

Second Grade Overview

	First Semester	Second Semester
Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent reading • Writing short paragraphs • Consonant blends and word families • Poetry • Fables and other classic stories • Summarizing stories • Descriptive writing • Memorization and recitation • Sight words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal stories and fables • Dramatic storytelling • Independent reading • Summarizing stories • Vowel combinations • Vowel/consonant combinations • Creative writing • Comparison writing
Social Studies	<p><i>HISTORY</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Folklore of Ancient China • Ancient Mali and Sundiata • Ancient Celts • Family customs and traditions <p><i>GEOGRAPHY</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardinal and ordinal directions • Map reading and using a globe • Climate regions • Continents and oceans 	<p><i>ECONOMICS</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural, human, and capital resources • Money and economic transactions • Scarcity and abundance <p><i>CIVICS</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindness and reciprocity • Honesty and tall tales • Qualities of good leadership
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal observation and research • Charting data • Interdependence in nature • Sorting and classifying • Animal habits and habitats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertebrates and invertebrates • Warm and cold-blooded animals • Food chain • Carnivores, herbivores, and omnivores • Animal behavior and communication • Animal classification • Life of a frog
Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four processes • Vertical and horizontal equations • Missing numbers • Writing numbers in expanded forms • Carrying in addition • Place value • Number patterns • Form drawing • Mental math 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Times table up to 12 • Borrowing in subtraction • Greater than / less than • Number bonds to 20 • Multistep problems • Multistep mental math
Art	Students explore color through watercolor painting and crayon drawing as they illustrate the many stories and poems presented in language arts.	
Music	Students continue to develop their recorder playing skills by learning several new notes and mastering simple songs. Focus on breath control, tonality, and technique help enhance the student's musical abilities.	
Crafts	Students engage in various hands-on activities that help develop fine-motor coordination and focus. Highlights include crocheting a scarf, working with clay, and completing crafts from Oak Meadow's <i>Crafts for Early Grades</i> .	
Health	The book <i>Healthy Living from the Start</i> provides the basis for a yearlong health course. Families explore topics relevant to their child's growth and development including nutrition, the growing body, hygiene, community, emotions, and safety.	

Grade 2

Resource Book



Oak Meadow

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Introduction

Welcome to second grade! Your child is developing new skills and understanding of the world around them. You will notice that they may be more detail orientated and able to work more independently this year. Your child may be more interested in the relationships that exist within nature and within their own community. You will continue on the educational journey this year by sharpening the skills they will need for writing, reading, math computations, and purposeful involvement in a broader range of activities. Second graders are full of energy and wonder, and they have a desire to be a valuable part of their family and community.

Oak Meadow curriculum responds to growing intellectual development as the grades progress.

You will find that our curriculum is different from what may be found at most public schools. Although we present all of the traditional subjects, our approach is one that focuses more on the imaginative spirit of the child rather than an approach that is purely academic. You also may find that our time line for presenting and acquiring certain specific skills is unlike those in more traditional models of education. We believe if the mind is forced into development before it is ready, it can have an effect on the child's overall growth as an individual, so we do not attempt to pressure specific academic skills in the early years.

In your role as home teacher, you are always encouraged to try new approaches relevant to your individual needs, and not feel bound by the confines of the assignments presented. However, our curriculum intentionally centers around a few guiding principles in our approach to education. It is helpful to become familiar with these principles in order to guide your child's learning on a deeper level.

- **A child should be surrounded by an archetypal view of the world.** We use fairy tales, myths, folktales, and legends in our curriculum for this reason. For more explanation about this principle, see the section on “Nurturing a Healthy Imagination” in this introduction.
- **A child needs to have opportunities for artistic expression.** In all of a child's artistic explorations, it is important to remember that the process is more important than the form. Although there are numerous techniques and materials available for your child to use to create art, we often center our activities around crayon drawing since it is easily accessible and can be used to express any idea.
- **Each subject should be presented in a natural, informal manner.** This is important so that the child does not feel forced into any activity, but is motivated by their own curiosity and interest in

the topic. This is especially true during the younger years because children learn so much through daily activities and play. The best approach is to integrate the recommendations in the curriculum into your daily life, so that there isn't necessarily a distinction between "home" and "school."

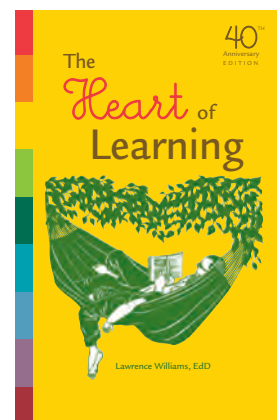
- **Unfold the potential within yourself so that you can respond more deeply and spontaneously to your child.** In order to refine the strengths in your child, you must also strive to unfold and refine your own strengths. It is the light of your own understanding, and the love you have for your child that will be the driving force in their growth as an individual. This is the essence and the gift of being a home teacher.

This introduction will give you important information about the Oak Meadow process and approach to each subject. Enjoy your homeschooling journey!

Course Materials

The Oak Meadow second grade course consists of the following materials:

- **Oak Meadow Grade 2 Coursebook** provides all the instructions and assignments for the full year of second grade.
- **Oak Meadow Grade 2 Resource Book** (this book) includes extensive instructions about teaching each subject, plus all the stories you will be reading this year in social studies, math, and science. It also includes language arts resources (word lists for word families, consonant blends, and vowel sounds).
- **The Heart of Learning** provides important support and guidance for the homeschooling parent through a series of essays on the educational philosophy and learning principles behind the early grades of Oak Meadow. It includes information on child development as well as suggestions on how to develop your skills as a home teacher.
- **Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades** includes practical information on how to present the academic and artistic lesson material, as well as an extensive collection of songs, poems, and action verses that you'll be using through the early grades.
- **Oak Meadow Circle Time Songs CD** provides musical inspiration for your circle time, and includes all the songs listed in the *Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades*.
- **Oak Meadow Crafts for the Early Grades** includes all the instructions for crafts mentioned in the coursebook.
- **Healthy Living from the Start: A Health Curriculum for Grades K–3** offers a wide range of activities around health-related topics. Each lesson



The Heart of Learning is a series of essays on the educational philosophy and learning principles behind the early grades of Oak Meadow.

includes a set of activities to choose from for each grade level, making it easy to use with children of different ages.

Supplies Needed throughout the Year

In addition to the materials listed in each lesson, the following items are recommended throughout the curriculum and can be obtained at local craft and art supply stores or by purchasing the second grade craft kit in the Oak Meadow bookstore.

Main Lesson Books: These are large format, spiral-bound blank books that will be used for most of your child's lesson work. We recommend one for language arts and social studies, one for science, and one for math. You will probably use three main lesson books in the first semester, and three in the second semester. (More details on the main lesson books are below.)

Colored Pencils: A good set of colored pencils will help your child as they begin to produce more writing.

Beeswax Block or Stick Crayons: A good quality set of crayons in the seven colors of the rainbow is an excellent choice.

Watercolor Paints: You will want to have one tube each of blue, red, and yellow. Your child will have the opportunity to explore how these three primary colors form the basis of every other color.

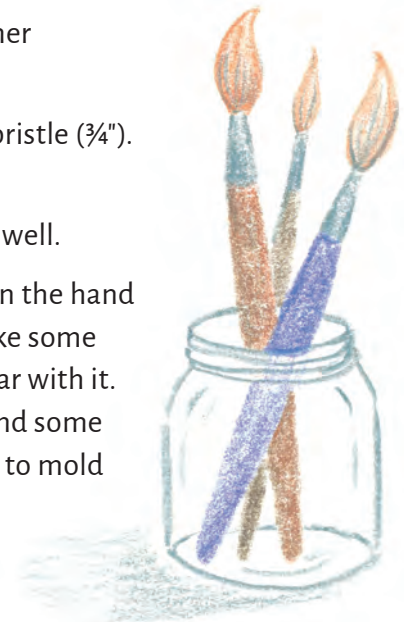
Watercolor Paintbrushes: We recommend brushes with a broad bristle ($\frac{3}{4}$ "). You will want one for you and one for your child.

Watercolor Paper: Sturdy 90 lb. paper in a 9" × 12" size works very well.

Modeling Material: Beeswax is a delightful material that softens in the hand and has a wonderful smell and comes in beautiful colors. It can take some getting used to, so be patient as you and your child become familiar with it. Clay and homemade salt dough are also fun to work with (you'll find some recipes at the end of this resource book). These materials are used to mold the shapes of each of the letters and numbers, so you will want to have a supply readily available.

Paper: You will want to have on hand a good supply of practice or scratch paper. Copier paper works well.

Deck of Cards: Cards are an excellent way to practice math skills.



Globe (or World Map): A globe is a wonderful addition to any household, as is a good world atlas or world map.

You will find a complete list of materials, sorted both by lesson and alphabetically, in the appendix of the *Oak Meadow Grade 2 Coursebook*.

How the Course Is Set Up

This curriculum is divided into 36 lessons, each intended to be completed over the course of one week. Each lesson includes explorations for circle time, language arts, social studies, math, science, arts and crafts, music, and health. You will also see the following sections in the coursebook:

Weekly Planner: This is a blank form that you can use each week to plan out your schedule. You can coordinate walks, trips to the library, and projects that need some advance preparation on your weekly planner, and then return to it to jot down notes about what worked well, what needs more attention, and what you'd like to save to work on at a later time. You will use your weekly planner to keep track of what you did each week—this can make year-end reporting and documentation much easier.

Assignment Summary: You'll find a checklist of assignments at the beginning of each lesson. This lets you check off assignments as you complete them and see at a glance what still needs to be done.

Materials List: We've included a materials list for each lesson, divided by project or activity. You can use this to prepare in advance for each day's work. There is a complete list of materials in the appendix of *Oak Meadow Grade 2 Coursebook*, if you'd like to stock up in advance.

Learning Assessment: At the end of each lesson, we've included a learning assessment form to help you track your child's progress and stay attuned to the key competencies that are being developed. Some parents may want to create their own rubrics or bypass formal assessment entirely for the time being. The learning assessment forms can provide an easy way to document your child's development for reporting purposes.

For Enrolled Students: This section is for families who are enrolled in Oak Meadow School and sending their work to an Oak Meadow teacher. It provides information and reminders about how and when to submit work.

You will find, especially in the early lessons, specific instructions and a range of suggestions for how to structure the day, introduce subjects, and proceed through the work of drawing and writing. However, we encourage home teachers to try a variety of methods as the year goes on.

We urge you to stay responsive to your child and make adjustments along the way based on your child's interests and needs. Your sincere interest in both your child and the subject will draw forth the spark of learning. Beyond the lesson plans and activities, it is who you are and what you bring to the learning relationship that makes it successful and rewarding. The Oak Meadow curriculum is not solely

interested in filling children with facts, but in helping parents and children become intelligent human beings, able to respond thoughtfully, imaginatively, and effectively to the world in which they live.

How to Begin

If this is your first experience with homeschooling, understand that it can take weeks or even a few months before you and your child have settled into a rhythm and routine that feels natural and productive. Be patient with yourself and your child. Expect that things may feel awkward or even unsuccessful in your first few lessons. You and your child will soon learn what works well and what does not, and together you will find your own unique and enjoyable approach to homeschooling.

In the meantime, here are a few tips that will help your homeschooling journey be more successful.

- After reading the introductory section, read through lesson 1 to get a sense of what you will be doing in the first week. Look ahead several lessons so that you become familiar with the weekly format and the pace of the activities.
- Reference the materials list and gather needed supplies. You may want to do this one week at a time, or gather all the materials you'll need for several months in advance.
- Begin reading *The Heart of Learning* and *Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades*. You don't have to complete both before you begin your lesson work, but it will be helpful to familiarize yourself with what each contains, and give yourself time to absorb some of it. You will probably find yourself referring back to both of these books throughout the year.
- After you have looked through all your materials and read a few lessons, if you have questions that are not answered by looking over more lessons or rereading the introductory section, feel free to call the Oak Meadow office to ask for clarification.

How to Use the Main Lesson Book

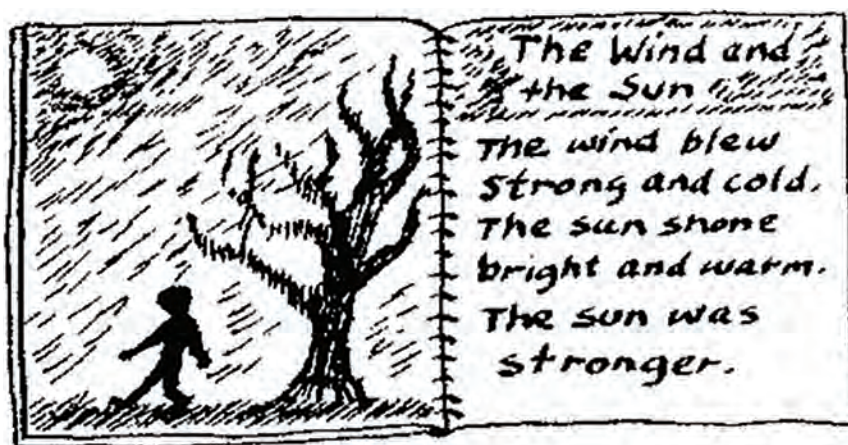
The main lesson book (MLB) serves as a way to collect all of your child's work in one place. You may want to have a set of books for your child and another set of books for yourself—this way you can work together side by side.

In each MLB, your child will fill the blank pages with beautiful, colorful drawings, and carefully formed letters and numbers. They should be encouraged to put their best work in this book and to take the time to decorate the borders of the pages, to add detail to drawings, and to take up the whole page. You can model this behavior in your own main lesson book. You can also glue into the MLB photos of larger projects, leaves and seeds collected for science studies, and anything else you would like to include in this special book. A main lesson book takes on a marvelous personality during the course of the year, and becomes a treasured record of your child's educational journey.

We encourage the use of crayons for both drawing and writing, and Oak Meadow's main lesson books come with onion skin paper between the pages to keep the crayon drawing from rubbing off on other

pages. Colored pencils also work well in the main lesson book. Unlike markers or pens, crayons and colored pencils produce a softer, more changeable line that encourages students to trace over their work if they need to change the shape of a form, letter, or number.

As your child begins to write more, they will probably want to use pencils instead of crayons because they produce a more refined line and make it easier to write legibly in a smaller space. Your child may want to switch to a graphite pencil or may continue to use colored pencils throughout the year.



Circle Time

It is helpful to start each day with a brief time of gathering together, which we call circle time. It is often easy and fun to include brothers, sisters, and other family members in circle time. Through vigorous, playful rhyming verses, songs, and large and small motor activities, the body and mind “wake up” and become ready for more focused work later in the morning.

Here are some tips for a successful circle time:

Location: When possible, have your circle time in the same area of your home each morning, so this place becomes associated with the activity. An open, uncluttered space with plenty of morning light is particularly nice.

Beginning verse: Say the opening verse (or a poem of your choice) once everyone is sitting or standing together. Your child will join you as the verse becomes familiar. Speaking clearly emphasizes the sounds of the letters in a way that can greatly enhance the language arts lessons. You will find suggested verses throughout the coursebook.

Songs, movement verses, and fingerplays: Each day you will do several songs and verses, many of which will have movements. Fingerplays are verses that are acted out using the hands in some way, and movement verses encourage more full-body involvement. It is important to use the same songs and verses each day for at least a week, or even several weeks, so that your child has time to learn each one and become fully involved. Children love repetition! Add one or two new songs and verses each week, but go back to familiar verses frequently. Many fingerplays, verses, songs, and activities are included in the *Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades* and you can

learn the tunes to the songs on the *Oak Meadow Circle Time Songs* CD. You may also remember some childhood favorites, or you can get a book from the library for more ideas. Add stretching, skipping, jumping, and crawling games to really get things moving. Get down on the floor and roll around. Be silly, playful, and energetic!

Closing verse: End with the closing verse before you begin the morning's main lesson. We suggest you use the same opening and closing verse for about three months. Surprisingly, children do not tend to get tired of the opening and closing verses since these verses act as markers for the beginning and end of circle time. You will find new opening and closing verses introduced every 12 weeks (lesson 1, lesson 13, and lesson 25).

Creating a Daily Structure and Rhythm

We have written the curriculum so that each subject is presented in a natural, informal manner. It is always beneficial when children do not feel forced into the activity, but instead become involved because it sparks something within them. Some children enjoy a consistent schedule for “school” each day, and for those children it is important to maintain regular periods, but this is not necessarily the most effective way to approach homeschooling for most children. We feel that the best approach is often to integrate the projects and assignments into the natural flow of daily activities. In this way, the child gradually develops the attitude that expanding one's knowledge and capabilities is part of the process of life, and indeed is what life is all about.

Regardless of whether or not you establish a regular school schedule, creating a consistent daily rhythm is highly recommended. Living and learning are synonymous, and homeschooling should feel like a natural extension of family life. Taking the time and effort to establish your daily rhythm will make a difference in the long run. Young children naturally need a lot of freedom to explore and express themselves creatively. They also need to have opportunities to move from active, outward (“expanded”) states, such as during vigorous or social play, to more inward, focused (“contracted”) states, such as listening to a story or drawing. When a child is either expanded or contracted for too long a period of time, they become restless and irritable.

The following schedule offers a natural balance between active and focused periods, and provides a good foundation for a daily routine.

Circle time: After the morning routine of dressing and eating breakfast is finished, start your day with 15 minutes of verses, songs, fingerplays, and movement activities.

Morning main lesson: After circle time, proceed to a 45–60-minute main lesson activity. We suggest that you focus on language arts four or five days a week, math three days a week, and social studies two times per week. This is just a suggestion, of course—you can plan your schedule according to whatever works best for your child and your family.

Creative free play: This is a daily time when you can attend to your other responsibilities, while also allowing your child to play freely or imitate you in your activities. Provide many opportunities

for creative play, and consider this play period an important part of learning. There are many suggestions for creative play in this introduction, and we encourage you to frequently put away unused toys and introduce new elements for your child to discover.

Afternoon lesson time: After lunch, two afternoons a week, focus on science lessons, enjoying relevant stories and activities. Three days a week, use this time for arts and crafts, music, and health.

Outings and field trips: Walks through the neighborhood, trips to stores, visits to museums, and play dates at the playground are all learning experiences that you can integrate into your homeschooling day. Bringing your child out into a range of social environments helps them learn a great deal about the larger community and is an important element of your home-based education. Make note of special outings on your weekly planner and incorporate them into your week's activities.

Creative free play: After dinner, allow opportunities for relaxed play in the evening.

Bedtime routine: Your bedtime story will become an important part of the next day's lessons. You'll find more detailed suggestions for a bedtime routine below.

Creating a Simple Bedtime Routine

Children have a real need for order and rhythm in their lives, and the bedtime ritual is an important part of this routine. It can be short or long and can include a variety of elements, depending on the needs of the child and the parents, but the basic purpose is always the same: to help the child calm down from the day's activities and prepare for sleep. During the bedtime routine, brief conversations often occur that can range from the practical to the sublime, and help to resolve the concerns of the day and prepare the child for a restful night's sleep.

For all of us, sleep is a time of rejuvenation—a time to let go of our daily concerns and recharge ourselves physically, emotionally, and mentally. When we view sleep in this light and prepare ourselves consciously for it each night, we derive the greatest benefit from it. As important as this is for adults, it is even more important for children because they are more sensitive than adults and are more influenced by what they experience prior to sleeping.

We offer the following tips to help you create a healthy and satisfying bedtime routine.

Be consistent, but not rigid: Try to be consistent in the timing and the sequence of the elements of the routine, but don't let the routine become more important than the child. The whole tone of the bedtime ritual should be relaxed and loving, not pressured and forceful. If change is necessary, talk with your child about it first. Children can be quite reasonable when they know their needs, ideas, and feelings are respected.

Make a smooth transition: A smooth bedtime routine can help you end your day with a feeling of harmony. However, for many parents, bedtime is a source of conflict. Most of the problems that arise are a result of not giving children sufficient opportunity to make the transition from the "waking mode" to the "sleeping mode." Just as people need time in the morning to wake up, so

they need time in the evening to slow down and prepare for sleep. If you want your child to go to bed at 8:00, you can't stay busy until 7:45 and expect your child to be quietly lying in bed at 8:00. At about 7:00, you should set aside what you are doing and begin the bedtime routine. By giving yourself and your child sufficient time in the evening, you provide an opportunity for quiet talk and a feeling of closeness as they gradually prepare for sleep.

Focus on activities with value: Bedtime is a perfect time to focus on things that have a broader perspective or a deeper significance than the little concerns of the day. At the close of the day, there is a natural tendency to want to put everything in perspective, to consider the more intangible and enduring aspects of our lives, and children feel the same need. Simple conversations that arise at bedtime, as children (and parents) reflect on things that they have experienced during the course of the day, are often a wonderful way to connect with one another and with the inner values you share.

This process can be helped by reading or telling stories that have a timeless value, such as the great myths, legends, fables, and fairy tales that have been handed down from generation to generation. Stories such as these contain profound messages, and enable children to experience the deeper aspects of life. This creates an opportunity to appreciate and enjoy each other as loving human beings who are sharing a journey of discovery together.

Creating a Supportive Homeschooling Environment

We offer the following ideas to families who are beginning to think about creating a new learning environment in the home. While much of it may seem to be common sense, we all need reminders to reconnect with the simple elements of creating a nurturing home for young children. It is easy to be lured by the “more is better” culture; we all end up with toy rooms overstuffed with toys, with videos and games that overstimulate, and with a weekly to-do list that feels more like a circus than a schedule. Yet, when considering introducing the new elements of homeschooling, it is important to look at your home environment with fresh eyes.

This is a great opportunity to make any changes and adjustments you have been intending to make. Even subtle or simple changes in the way a room is organized, or reducing the amount of screen time and overall media noise in your home, can have a renewing and enlivening effect on every family member. Young children are especially sensitive to these elements, and we encourage you to begin your homeschooling experience with a fresh start, an uncluttered space, and an open mind. Create a schedule that makes room for explorations and discoveries, and go forward into each day prepared to stop and smell the roses (sometimes literally!) whenever a “teachable moment” presents itself. In many ways, every moment is a learning moment.

Imitation Activities

Young children learn naturally through imitation, and this is still true of the second grader. When we include our children in the daily activities of life, allowing them to work side by side with us, they learn

essential tasks at their own pace, developing practical skills without feeling pressured to perform. The kitchen, with its daily bustle, is an excellent place to begin. Children often love to help prepare food. Kneading bread is a fun activity for children to dig their hands into, and they enjoy shaping their own little loaves or forming the bread into animal, letter, and number shapes. Have your child help set the table, and when flowers are in season, they can pick some to put on the table. After the meal, you can wash the dishes together. When parent and child work together, a harmonious flow is established between them, which results in a deeper bond.

No matter the task, your child will enjoy working alongside you when you bring an upbeat attitude to the task. If you give them a directive to clean up and you do not participate, however, they will most likely balk at the idea. Children want to do things *with* parents—this is the key.

Creative Play

Is your house overflowing with games, toys, books, stuffed animals, paper, and bits and pieces of everything in between? Such spaces occur naturally, and are the result of healthy, creative activity. Yet, too much stuff can make individual toys inaccessible, and the overall scene of piles upon piles of treasures can be quite uninspiring and overwhelming. You may consider doing a thorough organization before beginning your homeschooling experience. One method is to have a “50 percent Reduction” day, where just about half of everything is carefully put away into boxes and stored for another day (labeling the boxes is a great idea!). Do you have five puzzles out? Put away two or three for now. Do you have a dozen stuffed animals in an overflowing basket? Choose six to keep and six to take a break (“take a vacation”). Clearing out and bringing order to the physical spaces of play and learning can have a positive, refreshing influence on children and parents alike.

Once everything is organized and accessible, creative play often emerges naturally from the events of your day and the stories your child hears. Playing house or store, dressing up and acting out stories, building with blocks, and other such activities can easily be an extension of your focused main lesson times.

We offer the following list of classic creative play ideas.

Dress up: Many children love to act, so have a good collection of outfits and props on hand. Thrift stores and garage sales are great places to find interesting garments and accessories for your costume box. Hats, gloves, shoes, costume jewelry of all kinds, old neckties, shawls—all can be part of a well-stocked costume box. Large silk or cotton scarves are also wonderful for creative play.

Shopkeeper: Cans of food, a small bag of popcorn, a box of uncooked pasta, or small unopened packages of beans and other foods can stock the “store” shelves, and play money (or real coins) can make the experience more real for your child. Also, you can use empty food boxes and cans, taping up the lids so they can be safely used for a pretend store.

Playhouse or fort: Use a large cloth thrown over a table or an arrangement of chairs, to create a cozy playhouse. Making a house out of a large box (ask your local refrigerator or washing machine dealer) is also fun. Cut out windows and doors, and paint the outside of the house with shutters

around the windows, flowers growing around the edges, or any decorations that strike your child's fancy.

Block play: A set of plain wooden blocks in basic shapes—squares, rectangles, round “towers,” etc.—offers endless possibilities. Blocks that are of consistent and relative sizes (“unit” blocks that show two square blocks equal one rectangular block, or two triangular blocks equal one square block) are excellent for developing an awareness of mathematical relationships. By simply playing with these blocks, children become comfortable and familiar with simple concepts of addition and subtraction, comparison and

sequencing, and many other important ideas. Large cardboard “bricks” are also excellent building blocks, and can be used to create very tall towers and entire castles. They are lightweight and easy to stack, and won't hurt anyone when they fall down.

While small interlocking plastic blocks (like LEGO and DUPLO) are a great hit with children and can lead to hours of imaginative play, we encourage you to provide a sturdy set of wooden blocks. There is a big difference in the feel, sound, and experience of using wooden blocks as opposed to plastic blocks, and they will undoubtedly be used throughout the years by children of all ages.

Items from nature: As the year progresses, you can develop collections of nature items. Shells, stones, nuts, pine cones, and other materials from nature can be kept in small baskets in an easy-to-reach place. Your child will naturally gravitate to playing with them in an amazing variety of ways.

Handwork: Keep beeswax and clay handy. Make your own modeling dough (two recipes are provided at the end of this resource book) in addition to using purchased clay. Materials for handwork (yarn, felt, construction paper and other interesting papers, scissors, glue, craft sticks, etc.) can be kept on a low shelf, easily available whenever needed.

Sand play: All that is needed is a pile of sand and some natural materials such as branches, leaves, small sticks, stones, acorns or other seed pods, grass, etc. Containers and “diggers” of different sizes and shapes (from thimble and spoon to bucket and shovel) and a bucket of water will allow your child endless possibilities.



Nurturing a Healthy Imagination

A child's “play” is actually an extraordinarily complex learning process! It is the way a child learns to make sense of the world. Any parent or teacher who has closely watched a child absorbed in

imaginative play must be impressed by the intensity of the play and its reality to the child. Social situations and emotional challenges are given expression in the safe world of a child's pretend play. In this way, a child is able to confront difficulties, try out solutions, and integrate problem-solving techniques into their being.

In recent years, however, simple toys have been replaced by a bewildering variety of toys designed to attract attention, make noise or move on their own, or tie into a movie or TV show. Electronic devices come loaded with enticing games and everywhere you turn, "there's an app for that." Even young children are targeted by media conglomerates eager to get technology into every little hand. Although one can admire the ingenious nature of these toys and electronic games, careful observation of children's relationship to these toys reveals an interesting point. These toys may be very alluring and fascinating at first, but children soon discover that the possibilities in such toys are limited. For example, if the toy moves and makes noise on its own, it takes away the child's fun of moving the toy and making noises. A rectangular wooden block can become a table, car, boat, house, man, or many other things as a child creates the details of it in their imagination. However, a Galactic Star Cruiser can only be a Galactic Star Cruiser. The child quickly loses interest or wants another more complex toy. A craving for more and more toys is often accompanied by less and less satisfaction.

When play centers around simple toys such as blocks, cardboard boxes, sand play, etc., the imaginative faculties are continually being strengthened and refined, for the child must supply the details of the adventure from within. A child who grows in such an environment develops the ability to see the possibilities inherent in all things, which lends itself to the skills of creative problem-solving, flexibility of thought, and a strong, independent mind.

The Importance of Fairy Tales

One of the central themes of the Oak Meadow lower school curriculum is offering children the opportunity to develop their imaginative capacities by introducing subject content through rich story images. Stories (particularly those without pictures) allow children the chance to enhance their innate ability to see and feel characters, landscapes, interactions, gestures, predicaments, and solutions in their mind's eye. Children also connect with these characters and events on an emotional or heart level, and begin developing their ability to empathize with another's situation, and to explore the nature of relationships.

Some tips for using fairy tales:

- Before reading to a child, we recommend that you read through the fairy tale at least one day before telling it so you are familiar with the images, characters, and plot of the story and so that you have an opportunity to think about parts of the story that you might want to present differently. Tell the story with your own creative interpretation that you feel will connect your child with the story more effectively.
- As adults, we tend to identify with characters quite literally, but the child thinks in a more imaginative way. The fairy tale speaks strongly to the young child because good always prevails over

bad, and this is what children need to hear. Remember that these stories are not likely to be interpreted literally by a child, as children tend to focus on the archetypes and images presented instead.

- During the story recall, support your child in remembering actual events and the sequence in which they happened. Don't worry about asking them to articulate an opinion at this stage.

For more tips about storytelling in general and its nourishing role in child development, please refer to the *Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades*.

The Influence of Screen Time and Media

From a developmental perspective, many parents and educators are concerned about the amount of time that children spend in front of a TV, computer screen, or electronic device. Young children are often riveted by moving pictures on a screen, be it video or computer games, movies or TV, or any other form of entertainment that is screen-based, but children benefit most from being physically active. They should be encouraged to run, jump, play, imagine, and use their hands to create things. While occasional movie viewing or interactions with technology don't normally present a problem, we don't feel that regular screen time is healthy for young children because it takes them away from physical activity, which is very important for their balanced growth.

It can be difficult to find a balance between indulging a child's desires and limiting exposure to TV, movies, computer games, handheld electronic devices, and other screen time. Most parents feel there are many positive programs that their child can benefit from or enjoy, and no doubt about it—TV (or online resources) can be an excellent educator and entertainer. However, electronic media can also get in the way of exploring, playing, interacting with parents and others, or just letting the mind wander, all of which encourage learning and healthy physical and social development.

Many educators have also noted that screen time can negatively influence the way a child plays. When children play, they often imitate what they see on the screen instead of engaging in their own creative and imaginative play. The more screen time children have, the more they will expect fast-paced action and excitement. They come to expect to be entertained and often act bored when they find themselves faced with free-play time. It can become hard for them to come up with their own original, creative play scenarios to explore, solve, and learn from.

Creative play lays the foundation for academic learning, and is vital for healthy intellectual, social, and physical development in young children. If your child needs help finding things to do when the TV is turned off, suggest other activities and be willing to join in the creative play until they are able to become involved and absorbed. With this approach, your child will soon develop the inner capacity to create original play scenarios and free-play time will become enlivened and enriched. (If screen time or boredom are concerns in your household, please read the chapters in *The Heart of Learning* that address these topics.)



Language Arts Resources

Word Families

ACK: sack black snack pack back track

AD: had pad lad sad tad mad glad

AIL: snail rail pail nail wail

AIN: plain grain main rain Spain

AM: ram jam Sam gram

AN: man plan fan pan ran span can

ANK: Hank plank blank crank bank sank

AP: cap flap map lap strap snap crack

AR: car jar star far

AT: rat hat fat cat mat flat

AY: play bay way day gray stay today okay

ED: bed sled red fed

EED: steed speed feed seed

ELL: dell well bell fell yell

EN: glen hen den then ten men

ENT: tent event went cent

EST: quest best nest west rest

EW: few crew stew brew grew drew new

ICK: chick pick brick click thick stick quick kick trick

IGHT: knight light bright delight sight

ILL: bill will mill hill fill still spill

IN: in thin fin spin twin grin

INE: dine pine line shine nine vine

ING: wing swing king sing bring thing spring

INK: pink drink sink blink wink

IP: ship trip drip slip grip flip trip

IT: sit knit quit it bit

OCK: flock dock rock sock clock

OP: crop chop stop shop mop top prop drop hop flop

ORE: shore tore wore store more sore

OT: hot pot tot trot got not

OUT: scout about trout snout shout

OW (short O sound): cow sow how plow chow bow

OW (long O sound): crow low snow glow grow slow blow throw

UCK: duck stuck muck cluck pluck luck

UG: bug dug snug slug shrug

UM: drum plum hum glum gum

UN: fun run sun spun

UNK: skunk junk trunk bunk plunk

Y: fly shy cry my try dry

Consonant Blends and Digraphs

bl	br	ch	cl	cr	dr
black	brag	chain	clam	crab	drag
blame	brain	chair	clap	crack	draw
blank	brake	chalk	class	crash	dream
blast	brand	chance	claw	creep	dress
bleed	brave	change	clay	crib	drip
blend	breeze	chase	clean	crime	drop
blind	brick	chat	climb	crop	drum
block	bring	check	clock	cross	dry
bloom	broke	cheek	close	crow	
blow	broom	chest	clown		
blue	brother	chick			
blush	brown	chin			
	brush	choose			
		chop			

fl	fr	gl	gr	pl	pr
flag	frame	glad	grab	place	press
flake	free	glade	grape	plan	price
flame	freeze	glass	grass	plane	pride
flap	fresh	glide	green	plate	prince
flash	friend	glib	grin	play	prize
flat	frog	glove	grip	please	probe
flip	from	glow	grow	plot	problem
float	front	glue	growl	plug	prance
flow	fry			plus	precious
flower	Frisbee				precise
fly					predict

sh	sl	sm	st	th	wh
shade	slam	small	stand	that	whale
share	sled	smart	staple	the	what
shark	sleep	smell	step	their	when
she	slid	smile	steep	then	where
sheep	slip	smog	sting	there	white
sheet	slow	smoke	stop	these	why
shell			store	they	
shine			story	thin	
ship			street	think	
shirt			string	this	
shop				those	
shot				thumb	
should					
show					
shut					

Short Vowel Words

short A	short E	short I	short O	short U
add	bed	big	fox	bus
bad	fed	pig	box	mud
dad	red	bill	cot	cub
sad	beg	hill	dog	tub
band	leg	crib	fog	drum
hand	egg	fib	knob	gum
grand	desk	dish	job	hut
sand	fence	fish	on	nut
bag	get	wish	mom	jug
rag	jet	grin	mop	rug
sag	met	in	top	mug

short A	short E	short I	short O	short U
tag	pet	tin	drop	bug
cab	set	win	hop	luck
tab	vet	king	not	tuck
cap	wet	sing	pot	up
map	yet	wing	hot	pup
nap	help	did	jot	cup
tap	yelp	hid	lock	run
can	nest	lid	rock	sun
fan	test	milk	sock	fun
man	pest	silk	shock	fudge
plan	rest	rip	stock	
bat	vest	sip	song	
cat	bent	ship	toss	
fat	sent	fix		
mat	den	six		
pat	ten	this		
sat	men	sip		
am	when	tip		
ham	web	dip		
		whip		
		clip		
		zip		



Stories: Social Studies

Loawnu and the Fallen Sky: A Tale of Ancient China Lesson 1

Many years ago, when the Xia people were still the makers of stories, there was a little village that lay by the Huang He River. The children of the village were very excited, for very soon now the great festival was coming. The whole town was in a flourish. Silk had been harvested to make the cloths of glorious colors that the townspeople would carry. The wind would carry them and the colors would dance; the silks would be transformed into the wings of the sky itself. Rice cakes were formed, and already villagers from neighboring towns were arriving.

On the day before the festival, the children were very busy tidying the village and preparing the lanterns that would bring light to the night sky. All at once, one little girl called to her friends, “Come quickly, come quickly, friends. The sky has fallen. What are we to do?”

Now it was, in those early days, that if there were a problem in the village, the village wise woman was consulted. The wise woman of this village was named Loawnu, and it was said that she could speak with the ancestors directly. The children ran to Loawnu’s hut and begged her to come with them.

“Loawnu, see for yourself. The sky has fallen. What are we to do? The festival is coming tomorrow. We will be shamed before all the villages!” Loawnu only smiled and returned to her hut. Over her shoulder she spoke to the children. “Gather the pieces of the sky, children, and bring them to me.” With that, she disappeared inside.

The children ran throughout the village, gathering all of the pieces of the sky. Some of the pieces were missing! Horrified, they ran again to Loawnu’s hut.

“Loawnu, Loawnu! We have brought you all of the pieces of the sky that we could find. But oh, Loawnu, some of the pieces are missing. Try as we might, we cannot find them. What are we to do? We will surely be shamed.” But Loawnu only smiled and told the children to go home to their beds.

On the morning of the festival, the children awoke and rushed outside. The sky dawned clear, bright, and blue! They found Loawnu and said gratefully, “Thank you; Loawnu, now our village will not be shamed before all the others. But what did you do with the missing pieces?” Again, Loawnu only smiled.

That night, the children looked happily up at the sky, black as ever before. All was dark, but for one thing. In each tiny spot where the missing pieces had been, Loawnu had fastened bright sparkling lights! Now the sky twinkled and sparkled at night.

And that is how Laownu brought light into the night sky.

The Fish Basket Goddess: A Tale from Ancient China

Lesson 2

Long ago there was but one way to reach the great capital city of Luoyang. Each day people came from all directions. Some were merchants selling silk and tea; others were students, anxious to take their imperial examinations. In order to reach the city, however, all people had to cross the great, wide river. Because the trip was long enough, parents would bring sweets and other foods for their children to enjoy as they slowly crossed the wide waters.

People would open their lunch boxes filled to brimming with roasted pig, scallion chicken, steamed fish, and sweet teas. The families would laugh and play together as they made their way to the city gates across the cool river.

One day River Dragon was awakened by the merry festivities of the people on their boats. “I’m bored,” he said to himself, “it is time I had some fun!” And so River Dragon raised his great golden tail and slashed the river water. He spun and spun the water until it became a torrent of waves, white and furious. The people were thrown out of their boats, children calling fearfully as lunches and goodies sank miserably to the bottom of the river.

“Oh my,” River Dragon said to himself, “this is fun. Look at all those people whining and crying. They are wet to the bone! What fun it is, dunking these silly ones. I don’t suppose they will wake me with their loud noises now!” But River Dragon was having too much fun to stop his swirling of the water.

At last a little girl climbed out of the angry waves to the water’s edge. She sat on the banks of the river and cried. “What am I to do?” the little girl sobbed. “My pork bun has sunk to the bottom of the river. I am hungry and I have nothing to eat!”

Up in her heavenly palace, the Goddess of Compassion, Guan Yin, heard the sorrowful cries of the people below. She descended to the river bank and called to the River Dragon.



“Honorable Dragon King!” she called. The River Dragon was curious to see this beautiful maiden standing by his river’s edge so bravely, so he came to her call.

“Honorable Dragon,” Guan Yin began again as the dragon approached. “Please stop making these waves. You are causing much sadness and grief to the people of China.”

But the River Dragon only laughed and said, “I know. Isn’t it fun? No, I do not believe I will stop. It is delightful to watch these people tossing to and fro on the waves. They amuse me.”

Guan Yin thought for a moment. “Then I suppose I shall have to think of another way.”

The River Dragon only laughed again. “Good fortune to you, lovely maiden!” And off he went to continue to set the waves spinning and swirling.

Guan Yin disguised herself as a fishmonger and went to the marketplace in the city. There she set up a large basket and sat beside it. In the basket were the most beautiful fish the people had ever seen. Their scales shone with all the colors of the rainbow and they appeared fresh and tasty. It was not long before all the fish were sold and the people begged for more.

Guan Yin said to the people, “Let us play a game. See my empty basket? Whoever throws the most coins into it, I will marry. But whatever coins miss the basket, we shall use to build a bridge so that you may walk safely over the Dragon King’s river.”

All the young men agreed happily and the coins began to fly forward. Try as they might, however, not one coin landed in the large basket. It was not long before the people had gathered enough money to build their bridge.

The River Dragon was greatly saddened when he could no longer have his fun throwing the people into his river. He glumly sank to the river’s bottom and has not been seen since.



Stories: Math

Mr. Placevalue's Houses Lesson 11

Once there was a man named Mr. Placevalue. No one ever knew what his first name was; they just called him Mr. Placevalue. Now, everyone is involved in some kind of business, and Mr. Placevalue's business was houses. He loved to buy houses and rent them to people who needed places to live.

Mr. Placevalue owned one group of houses that were connected all in a row, side by side, and each house was 10 times as tall as the house next to it. They made a very funny sight to see. We can't draw a picture of the way they really looked, because there wouldn't be room on the paper, but you can imagine that they must have looked like stair steps, something like this:

Because each house was 10 times as tall as the one next to it, Mr. Placevalue gave them each a special name. The first house in the row, which was the smallest, he called the ONES house, and he put a big sign on it with the number 1, so everyone would know that was the ONES house. The ONES house was the smallest of the houses, and could hold 9 people, but no more.

The house next to it was called the TENS house because it was ten times as tall as the ONES house. It could hold a lot more people than the ONES house. In fact, it had so many rooms, it could hold 90 people! But 90 people was the limit. There wasn't room for any more. On the front of that house was a big sign with the number 10, so everyone would know that was the TENS house.

Next came the HUNDREDS house. That was 10 times as tall as the TENS house, so you can image how many rooms it must have had. It could hold 900 people, but no more. There was a sign on the front with the number 100.

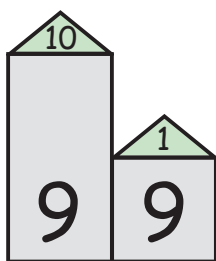
And finally came the THOUSANDS house, which would hold 9,000 people, but no more. The sign on the front of that read 1,000. Of course, each house was 10 times as tall as the last, so the THOUSANDS house was absolutely immense.



Mr. Placevalue was very careful about keeping an exact count of how many people were in each building. He never allowed more people to live in each building than were supposed to. When he first bought the four connecting houses, he was repairing the larger houses, so he only rented the ONES house. At that time he had 9 people living in the ONES house, so in his rental book he wrote down the following:

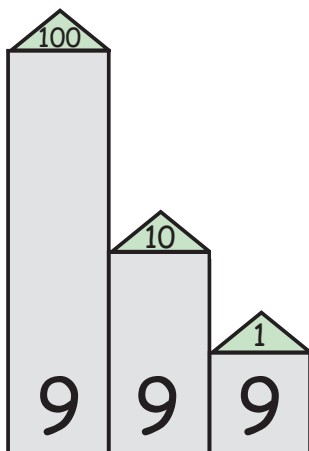


That reminded him that there were 9 people living in the ONES house. Later, as he fixed the TENS house, he rented that too. People were eager to live in the funny-looking houses, and soon it had 90 people living in it. So he wrote in his book:



That meant he had 90 people in the TENS house (9 groups of 10) and 9 people in the ONES house. By looking at the numbers he knew he had 99 people living in his houses.

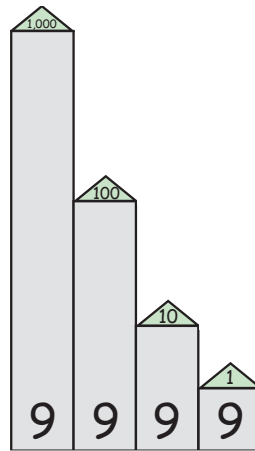
When he had fixed the next house and rented it, he soon had people living in that, so he wrote that down:



That told him he had 900 in the HUNDREDS house (9 groups of 100), 90 in the TENS house (9 groups of 10), and 9 in the ONES house. That made a total of 999 people. Mr. Placevalue was a kind man, and everyone enjoyed living in his funny-looking connected houses.

Mr. Placevalue's New House Lesson 12

As word spread of what nice houses Mr. Placevalue had, more people wanted to move in. Mr. Placevalue soon repaired his next house and filled it with 9,000 people. This brought the total in his record book up to 9,999, which he wrote like this:



After the houses were rented for several months, many of the tenants complained to Mr. Placevalue that the children who lived in the houses were bouncing balls against the front of the houses while they were playing, and sometimes windows were being broken accidentally. Since Mr. Placevalue loved children, he didn't want to tell them that they couldn't bounce their balls, but he was very concerned about the windows that were being broken. So he decided to build a wall for the children to bounce balls against.

As there were so many people living in the THOUSANDS house and the HUNDREDS house, he decided to build the wall right between those two houses. When the wall was finished, the group of houses looked like this:

With 9,999 people living in his houses, Mr. Placevalue was a very busy man! Soon he stopped drawing pictures of his houses and just wrote down the numbers of people as they moved in and out. When he wrote down the number of tenants (for example, 8,647), he always put a little mark (which we call a comma) where the children's wall was.

Mr. Placevalue liked always knowing exactly how many people were living in his houses. He was glad the numbers could tell him this. For example, in the number 8,647, which we used above, the number all the way to the right was a 7. Mr. Placevalue knew that meant there were 7 people in the ONES house. The next number was a 4, and he knew that meant there were 4 groups of 10, or 40



people, living in the TENS house. The third number was a 6, which meant there were 6×100 , or 600 people, living in the HUNDREDS house. And finally, there were $8 \times 1,000$, or 8,000 people, living in the THOUSANDS house.

When Mr. Placevalue writes numbers on a form like this, he likes to read each number aloud. So, when he sees a number such as 3,567, he says, “Three thousand, five hundred sixty-seven.” When he sees 475, he says, “Four hundred seventy-five.” Mr. Placevalue enjoyed writing and saying the numbers almost as much as he enjoyed seeing all the friendly people living in his fine houses.

Mr. Placevalue's Millions Lesson 13

Mr. Placevalue continued to work diligently on fixing up his houses and giving people great places to live. As you know, there was the ONES house, which fit a total of 9 people, and no more. There was the TENS house, which fit a total of 90 people and no more. There was the HUNDREDS house, which fit 900 people and no more, and then there was the wall for children to play ball against.

The children in Mr. Placevalue's homes loved to play ball so much that Mr. Placevalue decided to build walls between every three houses from now on. So, after the HUNDRED THOUSANDS house, Mr. Placevalue built a wall before continuing.

Each of the three houses between the walls created one block. The first block included the ONES, TENS, and HUNDREDS houses. The second block was the thousands block, and it had the THOUSANDS, TEN THOUSANDS, and HUNDRED THOUSANDS houses.

When Mr. Placevalue built a new block, he named it the millions block. This block included the MILLIONS house, the TEN MILLIONS house, and the HUNDRED MILLIONS house.

When Mr. Placevalue counted up all the people in his houses, he wrote this number in his book:

123,456,789



Stories: Science

The Ant and the Cricket Lesson 2

Once upon a time, one hot summer, a cricket sang cheerfully on the branch of a tree, while down below, a long line of ants struggled gamely under the weight of their load of grains; and between one song and the next, the cricket spoke to the ants. “Why are you working so hard? Come into the shade, away from the sun, and sing a song with me.” But the tireless ants went on with the work. “We can’t do that,” they said. “We must store away food for the winter. When the weather is cold and the ground white with snow, there’s nothing to eat, and we’ll survive the winter only if the pantry is full.”

“There’s plenty of summer to come,” replied the cricket, “and lots of time to fill the pantry before winter. I’d rather sing! How can anyone work in this heat and sun?”

And so all summer, the cricket sang while the ants labored. But the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months. Autumn came, the leaves began to fall, and the cricket left the bare tree. The grass was turning thin and yellow. One morning, the cricket woke shivering with cold. An early frost tinged the fields with white and turned the last of the green leaves brown; winter had come at last. The cricket wandered, feeding on the few dry stalks left on the hard frozen ground. Then the snow fell and she could find nothing at all to eat. Trembling and hungry, she thought sadly of the warmth and her summer songs. One evening, she saw a speck of light in the distance, and, trampling through the thick snow, made her way toward it.

“Open the door! Please open the door! I’m starving. Give me some food!”

An ant leaned out the window. “Who’s there? Who is it?”

“It’s me, the cricket. I’m cold and hungry, with no roof over my head.”

“The cricket? Ah, yes! I remember you. And what were you doing all summer while we were getting ready for winter?”

“Me? I was singing and filling the whole earth and sky with my song!”

“Singing, eh?” said the ant. “Well, try dancing now!”

The Blackberry Bush

Lesson 10

from Celia Thaxter's *Stories and Poems for Children*

A little boy sat at his mother's knees, by the long western window, looking out into the garden. It was autumn, and the wind was high. The golden elm leaves lay scattered about the grass, and on the gravel path. His mother was knitting a little stocking, her fingers moving the bright needles, but her eyes were fixed on the clear evening sky.

As the darkness gathered, the boy laid his head on her lap and kept so still that, at last, she leaned forward to look into his round face. He was not asleep, but was watching very earnestly a blackberry bush that waved its one tall, dark red branch in the wind outside the fence.

"What are you thinking about, my boy?" she said, smoothing his soft hair.

"The blackberry bush, Mama. What is it saying? It keeps nodding, nodding to me behind the fence, what is it saying, Mama?"

"It says," she answered, 'I see a happy little boy in the warm, firelit room. The wind blows cold, and here it is dark and lonely. But that little boy is warm and happy and safe at his mother's knees. I nod to him, and he looks at me. I wonder if he knows how happy he is!'

"See, all my leaves are dark crimson. Every day they dry and wither more and more, and by and by they will be so weak, they will scarcely be able to cling to my branches. The north wind will tear them all away, and nobody will remember them any more. Then the snow will sink down and wrap me close. Then the snow will melt again and icy rain will clothe me, and the bitter wind will rattle my bare twigs up and down.

"I nod my head to all who pass, and dreary nights and dreary days go by. But in the happy house, so warm and bright, the little boy plays all day with books and toys. His mother and his father cherish him; he nestles on their knees in the red firelight at night, while they read to him lovely stories, or sing sweet old songs to him. Oh, what a happy little boy! And outside I peep over the snow and see a stream of warm light from a crack in the window shutter, and I nod out here alone in the dark, thinking how beautiful it is.

"And here I wait patiently. I feel the snow and the rain and the cold, and I am not sorry, but glad; for in my roots I feel warmth and life, and I know that a store of greenness and beauty is shut up safe in my small brown buds. Day and night go by again and again, little by little the snow melts all away, the ground grows soft, the sky is blue, and the little birds fly over, crying, 'It is spring! It is spring!' Ah! Then through all my twigs I feel the slow sap stirring.

"Warmer grow the sunbeams, and softer the air. The small blades of grass creep thick about my feet, and the sweet rain helps swell my shining buds. More and more I push forth my leaves, until out I burst



in a gay green dress, and nod in joy and pride. The little boy comes running to look at me, and cries, “Oh, Mamma! The little blackberry bush is alive and beautiful and green. Oh, come and see!” When I hear this, I bow my head in the summer wind, and every day they watch me grow more beautiful, until at last I shake out blossoms, fair and fragrant.

“A few days more, and I drop the white petals down in the grass, and there are the green tiny berries! Carefully I hold them up to the sun, and gather the dew in the summer nights. Slowly they ripen, growing larger and redder and darker, and at last they are black, shining, and delicious. I hold them as high as I can for the little boy, who comes dancing out. He shouts with joy, and gathers them in his hands. He runs to share them with his mother, saying, ‘Here is what the blackberry bush grew for us! Aren’t they nice, Mamma!’

“Ah! I am glad, and if I could, I would say, ‘Yes, take them, little boy, for I kept them for you, holding them long up to sun and rain to make them sweet and ripe for you.’ Then I nod and nod, fully content, for my work is done. From the window the boy watches me and thinks, ‘There is the little blackberry bush that was so kind to me. I see it and I love it. I know it is safe out there nodding all alone, and next summer it will hold ripe berries up for me to gather again.’”

Then the boy smiled, because he liked the story. His mother took him up in her arms, and they went to supper and left the blackberry bush nodding up and down in the wind. It is still nodding there now.

The Cloud Lesson 10



One hot summer morning, a little cloud rose out of the sea and floated lightly and happily across the blue sky. Far below lay the Earth, brown, dry, and desolate, from drought. The little cloud could see the poor people of the Earth working and suffering in the hot fields, while she herself floated on the morning breeze, hither and thither, without a care.

“Oh, if I could only help the poor people down there!” she thought. “If I could but make their work easier, or give the hungry ones food, or the thirsty a drink!”

And as the day passed, and the cloud became larger, this wish to do something for the people of Earth became greater in her heart.

On Earth, it grew hotter and hotter. The sun shone down so fiercely that the people were fainting in its rays. It seemed as if they must die of heat, and yet they were obliged to go on with their work, for they were very poor. Sometimes they stood and looked up at the cloud, as if they were praying, and saying, “Ah, if you could help us!”

“I will help you, I will!” said the cloud. And she began to sink softly down toward the Earth.

But suddenly, as she floated down, she remembered something that had been told to her when she was a tiny cloud-child, in the lap of Mother Ocean. It had been whispered that if the clouds go too near the Earth they die. When she remembered this, she held herself from sinking, and swayed here and there on the breeze, thinking and thinking. But at last she stood quite still, and spoke boldly and proudly. She said, “People of Earth, I will help you, come what may!”

The thought made her suddenly marvelously big and strong and powerful. Never had she dreamed that she could be so big. Like a mighty angel of blessing she stood above the Earth, and lifted her head and spread her wings far over the fields and woods. She was so great, so majestic, that people and animals were awestruck at the sight. The trees and the grasses bowed before her, yet all the Earth-creatures felt that she meant them well.

“Yes, I will help you,” cried the cloud once more. “Take me to yourselves, I will give my life for you!”

As she said the words, a wonderful light glowed from her heart, the sound of thunder rolled through the sky, and a love greater than words can tell filled the cloud. Down, down, close to the Earth she swept, and she gave up her life in a blessed, healing shower of rain.

That rain was the cloud’s great deed, and it was her death too. But it was also her glory. Over the whole countryside, as far as the rain fell, a lovely rainbow sprang into an arch, and all the brightest rays of heaven made its colors. It was the last greeting of a love so great that it sacrificed itself.

Soon that, too, was gone, but long, long afterward the people and animals who were saved by the cloud kept her blessing in their hearts.