

Baby Dance

A CLEL Silver Bell Award Book for SING

by Ann Taylor, illus. by Marjorie van Heerden

ISBN-13: 978-694012060

HarperFestival, 1998



In *Baby Dance*, a father calms his child by singing to and dancing with her, modeling a powerful and loving way that adults can verbally engage with children too young to talk. *Baby Dance* also shows that people use language for different reasons—in this case, as a simple and effective way to soothe an upset child.

Activity Ideas for *Baby Dance*:

- Sing the words of the book to the tune of the lullaby “Hush Little Baby.” When the book says, “baby,” add a child’s name instead. Singing instead of reading, and using a child’s name, are ways to increase children’s interest in a book. The more enjoyable the reading experience is, the more books children will want to listen to, and the more books they listen to, the more early literacy skills they will learn.
- Turn on any music you like and dance together. Give the children scarves or ribbons to hold. Have the children move their bodies and their ribbons or scarves to the music. Show children how to hold scarves or ribbons between their fingers and thumbs. This will strengthen their “pincer grip,” which they will use to hold pencils and crayons steady when they write.
- Look in a mirror together with a child, or hold a baby close and look into their eyes, just like the father in *Baby Dance* makes eye contact with his child. When babies feel warm and secure they are better able to pay attention and learn. Talk about what you see; for example, say, “Where is your nose?” “I see your nose!” “Where is your chin?” “Here is your chin!” This will give babies opportunities to start to learn how language works.
- Read or sing the words in *Baby Dance* and perform the actions with the children. Share other rhymes that can be acted out such as “The Itsy Bitsy Spider” or “Where Is Thumbkin?” Paying attention in order to match actions to words helps children develop comprehension and listening skills.

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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Jazz Baby

A CLEL Silver Bell Award Book for SING

by Lisa Wheeler, illus. by R. Gregory Christie
ISBN-13: 978-0152025229
Harcourt, 2007



A music-loving extended family gathers for a party, singing jazz and blues and dancing together, ending with the baby falling deep asleep. *Jazz Baby* shows a family clapping, snapping, and tapping out rhythms, and the rhyming scat and bebop nonsense syllables highlight their enjoyment of language.

Activity Ideas for *Jazz Baby*:

- Listen to jazz music together. Your local children's librarian can help you find recordings that will be fun to share with children. What instruments can you hear? What do they sound like? Do they sound the same or different? Can you make sounds like the ones you hear? Being a good listener is a part of oral language skills, which are important because they are the foundation for written language skills.
- After you read the book together, go back and have the children say the bebop phrases in the story, such as Go-Man-Go, Doo-Wop-Doo, Rum-Tum-Tum, Bop-Bop-Bop, and Oh, Yeah! Ask them to say them very quickly, then ask them to say them very slowly. Can they make up their own bebop words and say those fast and slow? Playing with the sounds of our language will give children more confidence in identifying the separate sounds in the words they read.
- Share a nonfiction book about musicians or musical instruments with the children. Then use shaker eggs, rattles, or other instruments, either purchased or homemade, and have the children play in a band together. Making connections between books and real-life experiences is one way to help children become motivated to learn to read, because they learn that books contain stories and information that is relevant to their interests.

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The Neighborhood Mother Goose

A CLEL Silver Bell Award Book for SING

by Nina Crews
ISBN-13: 978-0060515737
Greenwillow Books, 2003



The Neighborhood Mother Goose is a collection of traditional Mother Goose rhymes illustrated with photographs of contemporary children acting out the rhymes and songs. This edition demonstrates that nursery rhymes continue to be relevant, and also serves as a model for how and when nursery rhymes can be recited throughout a child's day.

Activity Ideas for *The Neighborhood Mother Goose*:

- Read nursery rhymes from other Mother Goose books, such as *Tomie DePaola's Mother Goose* or *My Very First Mother Goose* by Iona Opie and Rosemary Wells. Read the same nursery rhyme in each book and look at the pictures. How are they the same? How are they different? What are the characters doing? Talking about the illustrations in books leads to better understanding of the story.
- Have the children choose a favorite nursery rhyme from the book and draw a picture of it. Ask them to talk about what they chose to draw for their picture and why. Write the words of the nursery rhyme on the drawing and read it out loud. Understanding that the ideas we think and say can be represented on the page by illustrations and text is a critical early literacy milestone for young children.
- Practice memorizing a rhyme by saying it together every day or every week, then work together to learn another rhyme. Children who know several nursery rhymes by heart before kindergarten often have an easier time learning to read, because they've internalized rules for how words are put together out of smaller sounds.
- Act out nursery rhymes, switching in children's names for the names in the rhymes, such as, "Sarah be nimble, Sarah be quick, Sarah jump over the candlestick," or, "Señor Jorge sat on tuffet eating his curds and whey." Acting out stories helps children understand and remember them more easily. The more nursery rhymes children know, the more they will understand when other books and stories mention nursery rhyme characters and their actions.

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Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes

A CLEL Silver Bell Award Book for SING



by Eric Litwin, illus. by James Dean

ISBN-13: 978-0061906220

HarperCollins, 2010

Pete the Cat is walking down the street in his brand new white shoes, when he steps first in a pile of strawberries, then blueberries, then mud, and finally, water. Pete doesn't cry, though, he keeps walking along and singing about how much he loves his shoes. *Pete the Cat* encourages children's participation by seamlessly adding a simple song they can sing to the reading experience.

Activity Ideas for *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes*:

- Gather a variety of shoes or just look at all the different shoes children are wearing in your group. Sing Pete's song, changing the descriptive words to match the shoes you see: "I love my pink boots," or "I love my Spiderman shoes." Being able to use specific words to describe objects is a type of comprehension skill.
- In the story, Pete's shoes change color when he steps in various piles and puddles. Talk about what would happen if he stepped in pineapple juice: What color would it turn his shoes? What could he step in to make his shoes turn purple? Or green? Conversations like this help build vocabulary. The more words children know and hear, the better they are able to understand what they read in books.
- Have the children tear strips of paper, then hold them between their fingers and thumbs to dip them into different substances (mud, mustard, milk, chocolate sauce) or paints. Tearing paper and gripping small objects develops finger strength for writing activities. Ask the children what they think will happen: what if you dip the paper into mustard and then ketchup? Or into blue and then yellow? Making predictions is something good readers do to help them understand the events in a story.
- Put one shoe from every child in a pile and have them each choose one. The first player says, "I have a blue boot. Who has a yellow tennis shoe?" The holder of the tennis shoe then says, "I have a yellow tennis shoe. Who has a red flip-flop?" This game reinforces basic sentence structure. It also gives children practice noticing differences between objects, a skill they will use to recognize letter shapes.

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Tanka Tanka Skunk!

A CLEL Silver Bell Award Book for SING

by Steve Webb
ISBN-13: 978-0439578442
Orchard Books, 2003



Tanka, an elephant, and his friend, Skunk, combine rhythm and rhyme as they play the drums and play with words. *Tanka Tanka Skunk!* creates a fun reading experience that allows children to listen to and play with the sounds and syllables in words.

Activity Ideas for *Tanka Tanka Skunk!*:

- After you read the book together, read it again, clapping once for every syllable. Help children notice that “Tan-ka” has two claps for two syllables, and “Skunk” has one clap for one syllable. What other words in the book can you clap out together? How many claps or syllables do they have? How many claps or syllables are in each child’s name? Learning that words break apart into syllables a phonological awareness skill that will help children sound out words when they become readers.
- *Tanka Tanka Skunk!* repeats the names of the animals in different patterns. Use toys, blocks, felt shapes, or other small objects to make patterns, then say the patterns out loud. Such as, “car, car, truck, car, car, truck,” or “blue block, yellow block, yellow block,” or “circle, square, circle, square.” Children will need to be able to recognize patterns in letters, words, and sentences when they are readers.
- Write out the names of the animals from the book. Can children find all the names that have the letter K in them? How about the letter A? Or T? Write out the names of the children in your group or family and look to see if they can find which letters are the same or different. Children learn the letters in alphabetical order when they learn the “ABC Song,” but they will need to be able to recognize letters in many different combinations when they read words.

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