. Talk about the estimations that were much higher or much lower than the actual number and why this might have been. Compare this week's estimation number with that of previous weeks. Is it a higher number? If so, why? Did the objects' shape or size have something to do with it?
- Take the estimation book and on the top of the page write the date and at the bottom of the page, write the sentence, "There were (number) (items) in the jar." Say what you are writing as you are doing it and explain why you are writing the number the way you are. For example, if the number of items was 56, you would say "5 sets of ten and 6 more." Write the number 56 next to this.
- Choose a volunteer to illustrate the items inside the jar on the page.
- Ask for volunteers to help empty the contents of the plates into a plastic bag for storage. Collect the plates. Wipe the Estimation Board clean with a damp paper towel. You're now ready to begin the activity again.



Why I Like This Activity:

Our Friday estimation activity is one of the highlights of the week because it encourages interesting mathematical discussions and revelations from students. Students are exposed to, and gradually adopt, the mathematical vocabulary and language that indicates their understanding of the concepts. After a few weeks, students begin to really understand estimation, and their estimations become more accurate.

In addition to the mathematical reasoning skills students develop, they learn how to count by 10s. They learn place value and how to write large numbers correctly (fifty-six as 56 instead of 506) as they see the sets of tens and ones. They learn how to describe items based on an item's shape. They are also introduced to the concept of volume. They begin to understand that when an object is larger it takes up more space, so that fewer objects can fit in the finite amount of space in the jar.

Tips for Success:

- ✎ It is important that the items in the jar be uniform in size and shape so that meaningful estimations can take place.
- ✎ Use items that students know.
- ✎ Start with larger items and gradually move to smaller ones.
- ✎ Start with round items and gradually move towards more difficult shapes.
- ✎ It takes a long time to collect the items you will use in the Estimation Jar each week. I recommend that you collect them over the course of the first year and save them in plastic bags for the following year.
- ✎ Using food in the Estimation Jar once in awhile is very effective, but you cannot recycle it for the next year. It is much more sanitary if you use wrapped food, as students will be touching it.
- ✎ Allow students to estimate only once each day so that they make a meaningful guess.
- ✎ If you suspect that a student intentionally estimates inaccurately (usually in the millions), discuss why such an estimation does not make sense.
- ✎ You can reuse the white plates each week.
- ✎ Allow only a few children to count items at a time. Otherwise, they get confused and potentially silly.
- ✎ In order for the estimation activity to be a successful experience, you need to consistently emphasize that you do not expect students to guess the exact number of items. This may happen occasionally, but it is not the goal of the activity. You simply want to encourage students to make reasonable, educated guesses.
- ✎ Encourage students to refer to the Estimation Book before they make their guesses. With practice they will make comparisons to previous weeks and make the connection between the relative size and number of items in relation to previous items.
- ✎ To make the estimation activity more challenging, put items with different colors in the jar and have students estimate based on color. They might also sort the items by color, and then add the numbers of each color with a calculator to determine the total.

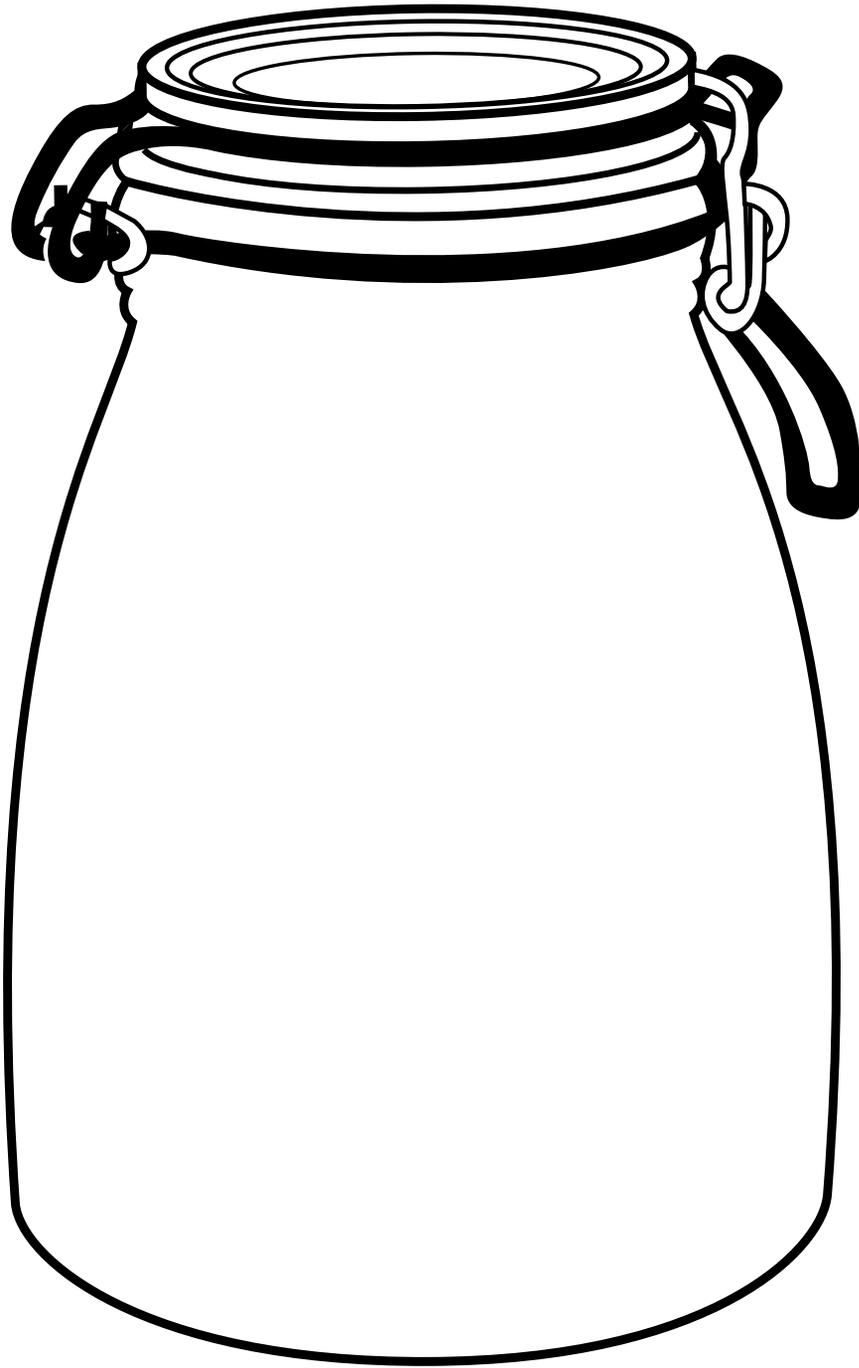


Sample items to place in the Estimation Jar:

Marshmallows
Clothespins
Walnuts in their shells
Hershey's Kisses
Styrofoam peanuts
Golf balls
Cotton balls
Shells
Chestnuts
Pebbles
Empty film canisters
Pasta shells
Straws
Coin rolls
Unifix cubes
Corks
Peanuts in their shells
Pattern blocks
Pink erasers
Pretzels

NOTE: Keep in mind any allergies students may have when deciding what items to put in the jar.

Date: _____



There were _____

10 Black Dots Books

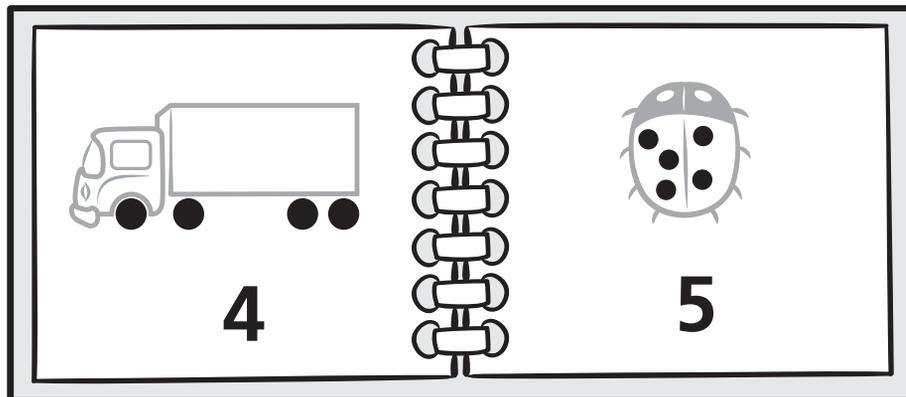


Skills:

- Retelling
- Creative writing
- Cooperation
- Addition

Materials:

- 55 circles (2 inches in diameter) made of black construction paper
- 11- by 14-inch paper (one piece for every two students)
- *10 Black Dots*, by Donald Crews, Harper Collins Children's Book Group, 1986
- Black marker
- Glue sticks
- Crayons and markers



Purpose:

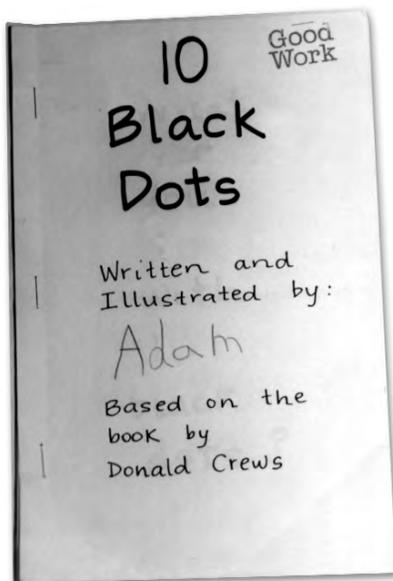
After reading and discussing *10 Black Dots* by Donald Crews, students make their own version of the story. This gives students the opportunity to try their hands at authoring a book. By using *10 Black Dots* as a guide, students focus on specific tasks such as retelling a story rather than worrying about creating a story from scratch. This is a good way to get reluctant readers involved.

Do This:

1. Trace the bottom of a can or other circular object to make 55 black dots. NOTE: If you have more than 20 children in your class, you will need more black dots and you should change the title of your version to "11 Black Dots" (if you have 21 or 22 children), for example.
2. Hold the white paper vertically and draw a line in pencil across each piece, about 4 inches from the bottom.
3. Read *10 Black Dots* and discuss the illustrations. Select children to work together in pairs to illustrate a page of the story. Hand out a piece of the white paper for each pair of children and distribute the black dots. One pair will have one black dot, another pair will have two black dots, another pair will have three black dots, and so on.



4. Have each pair of students discuss and decide what they will illustrate using their dot(s). Once they've decided, ask them to dictate their idea to you so you can write it in black marker below the line you drew earlier.
5. Have each pair glue their black dot(s) to the page and then complete the illustration incorporating their black dot(s). When all the drawings are finished, put them in number order (1 to 10) and read them to the class. The book can be laminated and bound with book rings or hung on a bulletin board or clothesline for display.



Tips for Success:

- ✎ This is a good activity for the beginning of the year.
- ✎ You should approve each pair's illustrations before they begin in order to avoid duplication.
- ✎ Make individual books using round or other shaped stickers of different colors.

😊 Why I Like This Activity:

This activity promotes creativity, cooperation, and compromise, which are important skills in the first grade. The activity also integrates reading, writing, math, and art.

Vowels-in-Our-Names Graph

Skills:

- Phonemic awareness
- Graphing
- Counting
- Analyzing data

Materials:

- Colored butcher paper or graph paper on the roll
- Yardstick
- Paper cutter
- 3- by- 5-inch index cards or construction paper in five different colors
- Masking tape
- Black permanent marker
- Red permanent marker

Purpose:

In this activity, students focus on the vowels in their names and graph the total number of each vowel in all the first names in your class. As students complete the activity, they not only strengthen language arts skills, but also math skills as they practice graphing and analyzing data.

Do This:

1. Set up your chart as shown at right.
2. With the paper cutter, cut the colored index cards into 1- by 3-inch strips.
3. Discuss the difference between a consonant and a vowel. NOTE: For this activity we are not counting "Y" as a vowel. Ask students who has a vowel in his or her name. Then ask students if any of them has a particular consonant in their name ("Who has the letter B?").
4. Have students help you find out which vowels are most common in your students' first names. Tell them you will make a graph showing which is most common. Start with the vowel "A." Ask students to raise their hand if they have an "A" in their first name. Invite these students to come to the front of the class and give each one a colored card strip. Have them write their name on the strip and stick it on the graph in the appropriate column with a piece of masking tape. For students with more than one "A" in their

← 6" →

2" ↑↓

	A	E	I	O	U
30					
29					
28					
27					
26					
25					
24					
23					
22					
21					
20					
19					
18					
17					
16					
15					
14					
13					
12					
11					
10					
9					
8					
7					
6					
5					
4					
3					
2					
1					
	A	E	I	O	U

names, give them additional strips to write their names. For example, Alex would get one green strip, but Andrea would get two green strips because her name has two "A's." Repeat this step using a different color card strip for each vowel.

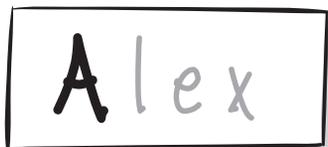
- Continue this way until all the vowels have been represented. Pause as you go along to discuss how to read the graph and how the numbers of vowels compare to one another. Ask, "How many more A's are there than O's?" and "Do you think the O's and the U's together are more than the E's? How can we check?"
- After school, go over the students' writing with a marker. Use red for the vowel that is being counted in each column so that the vowel stands out; use black for all other letters. For example, all the "E's" in the "E" column will be red, while the other vowels in that column are black. In the case of a name that has two of the same vowel in it, on the first strip make the first one red, and on the second strip make the second one red. So the name Elizabeth would have one strip in the "A" column (Elizabeth), two strips in the "E" column (Elizabeth and Elizabethe), and one strip in the "I" column (Elizibeth).
- Label the graph "Vowels in Our Names," and hang it where everyone can see.

Tips for Success:

- Graph paper on a roll is easiest to use because you can just trace the lines rather than measure them.
- To make sure the graph will be the right size, count all the vowels in your students' names before beginning the activity.
- Children with nicknames need to choose one name they will use throughout the entire lesson so as not to confuse others. Most children choose the longest version of their name so they can be on the graph as many times as possible.
- If a child has two of the same vowel in his or her name, place both of that child's strips consecutively, so that students can easily see the first and second occurrence of the letter.
- Children may start to get competitive about which vowel is "winning," as if the graph were a race. Emphasize that you are doing an experiment with vowels and that it doesn't matter which vowel is the most common.



Elizabeth



Alex

😊 Why I Like This Activity:

This integrated math and language arts activity is a fun way to introduce students to vowels and graphing. Following this lesson, I noticed students pointing out vowels everywhere!

Name Graphs



Skills:

- **Graphing**
- **Counting**
- **Analyzing data**

Materials:

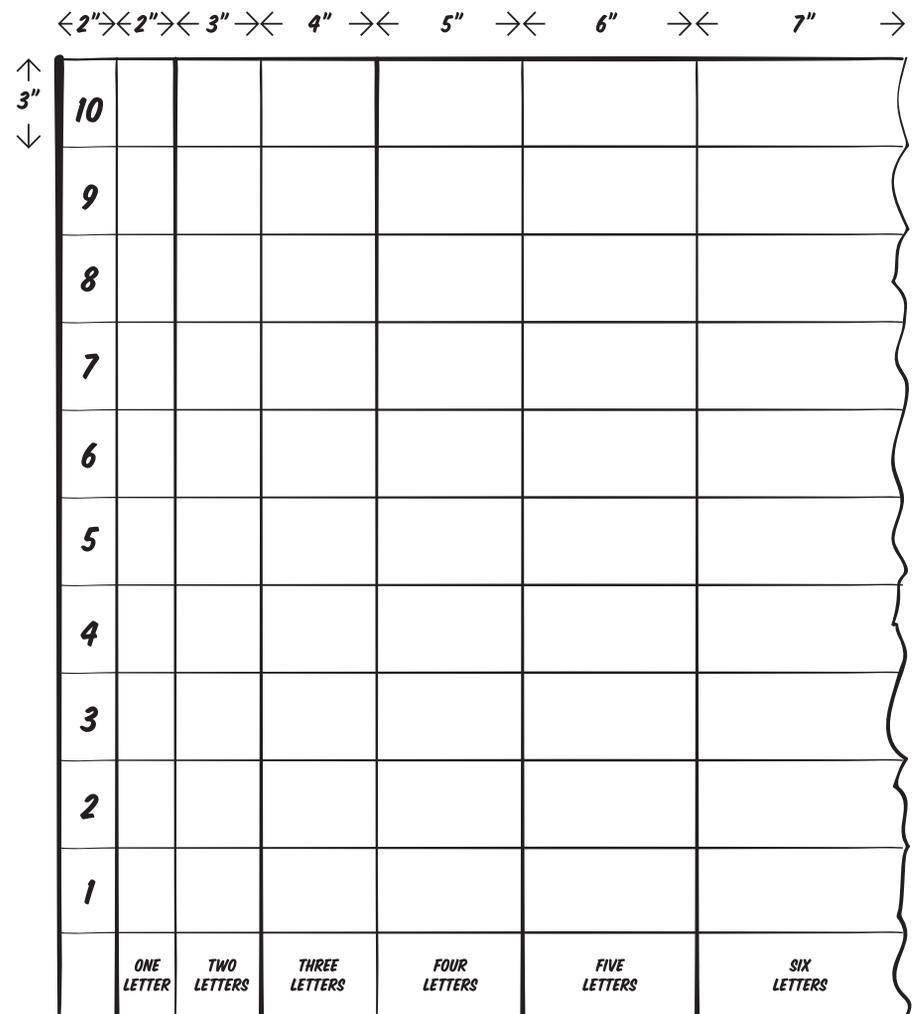
- Colored butcher paper or graph paper on the roll
- Yardstick
- 8 1/2- by 14-inch paper
- Paper cutter
- Masking tape
- Black permanent marker

Purpose:

Students create a graph to figure out how many children in the class have the same number of letters in their first names. Students tend to get very involved in this activity, sometimes turning it into a contest. Although I try to stress it isn't a contest, I love that they are getting excited about math topics such as graphing and counting.

Do This:

1. Set up your chart as shown below.



2. Hold the 8 1/2- by 14-inch photocopy paper horizontally and use a black permanent marker to draw columns every inch (14 total). Then, use the marker to draw rows every two inches (four total, with 1/2 inch left over). This will be your template. Each template will make four strips.
3. Make enough copies of the template for each child to get one strip, making a few extras. Use the paper cutter to cut the strips so that they are 14 inches long and one inch tall. Throw away the extra 1/2 inch.
4. Ask students to count the letters in their first names and then tell you how many letters they have. Explain to students that you will organize the information they are giving you by creating a graph.
5. Show the class the graph you made earlier and tell the students that you will be keeping track of the information here so that everyone can see it. Show students the strips of paper that have been divided into boxes. Hold the strips horizontally. Explain that each box can only have one letter in it. Demonstrate how to write their names on the strip by writing your name, remembering to put only one letter in each box. Hand out the strips and ask students to write their names on them. Go around the class and cut off the extra boxes that don't have letters in them.
6. Ask students to gather around the graph. Start with the column that says "1 letter." Ask if anyone's name has only one letter in it. If a student's name has only one letter, the student should stick his or her name strip to the appropriate spot on the graph with a piece of masking tape. Continue this way until all names are on the graph. Stop periodically to ask questions about the graph: "How many names have 5 letters?" "Is there any other column that has the same number of names in it?" When the graph is complete, ask students what they notice about the graph. Are there more short names or long names?
7. After school, go over the names with a black permanent marker so that they can be seen clearly from far away. Hang the graph in a prominent spot.

Tips for Success:

- ✎ If you have a student in your class with a name longer than 14 letters you will need to tape two strips together.
- ✎ Children may start to get competitive about which number is "winning," as if the graph were a race. Emphasize that you are doing an experiment with the number of letters in their names and that it doesn't matter which number is the most common.

Why I Like This Activity:

This is a fun way to integrate math and language arts. I've discovered that students really pay attention and get excited when the letters we're graphing are part of their names. Without realizing it, students are learning important skills they will take with them to later grades.

Animals! Animals! Animals!



Skills:

- **Research**
- **Reading comprehension using nonfiction texts**
- **Understanding scientific vocabulary**
- **Cooperation**
- **Comparing and contrasting**

Materials:

- Nonfiction books about animals, including dinosaurs
- Boxes to hold the books (one box for each group of four students)
- Construction paper in various colors
- A large piece of colored butcher paper, preferably on the roll
- Yardstick
- Chart paper
- 5- by 8-inch index cards
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Thick markers

Purpose:

This project gives students a chance to do age-appropriate research using nonfiction texts. Working cooperatively in small groups, students learn about and practice various research skills as they discover interesting facts about animals.

Do This:

1. Divide students into small groups (four or less), taking into consideration the following factors: students' interests, reading abilities (try to mix students with different reading levels), an equal boy/girl ratio, and the likelihood of cooperation among the members of the group.

For each group, collect at least six books on one type of animal. Put each group's books in a box covered with construction paper (each box should be a different color). Write the name of the appropriate animal on each box

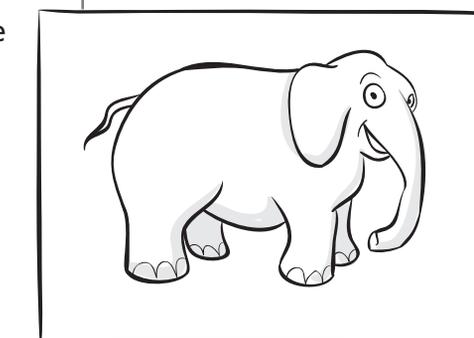
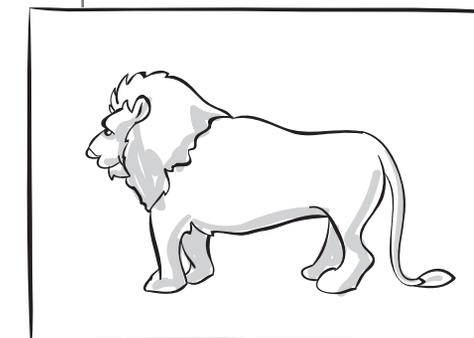
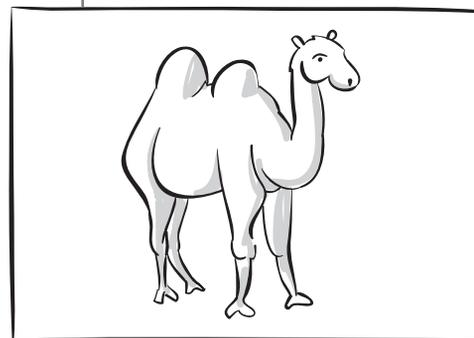
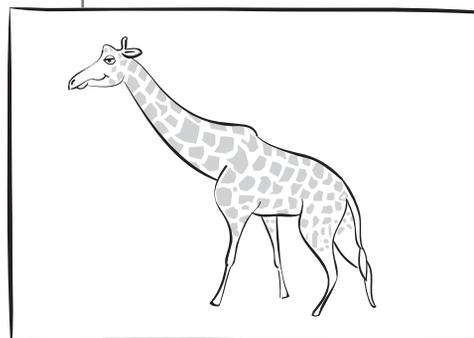
2. Set up your chart as shown on page 58.
3. Begin by creating a list on the chart paper called "How to Read Nonfiction Books." Demonstrate the research techniques included on the list with your own set of research books about dinosaurs. Here is a sample list:
 - Don't read the entire book.
 - It's not necessary to begin reading at the beginning of the book.
 - Use the table of contents (items listed in sequential order).
 - Use the index (ideas listed in alphabetical order).
 - Use the pictures.
 - Read the picture's captions.
4. Discuss the importance of working collaboratively and sharing books with the other members of the group. Demonstrate how two students can share a book. Let students explore the books freely a day before the research formally begins.
5. Each day the class will generate one question to guide the research. All the groups will answer the same question, so it

must be a question that is broad enough to be applicable to all the animals. Write the question on chart paper under a list called "Our Research Questions." You will also write each question on the chart in a box along the top row. I've included some questions on my animal chart sample.

6. After the question of the day is selected, show the class how to find the answer to that question using your box of dinosaur books. Your modeling will teach students not only about dinosaurs, but also about the steps involved in researching a topic. After your demonstration, ask students to move into their groups and begin their own research to answer the same question for their animals. Once they determine the answer to the question, the group should share it with you. Write their answers on the index cards, held horizontally.
7. Have one child in each group illustrate the answer on the index card with crayons or markers, and then place the card on the chart next to the animal's name. After the first day, the first column will be filled with index cards answering the first question about each animal. At the end of each day's research, the groups should share their information with the other groups, so that all students learn about all the animals.
8. After 10 days, the entire chart will be filled and students can easily make observations about how certain animals are similar and different.

Tips for Success:

- Due to the amount of reading, independence, and cooperation necessary for this activity, I recommend beginning it in spring.
- Choose books with a lot of photographs and captions.
- Base your animal choices on the number of available books. Even though students may be very interested in skunks, if there are only two appropriate books about them, the students' research will be too difficult.
- Choose at least one representative from mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds, for more interesting comparisons.
- The list of questions should come from students, but it is important to guide them and to use editorial license if you think a question might be too frustrating to research.



 **Why I Like This Activity:**

This is a good activity to teach students how to work cooperatively. With their new animal knowledge, students take the role of teacher as they share what they learned with the rest of the class. Many students even begin to sound like experts discussing their particular animal. This activity also introduces students to scientific vocabulary, such as predator, prey, offspring, herd, flock, etc. Perhaps most significantly, students learn the difference between nonfiction and fiction.

-  The groups should always meet in the same spot to do their research to avoid conflict.
-  Keep track of which children have already had a chance to illustrate the index cards for the chart and do not allow second turns until everyone has had a first turn.
-  It is helpful to have an adult research book available to check students' research if you are in doubt of a particular answer. Use it sparingly, however; or students may become dependent on you for the answers.

ANIMAL CHART

← 9" →

	WHAT DOES THE ANIMAL EAT?	WHERE DOES THE ANIMAL LIVE?	HOW DOES THE ANIMAL CATCH ITS FOOD?	HOW MANY BABIES DOES THE ANIMAL HAVE?	WHAT OTHER ANIMALS ARE SIMILAR?	WHAT ANIMALS TRY TO ATTACK THIS ANIMAL?	HOW MANY YEARS DOES THE ANIMAL LIVE?	HOW DOES THE ANIMAL DEFEND ITSELF?	HOW MANY OF THE ANIMALS LIVE TOGETHER?
↑ 6" ↓	DINOSAUR								
	ELEPHANT								
	LION								
	SNAKE								
	GIRAFFE								
	SHARK								



Pumpkin Science



Skills:

- Weighing
- Measuring
- Predicting
- Estimating
- Graphing

Materials:

- Three large pumpkins (one with very defined vertical lines)
- Three small pumpkins (one with very defined vertical lines)
- One medium pumpkin
- Large roll of graph paper
- Newspaper
- Two bowls large enough to hold pumpkin seeds
- Elmer's glue
- Bucket large enough to hold a small pumpkin
- 3- by 5-inch white index cards
- Paper plates
- Chart paper
- Bathroom scale
- Empty half-pint milk carton for each child in the class
- Green construction paper
- Markers for students
- Orange markers or crayons
- Black marker
- Stapler
- Two plastic tubs
- Potting soil
- Bucket of warm, soapy water (if you don't have a sink)
- Paper towels
- Garbage can
- Watering can



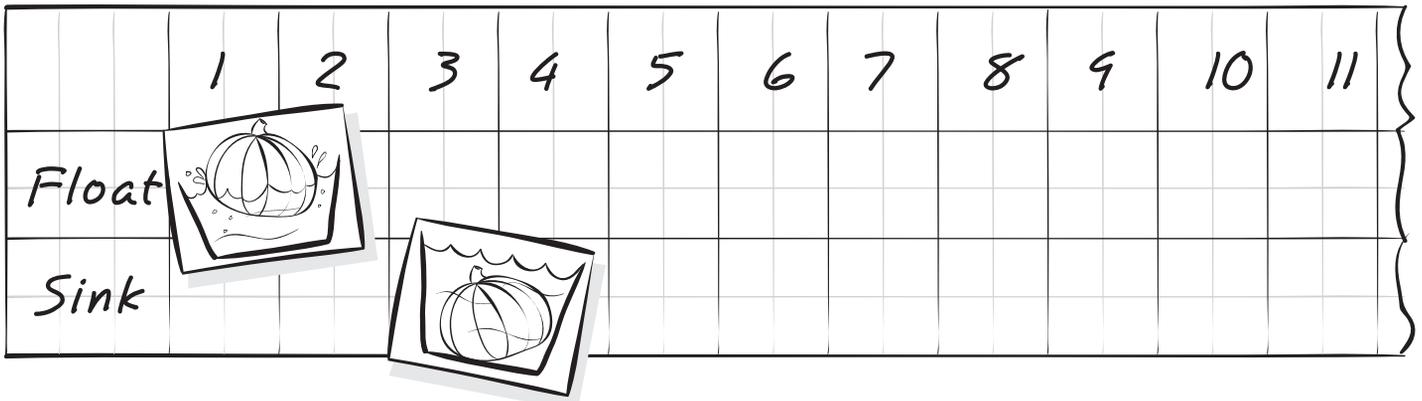
Purpose:

This is a wonderful October activity that involves parents coming to school to assist in pumpkin-related science experiments. Preparation for each experiment is done as a whole class, but during Pumpkin Science Day students are divided into groups that rotate through the different parent-monitored stations. Every child has a chance to participate in each station on Pumpkin Science Day. **NOTE:** The Pumpkin Science Day activities can also be done in the classroom over the course of a week, if necessary, without parent involvement.

Do This:

Set up five stations around the classroom for Pumpkin Science Day (instructions are included under each station heading).

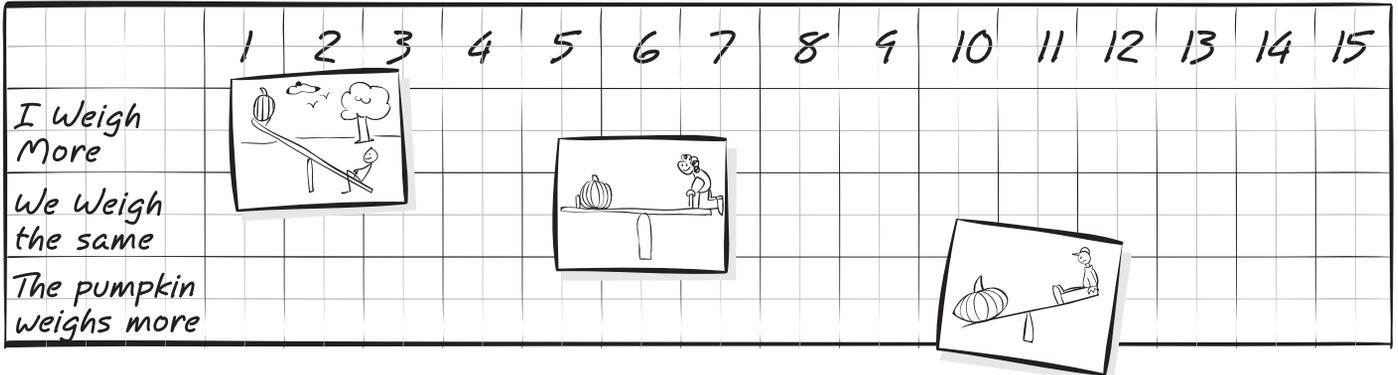
SINK OR FLOAT GRAPH



Sink or Float Graph:

1. To prepare the graph, cut a long piece of graph paper. Then cut it in half horizontally so you have a long, narrow strip.
2. Set up your graph as shown above.
3. Show students a small pumpkin. Ask them what they think will happen if you put the pumpkin in a bucket of water. Give them a chance to hold the pumpkin. Tell them to keep their guess to themselves so they won't influence their peers. Hand out the index cards. Have students hold them horizontally and draw a picture of the pumpkin sinking or floating, depending on their guess. Place the index cards in their appropriate rows on the graph.
4. When students visit this station, have your parent monitor review the graph of their predictions. Once the entire class has visited the station put the pumpkin in the bucket of water and watch what happens. It floats! NOTE: To avoid a mess, fill the bucket only halfway.
5. Afterwards, compare students' predictions to the actual outcome. Ask students what influenced their prediction. Ask why they think the pumpkin floated. (Pumpkins, melons, and gourds float because they have an air pocket inside. They are not completely solid.)

WHICH WEIGHS MORE GRAPH



Which Weighs More Graph:

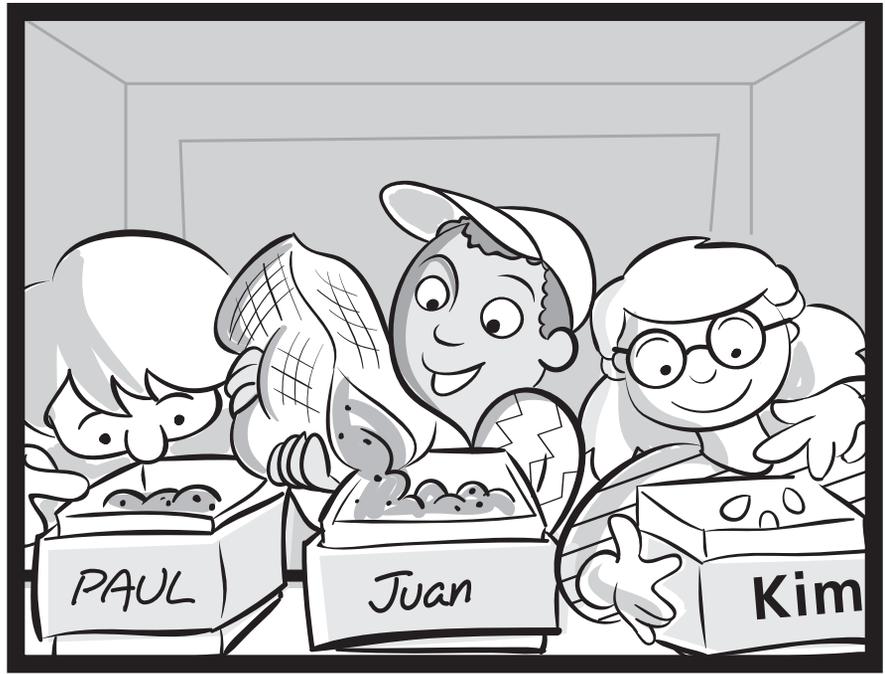
1. Make the graph as shown above.
2. Before Pumpkin Science Day, place a large pumpkin on the floor. Let students look at it and feel it, but not pick it up. Ask students if they think they weigh more than the pumpkin, the same, or less. Hand out index cards. Have students hold them horizontally and draw a picture of themselves and the pumpkin on a seesaw. Place the index cards in the appropriate row on the graph.
4. When groups visit this station, have them weigh themselves and the pumpkin on the scale. Ask your parent monitor to help students compare the weights.

How Many Lines Chart:

1. To prepare the chart follow the sample to the right.
2. Before Pumpkin Science Day, show students a small pumpkin and a large pumpkin, each with clearly defined vertical lines. Ask students to estimate how many lines they think are on each pumpkin. Have each child come up to the chart and tell you how many lines they think are on each pumpkin. Record their predictions.
3. Ask your adult monitor to help students count the lines on each pumpkin when groups visit this station. NOTE: Create a starting/ending point by making a black dot on one of the lines on each pumpkin.
4. Have the parents lead a discussion about the results. Were they what students expected? Were there more lines on one pumpkin than on another? Does the size of the pumpkin affect the number of lines on it?

HOW MANY LINES CHART

	Small Pumpkin	Large Pumpkin
Steph		
Mike		
Laurie		
Max		
John		
Sally		
Dave		
Erin		
Cadi		
Allison		
Delaney		
Raoul		
Andrew		
Victor		
Tracy		



Planting Pumpkin Seeds:

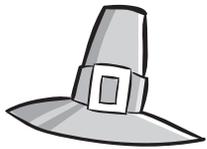
1. Cut off the tops of the milk cartons. Wash and air-dry them.
2. Measure the height and circumference of a carton, then cut a strip of green construction paper for each child that will fit around the carton.
3. Before Pumpkin Science Day, hand out the strips and ask students to write their names in one section, draw a picture of a pumpkin in another section, write the words "Pumpkin Plant" in another section, and the date in the fourth section. Go over their writing with black marker and laminate the strips. Staple the laminated strips to the milk cartons.
4. To prepare the station for Pumpkin Science Day:
 - Cover a table with newspaper.
 - Fill a box or plastic tub with potting soil.
 - Cut the top off the medium pumpkin.
 - If a sink isn't available, fill a bucket with warm, soapy water.
 - Have plenty of paper towels and a garbage can nearby.
 - Fill a watering can with water.
5. As the groups visit this station, students should find their milk carton and fill it halfway with soil. Next, they should remove six seeds from the pumpkin, place the seeds in their pots, and cover the seeds with a little additional soil. Ask a parent monitor to help students drizzle a little water over the seeds before placing their pots on a windowsill.
6. If a sink isn't available, have students clean up in the bucket of soapy water.

Tips for Success:

- ✎ Ask parent volunteers to bring the pumpkins and other materials you don't have at school at least a week in advance.
- ✎ It is time-consuming to make all the graphs each year, so laminate the graphs before you use them the first year so they can be recycled.
- ✎ Even though it seems excessive, have a different pumpkin for each activity, as specified in the Materials section. Otherwise, the stations will not be able to function simultaneously on Pumpkin Science Day.
- ✎ Invite parent volunteers to come to the classroom a little early so that you can go over the stations before students arrive. I always have Pumpkin Science Day right after lunch and invite parents during the second half of my lunch hour.

Why I Like These Activities:

This is a productive Halloween activity that involves parents. Each activity integrates math and science meaningfully and shows students how exciting science can be, while helping them feel comfortable taking risks. As students make predictions and form hypotheses, they also strengthen their understanding of numbers.



Thank You Very Much!



Skills:

- Improving expressive language

Materials:

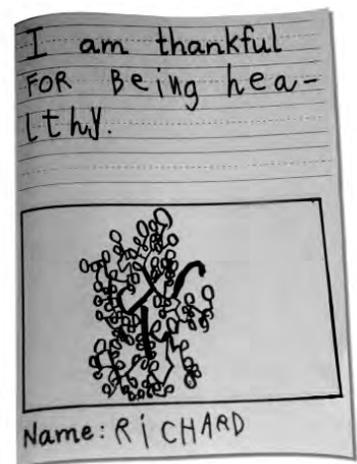
- Thankful Book template (page 68)
- Black marker
- Sheet of plain paper
- Binding machine
- Colored pencils for students

Purpose:

Thanksgiving is the first major holiday of the school year. This project serves to crystallize the themes of the holiday by asking students to select something for which they are thankful and then creating a book of their ideas. Copies of the book can be sent home. Parents have told me that the books serve as a springboard for discussion during Thanksgiving dinner.

Do This:

1. Photocopy a Thankful Book template for each child plus a few extras in case of mistakes.
2. Have a discussion with students about what it means to feel thankful. Ask, "What (or who) is special to you?" "What (or who) helps make your life better?" "What (or who) makes you feel happy?" Encourage students to really think for themselves. Although many children are thankful for their families, there tends to be a great deal of variety when it comes to their ideas for this book.
3. Give each student a copy of the Thankful Book template. Ask students to draw a picture and write a sentence or two about what they are thankful for. When everyone is finished, collect the papers. After school go over their writing with a black marker.
4. Alphabetize the pages by students' last names and then bind the pages into a book with a cover. Read the finished book to the class before the holiday.



Tips for Success:

- ✎ Reading nonfiction children's books about Thanksgiving prior to writing the Thankful Book helps keep students focused on the origins of the holiday, this is critical to the success of the class book.
- ✎ When discussing what makes students feel thankful, steer them away from material things. Emphasize that Thanksgiving is not about TV and toys, but about the Pilgrims surviving their first year in America and overcoming obstacles.
- ✎ If you think parents would be interested in the students' ideas, you can photocopy the pages of the book before you bind it.
- ✎ Remember to begin the activity with enough time to complete the book by the Monday before Thanksgiving. This way you can send the copies home on Tuesday, in case anyone plans to miss school on Wednesday.
- ✎ You may want to add a special poem to the Thankful Book covers. Consider *A Child's Song* by Alice F. Green.



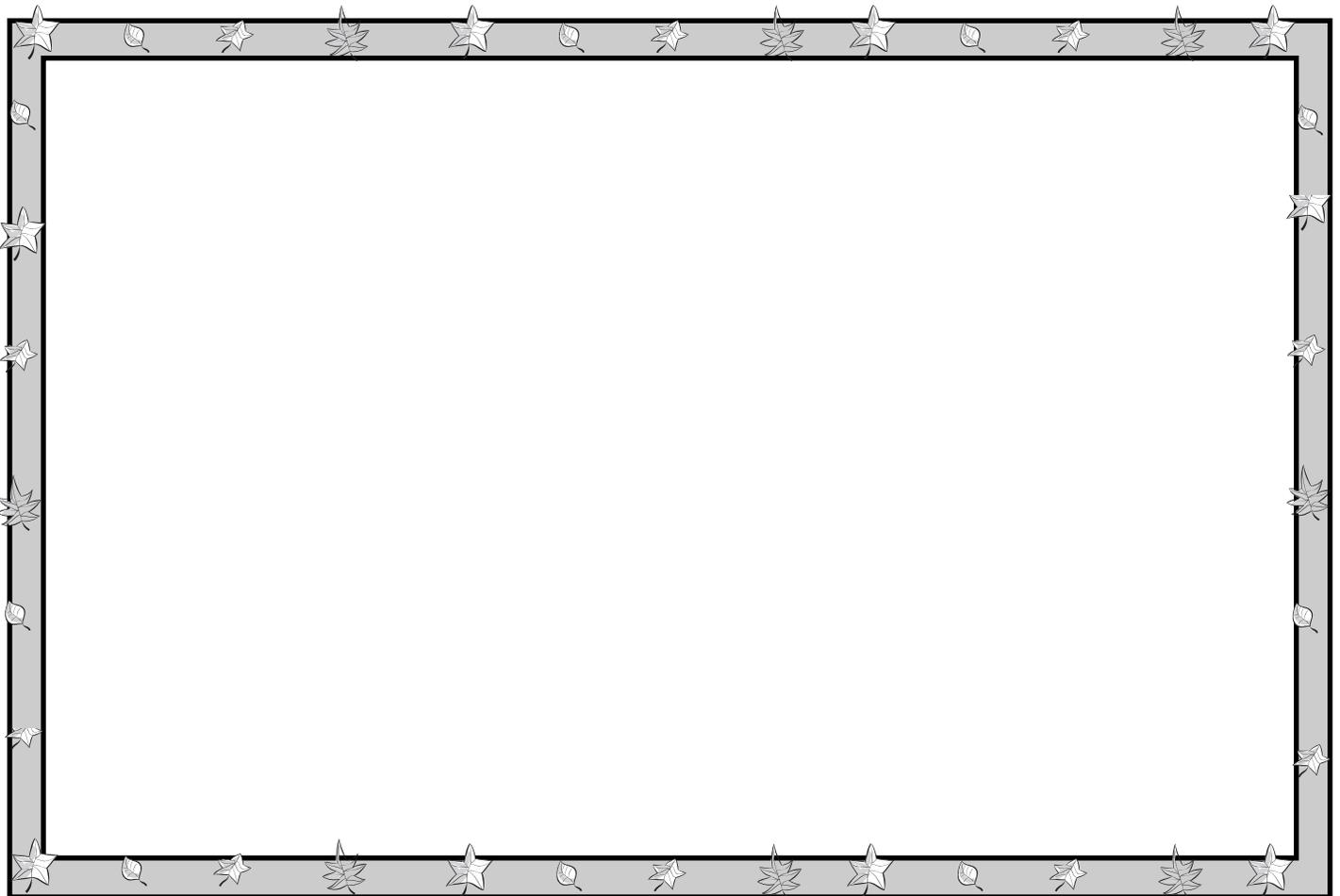
😊 Why I Like This Activity:

I think it is very important for students to be able to express themselves and to acknowledge their feelings in writing (eventually these skills will be used in letter writing). This activity also gives students a chance to feel fortunate as they reflect on their situations.

Name: _____

I am thankful for

Draw your picture here.



We Appreciate You!



Skills:

- Developing expressive language

Materials:

- We Appreciate You template (page 71)
- Black marker
- Report covers
- Binding machine

Purpose:

Show your students how to say a special thank you to someone who has helped them or made a difference in their lives. Showing appreciation is a learned skill that can be easily taught with this little book. Why not celebrate Nurse's Appreciation Day, Custodian's Appreciation Day, and Aides' Appreciation Day by saying thank you as a class?

Do This:

1. Photocopy one book template for each child in the class.
2. Have a discussion with students about the person for whom they are writing the book. What makes this person special? What does this person do to help students? Why do students like the person? After discussing the person, ask each child to think of a reason why he or she appreciates the person. As each student gives you his or her idea, hand the student his or her copy of the book template.

Why I Like This Activity:

It's very important for students to learn to express themselves and acknowledge the kindness of others. Many students feel quite proud when they share the book with its recipient. This in turn encourages students to show their thanks and appreciation with others. I've also found that this project helps students become more aware of their own actions and understand more clearly how they may affect others.

3. Ask students to draw a picture and write a few lines about why they appreciate the person you are honoring. When everyone is finished, collect the papers.
4. Put the pages in alphabetical order by students' names and bind them into a book with a cover. Present the book to the honoree in front of students. You may want to pass the book around and let students read aloud what they wrote.

Tips for Success:

-  Students should have some sort of relationship with the person for whom they are writing; otherwise, it will be difficult for them to express any feelings about him or her.
-  If a child's spelling is not clear, you can write the correct spelling beneath the words in question so the recipient can read it.
-  You may also want to encourage students to create smaller, more personal books for people they are particularly close to, such as their parents, grandparents, friends, or a babysitter.

Name: _____



We appreciate you because

Mascot Diary



Skills:

- Retelling
- Reading aloud
- Probability

Materials:

- Stuffed animal
- Canvas tote bag for the stuffed animal
- Composition notebook
- Basket
- Strips of paper with students' names
- Numbered tiles or a deck of playing cards (optional)



Purpose:

Invite a stuffed animal to join your class as a special mascot and watch as students bring the fluffy creature to life. This creative, unusual activity turns diary writing into a fun story-telling activity. Students take turns having the class mascot as a weekend houseguest (in our class it was Tabby, a stuffed dog) and recording his or her adventures in a class diary to be shared with their classmates on Monday morning. Choosing who gets to take the mascot home becomes a lesson in probability as students are picked by lottery.

Do This:

1. About a month into the school year, introduce the stuffed animal. Explain that it belongs to the whole class and lives in the tote bag. During the week, he rests and listens to what is going on in the classroom, but on the weekends, he likes to get out and see new places. He likes to visit with students rather than spend time alone in the school.

2. Show students the class diary (you may want to name it for the mascot, such as “Tabby’s Diary”) and explain to them that whoever takes the mascot home must write down everything it does during the weekend. The first weekend, you should take the animal home. On Monday, share your entry with the class.
3. On Friday, explain that you’re going to hold a lottery to choose a student to take the animal home for that weekend. Reassure students that everyone will have a turn, so it doesn’t really matter who goes first. Ask, “Have you ever heard the expression, to pick a number out of a hat?” Fill a basket or bag with numbered tiles or playing cards and show students what the expression means. Explain that the piece you picked was chosen randomly. You will use the same method to choose a student to take the animal home.
4. Write each student’s name on a strip of paper. Show the strips to students as you fold each one and drop it into the basket. Pick one strip out of the basket. After a student is picked, throw his or her name away. The chosen student takes the mascot home, records its experiences in the diary during the weekend, and finally reads the entry aloud on Monday to the class.

Tips for Success:

- ✎ Include a letter to parents in the diary explaining the activity so parents know what you expect. I’ve found that parents are usually very willing to support the project if they are told how to do so.
- ✎ “House” the animal in a zippered bag so it doesn’t get lost during its travels.
- ✎ Explain to students (and parents) that the animal should sleep in its bag so as not to spread germs. You may want to wash it a few times during the activity, too.
- ✎ Do not send the animal home over long weekends or holidays as it is unfair for some children to keep it longer than others.
- ✎ Calculate the number of two-day weekends in the school year ahead of time so you know when to begin the activity to assure that each child gets a turn.
- ✎ In my class, students hum the theme to *Jeopardy* to increase the anticipation before a child’s name is selected. It serves as a sort of drum roll.

Why I Like This Activity:

This activity is a favorite of my students as they eagerly anticipate their chances of taking home the animal. Students are proud and excited to share their weekends with the class as they practice their storytelling and reading aloud skills. Students who are not immediately chosen quickly realize that as time passes their likelihood of being picked increases.

Special Memories



Skills:

- Retelling
- Reflecting

Materials:

- Special Memories template (page 75)
- Binding machine
- Colored pencils

😊 Why I Like This Activity:

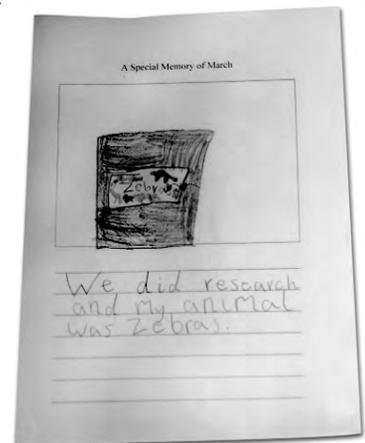
I think these books are a terrific way for students to really think about and remember what was important to them in the first grade. Over the course of the year, the books are also an ideal way to watch students' handwriting and drawing develop. You might even want to encourage students to save these books for years to come.

Purpose:

Each student creates a Special Memories Book, with one page for each month. Every month each student chooses one memory to highlight. As students think about and discuss which activities from the past month were most special, they strengthen speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills.

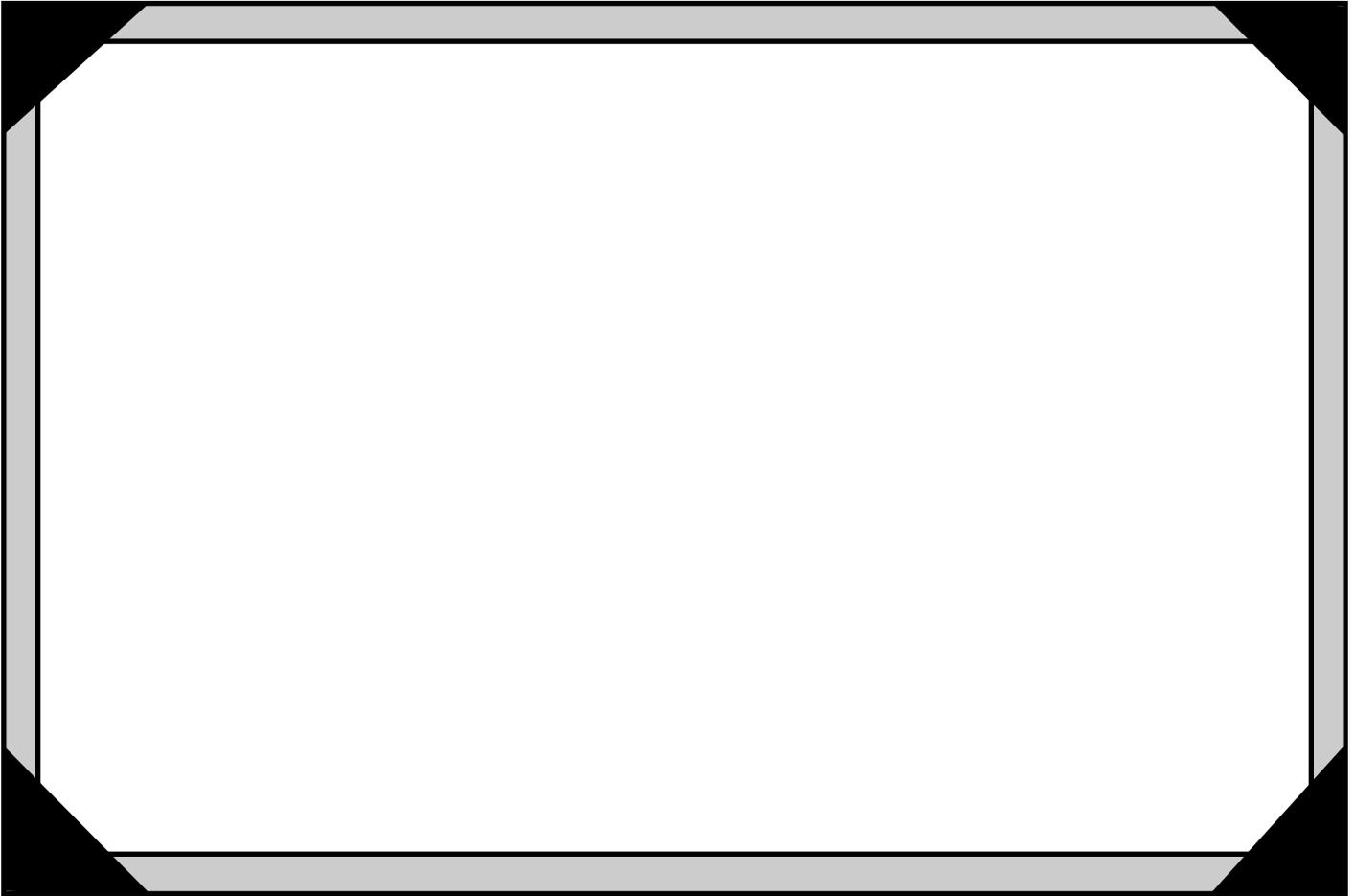
Do This:

1. Photocopy 10 Special Memories templates. At the top of each page, write the name of each month in the school year.
2. Make a photocopy of these monthly pages for each child. Bind each packet of 10 pages into a book with a cover.
3. As a class, think of 10 or more special memories and write them on the board or chart paper. Review each idea. Ask students to decide which memory is particularly special to them. This will be the memory they add to their personal Special Memories Books.
4. Have students copy the text describing their fondest memory into their books. Invite students to illustrate the memory using colored pencils or other coloring supplies.



A Special Memory for

_____ (month)



Scholastic Teaching Resources

Name: _____

Class Yearbook



Skills:

- Retelling
- Sequencing

Materials:

- Camera
- Film
- Large white self-adhesive labels
- Computer or typewriter
- Colored construction paper
- Glue stick

Purpose:

Emphasize the importance of special class trips and experiences by turning a stack of snapshots into a one-of-a-kind photo album. As students create these albums and then review them later, they will strengthen their sequencing, storytelling, reading, and writing skills.

Do This:

1. During your next class trip or special day (such as Pumpkin Science Day; see page 59), snap photos of students in action. Once the film is developed, choose the best photos to include in a Picture This! photo album. Look for photos in which students' faces are visible (not covered by hands or hair), students are involved in the experience, and the location is obvious (you may want to take a picture of a landmark in order to remember the spot).
2. Ask a few students to help you sequence the photos. Have another group of students review the sequence to make sure the photos are in the correct order.
3. Ask students to help write the text for the photo captions. Type or print the captions on the large labels. Next, match the caption labels with the correct photos.
4. Glue the photos and captions to the construction paper. Encourage students to help with the layout and design of the album. (Use a different group of volunteers for each batch of trip/class experience photos.) If you don't want the album to be too thick, use both sides of the construction paper for your layouts.
5. If there's room, you may want to ask for volunteers to add a colorful border or other design to the album pages. Laminate each page and then bind them into a book with a cover.
6. Read the finished photo album to your class or let students take turns reading it aloud. Add the album to your class bookshelf for students to read and look at during their free time.

Tips for Success:

- ✎ Make sure at least one photo of every student is included in each album.
- ✎ Aim for natural, rather than posed, photos. It's not necessary for students always to be looking at the camera.
- ✎ If you're writing the photo captions without the help of students, take care to use vocabulary and sentence structure with which they are familiar.
- ✎ If you don't have self-adhesive labels, use plain white paper and the glue stick to affix the captions.

Why I Like This Activity:

These photo albums are a great addition to your classroom library. I've found that students (especially reluctant readers) love to read about things that really happened to them. Working closely with students, you can control the content and readability of the captions, making them accessible to a wide range of reading levels. Finally, these albums are a good way to share with parents what their children are doing on class trips and special class days.

That's Me!

A Special Year-End Photo Album



Skills:

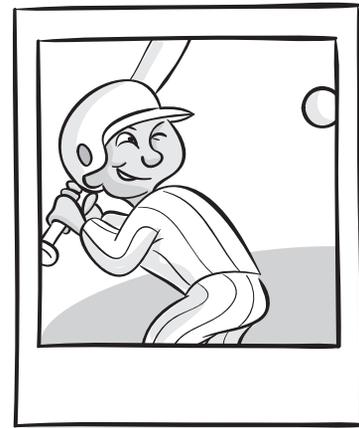
- Retelling
- Sequencing

Materials:

- Tagboard cut into 9-by 9-inch squares (11 squares per student)
- Camera
- One roll of film (24 exposures) per student
- 4- by 6-inch index card box with dividers
- Glue sticks for students
- Lined paper
- Computer or typewriter
- Large, white self-adhesive labels (20 per student)

Purpose:

Throughout the year, take photographs of students in action, sorting them by child as the rolls are developed. At the end of the year, give students a stack of their own photos to create a special, personal photo album. As students create their albums, they reinforce sequencing skills by placing photos in chronological order and strengthen language arts skills as they write descriptions of each photo. What a wonderful way to reflect on the year!



Do This:

1. Bind 11 pieces of tagboard into a book. Make one book for every student in the class.
2. Over the course of the year take photos of your students in action. After you get each roll developed and printed, sort the photos by student. File each student's photos in the index card box under the student's name. Keep a record of how many photos each child has (to make sure all students have the same number). Each student should end up with 20 or more photos.

3. About two weeks before the end of the school year give each student his or her photos. Have students sequence the photos as best as they can so that their photo albums will be in chronological order. To help them keep track, have them number the photos. Hand out the blank photo albums and have students number the pages on both sides from 1 to 20 (starting on the second page).



4. Show students how to use the glue sticks to affix their photos to the correct pages of their albums. They can place photos horizontally, vertically, or at angles—encourage them to be creative. Ask students to leave a space on each page for their photo description. Depending on how they placed their photos, the label might go on the top, bottom, or side of each page.



5. Once all the photos are glued into their albums, students are ready to write their photo descriptions. Give students lined paper numbered 1 through 20; allot three or four lines per number, including a line for the title. This will help students stay organized. Encourage students to be as descriptive as possible.
6. As students finish their descriptions, type or print their text, including the photo/text numbers, onto the large labels. Give students the completed labels. Before they stick them in their albums, they should reread each label and make sure it's the appropriate description for the photo. When the albums are complete, have students share them with their classmates.

😊 **Why I Like This Activity:**

These photo albums are a wonderful way to celebrate the year together and to commemorate students' shared experiences. The project provides year-end closure, which is helpful for a lot of students who have anxiety about moving on to the next grade. Finally, the photo album is a special way for students to communicate with their families about their experiences at school.



Tips for Success:

- ✎ Ask each student to bring in a roll of film at the beginning of the year. You might want to send a note home, describing the project to parents.
- ✎ Paying for the developing of the photos can quickly add up. In the past, class parents have volunteered to help with the cost, I've used money that I've received from the PTA, or I've paid for it myself. It never hurts to ask your local photo store for a discount, too.
- ✎ You can also use Polaroid film. If you do, I would recommend changing the dimensions of the photo album to suit the size of the Polaroid film.
- ✎ If a photo store offers free doubles, get them, so if you take a picture of two children, you can give each child a copy.
- ✎ When sorting the photos for students, put their initials on the back of each photo so that when you hand them out they don't get confused about which pictures belong to whom.
- ✎ Use a larger binding than you normally would for the number of pages in the book, because the photos make the album a lot thicker.
- ✎ A nice way to decorate the cover of the photo album is with a class picture you take near the end of the year. To save money, take the same photo enough times for half the class to get one. Use the free double offer to get photos for the rest of the class.