

READING IS FUNDAMENTAL STORY SAMPLER

Blooming with Books

FOR PRESCHOOLERS
AND KINDERGARTNERS





Support for Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. comes from corporations, foundations, government, and other national service organizations. RIF is affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution and has been accorded tax-exempt status under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to RIF are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Reading Is Fundamental, RIF, and the logo design showing the open book with a smiling face on it and the words Reading Is Fundamental underneath it are all registered service marks of Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. All rights reserved.

Created and developed by Sara Horwitz,
Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.
and Kathy Broderick, Consultant

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.
1825 Connecticut Avenue, N. W.
Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20009-5726
Toll free: 877-743-7323
Web site: www.rif.org

© 2001 Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.
All rights reserved.

What Is a Story Sampler?

A Story Sampler makes books come alive for children. It is a book-based thematic approach to reading designed to engage children in the book experience. Each Story Sampler includes hands-on, cross-curricular activities for books that are linked by a common theme.

Why Use a Story Sampler?

Motivational activities are an important part of every Reading Is Fundamental program. And these motivational activities are an easy way to excite children's interest in reading and help them associate books and reading with positive experiences and that means fun! The ideas you will find in each Story Sampler show you how to build anticipation and excitement in your RIF programs.

Scores of studies show that students learn more and do better in school when their parents are involved in their education. Different types of hands-on activities enable all children to learn in different ways. Particular questions before, during and after read aloud activities can develop high order thinking skills.

Family members can encourage children to become life-long readers by reading aloud with them everyday. Reading aloud to children is one of the most effective ways

to support language and literacy development. Children who are read to from infancy associate reading with pleasant, warm feelings. When you invite children to participate in reading, ask open-ended questions that promote creative thinking and learning, and plan activities and experiences that allow children to expand their understanding of the story, you help them develop a love of reading.

What Are the Standard Elements of a Story Sampler?

Each section of the Story Sampler includes a featured book plus additional titles and resources.* The activities that accompany each section will help you develop a literacy-rich environment that contributes significantly to a child's enjoyment of reading. The standard elements in the Story Sampler include:

- Questions to ask
- Family involvement
- Things to do
- Community connections

**The ISBN listed indicates a specific edition of the book. However, other editions may also be available through the public library or other publishers.*

Who Should Use a Story Sampler and Where?

Some Story Samplers are age-specific, but most can be adapted to a broad range of ages. Teachers, families, and child-care providers can use them in classrooms, community centers, homes, and in Head Start sites. And most importantly, parents can extend the story beyond the classroom with home-based projects and field trips.

Story Samplers can forge relationships and shared experiences within the family and the community. Through the family, children can be introduced to many kinds of books. Books can explain and reinforce concepts; allow children to build positive self-images; stimulate discussions and thinking; increase children's understanding of various concepts; and expand their imagination.

The age range for a Story Sampler is indicated at the beginning of each set of activities.

When and How Should I Use a Story Sampler?

Story Samplers can be used within or as a supplement to a curriculum or an after-school program. They can be part of reading challenges, reading weeks, and family involvement events. Your imagination and the interests of the children who participate in the RIF program will help determine the best way to use the Story Sampler. Enjoy and have fun!

Tips for Reading Aloud

Before You Read a Story...

- Make sure everyone is comfortable
- Show the cover and read the title and author of the book
- Ask the children about the cover
- Suggest things the children can look or listen for during the story

During a Story...

- Change your voice to fit the mood or action
- Move your finger under the words as you read them
- Show the pictures and talk about the book as you read
- Add information or change words to help kids understand more words and explain the meaning of a new word
- Ask children to make predictions about the plot, the characters, and the setting
- Share your own thoughts about the story
- Follow the cues of the children

After You Read a Story...

- Ask questions about what happened in the story
- Encourage the group to relate the story to their own experiences
- Ask children how they might feel or act if they were one of the characters
- Encourage children to share their thoughts about the story and pictures
- Extend the story with an activity or another book

Blooming with Books

A STORY SAMPLER FOR PRESCHOOLERS AND KINDERGARTNERS

CARING FOR A GARDEN

Growing Vegetable Soup

by **Lois Ehlert**, Harcourt Brace, 1990
ISBN 0152325808

MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

Miss Rumphius

by **Barbara Cooney**, Viking, 1985
ISBN 0140505393

GARDEN LORE

The Tale of Peter Rabbit

by **Beatrix Potter**, Scholastic Trade, 1987
ISBN 0590411012

DELICIOUS DELIGHTS FROM THE GARDEN

The Ugly Vegetables

by **Grace Lin**, Charlesbridge Publishing, 1999
ISBN 0881063363

GROWING A TALL TALE

Jamie O'Rourke and the Big Potato

by **Tomie dePaola**, Paper Star, 1997
ISBN 0698116038

Caring for a Garden

Growing Vegetable Soup

by Lois Ehlert

Harcourt Brace, 1990

ISBN 0152325808

Bold artwork identifies various vegetables and the different stages of a vegetable garden that a father and child are growing together. Pictures using bright colors and simple shapes are easy to see from a distance, making this book perfect for reading aloud to a group. Ehlert also labels everything in her drawings, so that children will love to study this book on their own as well.

What To Do Before Reading the Story

■ **Choose one of the following musical introductions.**

- Play a recording of the famous “Garden Song.” Peter, Paul, and Mary recorded a version on their album *Peter, Paul and Mommy, Too* (Warner Brothers, 1993). Talk about the meaning of the words.
- There is also Raffi’s album *One Light, One Sun* that has a song called “In My Garden.”
- You might also try Woody Guthrie’s *Woody’s 20 Grow Big Songs* where there is a song called “Little Seed” (Source: Children’s Jukebox by Rob Reid).



- Talk about different kinds of gardens: vegetable gardens, flower gardens, butterfly gardens, community gardens, herb gardens, windowsill gardens, etc. . . . Make the point that anyone, anywhere in the world, can plant a garden and that gardens can be as small or as big as a person wants them to be.
- Discuss the fact that all gardens, no matter what type, need certain things. Let the children talk about what a basic garden needs (water, sunlight, good soil, room to grow).



What To Talk About During the Story

- Hold up the cover of the book and ask children where they get their vegetable soup.
 - Do they buy vegetable soup in a can from the store?
 - How does that soup get in a can? (Make sure to show the children the recipe on the back cover of the book after reading the story).
- Talk about about planting seeds;
 - Point out that different vegetables grow from different seeds (if a bean seed is planted, then a bean plant will grow).

- Explain what it means to *sprout* or *weed*.
- Point out how the characters in this book care for their garden (they water, weed, and stake up the bigger plants and climbing plants).
- Point out that on some plants, like the squash in this book, a flower blooms before the fruit appears.
- Talk about how some things grow underground and need to be dug up, and other things grow above ground and can be picked.
- Have children call out different colors and different shapes they see in the pictures, and see if they can name the various vegetables.

What You Can Do When You Finish Reading the Story

- Ask the children how the bright pictures in this book made them feel.
- Discuss how the artist made the pictures with simple cut-out shapes.
- Ask the children if they think Lois Ehlert grows a garden herself, and how a garden must make her feel. Explain what a dedication is and read the children Ehlert's dedication in the front of the book.

Sorting Seeds

Obtain 20 or so seed packets of various kinds, both flowers and vegetables. For young children, have them sort the packets into two piles: flowers and vegetables. Or, more than two piles: red vegetables, green vegetables, pink flowers, white flowers, etc. Let them count the number of flower packets, vegetable packets, or even the seeds inside a packet. For children a little older, teach them the names of the vegetable or flower on the front of the seed packets.

Charting Growth

Read the book *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss, Harper Trophy, 1989. Talk about how the little boy in the story waited patiently for the carrot to grow. Ask the kids why people, plants, and animals take time to grow and review what kinds of things they need to grow.

Gather some clear plastic cups, seeds that take a short time to germinate, potting soil, popsicle sticks labeled with each child's name, and a long piece of chart paper or growth chart. Plant the seeds in the soil in the cups, place the popsicle sticks in the cup with the soil, and seed and tack the growth chart to the wall. Water the plants when you have snack each day so that the children associate the nutrition they receive in order to grow with the nutrients the plants need in order to develop.

Measure each child weekly and have them observe the growth the seed makes each week. At the end of a few months, take pictures of each child holding their plant in one hand and a sign that tells how much they grew together during the allotted time. Develop the pictures and place them in an album for the children to see how much they have grown!

Thirsty Plants!

A great way to illustrate how plants and flowers need water, air, and the sun to grow is to get a carnation and a carrot top. Put the carrot top in a small dish that has some water in it. Put the carnation in a thin vase and mark with a marker where the water comes up to in the vase.

After two or three days, check on the carrot and the carnation. A noticeable amount of growth should have taken place with the carrot top, and the water in the vase with the carnation should be below the mark made the previous day. Show the children how the carnation drank the water and how the top of the carrot grew with the help of the air, water, and sunlight.

Family Involvement

- Ask your children to look around your home for objects that no one wants or needs anymore (an old pot, crate, jar) and have them try to imagine growing something inside that container. It can be anything (even an old pair of shoes)! Grab some seeds and some soil and plant together. For more ideas, a good book to have around is *Growing Things*, from the Play and Learn series with Dib, Dab, and Dob. 1997. DK.
- Make a copy of the recipe for *Vegetable Soup* that is at the back of the book by Lois Ehlert and try cooking it with your children.



Community Connection

- Take a nature walk through the community. Whether you live in an urban, suburban or rural area, see what kinds of vegetation grow in your environment. Review with the children what plants need in order to grow. Depending on the season, point out what is in bloom or what will eventually change when the weather takes a turn.
- Go picking at the nearest orchard! Harvesting apples, pumpkins, strawberries, blueberries, acorns, or anything that might be in season is usually a fun experience for young children.

Additional Titles

All of the following books can be used to talk about the feeling of satisfaction that people get from growing plants from seeds. It's a lot of work, but with patience and dedication the gardener is always rewarded (as in the following examples, with a giant carrot, a beanstalk, or a basketful of beautiful vegetables).

The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss, HarperTrophy, 1989
ISBN 0064432106

Despite the doubts of a little boy's immediate family, his seed yields a carrot that surprises them all, just like he knew it would.

Pumpkin Pumpkin by Jeanne Titherington, Mulberry Books, 1990
ISBN: 0688099300

Jamie plants a pumpkin seed in the spring and watches it sprout and grow all summer until it is perfect in the fall to become a jack-o-lantern for Halloween. He wisely saves the seeds to replant again in the spring.

Jasper's Beanstalk by Nick Butterworth, Simon & Schuster, 1997
ISBN 0689815409

Jasper, a black cat, tries hard—too hard—all week long to get his bean to grow. When it finally does, Jasper is in for a great surprise. This book also uses the days of the week effectively.

Vegetable Garden by Douglas Florian, Harcourt Brace, 1996
ISBN 0152010181

Rhyming phrases tell of a family that plants a vegetable garden in the spring, tends to it throughout the summer, and harvests its fruits in the fall. This is a good book to use when explaining that outdoor plants need a lot of sunlight and a certain warm temperature to grow, which is why in colder climates seeds are planted in the spring.

First Tomato: A Voyage to the Bunny Planet by Rosemary Wells, Harcourt Brace, 1992
ISBN: 0803711751

Poor little Claire is not having a good day, but her travels to the bunny planet where she picks tomatoes and eats sugar snap peas make her feel much better.

Making the World a Better Place

Miss Rumphius

by **Barbara Cooney**

Viking, 1985

ISBN 0140505393

As a young girl becomes a young lady and then an older woman, she thinks about fulfilling the promises she made to her grandfather and making the world more beautiful. Cooney's gentle illustrations depict the "Lupine Lady," a woman who lives a long, rich life, and who understands the healing power of flowers.

*A paperback edition is also available in Spanish.

What To Do Before Reading the Story

- Ask children to think about why people garden: to grow food to eat, or to sell? Do they like to look at beautiful flowers, or give them away as a gift?
- If you are able to get a copy, play the video "The Man Who Planted Trees," a beautiful, award-winning animated short film about a French man who planted acres and acres of forests.

What To Talk About During the Story

- Stop at the title page and point out that the flowers there are called lupines.
- Miss Rumphius visits the conservatory one winter day. Explain to the children what a conservatory is and how it works. How does it make her feel?
- When Miss Rumphius feels very tired and sick, ask the children what makes her feel better? Why?
- The following spring, she discovers lupines in a place she didn't plant seeds, discuss with children how the seeds got there (wind or birds, possibly).



What You Can Do When You Finish Reading the Story

- Draw a comparison between Miss Rumphius and Johnny Appleseed (“the man who planted trees”).
- Have the children talk about the pictures in this book. If you have read *Vegetable Soup*, ask the children how the illustrations are different from Lois Ehlert’s illustrations?
- Ask the children if they think Barbara Cooney, the author, grows a garden. Ask them why artists would like to have gardens.

Lupine Designs

Bring in a real lupine plant or a seed packet. Have children create their own lupines, either by gluing beads onto paper, or gluing scraps of colored paper onto construction paper (mosaic-like). Use green pipe cleaners for stems and color in leaves with bright green markers.

Plant an Imagination!

Pretend to be gardeners! Gather gardening gloves, hats or visors, real or plastic tools, watering cans, and seed packets and use the dramatic play area or the sandbox. Encourage young children to dig deep!

Family Involvement

- Read the story by Eve Bunting called *Flower Garden*. Talk about the surprise that the little girl and the father in the story make for the girl’s mother. Try planting your own family flower box and help your child care for the new addition to your home.
- Find out if there is a community garden in your area and go for a visit. See if they offer garden tours or have an information center where you and your child can learn more about the natural beauty that your environment has to offer.

Community Connection

- Ask the children if they know of a school or community garden in their area. Visit it together, or suggest they visit it with their families. Take a garden walk or garden tour. Or, visit a conservatory (even in winter!). These are places that make our communities more beautiful.
- All fifty states in the U.S. have master gardeners, volunteers who spread their knowledge of gardening to others who want to know more about it. Contact a university’s extension services office to find out how to invite a master gardener to talk to your children. These are people, like the fictional Miss Rumphius, who are working to make our communities healthier, more beautiful places.

Additional Titles

The following books all demonstrate how gardening brightens our world, on an individual scale or on a grander scale. These books feature people who have an idea and a way of bringing pleasure to others through growing plants.

A Field of Sunflowers by Neil Johnson, Scholastic, 1997
ISBN 0590965492

This story of a farmer who decides to plant a crop of sunflowers is illustrated with full-color photographs. But this is a special farmer, who lets visitors picnic under the bright yellow blooms, and then, instead of harvesting the sunflowers, lets the seeds sit, so that hundreds of birds will come to feed on them.

Flower Garden by Eve Bunting, Harcourt Brace, 2000
ISBN 0152023720

This is a touching story of a young girl and her father who purchase everything to make a windowsill garden for Mom on her birthday. The new, bright flowers bring a smile to a mother’s face and color to the urban setting of this story.

The Gardener by Sarah Stewart, Farrar, 2000
ISBN 0374425183

The impact one individual can make is celebrated in this Caldecott Honor Book. A young Lydia Grace Finch spends one growing season with her sour Uncle Jim, spreading love and inspiration and brightening his world. The story is told in letters that Lydia writes to Mama, Papa, and Grandma.

A Gardener’s Alphabet by Mary Azarian, Houghton Mifflin Co (Juv), 2000
ISBN: 0618033807

Each page in this book begins with a letter of the alphabet and reveals a colorful display of something having to do with gardening. Young children will like the illustrations, but may need some help with a few of the words such as compost, topiary, or xeriscape.

My First Garden by Tomasz Bogacki, Frances Foster Books, 2000
ISBN 0374325189

While riding on a train, a man remembers his childhood and the garden he made in the cobblestone courtyard by his house. His daydreaming takes him back in time, and he remembers the pleasure the garden brought him and all his neighbors.

The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle, Little Simon, 1998
ISBN: 0689819668

The wonderfully colorful illustrations of Eric Carle help tell the story of the life cycle of a flower as it grows from a seed.

Rabbit Seeds by Bijou Le Tord, Yearling Books, 1993
ISBN 0440407672

Gardening can be fun, but it also takes some work. Follow the gardener as he digs, rakes, waters, and tills through the seasons.

This Year’s Garden by Cynthia Rylant, Aladdin Paperbacks, 1987
ISBN 0689711220

This is another wonderful story that follows the seasons of the year through a family’s garden and all that they do to care for it.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit

by **Beatrix Potter**
Scholastic Trade, 1987
ISBN 0590411012

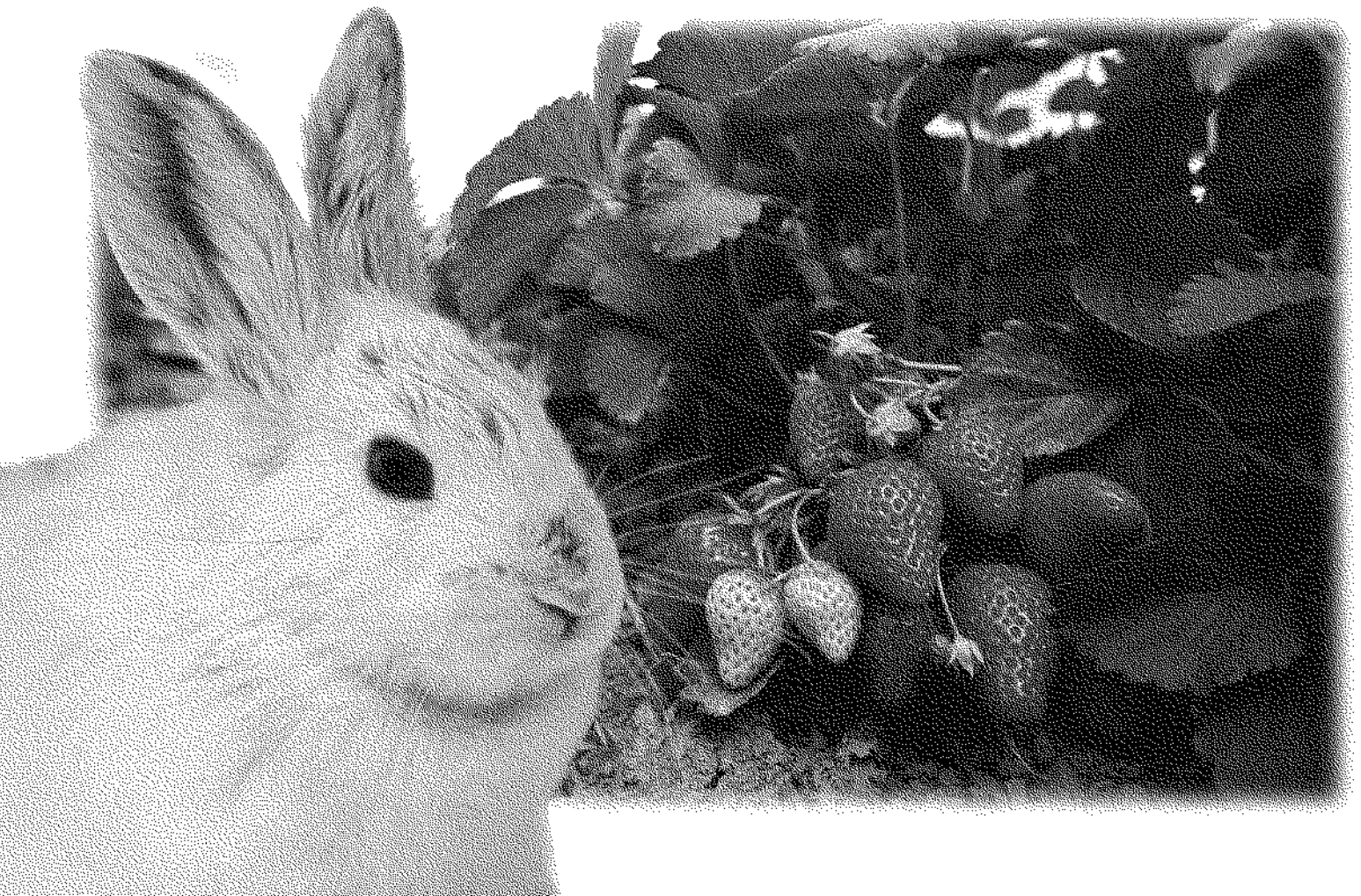
This is one of the most famous children's stories of all time, in which a mischievous rabbit is chased around Mr. MacGregor's garden and narrowly escapes.

What To Do Before Reading the Story

- Ask the children if they know the story of Peter Rabbit. Or if they've ever heard of Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail.
- Tell the children that this book was written almost one hundred years ago by a woman who lived in England. Point out England on a globe or a map of the world. Ask the children to listen to how the words in this book sound different than what we usually read today.
- Because Beatrix Potter's watercolors are so detailed and small, it's best to read this book to small groups of children, who can sit closer to the illustrations.

What To Talk About During the Story

- If you feel comfortable doing so, read the book with a British accent. Explain words or phrases that might not be clear to the children and ask some of the following questions:
 - Why does Peter have to squeeze under a gate to get into Mr. MacGregor's garden?
 - Why does Mr. MacGregor call Peter a thief?
 - Even though we're rooting for Peter, in reality, rabbits are pests for a gardener. Beatrix Potter took an annoying problem and turned it into a grand adventure.
- Have the children talk about how realistic the art looks. Beatrix Potter must have been a person who knew what gardens looked like and what animals that visit a garden looked like. Let children point out the other animals in Mr. MacGregor's garden.



What You Can Do When You Finish Reading the Story

- Talk about how Beatrix Potter is a national figure in England and that her home and properties are visited by tourists every year.
- Let the children know that Beatrix Potter wrote many little books just like *Peter Rabbit*, creating a whole imaginary world of animal characters, and that she really had a pet rabbit!

Video Version

Play the excellent video of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, produced by the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation).

Making Up a Story Beatrix Potter Style!

Let the children, as a group, invent their own story about an animal, in the Beatrix Potter style. Let them name the animal and draw pictures of how it dresses and where it lives. If necessary, an adult can write the story across the bottom of the pictures. The pictures can be hung across a wall or bound into a book (with staples or brass tacks.)

Family Involvement

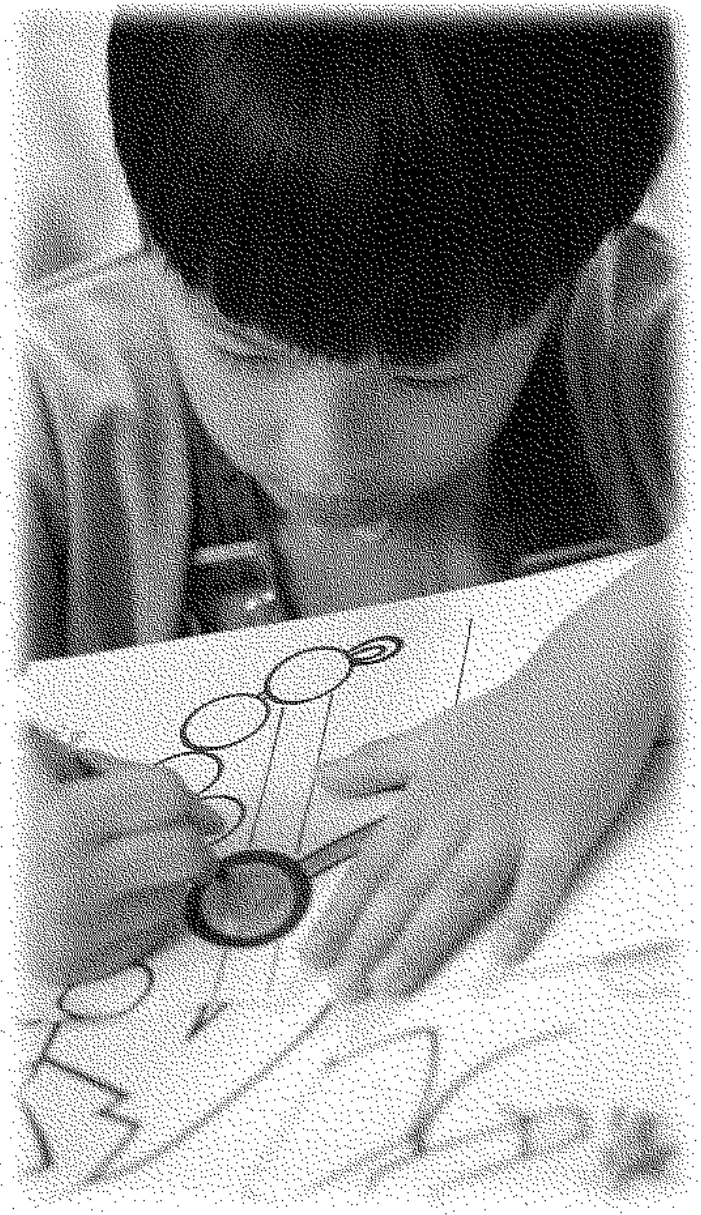
- The Bunny Hop is an all time favorite. Show your kids how to do the simple dance and go hopping down the bunny trail!
- Follow in the footsteps of Peter Rabbit and enjoy a healthy snack of carrots together.
- Watch the BBC's version of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* together.

Community Connection

- Visit the local library and check out some of the titles from this section. Grab a blanket, some fruits, and some vegetables and read one of the old favorites while sitting in a garden or on a nice patch of grass!
- Find a local pet store or petting zoo and see if you can find Peter Rabbit and his friends Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail. Let the children feed, pet or hold the rabbits and talk about how the characters in Beatrix Potter's famous story got their names.

Additional Titles

The following books are stories that have been around for a long time and that children may already be familiar with. Like *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, they are not really books about gardening, but rather famous, high quality stories that are set in or near a garden.



“**The Garden**” from *Frog and Toad Together* by Arnold Lobel, HarperTrophy, 1979
ISBN 0064440214

This famous and popular best friend team has many adventures. Frog and Toad teach each other many things. In this story (one of five in the book), Toad learns that the hard work of gardening is worth the effort.

Rapunzel by Barbara Rogasky, Holiday, 1987
ISBN 0823406520

A young mother stares at her neighbor's gorgeous garden and decides she must have some of the delicious looking plants that grow there. But this is the witch's garden — best not to raid it!

Tops and Bottoms by Janet Stevens, Harcourt Brace, 1995
ISBN 0940257009

This Caldecott Honor Book, based in the genre of trickster and Brer Rabbit tales, tells of Hare who repeatedly tricks Bear out of the best of their crop.

Delicious Delights From the Garden

The Ugly Vegetables

by **Grace Lin**

Charlesbridge Publishing, 1999

ISBN 0881063363

When a little girl and her mother plant their garden, it doesn't look like everyone else's in the neighborhood. The little girl doesn't understand why their garden is not filled with pretty flowers and buzzing bumblebees. Her mother reassures her that what is in their garden is better than the neighbor's plants. Eventually the sweet smell of *Ugly Vegetable Soup* fills the air, and the little girl is delighted with what has come from her mother's garden.

What To Do Before Reading the Story

- The title of the story is a fun place to start. Bring in a few vegetables such as a cucumber, a pepper, a turnip, or perhaps a head of lettuce from your garden or the local grocery store. Ask the children what they think of the vegetables that you are showing them. Do they like the colors? Are they nice to look at or are they shaped strangely?
- Read the title of the story to the children after you have looked at and discussed the vegetables in front of them. Ask the kids if they can think of any vegetables that they think are pretty or that make them want to eat them when they look at them. Ask the children what they think makes a garden seem attractive. Is it the colors or the smell? What can make a garden look ugly?

Things To Talk About During the Story

- The illustrations are wonderful in this story. Point out all the details as you read, especially the differences that the little girl keeps pointing out to her mother throughout the story.
- Ask the children why the little girl in the story thinks her mother's garden is filled with ugly vegetables. Why does this make her sad?
- During the story, the mother starts cooking and the little girl says everyone is trying to eat the smell; what does that mean? Ask the children if they have ever smelled something so delicious that they became hungry just from the smell. If you have the means, bring in something with a strong tempting scent like buttered popcorn or cinnamon bread to use as an example.



- Towards the end of the story, everyone in the neighborhood wants to try some of the yummy smelling soup, so they bring flowers and things from their garden to trade for a taste. Ask the children if they have ever wanted something from one of their friends at lunch and offered to trade for it. Briefly discuss the benefits of trading between friends.

What You Can Do When You Finish Reading the Story

- Talk about how the “ugly vegetable” garden was different from everyone else’s in the neighborhood. Flowers can be pretty, but vegetables can be good to eat! Ask the children what they like about the pictures in the book. What colors do they like? What kinds of vegetables do they like to eat?
- Ask the children why they think people choose to grow different things in their gardens. Why did most of the people grow flowers? Why did the little girl’s mother grow Chinese vegetables? Talk about farmers. How do they choose what to plant in their fields or gardens?
- Make a list with the children of all the things that you can plant and grow. (flowers, vegetables, trees, grass, bushes, etc.)

Use All Five Senses!

Gardens are meant to be appealing to the eye, but they can also be pleasing to the other senses. Grab some mushrooms, carrots, peppers, or broccoli. Wash and slice them up into bite size pieces. Buy some of the vegetables cooked and have that ready for the children to try as well. Talk about some things that the children might eat that have vegetables in them such as pizza, salads, or soups. Give each child a small plate of vegetables to smell, taste, and touch. Let them explore, and find out if they like any of the “ugly vegetables!”

Pretty Planting

Gather a bunch of old seed or flower catalogs or seed packages, some scissors, and some glue. Have the children help you make flower or vegetable picture cards by cutting out pictures from the catalogs. Glue the pictures onto index cards and let them dry. Take sheets of primary colored construction paper and place them out in front of the children. Label each colored piece of construction paper “Red,” “Blue,” “Green,” etc., and let the children sort the cards by color by placing each card on the corresponding piece of colored paper. When the children finish, count how many cards are on each color.

If you have the time, grab some butcher paper, paints, and brushes and create a garden mural. Glue the picture cards onto the mural and let the children paint some more flowers, plants and trees to complete the scene.

Family Involvement

- Make some Ugly Vegetable Soup! The author of the story provides the recipe for Ugly Vegetable Soup right at the back of the book along with the ugly vegetables, a description of each vegetable, and the Chinese symbol for each one.

- Gather various gardening tools such as rakes, hoes, watering cans, or spades either from plastic play sets, or old gardening tools. Put some soil in a large bin or find a plot of soil to use outside and let the children dig away.
 - After some playtime, take a walk around and look at the types of plants in your area. Are there big trees, small plants, or perhaps even stalks of corn?
 - Ask the children what kinds of gardening tools they might need to plant what they see around them. Remind them how the little girl’s mother in the story uses big shovels to plant her vegetables while the neighbors use smaller shovels and hoes.
 - Check some books out of the library that show pictures of tractors, plows, and lawn mowers to show the children. Explain that some gardeners or farmers cover a large piece of land and need large machines to do all the planting and watering they have to do.

Community Connection

- If possible, visit a nursery or invite someone from the nursery to come in and talk to your group about the plants in their care. Depending on the resources in your area, you may also want to visit an orchard or plan a walking trip through your neighborhood to see what you can find. Children often think that vegetables and fruit come from supermarkets, rather than trees or seeds planted in the ground. Giving the children a chance to make firsthand observations will help their understanding of the gardening process.
- Explore the community you live in. What kinds of cultures or nationalities exist where you live? Is there a Chinatown or Little Italy? Find out what kinds of fruits and vegetables are used by other cultures in their traditional recipes. Try out a new recipe or trade with your neighbors like the characters in the story, *The Ugly Vegetables!*

Additional Titles

Blueberries for Sal by Robert McClosky, Viking Press, 1976
ISBN 014050169X

This classic Caldecott Honor book has been around for many years and continues to be a warm and fun story to share with young children. Just make sure you have some blueberries to taste when you are done reading!

Eating the Alphabet by Lois Ehlert, Red Wagon, 1996
ISBN 015201036X

Eating the Alphabet is just one of several books that Lois Ehlert has written about food and gardening. The vibrant colors and large text will appeal to young children and will make everyone hungry while they learn their ABCs.

The Children’s Kitchen Garden: A Book of Gardening, Cooking, and Learning by Georgeanne Brennan, Ten Speed Press, 1997
ISBN 0898158737

This is a great resource to use with children that not only provides recipes but also information on composting and how flowers ‘drink’.

Growing a Tall Tale

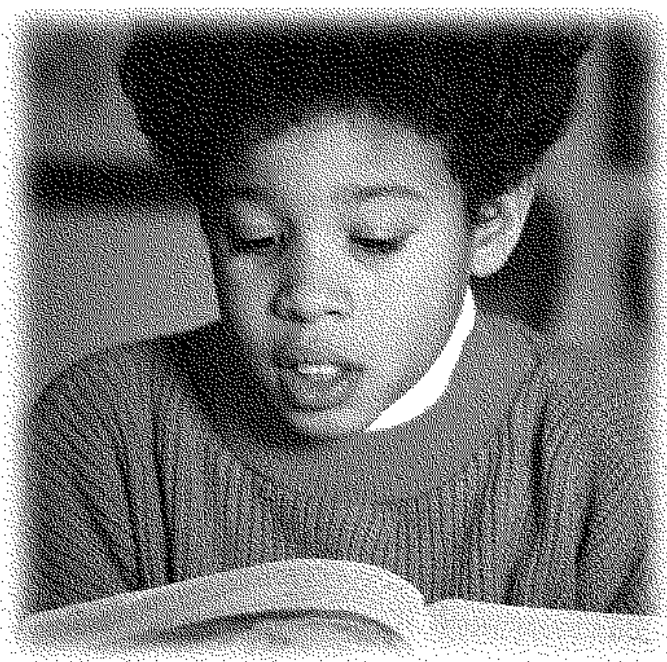
Jamie O'Rourke and the Big Potato

retold by Tomie dePaola

Paper Star, 1997

ISBN 0698116038

The night Jamie O'Rourke caught a leprechaun, he returned home with a magic potato seed instead of a pot of gold. Saints preserve us! That clever leprechaun had outsmarted the laziest man in all of Ireland! Or had he?



What To Do Before Reading the Story

- Bring in a real potato to show the children. Talk about its size, shape, and color and how potatoes grow under the ground.
- Read the first page, "A Note About The Story," to the children. Explain a little bit about folktales and how families in various cultures have passed on stories through the years. Tomie dePaola, like many other authors, decided to write down some of the stories he heard as a child.
- Ask the children if they know of any family stories that have been passed down through the generations. If there is time, have the children, or invite parents, to share their family stories.

What To Talk About During the Story

- The story takes place in Ireland. Point out where the country is on a map. Explain that people in Ireland speak with a slight accent. If you are feeling bold, read the story with an Irish accent.
- If the children in your group are not familiar with the word "lazy," ask them what they think it means based on the sentence in the book and then explain what it means.
- Jamie O'Rourke happens upon a leprechaun on his way to church. The children in your group may not know what a leprechaun is and what significance he has to Irish culture.

The brief explanation below comes from this website and might be of some use: <http://www.nando.net/toys/stpaddy/stpaddy.html>

Leprechaun

Irish fairy. Looks like a small, old man (about 2 feet tall), often dressed like a shoemaker, with a cocked hat and a leather apron. According to legend, leprechauns are aloof and unfriendly, live alone, and pass the time making shoes...they also possess a hidden pot of gold. Treasure hunters can often track down a leprechaun by the sound of his shoemaker's hammer. If caught, he can be forced to reveal the whereabouts of his treasure, but the captor must keep their eyes on him every second. If the captor's eyes leave the leprechaun (and he often tricks them into looking away), he vanishes and all hopes of finding the treasure are lost.

- The leprechaun grants Jamie a wish instead of his pot of gold. Young children often like to make wishes. Ask them what they would ask for if they were granted one wish.
- As the potato grows and grows, ask the children to predict what problems Jamie might run into eventually.

What You Can Do When You Finish Reading the Story

- Jamie O'Rourke makes out fine in the end. Ask the children what they think: Is Jamie O'Rourke lucky, or lazy, or both?
- Ask the children if they believe that a potato could really get that big. Have they ever seen a vegetable or a plant grow to a giant size?

Potato Heads

Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head have been around for many years. Grab some potatoes, toothpicks, raisins, marshmallows, and any other kinds of material that you might want to use to create your own version of the Potato Heads with the children in your group.

Family Involvement

- Read one of the titles from the list below and talk about whether or not the events in the story could actually take place. What makes the story a tall tale? Snuggle up together and read one of the stories or another folktale.
- Families often pass on stories from generation to generation. Are there fictional or non-fictional stories that you can share with your child? Maybe a tale of adventure from your own childhood or a famous move from one home to another; give your child a piece of your own history to pass on. Tell your tale with colorful details and an enthusiastic voice. Ask your child to tell the story back to you and see how their version compares to yours.

Community Connection

- See if your community hosts any gardening contests. The largest pumpkin or giant zucchini might just be growing in your hometown. Check out what you can find in your own backyard!
- Sometimes, towns or cities play host to a variety of local legends or folktales. Check out the local library or historical society to see if they know of any tall tales about the community where you live.

Additional Titles

Jack and the Beanstalk by Matt Faulkner, Scholastic Trade, 1996
ISBN 0590401645

The classic tale of clever Jack who climbs the beanstalk and outwits the hungry giant.

Jim and the Beanstalk by Raymond Briggs, Paper Star, 1997
ISBN 0698115775

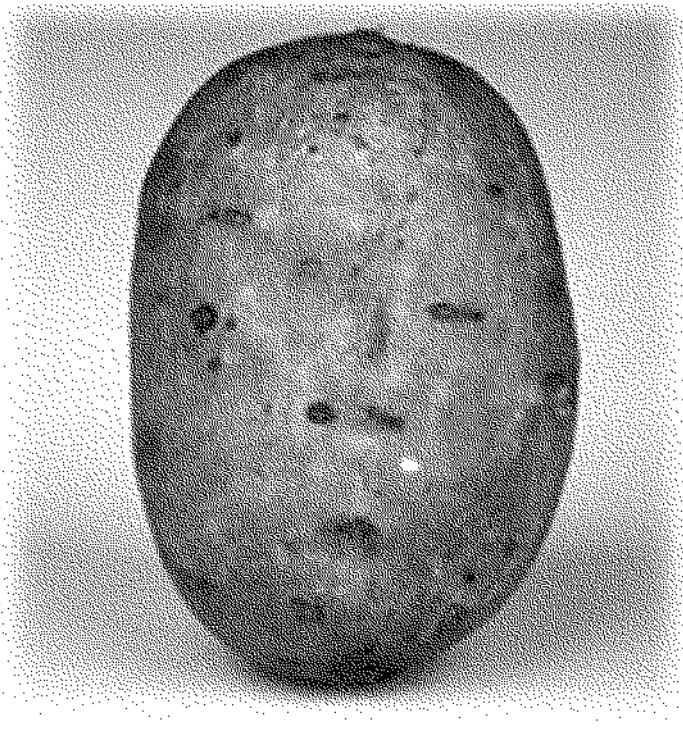
Jim climbs a large beanstalk and encounters a giant at the top with several modern day issues that he demands Jim help him to resolve.

The Tale of the Turnip by Brian Alderson, Candlewick Press, 1999
ISBN 0763604941

A local farmer plants turnips in his field and one of them happens to grow to a very large size. The king of the land is so impressed by the farmer's efforts, that he rewards him generously while a jealous neighbor gets his just reward.

The Mouse and the Potato by Thomas Berger, Anthroposophic Press, 1990
ISBN 0863151035

Another story of a giant potato that grows and grows and requires many helping hands to get it out of the ground.



- Explain what a folktale or a tall tale is to the children. Talk about how stories that are passed on through time can sometimes take on a life of their own. Sometimes they are simply funny or entertaining stories that depict a particular culture, and sometimes they have a specific moral or message woven into the fabric of the story.

“One Potato, Two Potato, Three Potato, Four”

Teach the children in your group the rhyme used to decide whose turn it is:

One potato, two potato, Three potato, four, Five potato, six potato, Seven potato, more.

Chant the rhyme by either stacking fists or by sitting in a circle and tapping heads until you get to the word “more” which decides whose turn it is or who gets to go first. The rhyme can also be used to play an elimination game like “Simon Says.”

Play a Game of Telephone

If children are not familiar with the game of Telephone, seat them in a circle and start off by whispering a message into the first child's ear. Ask him or her to pass it on. The last child to receive the message tries to say it out loud, and, more often than not, the message has been altered somehow. The children will not only get a kick out of how the message has been changed as it goes down the line, but it may also help them to see how a tale can grow!

What Can You Make With Potatoes?

Soup, french fries, potatoes au gratin — whatever your little “pratie” heart desires. Pick a fun and easy recipe that requires potatoes. Write out the recipe on a large piece of paper. Use rebus symbols for items like the potatoes, measuring cups, bowls, and cooking pots to make it more fun for the young children. Gather the ingredients and let the kids help you cook a delicious potato feast!

RIF'S MISSION

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF) develops and delivers children's and family literacy programs that help prepare young children for reading and motivate older children to read. Through a national network of teachers, parents, and community volunteers, RIF programs provide books and other essential literacy resources to children at no cost to them or their families. RIF's highest priority is the nation's neediest children, from infancy to age 11.

ABOUT RIF

Founded in 1966 in Washington, D.C., RIF is the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit children's literacy organization, with programs operating nationwide in 16,500 schools, child-care centers, libraries, hospitals, clinics, migrant worker camps, Head Start and Even Start programs, homeless shelters, and detention centers.

RIF serves more than 3.5 million children through a network of more than 240,000 volunteers. Two-thirds of the children served by RIF have economic or learning needs that put them at risk of failing to achieve basic educational goals.

Through a contract with the U.S. Department of Education, RIF provides federal matching funds to thousands of school and community-based organizations that sponsor RIF programs. RIF also receives private support from hundreds of corporations and foundations, thousands of local organizations and businesses, and countless individuals.

RIF distributes about 13 million books a year. By the end of 2000, RIF will have placed more than 200 million books in the hands and homes of America's children.



Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.
1825 Connecticut Avenue, N. W., Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20009-5726
Toll free: 877-743-7323
Web site: www.rif.org

©2001 Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.
All rights reserved.