

# First Grade Overview

## First Semester

## Second Semester

### Language Arts

- Upper- and lowercase letters A-Z
- Long and short vowel sounds
- Fairy tales and poetry
- Word families
- Printing words
- Phonics

- Fairy Tales
- Form drawing
- Printing words
- Independent reading
- Writing out sentences
- Consonant blends
- Word games

### Social Studies

- HISTORY**
  - Classic fairy tales
  - Daily and monthly cycles
  - Yearly calendar
- GEOGRAPHY**
  - Navigating with a compass
  - Mapmaking and reading maps
  - Using a globe

- ECONOMICS**
  - Goods and services
  - Marketplace exchanges
  - Saving and spending
- CIVICS**
  - Rules and playing fair
  - Family jobs
  - Respect
  - Diversity

### Science

- Phases of the moon
- Constellations
- Life cycle of the seed
- Animal observations
- Weather and cloud formations
- Seasonal animal behavior, tracks, and hibernation
- Deciduous and coniferous trees

- Diurnal and nocturnal animals
- Forms of matter
- Pond and forest life
- Seed dispersal
- Pollination and bees
- Planting and charting plant growth
- Scientific inquiry
- Life cycle of a butterfly

### Math

- Four processes
- Ordinal numbers
- 2, 5, 10 times tables
- Translating story problems into equations
- Missing numbers
- Mental Math
- Counting/Sorting
- Form drawing

- Odd and even
- Number bonds
- Multistep problems
- 3 times tables
- Mental math
- Relationships between math processes
- Equations in vertical format
- Cumulative property of addition

### Arts & Crafts

Throughout the year, students engage in a variety of arts and crafts activities. Fine-motor dexterity and focus are developed through learning to knit, which benefits the child's developing writing skills. Highlights include making a bird feeder and nesting supply box, maintaining a seasonal display, wet paper watercolor painting, nature crafts, and creative sand and water play.

### Music & Movement

In addition to regular singing exercises, students learn how to play the recorder. Instructions and simple songs are included in Oak Meadow's *Beginning Recorder* book. Movement activities focus on balance, coordination, directional awareness, and rhythmic movements such as jumping rope.

### Health

The book *Healthy Living from the Start* 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 1

## Resource Book



**Oak Meadow**

**Oak Meadow, Inc.**

Post Office Box 615

Putney, Vermont 05346

[oakmeadow.com](http://oakmeadow.com)



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# Introduction

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Welcome to first grade! As your child moves beyond kindergarten, you may notice a new sense of mental alertness and an ability to grasp more difficult concepts emerging. These awakenings allow your child to develop further as an individual, and they open doors for new learning experiences. This year is a year of new discovery as you share stories, create, explore your community, and find a deeper understanding of the world around you.

You will find that our curriculum is different from what may be found at most public schools. Although we present all the traditional subjects, our approach is one that focuses more on the imaginative spirit of the child than one 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; you need not feel bound by the confines of the assignments presented. Our curriculum does intentionally focus on a few guiding principles in our approach to education, however. 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, and legends in our curriculum for this reason. For more explanation about this principle, see the section titled “Nurturing a Healthy Imagination” found in this introduction.
- **A child needs to have opportunities for artistic expression.** In all of a child's artistic explorations, it is good to remember that the process is more important than the form. Although there are numerous techniques and mediums 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 your child does not feel forced into any activity but rather 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

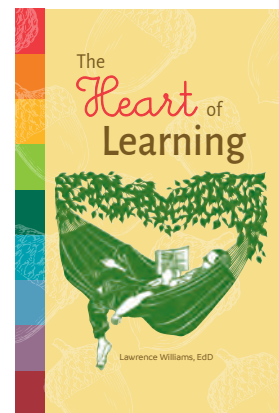
your own strengths. It is the light of your own understanding, and the love you have for your child, that will be the driving force in their growth as an individual. This is the essence and the gift of being a home teacher.

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

## Course Materials

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

- **Oak Meadow Grade 1 Coursebook** provides all the instructions and assignments for the full year of first grade.
- **Oak Meadow Grade 1 Resource Book** (this book) includes extensive instructions about teaching each subject, plus all the stories you will be reading this year in language arts, social studies, math, and science. It also includes an alternate set of stories in math so you have plenty of material with which to teach math concepts.
- **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 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 *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 includes a set of activities to choose from for each grade level, making it easy to use with children of different ages.
- **Oak Meadow Word Families** is used in language arts as children move from letter and sound recognition to the recognition of related words and emerging reading skills.



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



## 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 first 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.)

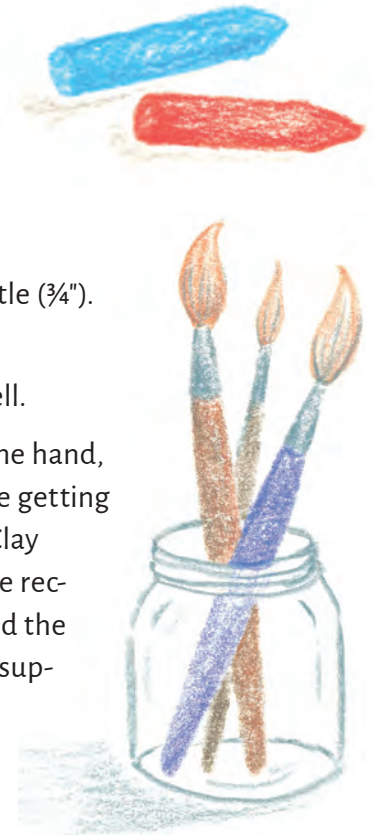
**Jumbo beeswax block or stick crayons:** A good quality set of crayons in the seven colors of the rainbow is an excellent choice.

**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, 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 in the the Creative Play section.) 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 *Oak Meadow Grade 1 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, movement, 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:** 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 1 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 who send 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 the 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 only interested in filling children with facts but also in helping parents and children become intelligent human beings who are 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.

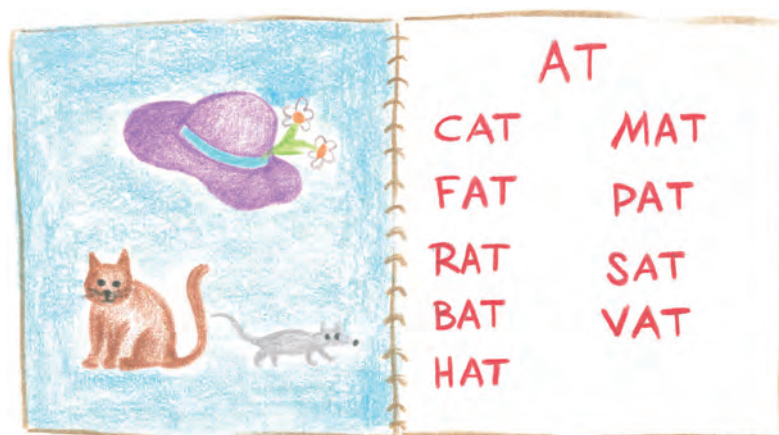
In the meantime, here are a few tips that will help your homeschooling journey be more successful.

- 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.
- Refer to 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.
- Choose where to begin your science curriculum based on the season. Lessons 1–12 focus on fall activities, lessons 13–24 focus on winter, and lessons 25–36 focus on spring. Select the appropriate group of science lessons for the season of the year in which you are beginning. If you live in a more temperate region, you can still do most of the assignments since science explorations are focused on observation and description. You can use whatever nature offers you outside your door for your science activities. All the other subjects in the curriculum should be followed sequentially, lessons 1–36.
- 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 main lesson book, your child will fill the blank pages with beautiful, colorful drawings and carefully formed letters and numbers. Your child should be encouraged to put their best work in this book and to take the time to decorate the borders of the pages, add detail to drawings, and cover the whole page. You can model this behavior in your own main lesson book. You can also glue into the main lesson book 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 in first grade, 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.

## 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.

**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 it 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 *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 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. New opening and closing verses are 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 four- to six-year-olds. We feel that the best approach is often to integrate the projects and assignments into the natural flow of daily activities so the child doesn’t make a distinction between “school” and “life.” 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 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 it 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 and social studies three times per week and math two times per week. It is not necessary to do each subject each day. However, if your child prefers to do a little math and a little language arts and social studies each day (perhaps imitating an older sibling), you can certainly plan your schedule accordingly.

**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 for about an hour. Three days a week, use this time for arts and crafts, music, movement, and health. You might choose two to do each day, depending on how long a particular project takes.

**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 home-schooling 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 to 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.

Most home teachers of first grade spend about two hours during the day of focused time with their children in homeschooling and another hour at bedtime, reading stories and talking about the day.

## 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.

Each family has its own version of the bedtime ritual, but the traditional approach usually includes taking a bath, brushing teeth, hearing a story, giving and receiving goodnight kisses, and in some families, saying prayers or recounting the blessings of the day (remembering the good things that happened). Of course, interspersed in this sequence are brief conversations that can range from the practical to the sublime, but all 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. Children derive great satisfaction from following a set pattern, but this doesn't mean that everything must always be *exactly* the same, or that you should never skip an evening, or that you can't do things a little differently if the circumstances require it. 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 "waking mode" to "sleeping mode." Just as people need time in the morning to wake up, they also need time in the evening to slow down and prepare for sleep. Often, however, parents don't give children time to make this transition, and they create conflict by trying to force them to make the shift at the last minute. 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 your child gradually prepares for sleep.

**Focus on activities with value:** After bathing and brushing teeth, take some quiet time for sharing, chatting, and reading aloud. Bedtime stories should be chosen carefully, leaving your child relaxed and open rather than revved up for action. You may spend this time in your child's room or in a special chair elsewhere. If you do it elsewhere, your child will still need to transition into the bedroom sometime during the routine. Once your child is in bed, you may want to sing one or two quiet bedtime songs to soothe them in preparation for sleep.

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 something more meaningful than whether our children have learned their multiplication tables. At this time of the day, we tend to be inclined 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 each other 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 discussions to families who are beginning to think about creating a new learning environment in the home. While much of the following 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**

Children in the first stage of development learn naturally through imitation. If possible, provide opportunities each day for your child to imitate you in your “real work.” Children would much rather be involved in the regular activities of the household than have life revolve around them. When we include our children in the daily activities of life, allowing them to work side by side with us instead of focusing all our attention on them, they learn essential tasks at their own pace, developing practical skills without feeling pressured to perform. When parent and child work together, a harmonious flow is established between them, which results in a deeper bond.

However, it is not enough to tell a child something—children need to be shown, and they need to have the supporting presence of the parent to help them maintain focus. What young children want most of all is simply to be with the parent and to be included in the parent’s activities. The kitchen, with its daily bustle, is an excellent place to begin. Children love to help wash the fruits and vegetables for a meal, and they are capable of cutting them when shown how to do so safely. 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.

Include your child when setting the table. Mealtimes become very special when you create a ritual. You may wish to have cloth place mats and napkins and to make napkin rings for each member of the family (a fun craft project to do with your child!). When flowers are in season, your child can pick some to put on the table. When care is brought to the presentation of the meal, your child is often able to eat in a calm and slow manner, and many problems associated with mealtimes may thus be avoided. Good manners flow more naturally when care is taken with the arrangement of the table and the family is calm and focused. Offering a special thanks for the food can be part of creating a special atmosphere.

After the meal, you can wash and dry dishes together. Ask your child to help put away the silverware in the proper slots. Buy your child a small broom so they can sweep the floor with you. When you make the beds, ask your child to get on one side of the bed with you on the other to help you pull up the sheet, blanket, and bedspread. Children love to fold clothes. Dish towels, washcloths, socks, and other small items are perfect for little hands. Teach your child to match socks and to stack the towels by color. All sorting and matching activities help build math and reading readiness.

No matter the task, your child will enjoy working alongside you when you bring an upbeat attitude to the task. If you give your child 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, from the stories your child hears and from the experiences they have. 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, and your child will often happily engage in these activities for an extended time without your active involvement.

The following is a list of classic creative play ideas.

**Play dress-up:** Children love to wear “big people clothes” so they can pretend to be the mommy or daddy, storekeeper, doctor, nurse, police officer, firefighter, and so on. They also like trying out all sorts of creative outfits. Thrift stores and garage sales are great places to find interesting garments and accessories for your costume box. Hats, gloves, shoes, silky things that can be draped, costume jewelry of all kinds, old neckties, and shawls can all be part of a well-stocked costume box.

**Play store with real food:** 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.



**Play house:** Use a large cloth thrown over a table or an arrangement of chairs to create a cozy pretend house. 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 they can be used to create very tall towers and entire castles. They are lightweight and easy to stack, and they won’t hurt little toes 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. Although wooden blocks are especially helpful for small children to use, they will undoubtedly be used throughout the years for larger constructions by children of all ages.

**Toys 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 here) 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.

**Grinding grain:** Put wheat berries or dried corn in an old-fashioned manual coffee grinder and let your child grind it into flour. Store wheat flour or cornmeal in a jar until there are several cups and then make bread together.

**Scarf play:** Large silk or cotton scarves are wonderful for creative play. Children love to wrap themselves in the scarves, use them as capes, or dance with them. They can be used to create forts and houses or to lay the foundation for a farm or water scene on the floor. You can simply buy large pieces of light, silky fabric and place them in a basket near the play area.

**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. A “drip castle” can be made by mixing a soggy mixture of water and sand, scooping up small handfuls of it, and then allowing it to drip down into a pile, adding to it bit by bit as it grows into an unusual castle.



## Simple Homemade Modeling Dough (Uncooked)

Ingredients:

**4 cups flour**

**2 cups water (add food coloring if desired)**

**1½ cups salt**

Combine flour and salt. Add the water little by little, kneading and mixing constantly. Put a little vegetable oil on your hands (and on your child's too) before taking the dough out of the bowl to knead on a board. Be careful not to add too much water—you want the dough to be soft but not overly squishy.

Kept in sealed containers in the refrigerator, this dough will last a couple of weeks. If you want to make several colors of dough at once, divide the flour and salt mixture into several bowls and divide the water, adding a different color to each batch.

## Simple Homemade Modeling Dough (Cooked)

Ingredients:

**2 cups baking soda**

**1 cup cornstarch**

**1¼ cups cold water (add food coloring if desired)**

Combine baking soda and cornstarch in a pan, and slowly add cold water while stirring. Cook over low heat, stirring often, for 5 or 6 minutes. Remove the dough from the pan and lay it out on a flat board to cool, covered with a damp cloth so it doesn't dry out.

When cool, knead the dough for about 10 minutes. Store it in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

If your child uses this dough to make something they want to keep, you can put the creation on a lightly greased cookie sheet and bake it for about 2 hours at 200°F. Then turn off the oven and let it sit for another 2 hours in the oven to cool and harden. The cooked, hardened project can be painted if desired.

## 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. Through the imaginative use of wooden blocks, dolls, scarves and capes, and other simple props, a child can create the characters and scenery for a rich and endless variety of imaginative scenarios.

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 be only 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 they begin developing their ability to empathize with another’s situation and start to explore the nature of relationships.

Fairy tales help introduce the forms, names, and sounds of the letters of the alphabet by painting colorful, diverse, and lively internal images. The act of telling a story also provides you and your child an opportunity to connect during a quiet moment together.

Some tips for using fairy tales:

- Before reading to your 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 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. The stories found in this book work well for making these connections.



- As adults, we tend to identify with characters quite literally, but children think in a more imaginative way. Fairy tales speak strongly to children because good always prevails over bad, and this is what they need to hear as they take some of the first steps into the next phase of development. Remember that these stories are not likely to be interpreted literally by a child, as children instead tend to focus on the archetypes and images presented.
- During the story recall, help your child remember the 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 *Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades* for a more detailed discussion of this topic.

## **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 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.

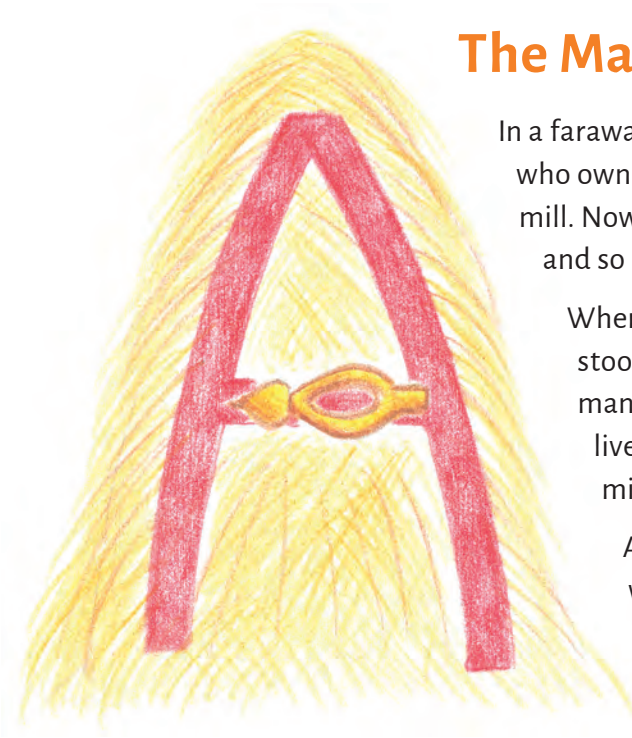
Many educators have also noted that screen time can negatively influence the way a child plays. When children play, they often imitate what they see on the screen instead of engaging in their own creative and imaginative play. The more screen time children have, the more they will expect fast-paced action 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.)



# Stories: Language Arts

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## The Magic Spindle Lesson 1

In a faraway land in a time gone by, there lived a rich old man who owned a mill. All the people of the village worked at the mill. Now it came to pass that the old man's health was failing and so he called a meeting to which everyone was invited.

When all the people were in the meeting hall, the old man stood up and said, "Good Townspeople, I am a very old man and I am sick. I do not know how much longer I will live. After much thought, I have decided to close the mill."

A hush fell on the crowd as they heard the words that were spoken. When he was done, they all asked at once, "What will become of us when you close the mill? We will all be out of work! Oh dear! This is terrible news indeed!"

"Please," said the old man, "I do not wish for you to lose your jobs. I have tried to find someone to buy the mill, but these are hard times, and no one has enough money. I am sorry, but I will have to close the mill in two weeks."

The townspeople were angry and scared. They didn't like losing their jobs. Without jobs, how would they support their families?

The next day, the whole village seemed to be thinking about the old man's announcement. They went about their work at the mill with long faces and no smiles were seen anywhere.

On Saturday morning, as the townspeople gathered at the well to draw water, a woman walked into town and stood on the rock at the center of town. "Good people, may I have a word with you? I have come from far away and I would like to help you."

"Do you think she has come to buy the mill?" asked several people.

"She doesn't look like she could afford to buy anything!" snickered some boys.



The mysterious woman continued, “In yonder field, filled with haystacks, I will hide a magic spindle. At seven o’clock Monday morning, before you go to work at the mill, I invite you to come to the field and search for the spindle. The lucky person who finds it will be richly rewarded, for the magic spindle knows how to spin straw into gold!”

The townspeople were surprised by the unknown woman’s unusual invitation. Who was she and where had she come from? Did she really have a magic spindle that could turn straw into gold?

Several people in the crowd were greedy and were thinking that if they got there earlier than the others, say at six o’clock rather than seven, perhaps they would find the magic spindle first and have all the gold for themselves. Other people were thinking about what they would buy with all the gold they would soon have.

As the sun rose on Monday, the greedy townsfolk who had arrived early were each surprised to see others besides themselves who had tried to get there first. They ran all over the field, swatting at haystacks and pushing them over, looking for the magic spindle and finding nothing.

By seven o’clock when the honest townspeople arrived along with the mysterious woman, the field was half demolished, and the early comers were angry that they had not found the magic spindle. “We don’t believe you, woman!” one man cried angrily. “You have tricked us! There is no magic spindle in any of these haystacks. You are trying to make a laughingstock out of us!” The people who had come early stomped out of the field in a rage, feeling as if they had been betrayed.

After they were gone, the woman smiled and held one finger up to the sky and another toward the earth. She blinked three times, then turned to the waiting crowd and announced, “The magic spindle has now been placed in one of the haystacks in this field. Good luck to each of you! Remember that it is a magic spindle and will spin all this straw into gold!”

The people quickly spread out over the entire field and began rummaging through the haystacks. Off to the side, the woman noticed a ragged little girl with eyes the color of the clear blue sky and hair the color of spun gold, dirty though it was. She was watching her poor mother look for the magic spindle in haystack after haystack. The mother was dreaming of all the fine things she could buy with the gold. As she searched frantically, images filled her mind. She imagined beautiful dresses, a handsome carriage with white horses, a large castle on the hill, and servants to do all the work. Similar thoughts filled the minds of each of the people as they burrowed through the hay in hopes of being the one to find the magic spindle.

Suddenly, the ragged little girl noticed a small mound of hay in the far corner, where someone had already knocked the top of a haystack off in their hurried search for the spindle. She ran straight to the tiny pile of hay. She reached into the center of the mound and her hand touched something that didn’t feel like hay. Could it be? Had she found it? As she slowly removed her hand, she found herself looking at the most beautiful spindle she had ever seen. She started to dance and skip around the pile of hay that had held the special treasure. Her mother came to her, and soon all the townspeople were gathered around the child, to see what she had found.

“Oh, it is beautiful!” exclaimed one young woman.

“Absolutely magnificent!” an old man admired.

“You will be rich! What will you do with all the gold you will have, child?” asked several people at once.

“All I want is for everyone to be happy again. I will buy the mill for the town and everyone will be able to keep their jobs forever.”

At this moment, the wise, mysterious woman came up and spoke to the girl's mother. “You have a very special daughter, for she is able to think of others besides herself. She has a very good heart and she is your greatest treasure.”

Then she turned to the girl and whispered something in her ear. The child placed the magic spindle on the hay in front of her and blinked three times. Instantly, the spindle began to whir and spin. Everyone looked on in amazement as pile after pile of straw was spun into gold. Such a sight as this no one had ever seen before!

That afternoon, the little girl bought the mill from the old miller and placed it in the hands of the townspeople. Everyone was so grateful to the child for saving their jobs and the mill that they carved a statue of her sitting by a haystack in the center of town. They also built a new cottage for the little girl and her mother. The townspeople never saw the mysterious woman again, and to this day, they don't know who she was or where she came from.

## The Bear's Child Lesson 1

by Theresa Davis

Many years ago in a tiny village nestled in a valley, there lived a little boy named Jonathan. From every window in his house, he could look up at the great mountains that towered over the village.



Jonathan's beloved grandfather lived in a little hut halfway up the mountain. On warm, sunny days Jonathan would climb the steep trail up the mountain to visit his grandfather. Together they would sit in the flower-filled meadows, or climb the peaks to see the hawks soaring high above. Sometimes they would lie on their backs in the soft grass and tell stories until the afternoon sun hung low in the sky. Jonathan loved his grandfather very much, and he liked to be with him more than anyone else in the world.

Jonathan was very proud of his parents, who were the healers for the village. His father was a kind doctor who knew much about helping people get well. His mother was a sweet, caring woman who collected the herbs that grew wild at the edge of the forest. Sometimes Jonathan helped her gather the plants. His mother used the herbs to make teas and medicines to help those who were ill.

One night, Jonathan's family was awakened from a deep sleep by a loud banging on the door. A large man burst through the door, carrying his sick daughter. She was a little girl Jonathan had played with

many times in front of the market stands while their mothers shopped. But now she was so sick that Jonathan hardly recognized her. Jonathan's mother and father rushed to care for the sick child.

Within minutes, others began arriving at the doctor's house. Everyone soon realized that many of the townspeople had been stricken with a terrible illness. Jonathan's mother immediately set to work cooking herbs to make a special medicine. She found one particular plant that seemed to help the sick people.

As the hours went on, more and more people became sick. Soon, Jonathan's parents used up all the special herbs his mother had collected. The boy's father said, "Jonathan, we need you to go out of the village and into the forest to collect as many of the special herbs as you can. Come back quickly, as there are many sick people in the village who need our help."

Jonathan felt very important as he slipped his mother's woven basket over his arm. He ran out of the village as fast as he could go. Right at the edge of the forest, he found the plants his parents had described to him. He was very happy that he was going to be able to help the townspeople.

Quickly, he began picking the plants, and soon his basket overflowed with healing herbs. As he was glancing about to see if there were more herbs within easy reach, he felt someone or something watching him. When he looked up, his heart began to pound with fear, for before him stood an enormous bear with very sharp teeth and big sharp claws. The bear looked Jonathan up and down, as if to say, "How many bites could I get out of you?" and then, quick as a flash, took a swipe toward him. Jonathan closed his eyes and prepared for the worst.

He felt a big *whoosh* of air, but that was all. He opened his eyes in time to see the huge bear grab the basket of herbs and lumber quickly off into the forest. Jonathan was so shocked that at first he couldn't even believe what had happened. He was certainly glad the bear hadn't eaten him! But now he needed to collect more herbs as fast as possible, before the bear had a chance to return! He took off his jacket in order to begin filling it with healing plants, but to his dismay, he discovered that there were no more of the special herbs to be found. He had picked them all!

When Jonathan realized that the bear had stolen the very last of the herbs, he became angry. "Why would a bear want to take herbs?" he wondered aloud. "I need those herbs to save the lives of all the sick people in the village!" He spent nearly an hour wandering around the meadow, desperately searching for another patch of the special herbs. But there were none to be found. At last, he realized that he would have to go after the bear.

As Jonathan walked deep into the forest, a chill went down his spine. The forest was filled with shadows, and it had a damp, dark smell that felt strange to his nose. He felt colder and colder as he walked farther into the forest. He followed the path along the edge of the stream, and suddenly he saw an enormous paw print in the wet earth. It was the bear, all right!

Everything inside Jonathan wanted to run back to the village, but instead, he grabbed a big stick so he could protect himself. He tried not to think about the bear's sharp teeth and claws, but sometimes he couldn't help himself as he continued through the forest.

When he had walked so far and looked so long that he was about to give up, Jonathan spotted a tiny red bird. The bird chirped and seemed to say, "Follow me! Follow me!" So Jonathan followed the little bird, and soon found himself at the mouth of a cave. There were many large paw prints at the mouth of the cave, and Jonathan knew he had found the bear's home.

He waited outside, listening for any sound of the bear. After hearing only silence, he decided to take a look inside the cave. Once his eyes adjusted to the darkness, he spotted his mother's woven basket on the floor, with his mother's special healing herbs still safely inside. The bear must have brought it back to the cave and dropped it. Jonathan didn't waste any time. He reached down to grab the basket. Just as he was lifting it, he heard an enormous growl behind him. The bear had returned to the cave, and now Jonathan was trapped!

The boy froze in fright, dropping his stick in his panic. The bear growled again, just inches from Jonathan's face. Then it walked around him, farther into the cave. For the first time, Jonathan saw two little bear cubs lying on the floor of the cave. They looked very sick and weak, and lay listlessly on the soft dirt, not even looking up to greet their mother as she nudged them gently.

At last, Jonathan understood that the bear meant him no harm, but only wanted to help her babies. He bravely looked right into the eyes of the mother bear, and grabbed the basket of herbs. He pulled out several of the plants and broke them into little pieces. Gently, he pried open the jaws of the bear cubs, and placed pieces of the herbs in their mouths. He tickled their throats to make them swallow. The bear softly growled, seeming to understand, and did not interfere. Jonathan hesitated, wanting to be sure the cubs would get well. Once again, he stuffed their mouths with healing herbs, and this time, the cubs began to chew on their own, as if they knew this was what they needed to grow strong and healthy once more.

Jonathan knew that time was running out for the sick people in the village. Glancing one last time at the mother bear and her cubs, who looked at him gratefully with their big black eyes, he left the cave, the basket held tightly in his hand. He raced through the dark woods, through the grassy meadow, through the village, and back through the door of his house.

His mother looked relieved to see him. "We've been so worried!" she cried as she hugged him. "You've been gone for hours!"

"I ran into some trouble, but I made it," Jonathan replied. "Here are the herbs you need."

"You're just in time," said his father as he began preparing the herbs. "Why don't you go help care for the patient in the back room?"

Jonathan walked to the back of the house and saw his dear grandfather lying in the bed, looking pale and weak. "Did you get the herbs, Jonathan?" the old man asked softly. Jonathan nodded and smiled. "I knew you would do it," whispered his grandfather.

"When you're feeling better, Grandpa, I'll tell you the whole story," said Jonathan as he held his grandfather's hand.

Jonathan knew that his grandfather and the little girl from the market would get well. He knew there would be plenty of herbs to help all the sick people of the village. He knew that the two little bear cubs in the cave in the forest would be all right too. And he felt warm and happy inside because he had been able to help.

## Dick Whittington and His Cat Lesson 2



In the reign of the famous King Edward III, there was a little boy named Dick Whittington, whose father and mother died when he was very young, so that he remembered nothing at all about them, and was left a ragged little fellow, running about a country village. As poor Dick was not old enough to work, he was in bad shape; but he begged for scraps from the people who lived in the village and they usually came up with potato peelings or a hard crust of bread for him.

For all this, Dick Whittington was a very sharp boy, and he was always listening to what everybody said. On Sundays, he was sure to hear the folks as they stood around in the churchyard and talked. On market day, you could see little Dick leaning against the signpost of the village alehouse, where people stopped to eat and drink as they came from the next town to market. And when the barber's shop door was open, Dick listened to all the news that the customers told one another.

In this manner, Dick heard a great many very strange things about the great city of London. The foolish country people at that time thought folks in London were all fine gentlemen and ladies, that there was singing and music all day long, and the streets were all paved with gold!

One day, a large wagon and eight horses drove through the village while Dick was standing by the signpost. He thought this wagon must be going to the fine town of London, so he gathered his courage and asked the driver to let him walk along with the wagon. When the driver heard that Dick was a poor orphan, he agreed to let him ride on the seat next to him all the way to London.

I do not know how little Dick managed to get food and water along the way, or where he slept at night when the wagon stopped at an inn. Perhaps some kindhearted people in the towns he passed through gave him something to eat and drink, and maybe the driver let Dick sleep on one of the soft, cushiony seats inside the wagon at night.

Dick got safely to London, however, and was in such a hurry to find the streets of gold that he forgot to say goodbye to the kindly driver. Instead, he ran off as fast as his legs would carry him, darting down streets in search of riches. Poor boy! He ran until he was too tired to move. He was so disappointed to see only dirt in the streets where he had thought he would surely find gold, that he cried himself to sleep in a dark corner.



In the morning, he tried to beg for money to buy food, but no one paid him any mind. Soon, he became quite weak from hunger. At last a good-natured gentleman saw how hungry he looked. “Why don’t you go to work, my lad?” said he to Dick.

“That I would, but I do not know how,” answered the boy.

“If you are willing to work, come along with me,” said the gentleman, and took him to a hayfield, where Dick worked and lived happily and had plenty to eat until the hay was made.

After this, he was as poor as before, and after wandering around the city, he collapsed on the doorstep of Mr. Fitzwarren, a rich merchant. He was noticed by the cook, who was an ill-tempered creature who told him to move along or she would pour hot dishwater on him.

Just then, Mr. Fitzwarren came home. Seeing the dirty, ragged boy on the doorstep, he said to him, “Why do you lie there, my boy? You seem old enough to work; you must be a lazy boy.”

“No, indeed, sir,” said Dick to him, “that is not true. I would work if I could, but I do not know anybody to ask for a job and I am hungry and weak now and can’t get up.”

Being a good man, Mr. Fitzwarren ordered him to be taken into the house, given a good dinner, and kept around to do what dirty work he could for the cook. This would have been a nice arrangement except for the ill-natured cook, who found fault and scolded Dick from morning to night. She would often beat him with a broom for no good reason. At last, word of her abuse of Dick reached Miss Alice, Mr. Fitzwarren’s daughter, who told the cook she must watch her mouth and her behavior toward the boy or she could find another job.

It worked for a while. Now that the cook was treating Dick a little more kindly, he had another problem to solve. His bed was in an attic that had so many mice and rats that every night he was tormented by the rodents and had trouble sleeping. One day, a gentleman paid him for shining his boots and so Dick went in search of a cat he could buy with his penny. When he saw a girl with a cat, he asked if she would sell it to him for a penny and she agreed. As she handed over the cat, she told Dick the cat was an excellent mouser.

Dick hid the cat in his attic and brought her scraps from his own dinner. In a short time, he had no more trouble with the rats and mice, and slept quite soundly at night.

One day, Mr. Fitzwarren announced that he was putting together a ship that would sail to foreign shores to trade goods. He thought all his servants should have some chance for good fortune as well as himself, so he called them all together and asked them what they would send on the ship to trade.

They all had something they were willing to venture except poor Dick, who had neither money nor goods and therefore could send nothing.

When Miss Alice offered to put in something for him, her father rejected the kind gesture, saying that it must be something of his very own. At this, Dick remembered his cat and reluctantly offered her for the voyage.

“Fetch your cat then, my good boy,” said Mr. Fitzwarren, “and bid her farewell.”

Dick went upstairs and brought down his little cat, and with tears in his eyes, gave her to the captain. He would miss her terribly, and he knew the mice and rats would bother him again now that she was gone. Seeing how sad he was, Miss Alice gave him a penny to buy another cat.

This and many other acts of kindness by Miss Alice made the ill-tempered cook jealous of poor Dick and she began to be mean to him again, worse than before. At last, he could take no more. He packed his few things and started off early one morning. He walked as far as Holloway and sat down on a stone, which to this day is called Whittington's Stone, and began to think about which road he should take from there.

While he was thinking about what he should do, the bells of Bow Church began to ring, and he fancied their sound said to him, "Turn back, Whittington, Lord Mayor of London."

"Lord Mayor of London!" said he to himself. "Why, to be sure I would put up with almost anything now to be Lord Mayor of London one day and ride in a fine coach! Well, I will go back and think nothing of the cook's ill treatment if I am to be Lord Mayor of London at last."

Dick went back to Mr. Fitzwarren's home and arrived before anyone noticed he had been gone. He set to work with new excitement, dreaming of the day he would be Lord Mayor.

The ship with the cat on board had been a long time at sea and was at last driven by the winds to the Barbary Coast, where the Moorish people lived. The English had never seen Moors before and neither had the Moors seen the English. The Moors came in great numbers to see the sailors who came from so far away, and they treated them well. As the two groups became better acquainted, the Moors were eager to buy the fine things from the ship.

The captain took some samples of his finest goods to the King of Barbary. The king and queen were delighted to receive such unusual visitors and goods, and they called for a feast to be prepared. The platters of fine foods were brought in and placed in the center of the room. It was not long before a large number of rats and mice rushed in, helping themselves from almost every dish. The captain was amazed and asked the king if this happened all the time.

"Oh yes," said the king, "they are very troublesome and destructive, indeed. I would give half of my treasure to be freed of them, for they not only destroy my dinner, but also attack me in bed. I am so afraid of them, I have a guard watch me all night while I sleep so that no rodents attack me."

Remembering Dick Whittington's cat, the captain said he had a creature on board the ship that would rid the palace of these vermin in no time. The king's heart leaped so high at the happiness this news gave him that his turban dropped off his head. "Bring this creature to me," commanded the king, "and I will load your ship with gold and jewels in exchange for her."

The captain's mate hurried to fetch the cat while another feast was being prepared in the palace kitchen. When he returned with the cat, she took one look at the table full of rats and sprang into action. In a few minutes, she had downed most of the rodents. Those remaining alive scampered off to their holes in fear.



The king and queen were delighted by this little creature who had done them such a great service and asked for her to be brought up to them. The queen was concerned about touching a creature who had just killed so many mice and rats, but when the captain stroked the cat's head and said, "Nice pussy," the queen reached out and patted her head, saying, "Nite putty," for English was new to her. The captain put the cat down in the queen's lap, where she curled up and purred herself to sleep.

The king traded with the captain for the entire ship's cargo. He kept his word and loaded the ship with riches in exchange for the cat, whose kittens would soon provide the whole country with cats, and rid the place of rats. The ship set sail for England on the next morning's tide, and catching a good tailwind, they quickly arrived back in London.

The captain made haste to Mr. Fitzwarren's shipping office to bring him the good news of the prosperous voyage. Mr. Fitzwarren was delighted, and when he heard what had happened, he called his servants to the office and said, "Go fetch Mr. Whittington."

At that moment, Dick was scouring pots for the cook. When they brought him to the office and offered him a chair, he thought they were going to make fun of him, and he begged them not to play tricks.

"Indeed, Mr. Whittington," said Mr. Fitzwarren, "we are quite serious and have good news for you from the ship's captain. He traded your cat to the King of Barbary and in return, brought you more riches than I possess in the whole world. I hope you may live long and enjoy them to the fullest!"

When Dick saw the great treasure that now belonged to him, he hardly knew how to contain his joy. He begged his master to take what he pleased, since he owed his good fortune to his kindness. But Mr. Fitzwarren refused, saying it was all his and he was sure Dick would use it well.

Dick next asked Mrs. Fitzwarren and then Miss Alice to accept a part of his good fortune, but they would not, telling him they felt great joy at his success. The good fellow was too kindhearted to keep it all to himself, so he made presents for the captain, the mate, the rest of Mr. Fitzwarren's servants, and even for the ill-natured old cook.

After this, Mr. Fitzwarren advised him to send for a tailor to make him a suit appropriate for a gentleman. He told Dick he was welcome to continue living in his house until Dick could buy one of his own.

When Dick was bathed, his hair curled, and proper clothes put on, he was as handsome as any young man in London. Miss Alice was smitten, and the two soon became sweethearts. It wasn't long before a wedding was announced.

History tells us that Mr. Whittington and his lady lived in great splendor and were very happy. They had several children. He became the Sheriff of London, and also Lord Mayor. It is known that he also received the honor of knighthood by King Henry V.

A carved stone figure of Sir Richard Whittington with his cat in his arms was displayed until the year 1780 over the archway of the old prison of Newgate that stood across Newgate Street in London.

## Jordan and Maria Lesson 2

On the edge of a large old forest, there lived a farmer and his wife and their two children, Jordan and Maria. For seven years, there had been very little rain and the farm was not doing well. The animals were thin and sickly and the fields were dry and barren. When it came time to go to market and sell their goods, they had little to take, and returned home with enough money to buy food for only one more week.

One evening after a meager meal of stale bread and water, they sat around the fire to talk.

“We are down to our last pennies,” said the father, “and the land will produce no more crops until the rains come. I don’t know what to do.”

They all sat there feeling very sad. The one thing they all agreed on was that the family would stay together. They would help one another and find a way to get through this most difficult time.

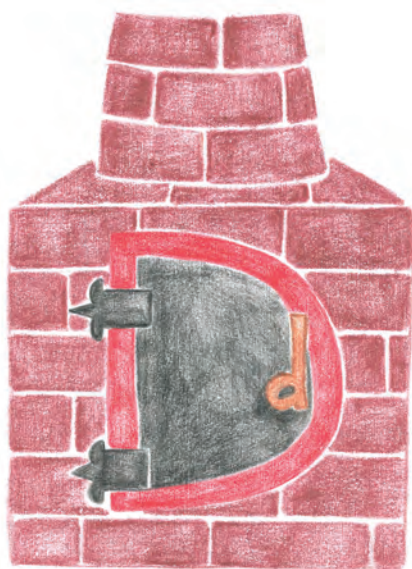
The next day, Jordan and Maria decided to take a walk in the forest. They both felt very sad, but walking through the beautiful old trees always made them feel better. The birds began chirping cheerfully as they passed, as if to say, “Don’t worry—be happy! Life is beautiful!” They noticed the squirrels and chipmunks scampering skillfully from tree to tree, playing games of tag. Their comical antics prompted a much-needed fit of giggles in the children as they held their sides and rolled in the soft green moss and fallen leaves that littered the forest floor.

On hot summer days, sitting in the cool shade of the thick forest canopy had always been a favorite pastime for Jordan and Maria. After finishing their early-morning chores on the farm and helping their mother get the midday meal started, they frequently took the opportunity to go to their favorite place for a few minutes. It was magical indeed. There was a small pond with a seasonal assortment of birds who would stop to drink, sing a sweet song, and eat a few berries. Jordan had a special fondness for his feathered friends and he always kept a small journal and pencil with him to try and capture each one’s

unique appearance. His book was filled with drawings of all kinds of interesting things he saw in the woods, not just birds.

Maria also loved the birds. She would spend hours trying to imitate the unique song of each one. There were times when Maria was sure she could understand what the birds were saying.

Jordan and Maria sat in the woods watching the animals go about their daily routine of gathering food, finding shelter, and, of course, playing. They loved to watch the graceful deer nimbly pick their way through the dense manzanita bushes that grew at the base of the tall pine and spreading oak trees. Gently, the doe would nibble at the manzanita berries, and show her fawn how to do the same. Then they would find a tender young tree and nibble some bark before taking a drink from the crystal clear



stream that ran through the woods. All of the creatures seemed to lead such a carefree life in the forest, where everything they needed was right there.

In the twinkling of an eye, Maria had an idea that might save her family. She turned to Jordan and said, "If the animals of the forest can survive by eating berries and nuts, well, maybe we can too!" She was so excited! She was sure she had found the answer to her family's problem.

Being older and more cautious by nature, Jordan asked, "But how will we know which ones to pick? What if some of the plants or berries are poisonous and we get sick?"

"Silly boy!" taunted Maria. "All we have to do is watch and learn from the animals! We'll eat what they eat, and surely we won't get sick."

It sounded reasonable to Jordan, so they ran home to get their baskets and tell Mother and Father the good news.

"You expect us to eat bark and berries?" Mother asked after Maria told her of the wonderful idea.

"Don't you know that these things can make people sick? Why, some plants are very poisonous and can kill you if you eat them. Acorns are good for squirrels, but impossible for people to eat. I think it is a silly idea and I don't think you should waste your time collecting things we can't eat. We have enough grain left for only one more meal. I just don't know what we will do after that." Mother was crying as Maria kissed her gently. Maria then snatched two handmade baskets from the rafter where they hung above her bed. With Jordan close behind, Maria ran into the woods to gather wild edible plants so her family wouldn't starve. Even if Mother didn't think the food would be good, Maria knew in her heart just what she must do.

All that afternoon, Jordan and Maria watched the animals as they ate the berries, nuts, and seeds. They collected the same ones, being careful not to take more than they needed and to leave plenty for their animal friends. Deeper and deeper into the forest they went in search of food. At one point, Jordan asked, "Maria, do you know where we are? It seems we are lost."

Maria, being very sure of herself, said, "We'll find our way back, don't worry, brother dear. Oh, look! There are lots of acorns and pine nuts!" and off she went.

It must have been several hours before the children felt they had enough to take home for a meal. But they had lost track of the time and suddenly realized the daylight was almost gone and they really had no idea where they were.

"We are lost and it is almost dark," cried Maria. "I'm scared, Jordan. What are we going to do?"

After a quick moment, Jordan said, "Why, we can do what the animals do at night. If they are safe here in the deep woods, then we will be too. I can make a small fire, and we'll make a bed of pine needles, leaves, and grass. We'll find our way home in the morning."

"And we can eat some of the things we collected today, for our meal!" said Maria, suddenly forgetting her fear. The thought of spending the night in the woods with her animal friends excited her.

Jordan made a little fire for warmth and they both collected soft fallen pine branches and dried leaves to make their beds for the night. Then they sat down to eat the goodies they had found in the forest that day. The berries were sweet and juicy and the nuts were tasty, but the acorns were impossible to chew. The children ate until they were satisfied, then fell fast asleep in their beds made of gifts from the forest floor. They slept soundly for most of the night, but as the sun rose, Maria suddenly awoke with a terrible stomachache. "Jordan, are you awake? I feel terrible!" moaned Maria.

"Me too," cried Jordan.

"What could make my stomach hurt so badly?" Maria wondered.

"Do you think it was the food we ate last night?" asked Jordan, holding his stomach as he leaned forward.

"I don't know. The animals eat it and they don't get stomachaches," said Maria. "Oooooohhhhhh, I wish Mother was here. She would know what to do."

"We are really in trouble now. Here we are, sick and lost in the forest!" Jordan complained. "What are we going to do?"

"I think we should try to find our way home, Jordan," Maria suggested.

So the brother and sister gathered up their things and slowly started walking in the direction they thought would lead them home.

Soon, they came to a stream and decided to follow it. After a while, Jordan spotted something. "Look, Maria, off in that clearing! It looks like a cottage!"

"Who would live way out here in the middle of the woods? Maybe it's a witch or an evil sorcerer who bakes little kids into pies! Look at that huge oven next to the cottage!" exclaimed Maria.

Cautiously, they approached the charming little cottage with its beautiful garden filled with all kinds of flowers and plants.

As they neared the edge of the clearing, an old woman's voice called out,

"Acorns and rosehips  
Biscuits and brew  
Things from the earth  
I offer to you."

Jordan and Maria looked at each other and shrugged. Just then, the old woman appeared in the doorway.

"Hello, children!" greeted the crone in a kind voice. "Are you lost?"

"Lost and sick too!" Jordan blurted out. "Who are you?"

"My name is Alexandra. And who might you be?" she asked.

“I’m Jordan and this is my sister, Maria. We went into the forest yesterday to gather wild things to eat because our family has no money to buy food, and we got lost. Then we slept in the forest last night and woke up this morning with bad stomachaches. I think it was something we ate.”

“Well, show me what you ate and maybe I can brew up a tea that will make you feel better.” Alexandra reached for the basket that Maria offered to her. “Ah, yes. I know just what will help you feel better. See that little plant at the corner of the house? Pick ten of the most tender leaves and bring them into the kitchen. We’ll make mint tea for you.”

Soon, the three new friends were sitting around a table sipping tea and enjoying the most delicious cakes the children had ever eaten. The children were already feeling much better and felt so lucky to have found this kind old woman in the middle of the forest. As they chatted, they asked Alexandra what she did all alone so far from town. She told them that she enjoyed the woods and loved to prepare good things to eat from its berries, nuts, and seeds. When she heard about their situation, she agreed to share her great wisdom with them so they could go back and help their family to survive. She showed them how to make the delicious little cakes they had eaten, called Johnny Cakes, from acorns prepared in a special way. She had recipes for delicious soups, breads, and even desserts that could be made from the gifts of the earth. She took them out to locate the things they needed, and then she showed them her huge oven. It was built from red clay bricks and had an enormous iron door shaped like a huge *D*. It had a large wooden handle and creaked when it opened on its huge iron hinges. Alexandra showed them how she built the fire below and let it get to just the right temperature before putting the raw cakes and breads inside to bake. The children were fascinated and learned quickly.

Soon, it was time to make their way home. Alexandra told them to follow the stream until it forked. At the fork, Jordan and Maria were to walk in the direction of the sun until they came to a large, very old oak tree. The lowest branch pointed in the direction of a path. That was the path that would take them home.

They said fond farewells and promised to return to visit Alexandra as often as they could. Maria’s basket was stuffed with samples of all the tasty foods they had learned to make and they were anxious to get home to tell their parents the good news. They followed Alexandra’s directions and soon found themselves home. Mother and Father were so happy to see them! They had been very worried when they hadn’t returned from the woods the day before, and they had searched the woods all night. Mother hugged and kissed them both. Then Maria showed Mother the goodies in her basket, and they all went in the kitchen to enjoy the treats and hear the story of how Jordan and Maria found a way to save their family from starvation.



# Stories: Social Studies

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## Nagamo: A Day in the Life of an Algonquin Girl

### Lesson 20

My name is Nagamo. In our language this means “to sing.” It is said that my mother, who is slow to speak, sang out loud the day I was born. She has not stopped singing since that day. Together we sing songs of thanksgiving for each day’s work, our loving family, and the safety of our tribe. Though my mother still does not speak often, she smiles with the dawn and I have always known what is on her mind—though she chooses to keep her silence.

Not long ago, my little brother was born into our tribe. My mother carries him on a cradleboard on her back as we go out to work in the fields. This morning brought the sun, bright and golden, into our wigwam. It was not long before my mother softly spoke and I rose to begin the day’s chores. We cooked a sturdy breakfast for my father, for he joined many other men on a long hunt that would keep him far in the hills until nightfall.

When we finished our chores, my mother and I went to the fields to help with the village harvest. We will bring in many baskets of squash and beans, as well as corn for our bread. It is said that some of the men of our tribe caught many fish in their nets today. When this happens, the village will share in their good fortune. My mother will trade her finely decorated leather skins for dried meat and fish when my father has brought home less than he wished. Often, though, my father comes home with meat for the entire village! On those days, my mother sings even louder than usual.

My moccasins softly meet with the earth as we walk. I am no longer afraid of the coming of winter. My family stays warm in our wigwam and this summer has been fruitful. We have already stored much food for the colder months. I know that I will be cared for in our tribe, for we are all one family.

There are rumors now from the men who have come back from fishing. They say that they have seen strange boats, not like our dugout canoes, but giant ones with clouds that catch the wind. The men say they have seen people living on these boats, men who look pale and wide-eyed. I have heard from my wise sister-friend, Pocahontas, and she intends on visiting these boats and seeing for herself. She says that I should not be afraid of new things—we may learn much from these newcomers.

I must be going home now. There is meal to grind and food to prepare, for my father will be coming home tonight! If I have time, I may play with the others this evening when it is cool. We will pretend to



be great warriors and princess maidens. Inside our wigwam, my mother will sing to my little brother and nighttime will fall softly on our tribe.

## Martin Alonso: Sailor of the *Santa Maria* Lesson 21

October 11, 1492

I, Martin Alonso, keep this log so that my children's children will never forget the things I have seen. We have been aboard the *Santa Maria* for 35 days now. It seems so long ago when I was asked to join this journey of exploration and discovery. Christopher Columbus promised new lands filled with sights no one from Spain had ever known. My family has always known me as one with a thirst for adventure, and so I signed on.

*Santa Maria* is a beautiful boat. She is not as fast as one of our sister ships, the *Pinta*, but she is bigger and is the flagship for this journey. We have brought many items with us for trade. At night, we tell stories of our adventures. Some say the clear sky tonight speaks well for us to reach land tomorrow. All I know is that I tire of dried fish and I long for solid ground under my feet!

October 12, 1492

We have landed at last! The water is blue and clear, and the sun is shining. Early this morning, we saw the natives of this land rowing out to greet us. They are very friendly, with dark skin and gold rings in their noses. The natives seem happy to trade. We give them glass beads, brass rings, knitted caps, gold, silver, pearls, and spices. In return, they give us parrots, balls of spun cloth, and spears as well as other goods. Their food is delicious, but it is the land itself that I love! We will stay here for a few weeks and rest up. Then it is on to further adventures!

## Life on the Kentucky Frontier Lesson 22

When Abe was young, his family moved to the Kentucky frontier. It was winter when they arrived. Abe helped his father cut the trees they would need to build their little three-sided shelter. Their only warmth was a small fire built at the open end, and there they nestled in until the time came when the family would build their own log cabin.

Abe was a strong lad. He woke early each morning to hunt and fish for food. Though he had little time for play, Abe loved to swing his ax and the family never lacked for firewood. The family worked hard to clear the forest for their new home. The animals watched silently as Abe made his way through the woods, and when they saw the quiet strength in his face, coupled with the twinkle in his eye, they knew that this boy would be a fine friend to all the creatures that lived there.



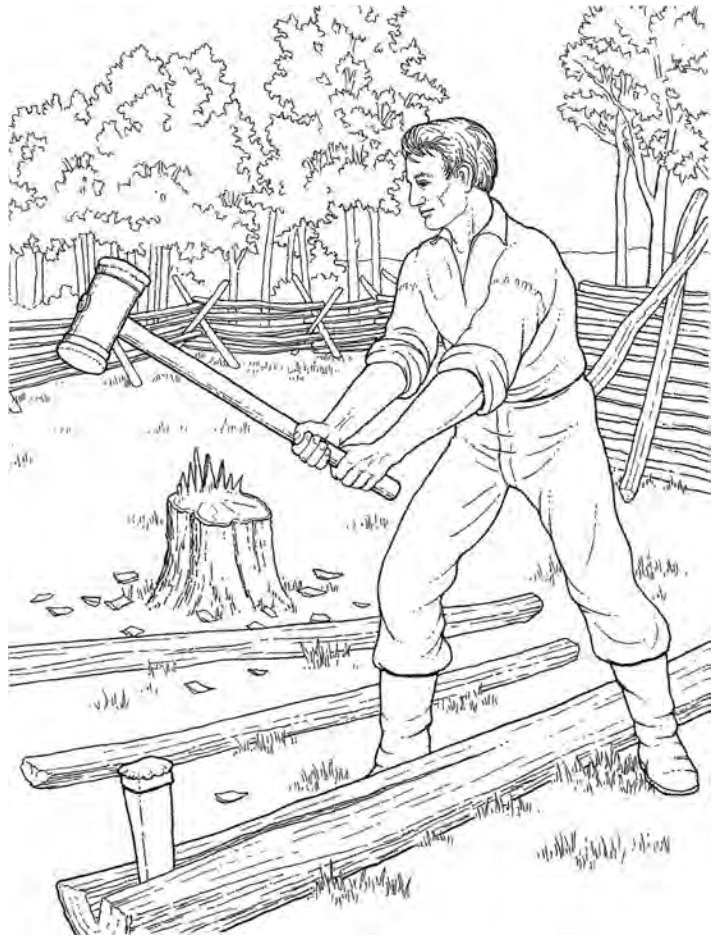
And so he was. Abe was always certain to take only what he needed from the forest, and as he helped his father build their log home, Abe kept a watchful eye for the trees that were homes for his friends, and made sure that they found new places to live, just as his own family had.

There was a cluster of homes and a small store not too far away. Although Abe and his family farmed, fished, or hunted for most of their food, his mother longed for real sugar for her sweet cakes and Abe wished for a book to someday call his own. They knew that the little store sold the items the family needed. Abe and his family went to bed each night dreaming of the soft cloth, new axes, books, and cooking pots that lay waiting at the little store only one day's march away.

Abe and his family began to save what little they had to barter for the things they needed. When he wasn't chopping firewood or logs for the home, Abe whittled small toys to sell and set them aside in a piece of cloth under his straw mattress. Abe's mother baked molasses cakes and made jars of maple syrup when the spring came.

Finally, the day came when they had enough goods to barter at the store. All the months of waiting, saving, and preparing were over! Abe's father collected the goods and prepared for the day's journey. He had to leave early and he would not return until late that night. Abe begged to come along and finally his father relented. Together they began their journey before the sun rose in the sky. The air was cool and wet on Abe's face, but he was too excited to notice. Neither Abe nor his father spoke much, but every so often Abe's father would point out a whip-poor-will in the treetops or a chipmunk nibbling at a root. Finally, as the sun beamed down on them from the top of the sky, Abe could see the homes ahead. He whooped with joy and ran quickly before his father.

Inside the store, it was cool and dark. Abe breathed in the scents of ginger, tobacco, and flour. His father moved to do business with the store's owner. When they finally agreed on a price for the goods Abe and his father had brought, the fun really began. Abe was allowed to choose one piece of hard candy as a treat for the journey home while his father measured out sugar, flour, gunpowder, and a small bolt of cloth for Abe's mother. But his greatest joy was the small book that found its way into his father's bundle. Abe was to learn to read at last!



On the way home, Abe smiled to himself. The months of preparing and waiting were hard, but made all the sweeter on this day, for this was the day he had dreamed of. All his hard work and saving had brought him to this moment. Abe never forgot that day, and years later, when he was a grown man, Abe knew that if only he waited and worked hard, he might find his reward at last.

## Johnny Appleseed and His Choice **Lesson 23**

Johnny Appleseed always loved the forest and everything in it. Every day, he could be found climbing his favorite apple tree, rubbing his face against the rough bark and breathing in the scent of apple blossom nectar. Johnny was a dreamy child. He was a kind soul with always a word of cheer. The animals of the forest knew him well and delighted to hear the pounding of his footsteps as he ran, the moment his chores were done, to the woods and his friends that lived there.



Johnny was not just a friend of the forest, though. He cared deeply for the children of his town and could always be counted on to play a game of hide-and-seek or swing from the branches of the trees that grew in the apple orchard. His parents were proud of his love for his family, and Johnny never failed to help his mother with the little ones. Winters were sometimes hard and Johnny found himself indoors a great deal. But spring always found him in the orchard once again, cradled in his beloved trees.

One winter, the cold wind blew and blew and blew. Johnny's trees bent down low to brace themselves from the icy frost and Johnny's family curled up inside their home for weeks and months. Johnny did all he could to help his family. He sang to the little ones and told stories of warm times and days of play in the sun. Sometimes his stories did help, but more and more the children would only shiver and listen to the wind howl as it blew snow up against the walls of their home.

Then one day, Johnny's family used the very last log in their fire. Johnny's mother looked at his father and nodded to the door. "No!" said Johnny as he saw his father reach for his ax. He ran to his mother. "Isn't there another way? We can't cut down my trees! Perhaps the cold will break. Surely spring will come tomorrow, for it has been months and months!"

His parents exchanged glances and his father put down his ax. "Johnny," his mother said softly, "I know you want the trees to last forever and be your playground for always. But sometimes we have to make hard choices. We can't always have what we want, but it does seem that we receive whatever it is we need. Even if it's hard to tell sometimes."

Johnny thought for a moment. He looked at his family huddled together against the cold. Suddenly, he knew what he must do. Johnny walked to the door and handed his father the ax. Then he went and picked up his own. "We will do it together if we must do it at all." And he smiled at his mother weakly.

That night, Johnny and his father came home with many armloads of freshly cut wood. The stove blazed merrily and the smoky smell of wood fire filled the small cottage. His family warmed themselves gratefully by the fire and Johnny told them stories of the orchard and the animals that lived there.

Soon, spring came at last. Johnny walked outside and greeted the sun. "Well," he thought, "it will be time to plant the fields soon." He looked over to where the orchard lay. "Hmm, I wonder, perhaps I could plant a new apple tree or two . . ."

## Clara Barton and Her Work with Those in Need

### Lesson 24

The day was hot and steamy, and Clara looked around for a cup of water for her patient. All of her patients needed more water than usual today, and it was scarce to begin with. Clara called to another nurse on the field. "Have you seen the men from supplies?"

"No, Clara, they haven't arrived. I will call you when I see them!"

Clara nodded and wiped her brow. Everyone had been working very hard. Clara had always loved caring for the sick, and she did it well. But sometimes, when supplies, like medicine and bandages, were running low, her job was very difficult. How was Clara to care for those who needed her if she did not have the goods she needed?

Clara walked down the row of soldiers, felt their foreheads, and looked at their wounds. Once in a while, one of her patients would call out her name joyfully when they saw her coming. She was well loved. Clara not only helped the men get well, but she sang to them and told them stories too. She loved to tell them about her life when she was a little girl, like the time she was caught bandaging her pet's legs and feeding her dolls medicine. Clara had always wanted to be a nurse and now she was! She loved to serve others, to care for them and make them well again. But she was quickly discovering that in order to really help, she needed supplies!

All at once, she heard her friend calling, "Clara, come quickly! The supplies have come!"

Clara ran to the end of the tent that had been made into a hospital.

"Thank you for coming!" Clara looked over the box of goods that the man from the hospital in town brought her. There were medicines of all kinds, bandages and, thankfully, bottles of cool fresh water! Clara looked at the man who was carrying these goods into the tent. As he walked, he rubbed his back as though in pain. Concerned, Clara asked him, "What is the matter, friend? Are you in pain?"

The man looked at her gratefully. “It is my back, dear lady. I don’t wish to speak of it as I see the men in here need more care from you than I.”

“Nonsense,” Clara scolded the man. “Come, let me take a look. Perhaps there is something we may do for you.” Clara motioned the man into the tent. Inside, she looked him over and found that he had developed a wound that had not healed properly. She cleaned the wound and put a strong medicine on it. “This should help, my friend. Please, remember to care well for yourself!”

The man thanked her and hurried away.

Days later, the man returned. Clara heard the men in the tent rejoicing and singing, and she rushed in as they called her name. There, before her eyes, was a table set with lovely treats, fresh fruits and juices, and bottles of medicine that had been hard to get! The nurses were running about, giving the sick a taste of the delicious fruits, and Clara cried out to see the joy in their faces. Times had been hard and even bandages were scarce. Fruits were almost impossible to find, and Clara had not seen these kinds of medicines, even though she needed them, for months. Clara clapped her hands. “How did these come to be here?” she asked. The man whom she had helped days before stepped out and bowed politely to her. “We have heard far and wide of a kind woman who gives of herself and asks for nothing in return. You are she. Your care helped me greatly and so I bring you the goods to care for those others you serve!”

Clara smiled. And so it was, goods for service, just as she had learned.

## George and the Big Storm **Lesson 25**

George stood bravely at the gates of the farm that was his home. His mother and father had left on business this morning and, for the first time in his young life, George was in charge. He turned confidently to face his home. The fields of grain waved happily back and forth in the breeze. Surely he could manage the farm for two days!

Just then, rain began to fall on his face. He looked up at the dark clouds rolling toward him. He turned to his home and hurried to prepare the farm for a storm.

Once the rain began to fall, it kept coming! George called to the farm workers and gave them orders to steady the animals and board the windows.

“I must do my part,” George thought. “I must help keep the animals and everyone on the farm safe and dry.” And so George took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and went to work with everyone else.

The rain fell and fell. It fell so fast and so thick that it appeared as a blanket in the sky. In the morning, George went to inspect the fields. Many of the crops had been washed away and needed to be replanted. Fences were broken and trees lay on the ground. The farm workers looked to George. They were weary, as he was, from the night’s labor. “Well,” he called to them with all the cheer he could



muster, “it seems I have some work ahead of me!” And he bent down and began to clear the grounds of trees, bushes, and plants that were thrown about. The people laughed quietly, and followed his lead. All that day and the next, George and the farmhands worked hard to repair what had been damaged from the storm. George made sure that everyone had lots of food and water. They all worked hard and soon the work was done.

George looked around the farm. The new fences stood sturdy in the evening sun, and the fields were freshly turned and replanted, hopeful for the harvest that would one day come. The grounds were fresh and clear. He thought, “Now is the time for celebration and thanksgiving.” Everyone was still singing when George’s parents returned late that night. As they rode through the gates, they were astounded by the joy and good cheer that greeted them, for they had heard of the terrible storm and expected the farm to be ruined and their crops to be gone. Instead, they were met by the sounds of people proud of the work they had done and the farm they had saved—together.

## The Kingdom of Light Lesson 29

Once, long ago, there was a beautiful palace made of gold and silver. When the sun rose, its rays danced off the palace walls and sent a rosy glow throughout the land. Because the kingdom was ever adorned in the light that shone from the palace walls, the kingdom was known throughout the land as the Kingdom of Light. The king and queen who ruled the kingdom were wise and good and their people were happy and feared nothing. They knew that if trouble came, their king would do his best to care for them equally and well.

The rules of the kingdom were few, for the people delighted in caring for one another. It was known that each member of the kingdom was required to always do their best, work hard, and be kind and respectful to one another. The people gladly did so and the kingdom was at peace for many years.

It came to pass that the king and queen’s daughter grew of age to marry. She was a lovely soul, with hair as golden as the palace walls and a heart just as fair. All the knights, lords, and men of valor came from far and wide to ask the king for her hand. But she would have none. The princess had been told by her grandmother to wait for the one whose heart was as golden as her own. She would recognize this heart, her grandmother said, by the light that shone from within the man. Many men came to woo her, but all were turned sadly away, for none bore the light that she longed for. Her suitors were not angry, however, for the princess was so kind and gentle in her reproach that they could only love her the more, and each vowed their allegiance to the Kingdom of Light, even as they were turned away. All but one.

Far in another kingdom lived an old witch. She loathed all that was light and hated the golden city. She sent her son, a hard and handsome man, to win the princess’s hand, for she wanted to turn the city into darkness when her son ruled. The princess, in her wisdom, knew immediately that this hard man was



not her beloved. But instead of responding in kind to her sweet reproach, the handsome man only glared at her and said, “You and all that live in this kingdom will pay for this day! If I cannot rule this Kingdom of Light, your subjects shall know only darkness!” And with that, he turned and was gone.

The witch made a terrible spell and the next morning, all the people of the land awoke in blindness. No longer could they see the rosy glow of the sun as it played off the walls, no longer could they remember the faces of their neighbors. The people grew angry and began to whisper that the princess in her selfishness had done this to them. The people stumbled to the palace and demanded the princess be banished, hoping that then the spell would be broken. The king demanded that they return to their homes, but the people only became angrier and began to push and shove at one another. “Remember our laws! They exist for the good of all!” the king said. But the people only yelled louder for the princess to be brought before them and punished. The princess came running from the palace and stood before the crowd.

“I will go,” she said. The crowd pushed forward in anger, and the king called out to his guards.

Suddenly, there was a voice in the crowd that sounded clearly above the rest: “Stop!” A farmer’s son walked through the crowd. He alone was not blind. As he walked, the crowd separated, for they could feel his strength and his purpose. He climbed up the palace steps and knelt before the king. “Sire,” he said, “may I speak?” The king nodded in wonder as the crowd quieted before this gentle lad. “My friends,” he began, “it is not only your sight that you have lost, but your love for one another as well. The witch cannot take that away from you, only your sight. You must give up the love in your hearts on your own. The princess is not to blame, for she cared not for herself, but only for the well-being of her people. Would you have the dark son of the witch rule?” The crowd began to murmur slightly and shake their heads as if in a dream. “Wake now, my friends. Remember the love you share with one another, for it is then that you may see your neighbors’ faces again.” With that, the lad laughed out loud. It was as if a thousand birds began to sing. At once the people began to reach for one another and . . . the spell was broken. The golden light of the palace shone so brightly once more, and the people again feared for their sight. The people were ashamed. But they could see and there was great rejoicing in the street.

The farmer’s son knelt before the king once again. “If it pleases you, my lord, I ask for the hand of your daughter in marriage, for it is our destiny and I love her with all my heart.”

The king turned to his daughter, who said, “Turn to me, farmer’s son.” And she looked into his eyes. There it was! The light within this man was bright and clear and she embraced him gladly, with all her heart. And so it was that the farmer’s son and the princess were wed that very evening.

The people asked for the king’s forgiveness, and he begged them to forgive one another. And they all—the king, the queen, the princess, and her beloved—lived happily in the Kingdom of Light for all their days. What became of the witch and her son? I cannot say. They were never heard of again.



# Stories: Math

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## The Kingdom of Mathematics Lesson 7

Once upon a time, in a land far away, there lived a king and a queen. The king was a fair king and all the people of the kingdom loved him. He always divided things equally among his people. He provided for all the people in his kingdom. He gave seeds to the farmers and sheep to the shepherds. He gave warm clothes and delicious food to the children. He even spread the extra crumbs from dinner evenly for the squirrels, birds, and rabbits to eat. The queen, however, was sad. Although the king provided all the things she could need, she continuously lost them.

One day, the king gave her a beautiful ring with a sparkling red ruby. The queen was delighted. She jumped up and down with happiness and showed everyone her new ring. The queen walked tall and proud, joyous about the gift from her husband. After two days, however, the queen looked at her finger and the ring was gone. Her joy turned to tears and then to rage.

The queen stormed into the chambers of the king where he was hearing a dispute among neighbors. Puffy-eyed from crying and red-faced with rage, the queen insisted the king replace her ring. Not only that, she wanted the king buy her a necklace too. The king, hating to see anyone suffer, reassured the queen that he would do as she wished.

The queen moped away, still sad about her lost ring, and spent the next days with her head bent down. No one could bring the queen out of her melancholy, not even to see the brilliant colors of the autumn leaves or the squirrels scampering about. It wasn't until the next lovely gift came from the king that the queen was once again elated. But, alas, this elation lasted only until the queen, as usual, lost her most recent prized possession. Each time the queen lost something, the king's most faithful knight, Sir Plus, scoured the lands far and wide to add a new gift to the queen's collection to ease her sadness and calm her temper.

This went on for many years. Little by little, the king gave more and more things to the queen, and he had less and less to give the people of the kingdom. Over the years, the farmers had fewer seeds to sow, and the children had to wear their warm coats until they were threadbare. Life in the kingdom became unbalanced, with the queen getting more and more and the people getting less and less. The king, who always wanted to divide things fairly, was not happy with the situation.

Now it came to pass that the king's treasury was almost empty when the queen lost her newest gift, a sweet-voiced, yellow songbird. The queen came stomping into the king's chambers demanding a new bird and also an elephant, for she had heard stories of lavishly ornamented elephants with rubies, emeralds, pearls, and topaz jewels covering their bodies.

The king lowered his head and said, "No, there is no more money to buy a songbird, let alone an elephant. The people are going hungry and the children are cold."

The queen replied, "What!? I don't care about them. I must have my elephant!"

The king again replied, "No."

The queen shouted and stomped and scowled and howled until finally she cried. She cried and cried and cried. The king hated seeing his queen suffer, but he didn't know how to appease the queen this time.

It happened that someone else had been watching the scene from the hallway: the court jester. The jester had been watching the queen for many years. He'd follow her, and as she lost items, he found them and stored them under his bed and in hidden passages in the castle, according to his secret plan. When the jester saw the queen's tantrum turn to tears, he knew it was the right time to implement his plan.

There was to be a feast in three nights, and the jester had a lot of preparing to do. For the next three days, the queen's voice could be heard crying and wailing all throughout the castle, but the jester paid no mind to the cries. He was too busy preparing his surprise.

On the night of the feast, everyone in the kingdom was invited and assembled in the great hall. The tables were set for a great feast, but the food was a thin soup and hard bread, for the king had only a little to give now. The people, however, were grateful for even a simple meal.

When the food had been shared, the king called for the jester to entertain. The queen's eyes were still wet with tears, and at first, she refused to look at the jester. The jester came out with bells on his hat, and he began juggling two diamonds, then four, then six, eight, ten, and twelve. The queen stared in surprise.

With all the jewels in the air, the jester turned a somersault and tossed each diamond to someone in the great hall. The people were amazed and shouted with delight. Then the jester made 3 rabbits appear, then 6 songbirds, 9 turtles, and finally, 12 monkeys. He called the children to come and choose one each, and they scampered after the animals happily. The king was overjoyed to see his people delighted.

The queen, however, was shocked. These were her diamonds, her rabbits, and her monkeys! How could the jester give them away?

Then she saw the happy face of a small girl with thin rags for a dress, who picked up a white rabbit. The queen had never seen the joy on another's face when receiving gifts of kindness. The joy that rose in

the queen at that moment was greater than all the delight she'd ever experienced when receiving something for herself.

The jester kept multiplying gifts for the people, but after a while, it wasn't the jester who gave them away, but rather the queen, who stood with a smile and took each gift the jester materialized and gave it away.

The queen realized that instead of keeping these things for herself, only to lose them, which brought her sadness, she could give them away, thus multiplying not only her happiness but also the happiness of others. This was the gift that the jester gave the queen that night.

By the end of the night, all went home happy, and the queen, with joy in her heart, took the arm of the king. As the happy couple passed the jester, the king gave him a hearty thank-you. The jester replied with a wink and a jingle of the bells on his hat.

## **Sir Plus**    Lesson 8

Sir Plus is the king's most faithful knight. Whenever the king needs him, Sir Plus is always ready to serve. Sir Plus is a plump and reliable knight. His favorite color is green, and this is the color of his cloak.

One day, the castle was running out of coal to feed the fires. The king sent Sir Plus out to get ten bags of coal. Sir Plus put on his green cloak and went straight to the coal mines. He told the foreman that he needed ten bags of coal. The foreman set aside ten bags for the knight. Sir Plus looked at the pile of ten large and heavy bags. He picked up one bag with one hand, and with his other hand, he picked up another bag, bending under the weight. He realized that he could carry only two bags each trip. So Sir Plus started trotting back to the castle with the two bags. He tossed them down the stairs into the cellar and went back for another trip. Two by two, Sir Plus brought bags of coal for the castle. After each trip, the cook gave him a sweet treat, for the cook knew that Sir Plus loved to eat. Sir Plus happily made five trips from the coal mine to the castle, carrying two big bags of coal each time.

When the last bag of coal had been dumped in the cellar, the castle was getting warm from the freshly stoked fires. Sir Plus smiled at a job well done, and he felt a little bit stronger from all his hard work. It was supertime, and Sir Plus cleaned up, put on a freshly washed green cloak, and joined the king and queen for a supper of fluffy white mashed potatoes, roasted duck, bright green brussels sprouts drizzled with butter, and soft dumplings. Sir Plus enjoyed every bit of this scrumptious dinner in the warm castle.



# Stories: Science

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## The Mighty Oak Lesson 3

by Julie Curtiss Voss

Look out your window—over the fence—there in the field. Do you see me? I am the oak tree. The mightiest tree in the park.



Today is a fine autumn day. Autumn is my favorite time of year. My leaves are as beautiful as a rainbow. And hidden in my leaves are hundreds of acorns still wearing their caps. Animals are busy in my branches getting ready for the winter. Birds come and eat my acorns and carry them away. A squirrel family has made a cozy nest between two of my sturdy branches. My branches cover them like a big umbrella.

Last night, winds howled through my branches and blew away most of my leaves.

Soon, my branches will be bare and I will be ready for winter. During the wintertime, it will rain for many days and sometimes the winds will be fierce. When I was just a small sapling with only two or three leaves, I used to worry about the storms. I thought the winds might blow me away. Then I would think hard about making my roots deep and strong. Those roots held me fast through many storms. Now that I am a sturdy oak tree, I enjoy the feeling of the wind rushing through my bare branches. Even the thunder and lightning storms do not scare me.

During my winter rest when I stand quietly, I am getting ready for spring when my animal friends will return. Tiny green leaves are tightly curled up on my branches. One day, when the sun shines warm on my branches, the baby leaves start to uncurl. Soon, my branches look like they are covered with a soft green fuzz. Then my flowers start





to shoot out. On spring days, the air is full of a yellow dust that helps my acorns grow. Then, almost before you notice, summer is here again.

In the summertime, my branches are covered with big, green leaves. Birds fly into my arms and children play at my feet. They feel safe under my shady branches. The days are long and lazy. I tower over the other trees and look out far in the clear blue skies. I think about the long years I have stood in this place and the many happy years to come. Soon, it will be autumn again—my favorite time of year.



## The Life Cycle of a Seed **Lesson 4**

by Meredith Childress

Have you ever wondered how trees are born? Can you believe that every new tree begins in a flower? It is the flowers that appear on trees in the spring that make tree seeds. Not all of these flowers look like flowers. Some of these flowers are very small and have no petals. Others are very beautiful flowers, and some of them look like tassels dangling from trees. But no matter what kind of flowers a tree has, they all make tree seeds.

Tree seeds grow in many shapes and sizes. Some are as large as a pine cone, a coconut, or a peach pit. Others are as small as an acorn or an apple seed. Some seeds are round and hard so that they tumble and roll on the ground to find a place to grow. Other seeds fly through the air on one or two fairylike wings to find a spot. Some of these even have a soft bit of fluff on their wings to catch the wind. This is nature's way of helping tree seeds travel to a spot where they can open and grow. Squirrels help nature by burying acorns and nuts. These tree seeds are in a good place to open and grow because they are already planted. Tree seeds that do not get planted may open and grow on top of the ground if the spot is wet enough to soften their hard seed coats. Yes, coats! Nature has done a marvelous thing for these young tree seeds that have ripened and left the parent tree. All winter, the baby tree is packed into its little home with plenty of food surrounding it. On the outside is a hard weatherproof coat for protection until spring comes again. With the warmth of spring, the seed begins to grow and bursts its coat open. When the tree seed begins to grow, a new tree is born.

Of course, this tree within a seed is very small. But if you look closely, you will see all the parts of a tree. There is a tiny white thread that will someday be the trunk. At one end of the thread is a root tip; at the other end is a bud with two tiny leaves. Even if the seed is lying on the ground, the threadlike stem of the tree grows bigger, and longer, and stronger. Then, magically, the end of the tree with the root tip turns down into the earth, while the end with the bud and leaves turns up to find the light from the sun.



Many years will pass before the tree will be very big. The sun will warm it and the rain and snow will water it. The wind will blow against it and make it strong. Someday it will be big enough to have seeds of its own. They may be apples, acorns, or nuts, but they, too, will leave the parent tree to find a spot to open and grow.

## Big Brown Bear Goes Fishing Lesson 16

by Rebecca Ide Lowe

The days were getting shorter. Big Brown Bear lumbered along through the woods. His tummy was full and fat, as he had eaten his fill day after day in preparation for his long nap. Now he was looking for a good place to spend the winter. It needed to be warm and protected from danger, but easy to get in and out of in case he woke up hungry during a warm spell and went out for a snack.

"I want just the right sort of place," Big Brown Bear said to himself, "and I'll keep looking until I find it." His big flat feet carried him along and his little eyes searched carefully in the bushes and shrubs that grew along the rocks and mountainsides of the forest. He sniffed the air. "Winter is coming quickly and I must find a good den today," he thought. "Luckily, my coat has grown thick and shaggy and I'll be able to keep myself warm."

As he loped around a corner, Big Brown Bear spotted an opening in the rocks. A big bush spread across it and made it difficult to see in. "That looks promising," thought the big bruin, and he drew closer to have a peek inside. "The entrance looks a little tight," he muttered. "My, I've really put on a lot of weight recently!"

Big Brown Bear carefully squeezed himself through the crack, sucking in his stomach and inching himself bit by bit through the small part of the entrance. Inside, there was a spacious cave with a soft dirt floor. It was not too big and not too small, and the ceiling was not too high and not too low. It was just the right size for Big Brown Bear to curl up in.

"This looks perfect!" he exclaimed. "It's a tight fit, but I can manage it. I'll be a lot smaller after a few months of not eating, so if I need to get in and out in a hurry it should be a simple matter." He yawned and stretched. "I'm really quite tired but I think I'll have one more feast and a good long drink before I settle down."

There were many things that Big Brown Bear liked to eat. He liked acorns, ants, bark, berries, birds, bugs, crayfish, eggs, fish, frogs, fruits, grasses, grubs, guts, honey and bees, leaves, mice, marmots, mushrooms, nuts, roots, seeds, squirrels, and lots of other delicious things. He especially loved salmon and honey and the little white grubs of flies, moths, and beetles. Today he went in search of squirrels, because he knew these little creatures were busy gathering their winter supplies and should be easy to find, along with their hoarded acorns. When he had eaten his fill of them, he dug his long sharp claws into the earth and finished his feast with some sweet, crunchy roots.

“Ah,” sighed Big Brown Bear with contentment. “My tummy is full, my coat is thick and warm, and I am ready for my nap.” He lumbered off to his new den, and with some difficulty, squeezed himself through the opening. He tucked himself into the farthest corner by a rock and curled up tightly. His big mouth opened in a huge yawn. His small round ears listened carefully to be sure no enemy was approaching, and he closed his eyes sleepily. In a few moments, Big Brown Bear began to snore.

Outside his den, the little animals celebrated. The birds twittered and flitted from tree to tree. The squirrels chattered and chattered and waved their bushy tails. The mice and the marmots ran here and there feeling quite safe, not worrying about keeping an eye out for a quick hiding place.

“Let us make a plan,” said the oldest squirrel, “so that when Big Brown Bear wakes up when the weather turns, he will go straight to the river to fish, and will move downstream and away from our part of the forest. He has eaten enough of us—let him go somewhere else to live for a while!”

“Hear hear!” cried all the little animals.

So it was that all through the cold winter, when the snow was falling and the icicles hung from trees, the little animals worked. They found frozen honeycombs and the squirrels and other gatherers shared their piles of nuts that had been carefully stored away in the fall. They dug into the hard ground for the roots they knew the big bear loved. They gathered a huge pile of food for Big Brown Bear, because they knew he would be starving when he awoke at the end of winter. They knew he would come roaring out of his cave with a raging hunger that was dangerous to them all. Day after day, they labored to make a pathway of food all the way from Big Brown Bear’s den to the banks of the river some distance away.

Finally, the trail of food was finished. Every little animal in the woods had given something from their own winter stores and every little animal had worked hard to make the path that would lead Big Brown Bear away from their forest home. The trail was finished just in time, because the next day the sun shone brightly and the snow began to melt. A warm wind began to blow. Spring was on its way!

“Hurry!” cried all the little animals to one another, their voices echoing off the rocks. “Hurry and hide! This is just the sort of day when Big Brown Bear will wake up!” They rushed to their homes high in the treetops, inside stumps, deep in holes below the ground, and underneath bushes. They waited quietly, listening. Inside the warm den, Big Brown Bear stirred. He uncurled his body and stretched, yawning and blinking his little eyes. “I have had a long and relaxing sleep,” he thought. “But now I feel like getting up. I feel awfully hungry!” He patted his stomach. “How flat and small my tummy is!” he exclaimed to himself. “It has been a long time since I filled it. And I am dreadfully thirsty too! I wonder what delicious treats are waiting for me outside.”

And with that, Big Brown Bear lumbered to his feet. He easily passed through the opening of the den, having lost all his winter fat during his long nap. Standing outside the cave, he sniffed the air. “I smell food!” he muttered. Then, “Food!” he roared. “I need food!”

The huge bear placed one flat foot in front of the other, sniffing the ground. The first food he found was a crunchy pile of acorns. “Heavenly!” he moaned, gobbling them down. “But this is just an appetizer.”

He continued along, following his nose. “Mushrooms, I smell mushrooms,” he drooled, and soon he found a heap of wild mushrooms. He nibbled them in no time, and eagerly looked for more. His nose wiggled, as he smelled something even more delicious. As he came close, he recognized the scent of grubs—a lovely little mountain of grubs tucked inside a rotten log. “Delicious!” said Big Brown Bear. “But still it’s just a start. I am starving!”

The little animals had planned their path well. They were careful not to put the food too close together or too far apart. They didn’t want Big Brown Bear to be suspicious, but they wanted to make sure he didn’t wander off their path. As he followed his busily sniffing nose, Big Brown Bear was led from one treat to another. He ate acorns, ants, bark, berries, bugs, eggs, fruits, grasses, grubs, guts, honey, leaves, mushrooms, nuts, roots, seeds, and lots of other delicious things. He didn’t even notice that there were no bees, birds, frogs, mice, marmots, or squirrels. He ate all the things the little animals had left for him, but when he finally arrived at the river, he wanted more.

Big Brown Bear clambered into the water and began to drink. He drank and drank, for he had had nothing to drink all winter, and he was terribly dry. After his drink, his beady little eyes looked around for fish. As he stared into the water, he saw a flash of silver. He swatted at it with his big paw, but came up with nothing. He followed it downstream a little way and swatted again. This time, his sharp claws caught a salmon. He gulped it down and looked for more. In his eagerness, he never saw that he was wandering far downstream, far from the forest where he had spent the winter. Soon, he was miles away, hungrily gobbling one fish after another.

The little forest creatures gathered by the river to see Big Brown Bear vanish from sight. “Safe!” they sang. “Big Brown Bear has gone to a new hunting ground and we are safe at last!” And they happily went about their business in the warm spring breeze.

## **Bobbie's Big Adventure**    Lesson 17

by Shari Mueller

It was cold and dark where Bobbie lived. He lived deep in the earth in an underground cavern. He liked his home, but lately he was yearning to see something new. He asked around and found out there was a group getting ready to depart for the surface in a few minutes. He asked if he could go along, and they agreed.

As they all moved into place, a sudden bubbling action started up underneath them and instantly they were being carried upward at a fast pace! Bobbie thought this was the ride of a lifetime! He was so excited to finally be going somewhere!

It seemed like they bubbled upward for a long time, but Bobbie didn’t mind. It was a new experience, and he enjoyed it. He spotted a tiny speck of light in the distance, and it seemed they were heading right for it, because the speck kept getting bigger and bigger. Suddenly, Bobbie found himself

surrounded by light and rushing water all headed in a downward direction! It was exhilarating! “What happened?” Bobbie shouted.

“We have emerged from underground through what’s called a ‘spring’,” answered someone near him. “And now we are at the mouth of a river . . . we *are* the river, flowing from this high mountain down to join with other water from other sources,” said the new friend. “You will see many wonderful things as we flow along, sometimes fast and sometimes slow, over rocks, around islands, merging and getting bigger until we end up in the ocean! It is the most exciting adventure I have ever taken, and this is my third trip!” said the friend excitedly. “By the way, my name is Jason.”

“I’m Bobbie, and this is my first time in a river aboveground. I’ve been part of an underground river all my life.” Bobbie marveled at the mountains rising tall along the path the river was taking. Since it was still winter, the snow that covered the mountainsides was not melting yet. But as soon as the seasons changed and the sun started to heat up the snow, it would melt and join the water that was bubbling along in this gentle mountain stream.

“When the melted snow joins us,” said Jason, reading Bobbie’s mind, “we will no longer be a gentle mountain stream. I have been here in spring before and it is really a wild ride! We swell to four times our current size and rush down the mountain with such force that sometimes we can’t control where we go and end up destroying a house or a bridge. Then people call us a flash flood. But at this time of year, we will remain small until we get farther down and join up with other streams that are heading down too.”

Bobbie was grateful for Jason’s company, and enjoyed hearing him talk about what was happening to them. He explained to Bobbie that the water usually travels between one and five miles an hour, and over time, it wears away the ground under it and on both sides of it. Over many years, a river wears away miles and miles of land. Jason said the people call it erosion. He also said that when a river erodes the land, it makes a groove in the ground that is shaped like the letter V. This V-shape is called a river valley. Over thousands of years, the river smooths out the valley into more of a U-shape and the land becomes flat. “Where we are headed, the land is very flat,” explained Jason. “People build houses along the river and ride in boats, big and small, up and down the water. They fish and swim in the river for fun!”

Bobbie had learned so much from listening to Jason and he knew that his experience as a river would be a rich one. He was so glad he had the courage to leave his safe underground river cavern and join the adventurous ride to the ocean. Even though this was his first ride, he knew it wouldn’t be his last!