

Dreaming Up: A Celebration of Building

A CLEL Silver Bell Award Book for PLAY



by Christy Hale
ISBN-13: 978-1600606519
Lee & Low Books, 2012

Photographs of famous buildings from around the world are cleverly paired with mixed media illustrations of children building similar structures out of boxes, toothpicks, sand, and other common household materials. The comparisons between children's play and real-life buildings helps children understand that there are genuine, relevant relationships between the activities they do, the world around them, and the ideas they read about in books.

Activity Ideas for *Dreaming Up*:

- Take photos of the children playing and the projects they create, print them, and collect them with samples of their own writing and drawing to create a personalized book for the group or for each child. Include a front cover with the title of their book, a title page with their names on it as authors, and a back cover. Children need to be familiar with the parts of a book and how books work before they can concentrate on learning to read the words inside.
- Invite the children to pretend to be different types of buildings and structures with their bodies. If they bend over and put their hands and feet on the ground, do they look like an arch? Can they balance on their tiptoes and reach above their heads to be a skyscraper? Gross-motor skills contribute to reading and writing readiness because children with muscle strength and control can sit up independently, leaving their hands and arms free to hold books, turn pages, keep paper steady, and use crayons or pencils.
- The illustrations in *Dreaming Up* offer many opportunities to talk with the children about concepts such as size, color, shape, materials, and even numbers. Talk about these ideas on the playground, on neighborhood walks, at mealtime, or while reading books. Include children in as many conversations as possible! The more words children hear, the more words they will learn, and the more ideas they will be able to understand when they read.

The CLEL Bell Picture Book Awards are given to books that provide excellent support of early literacy development in young children. For more information and for other activity sheets, visit <http://www.clel.org/content/bell-awards>



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Elizabethi's Doll

A CLEL Silver Bell Award Book for PLAY

by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, illus. by Christy Hale

ISBN-13: 978-1584300816

Lee & Low Books, 2002



When Elizabethi's mama has a new baby, Elizabethi finds a rock to be her doll, and takes very good care of her throughout the day. Children use dramatic play to help build their understanding of the world, and then bring this background knowledge to the books that they read.

Activity Ideas for *Elizabethi's Doll*:

- Before you read the book to the children for the first time, take a minute or two to talk about what you see on the front cover. Who do you see? What is she holding? How does she feel? Then read the title and point to the words as you read them. Now that the children know the title, can they guess what she's holding? What type of doll might it be? What will she do with it? Thinking about the story before they read it helps children connect with the story when they are listening to it.
- Use scarves or bandanas with other toys in a variety of ways: diaper or carry a doll like Elizabethi does, create a square parking lot for toy cars, or make a hat or cape for dress-up. Ask the children to describe what they are doing with the scarf, which will give them a chance to use the words they know, and practice saying new words.
- Sing one or more lullabies together. In a group, you can have the children rock dolls or imaginary babies as you sing. With one or two children, snuggle together and rock. When children feel secure, their brains release endorphins that help them retain what they learn. Snuggling and singing with children helps lay down permanent pathways for future language development.
- Fold a blanket or scarf into a square and see if the children can walk like Elizabethi while balancing something on their heads. Ask the children to make predictions about how many steps they can take before the blanket falls off, or how many blankets they can balance. Being able to guess what might happen next is a comprehension skill.

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Meeow and the Big Box

A CLEL Silver Bell Award Book for PLAY

by Sebastien Braun
ISBN-13: 978-1906250867
Boxer Books, 2009



Meeow is the proud owner of a big brown box that, with some art supplies and a little imagination, he transforms into his very own fire truck. Simple, bold text explains what Meeow is doing step by step and asks readers to guess what Meeow is making. Open-ended play builds children's language skills because it encourages them to create plans, make choices, and use representational thinking.

Activity Ideas for *Meeow and the Big Box*:

- Bring a large box to the children, choose something to make out of it, and as a first step have them use markers or paint and paintbrushes to color all the sides. When children write or draw on vertical surfaces, their wrists and hands automatically take the correct positions for strong and stable writing grips.
- Talk to the children and help them brainstorm a list of what they could make out of an empty box. Write down their thoughts on a large piece of paper, and read the list back to the children when you are done. Writing down ideas helps make children aware of how writing is used; seeing their words on paper and hearing them read aloud gives them a concrete connection to the abstract concepts of reading and writing.
- Glue or tape 4-6 shoeboxes together along their sides so that you can stand them up to make a small set of "shelves" with the open tops of the boxes facing the children. Put a small object from the book in each of the shoeboxes: a mug, a paintbrush, a block, scissors, a toy fire truck, or even a dollhouse chair. Ask the children questions such as, "What is above the fire truck?" or "What is next to the mug?" Try it another way and ask them to tell you where the paintbrush is, inviting them to use words such as "below," "on top of," "under," "over." This reinforces the meanings of words for ideas that children can't touch or feel, but still need to know to make sense out of what they read.

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Pete's a Pizza

A CLEL Silver Bell Award Book for PLAY

by William Steig
ISBN-13: 978-0062051578
HarperCollins, 1998



When Pete is stuck inside on a rainy day, his parents pretend he is a pizza, making toppings out of everyday objects like checkers and torn paper. *Pete's a Pizza* shows how games can provide opportunities for children to use and hear a wide variety of words (such as "mozzarella" and "knead"), as well as serving as a great example of a parent initiating pretend play with their child.

Activity Ideas for *Pete's a Pizza*:

- Have a taste test with tomatoes, pepperoni, cheese, and other pizza toppings. (Alternately, make clip art or felt shapes to represent the toppings and let the children choose their favorites.) Make a chart to record who likes what. When children see all the different ways that we read (for charts, menus, maps, etc) they can become more motivated to learn to read themselves. Motivation is important because learning to read is hard work!
- Sing, "I'm Making Pizza Pie" to the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell."
I'm making pizza pie, I'm making pizza pie,
High ho the derry o, I'm making pizza pie.
Add your own verses such as "I'm kneading up the dough," or "I'm spreading on the sauce." Singing songs with simple sentences helps children learn the patterns of our language.
- Act out the motions of making a pizza: Have children raise and lower their arms as you say, "Toss the dough up!" and "Now bring your arms down to catch it!" Show them how to make a circles in the air in front of them as you say, "Spread the sauce around and around." Then move your wiggling fingers left and right as you say, "Sprinkle cheese across the pizza!" Children will need to understand the meanings of the words like "up," "down," "around," and "across" when their teachers begin to show them how to write the letters of the alphabet.

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Press Here

A CLEL Silver Bell Award Book for PLAY

by Hervé Tullet
ISBN-13: 978-0811879545
Chronicle Books, 2011



Press the yellow dot in the center of the first page and then turn the page—now two dots appear. Tap the red dot five times and turn the page to see five red dots. Following the playful instructions on each page seems to create a magical surprise on another page. *Press Here* contributes to a feeling of excitement about books, turning pages, and seeing what happens next.

Activity Ideas for *Press Here*:

- Create an art project for the children by letting them dip marbles in paint, then placing the marbles on a piece of paper in a tray. Children can lift the tray and tilt it in different directions to make the ball roll around and leave trails of paint on the paper. Picking up small objects like marbles, and coordinating information from their eyes and hands to tilt the tray, will help develop children’s fine-motor skills for writing.
- Give the children pieces of different-colored tissue paper, and ask them to experiment with what happens when they overlap two different colors and hold them up to a window or light table. Are the colors the same, or different? What will happen when you try it again with two more colors? Simple science experiments like this one allow children to learn more about the world around them. Children’s reading comprehension increases when they already know something about a subject before they read about it.
- Have the children help you make your own materials for a Twister®-like game, by using markers to color circles on a bed sheet or shower curtain, or by coloring paper plates with paint or crayons. Put the materials on the floor and have the children follow instructions such as “Put your hand on a blue circle” or “Put both feet on a red circle.” Following instructions and taking turns while playing games helps develop children’s executive function skills, such as planning, working memory, waiting, and self-control. These skills are important for school readiness, and play a part in learning how to read by increasing children’s ability to resist distraction and focus on a task.

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