

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

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Introduction

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

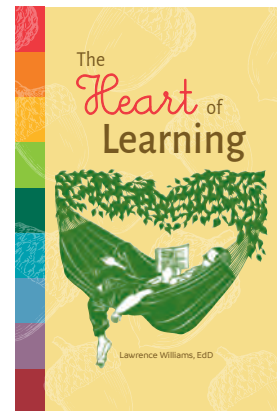
your own strengths. It is the light of your own understanding, and the love you have for your child, that will be the driving force in their growth as an individual. This is the essence and the gift of being a home teacher.

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.)

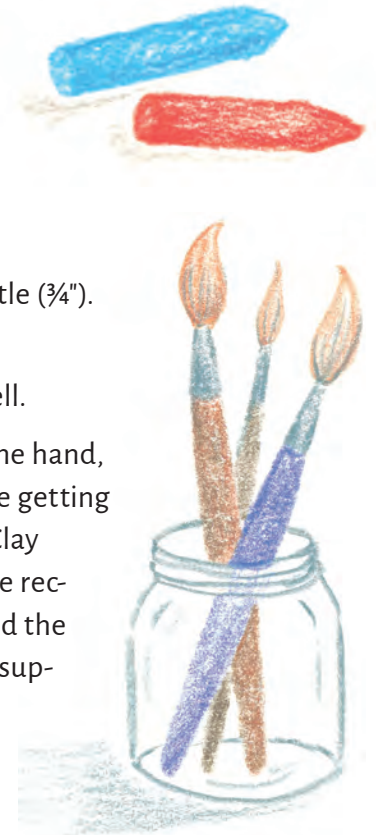
Jumbo beeswax block or stick crayons: A good quality set of crayons in the seven colors of the rainbow is an excellent choice.

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.

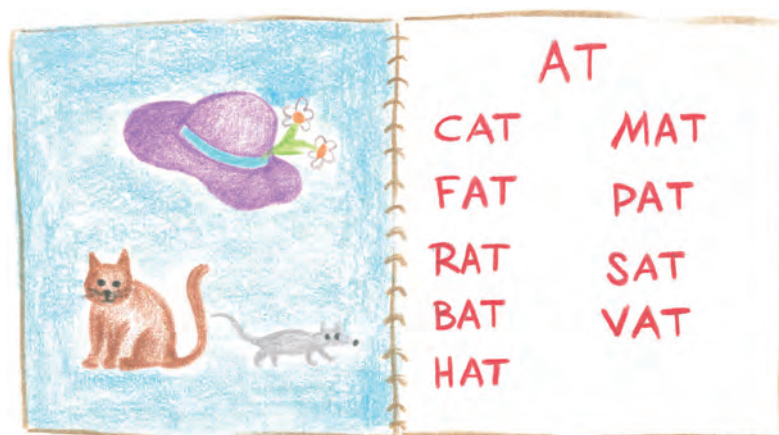
In the meantime, here are a few tips that will help your homeschooling journey be more successful.

- 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.



Introduction to the Subjects

These introductions contain important guidance for each subject. You will find it useful to read these introductions before proceeding with the lessons and to refer back to this information periodically as you progress through the year.

Language Arts

In the first grade, the primary focus of language arts is building a foundation for later work in reading. We concentrate on strengthening the recognition of uppercase and lowercase letter forms, and developing awareness of vowel and consonant sounds.

The first step to strengthening letter recognition is to review the capital letters with which the child is already familiar. An introduction to the lowercase letters can be integrated into this review so that it happens within the same learning experience. There are many fun ways to practice letters at this stage.

The following process is only one example offered as a way to practice letter forms.

- Find a story that will be used to present the two forms of a letter. The stories in this resource book work well for creating these letter stories. Be ready to tell the story over and over a few times, as children love to hear a story repeated and never seem to tire of their favorites! Another approach is to have the child tell the story from memory, as this is also an important skill.
- Once the story has been told, create a simple drawing on a piece of paper. The drawing will be an illustration of where the capital letter is found in the story. Next, draw the lowercase letter in the context of its role in the story. For example, if the big *B* is the bear in *The Bear's Child*, the little *b* might be the bear's chair with a nice soft cushion and a straight back.
- On the back of the paper, print the two letters beside each other. Do your best to make the forms just as you hope your child will make them. Ask your child to try making the letters on their own just like you did, and use this as an opportunity for lots of praise. If the form is drastically incorrect, try creating another example nearby and offer it as a visual reminder of the correct form for next time. Try having your child trace your example with one finger if they are a tactile learner.
- Have your child practice several times on a sheet of paper, and then suggest printing the letters in the main lesson book. Using the crayon techniques outlined in *Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades*, have your child color in the surrounding page with a complementary color.

Keep this activity low pressure, and focus on the process rather than the form. If your child is missing the form of the letter altogether, then they are probably too young. If your child is on the right track, then coach them to gently improve the form. For example, "Can you draw another one, and this time make the line tall and straight like this?" Taking away the pressure of forming the letters perfectly the first time will allow your child to gain confidence and have fun with what can otherwise be a tedious activity.

There is a tendency when we are practicing a sequence of similar items, such as the alphabet, to begin to rely on the same approach on a daily basis and essentially find ourselves “running on automatic.” Try new creative approaches for integrating lowercase and capital letters, but be aware if you are falling into a routine that is too systematic. If your child begins to feel that they would rather be doing something else, it is time to try something new. One way to avoid this is to fit these activities into the context of your daily routine rather than a separately designated time.

There are many ways to integrate letter learning into your daily activities. Tell a story at bedtime, and then ask your child to retell the story the next day when you are engaged in another activity that does not require concentration, like washing dishes or nursing the baby. This helps maintain the moment as a relaxed and informal one. Try presenting a poem or tongue twister that repeats a particular letter. Gauge the level of interest your child has in this activity. Does your child seem bored or engaged? Then respond to your child’s attitude with action.

If your child seems uninterested in the learning activity, then it is time to change activities. If we allow our teaching to respond to the child in the moment, then our learning experiences will stay fresh and engaging. Later, if your child overhears you repeating the rhyme for your own enjoyment while you are engaged in some daily activity, they will often latch on to the fun you are having and will become more interested in repeating the rhyme.

If your child shows interest in this word play, it is a good time to begin looking at the relationships of letters and sounds more closely. Work slowly when presenting the sounds and letters so that your child does not feel rushed or overwhelmed. There is no specific time line for mastering these letters, so be sensitive to your child’s needs. Make the process of learning, growing, and discovering together one that gently introduces your child to their own inherent strengths and abilities.

Using Unlined Paper

Your child will benefit from using unlined paper at this stage instead of relying on lines to keep letters straight. Although it is true that the form of the initial efforts may suffer by not having lines as a guide, this will gradually improve until the child is able to write beautifully with or without lines. As children develop greater awareness and poise, their printing will improve. The inner quality is what we strive to develop; the outer form will reflect that inner growth.

Becoming Familiar with Letter Forms

When your child is practicing forming letters, a gentle and effective approach is to ignore the failures and praise the successes. Draw attention to the correct form of the letter without mentioning the mistake: “When I make the B, I always make sure that the bear’s back is straight and tall, like this.” If your child is still having difficulty, try a special art project with that letter. Create a drawing or painting around the letter, form the letter out of clay, write the letter in collage form using photos of things that begin with the letter. This is a great time to use praise to inspire creative expression. If your child is a physical learner, try having them form the letter with their body, or draw large forms of the letter in the sand or snow with footsteps. This type of kinesthetic activity can help set this letter form to memory.

Word Families

As the curriculum progresses, we will begin to develop the ability to recognize patterns of similar sounds in groupings of letters. These groupings are often called “word families.” We have included *Oak Meadow Word Families* with this curriculum. This is for your use as your child is learning the basics of letter and sound relationships.

Read a word family story to your child, and then have your child list the words from the particular word family in the main lesson book. Encourage drawing a picture as well.

First Reader

Once a child has learned the alphabet and can use the letters and sounds to create word families, reading the written word is the next natural step. The process of moving from the act of writing to reading is part of the evolution of this process.

Some educators feel that children should read only letters that are perfectly formed to avoid confusion, so they allow children to read from only printed readers. Unfortunately, the printed letters in books are actually more unfamiliar to children than the forms that they make themselves. Instead, each child makes a slightly different symbol, which is representative of the ideal letter form. Reading develops more easily when the printed word is not the only letter forms they are exposed to as samples.

One approach to integrating reading and writing is to use your main lesson book (MLB) to create a reading book. Start with a blank book and choose a story. Refer to the guiding principles in *Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades* when choosing your story.

1. Read the story, and when it is finished, have your child draw a picture of the story. Point out that they are making pictures for a book, and just like an illustration in a book, your child’s picture should be as colorful and detailed as possible.
2. After the picture is finished, decide on a sentence to go with the picture. Be creative, but don’t try to sum up the whole story in one sentence. You can ask your child what sentence to write in the book, but you may have to work out a compromise so that it is a clear, simple sentence without any exceedingly difficult words.
3. It can be helpful to write the title of the story at the top and underline it (or choose a different color to go around it). This keeps it from being confused with the sentence that is to follow.
4. Skip down about two spaces and have your child write the sentence. You may need to print the words in their proper places on a sheet of paper (without lines) and have your child copy from that into the MLB.
5. After the picture and writing are finished, help your child read what has been written. Don’t be concerned if they don’t know all the words. Go over it several times together until your child can read most of it without any difficulty.

6. Continue to develop the reading book in this manner, adding to it gradually and reading over the stories that have already been done. Soon, your child will have a lengthy collection of stories to read.

Word Spacing

When printing, all children tend to run the words together. You can help avoid this by using fingers as space markers. Tell your child that letters in a word like to be close together, but that each word is separated by a space just like the space between houses next door to each other. When your child comes to the end of a word, tell them to “skip two fingers” before writing the next word. This is usually done by putting the index and middle fingers of the left hand close together after the last letter of the word and beginning the first letter of the next word on the right side of the index finger. Two fingers are usually about right, but you can adjust it to suit your child’s fingers by adding or subtracting fingers. Another idea some children enjoy is to put a little yellow star between each word, thus creating the habit of allowing space between words.

A Note on Pacing in Learning to Read

If your child already knows how to read, or if they learn to read very quickly, you may proceed to the readers that have come with this curriculum. However, if your child is not able to read all of the beginning readers that we have included with this curriculum, don’t become concerned or try to push. The first grade curriculum package includes several beginning readers because we know how quickly a child can learn to read when the time is right. If it is the proper timing for your child, you may go right through all of these readers and be ready for the second grade reader next year. On the other hand, if your child is not ready to begin reading, they may not be able to read even one of these readers. In either case, don’t try to force your child’s reading development. Children have a natural urge to expand their abilities, and this includes learning to read. A natural part of their unfoldment is wanting to read, and they will find a way to do it. Trust in the law of the child’s being, and respond with love and respect for the unique child that is developing.

Helping a child learn to read does not require any specialized skills. You can assist by helping with words when asked, giving a few hints that help tie things together (word families, letter sounds, etc.), providing opportunities to read (such as the reader they make), reading aloud daily from a wide variety of materials, and having absolute trust in your child’s ability to learn to read. It is not our responsibility to determine when a child will begin reading. Our role is to provide the opportunities to enjoy the gradual acquisition of the skills that will be needed when your child is ready.

Social Studies

Social studies usually consists of a study of history, geography, and civics. In first grade, we begin to build on the exploration of local community and awareness of familiar landmarks as well as the exploration of fairy tales as archetypal symbols and modes for discussing human behavior and relationships.

Cultural and Social Themes in Stories

The history studies are focused on the fairy tales, as told in conjunction with language arts. All people have the need to hear about the eternal realities of humanity and to share these realities with someone loved and respected. The daily ritual of reading draws parent and child more closely together while giving them a common focus. These stories have an archetypal message that conveys the essential struggles and victories of humanity. This creates a foundation for the later work in history.

For guidance in selecting stories, refer to the guiding principles in the introduction and review the section on the importance of fairy tales for a better understanding about how to best use these stories in your learning experiences.

Developing a Sense of Time

The second focus of first grade social studies is to help your child unfold a sense of time, which is basic to an understanding of history. The perception of time develops gradually through the experience of natural cyclic repetition, and the direct experience of natural repetition is much more meaningful to a child than the artificial hands of a clock. Telling time on a clock comes later, in third grade.

In ancient days, men and women measured time by the movement of the sun, moon, and stars. Without the aid of watches, they were able to order their lives effectively and live happily and productively. This does not suggest that we should not use watches or clocks but rather that we should realize that time is not only traceable through the hands of a clock. Ancient people enjoyed a relationship with nature that few enjoy today, due in part to their close observation of the cycles inherent in the natural world.

Because children of first-grade age are just beginning to understand time, this is an opportunity to introduce them to the cycles inherent in nature. In turn, your child will begin to understand these larger cycles and develop a wonderful foundation for the later understanding of calendars, clocks, and historical time lines. By developing awareness of these natural cycles, you will be helping your child unfold their innate sensitivity to the rhythms of nature, which will affect the way in which they understand themselves, others, and the world around them.

There are three basic rhythms that you should focus on: daily, monthly, and yearly. The daily rhythm is dominated by sunrise and sunset, the monthly rhythm by full moons and new moons, and the yearly rhythm by the seasons. In addition to these planetary points of reference, there are also cultural rhythms formed by regularly shared events, such as holidays or annual festivals.

In first grade, your child will also become well acquainted with the development and use of simple maps. Our geographical study reflects children's limited worldview by gently expanding their position on the maps they draw so that they eventually recognize the world as a larger whole in which everything is contained and interconnected. Children may then begin to experience themselves as part of something grand, while at the same time existing as a vital member in their home. The world family includes us all!

With this in mind, we explore people in the community and the ways in which they serve one another and the community as a whole. As human beings, we often have the tendency to become absorbed in our own particular interests and forget that we are all part of a group. We are members of a family, neighborhood, town, state, country, and that one large family called humanity. When we are aware of our place in these groups, our awareness is centered on broader matters, and we realize that our actions affect others in the group. We must be considerate of the rights and needs of others.

In essence, every community is a living organism composed of individuals with vastly different attitudes and traits. Learning to cooperate for the good of the group is an important lesson for all of us. There are many ways in which you could introduce these ideas to your child, but the approach that we have found most effective involves stories and human interaction.

Look for opportunities in your daily life to focus your child's awareness on the workers in your community. When you see a police car on the road, for example, you can talk to your child about police officers and what they do. If you hear and see a fire engine, you have a perfect opportunity to talk about firefighters. The same can apply to any of the workers you may meet in the course of the day: garbage collectors, auto mechanics, grocery clerks, librarians, and many others. Any of these can be the focus for a simple story that demonstrates the essence of what that person does for the community. These stories need not be complex; all that is required is a simple weaving of fact and fiction so that your child can experience the characteristics of this community member.

Some things to keep in mind when creating stories:

- Always place the worker in the best possible light, as a sincere person who always does their best to try to help people. Single out the attributes this person has that make them particularly suited for that position, and mention what a wonderful thing it is to have that attribute.
- Present a vision of the ideal. Of course we know that not all workers work to the best of their capabilities or with a sense of community mindedness, but focus your stories on workers who do. Try to look beyond apparent weaknesses and see the ideals that people are striving for instead.
- Help children develop this view by showing them examples of it in the way that you look at the workers in your community. As you help your child see the qualities and contributions each worker has to offer, they will form the habit of always looking for the best in people; this attitude will be of great benefit to them during life.

In addition to such stories, get to know some of the people you meet every day in your community. Introduce your child to the mail carrier, banker, bus driver, and store clerk, and let them form relationships. As your child meets them, explain how they help others in the community. Soon, your child will realize that all of these people work together to help one another and that because of their efforts, all who live in the community are able to live happier lives. By introducing your child to the workers in the community in this manner, you will be helping them unfold a love for others and a respect for the unique talents that they contribute to their community.

Mathematics

What do you think of when you think of mathematics? Is it numbers and arithmetic or shapes and geometry? Is it the logic proofs that you dreaded or the statistics that you loved? Mathematics is multi-faceted and does include arithmetic, geometry, logic, and statistics, but it is so much more.

Mathematics is a way to train thinking capacities and to order and understand the world. In the first-grade year, there is a focus on arithmetic—working with the four operations and times tables—as well as geometry. We also look at sorting and classifying, ordinal numbers, and odd and even numbers.

The most important aspect of this curriculum is that it asks your child, and you, to think and talk about numbers, processes, and form. This curriculum will not give you sets of problems with one right answer. By the end of first grade, you will find your child solving written problems in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. The process to get there, however, is one that encourages thoughtful and creative understandings of arithmetic and mathematics. Your child is asked to talk through the problems, and you might find your family talking about math more than you ever have!

We want children to make their own connections. Activities in this curriculum are designed to first do, and then, understand. The activities do not need to be explained to the child beforehand. Instead, do the activity and wait for them to make the connections. The purposeful sequence and timing of the Oak Meadow curriculum is designed with the intention of developing these capacities of thought. There is no need to supplement the activities with workbooks or math sheets. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of children at each age and stage of development.

Geometric Form Drawings

The semester begins with geometric drawings as we continue to unfold capacity of freehand drawing. While geometry is an essential part of any study in mathematics, knowledge of the basic geometric forms is only a minor aspect of this experience. The primary reason for this exercise is that it gives your child (and you) an opportunity to develop the inner poise and balance that is required to draw forms without any external aids. Because children are making freehand forms, their initial efforts will certainly not be as attractive as those they could make otherwise. Gradually, they will develop an inner sense of proportion, a sharp eye, and a steady hand, which are far more valuable than any number of perfect circles. In addition, they will be learning how to give form to their idea, since the only image they have to guide them is the idea of a perfect circle. Such inner abilities have far-reaching effects in a child's life. Geometric drawings also make great borders on main lesson book pages as well as on cards and other decorations that your child may wish to make.

Arithmetic

After a thorough review of the work that focused on the quality of numbers, we begin arithmetic with the introduction of the four operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Because these processes are the foundation for all operations in mathematics, it is important that they be introduced slowly through stories and images so that the child has a true understanding of what is

involved in each of them. The approach that we use is imaginative and artistic, because the imagination is one of a child's strongest tools at this age. Therefore, in presenting a subject as essential as the four math processes, we feel it is very important to approach it in just such an imaginative manner. Throughout the year, you will find stories that can be used with your child or used as inspiration to make up your own creative stories.

After the four operations are introduced, your child will be given plenty of time to work through story problems. This approach allows them to strengthen their understanding of each operation. Solving these story problems out loud can be more beneficial at this stage than mastering written arithmetic problems.

Throughout the year, continue talking about the ways that problems are solved and encouraging your child to talk through problems and solutions. This will help you see if your child is developing new strategies and integrating new ways of working into the solving of arithmetic problems. When you ask a child to articulate the steps for solving a math problem, it develops their thinking capacities and makes it easier for you to see new progress that they are making. The missing-number problems in the second semester are an exciting way to look at math problems, and they introduce skills needed later in algebra in middle school.

Your child will begin working with some of the multiplication tables this year. These tables are introduced through skip counting and rhythmic activities. Hand-clapping, stomping, skipping, singing, marching, drumming, tossing beanbags, and jumping rope while reciting the times tables are excellent ways to practice them together. Play with the times tables and don't confine your practice to only lesson time—spontaneous recitation might occur during dinner prep or in the car. It is not required that your child master the times tables by the end of the year, although with continuous repetition, it is likely they will master the rhythmic patterns of some of them.

Circle time is an ideal time to practice times tables. There is a rhythm of activity and rest built into the practice of the times tables. While reciting times tables during circle time, remember to vary the tempo, tone, volume, and activity that you are doing. One day toss beanbags, one day jump rope, one day clap or stomp around the house. Make sure to use ascending and descending order. For example:

2*4*6*8*10*12*14*16*18*20*22*24

24*22*20*18*16*14*12*10*8*6*4*2* done (or 0)

Keep the times tables light and fun. If they become monotonous and boring, stop them for a few weeks, and then bring them back in a new way.

Math Manipulatives

Math manipulatives are any set of objects that can be used to represent numbers when solving an equation. Manipulatives can be found items such as stones, beans, buttons, glass beads ("gems"), or nuts, or you can buy manipulatives like Cuisenaire rods, which come in graduated, relative sizes.

Have a small bag or basket for your manipulatives, and keep them handy. It is helpful to have a felt mat to put the manipulatives on. This helps keep the manipulatives from falling on the ground and makes less noise than putting them on the table. Have your child help you collect your manipulatives.

Pacing in Mathematics

Whenever we introduce something that children will be using regularly for many years, such as the letters of the alphabet, the signs of the four processes, or the vertical format in mathematics, it is very important that we approach that introduction as consciously as possible. Whenever children use that element in the future, they experience in a small way what was experienced when it was first introduced, usually in story form. Students will be aware of the connection at first, but it will soon become unconscious.

For this reason, we should not be too anxious to push a child into abstract problems (“How much is $4 + 5$?”). At this age, children need to exercise their imagination far more than they need to master all the intellectual facets of mathematics. Math provides another opportunity to create imaginative pictures and use stories, which can affect their feelings about the world and their inner character. The actual mathematical concepts that need to be learned at this age are simple, but when the process of addition is seen as a symbol of cooperation (“Let’s all add our nuts together”) and the process of division is seen as sharing, a deep sensitivity can grow from this use of the imagination. The stories present an attitude toward life and become part of the moral nature of the child.

Tips for Teaching Math

- A chalkboard is a great way to save paper and allow your child to practice the lessons in an informal way. Using colored chalk can make the lessons more interesting for your child, but keep in mind that too many colors can detract from the lesson.
- Children at this age are still highly imitative. In homeschooling, you can use this to your advantage. You will want to model all activities, behaviors, and skills before expecting your child to work independently. They will pick up the activity, behavior, or skill much better if you do it first and then give them the opportunity.
- Try your best to integrate math problems and skills into your daily activities. They will become much more meaningful if your child understands what part these skills play in life. Be aware of problems that you solve quickly and almost unconsciously in these activities, and give them to your child to solve. Then, when they have found the answer, let them know how helpful they are and how much you enjoy exploring this together.

Science

In first-grade science, we begin with a look at the natural world and the ways we observe and gather information about the world around us. Your child's experience in science this year will primarily involve a deepening of observational skills as we look at the phases of the moon, the seasons, plant formation, animal tracking, the basic needs of birds and other animals, and cloud formation and local weather. We will introduce simple tools to enhance observation and explore various concepts necessary to the study of science, such as sorting, classification, and identification.

At this point, it is our goal primarily to help your child build an understanding of the world through observations. For this reason, there is no need to try to analyze the observations. As your child participates in these activities, try to allow them to fully engage in their own interpretations, no matter what the result. As the curriculum continues, your child will gradually be introduced to the concepts that are at work behind what you have observed.

The joy of science for many children at this age is in the process of watching how things work and applying what they see to their own lives. It is exciting and gratifying to watch a child experience the “aha!” that happens when true understanding occurs! In the interest of encouraging a true love of learning, we begin this gradual process now by developing a solid foundation of the observation of the world and all its wonders.

Arts & Crafts

Artistic expression is a very important part of the Oak Meadow curriculum. The primary mediums used throughout the course are crayons and watercolor paints. Instructions for crayon drawing and watercolor painting can be found in *Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades*.

There are many opportunities for drawing and painting within the context of the academic lessons. In addition, your child may wish to draw or paint at other times during the day. As often as your child wishes, give them the opportunity to create art. This will allow them to develop artistic skills in a natural way, and this growth will affect their approach to later artistic work.

In addition to drawing and painting, your child will have the opportunity to enjoy a wide range of crafts this year. Even if you don't think you are a “crafty” person, we encourage you to explore these artistic activities with your child. A child who is reluctant or uncertain about their artistic abilities will be encouraged by your presence, enthusiasm, and willingness to try new things. A child who is eager to engage in art of any kind will enjoy sharing ideas and experiences with you as you create art together. The end product is almost beside the point—the artistic process is the rich reward.

In many schools, craft activities are organized without any apparent understanding of the needs of the child as an unfolding being. When that is the case, children usually do not derive any fulfillment from those activities, and the objects that are created generally end up in the trash. However, when a craft is chosen because it is in harmony with the child's inner needs, the child is able to bring a tremendous

focus and seems to derive nourishment from the activity itself. In addition, the finished creation is often kept for many years, because it seems to be imbued with the essence of the child.

When you first begin working on a craft project, gather your materials and begin working, without directly involving your child. In no time at all, your child will want to help you. When that happens, forget for the moment about finishing the project and patiently help them learn how to do whatever it is you are doing.



As your child's self-sufficiency with crafts increases, you should try to set aside an area that can be specifically used as a craft area. You and your child can assemble the materials and tools that are needed in craft work and keep them in that area. Help organize the materials in such a manner that your child will be able to find what is needed when working on a project. Remind them to always clean up the area after they have finished for the day, and help if necessary, so that materials are not lost or wasted. In this way, your child will gradually develop an orderliness that will carry over to other aspects of life.

As the craft area becomes well stocked with supplies, it becomes a valuable source of creative ideas when children are looking for something to do during the day or when birthday presents need to be made. Your children will gradually develop a pattern of creativity in all that they do, which brings a greater depth and meaning to life.

Knitting

In the Oak Meadow kindergarten course, finger knitting was introduced. This process, though simple to learn, is repetitive in nature and requires the child to become more aware of the fingers. In first grade, we continue this gradual integration of the child with their body by introducing knitting with needles. Any activity that is repetitious is beneficial for a child's development, and knitting is no exception, particularly for children who are inclined to be "scattered." For such a child, knitting has the effect of pulling together all the unfocused energy and concentrating it on one point. When this happens, the child begins to integrate all the fragments and gradually becomes more poised and alert.

We have provided simple knitting instructions in *Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades*.

Seasonal Tables

At the beginning of each season, create a seasonal table using natural materials. Have a table set up year-round. Here are some ideas of what might make its way to your seasonal table.

**For autumn:**

- Pumpkins and gourds
- Corn
- Pretty colored leaves
- Anything else you find that represents fall to you

For winter:

- Pine branch and pine cones
- Holly branch with bright red berries
- Snowflakes and icicles made from paper
- Anything else that feels like winter to you

**For spring:**

- Bird's nest
- Early blooming branches, like forsythia
- Bulbs growing in a shallow bowl with pebbles and water
- Anything else that feels like spring to you

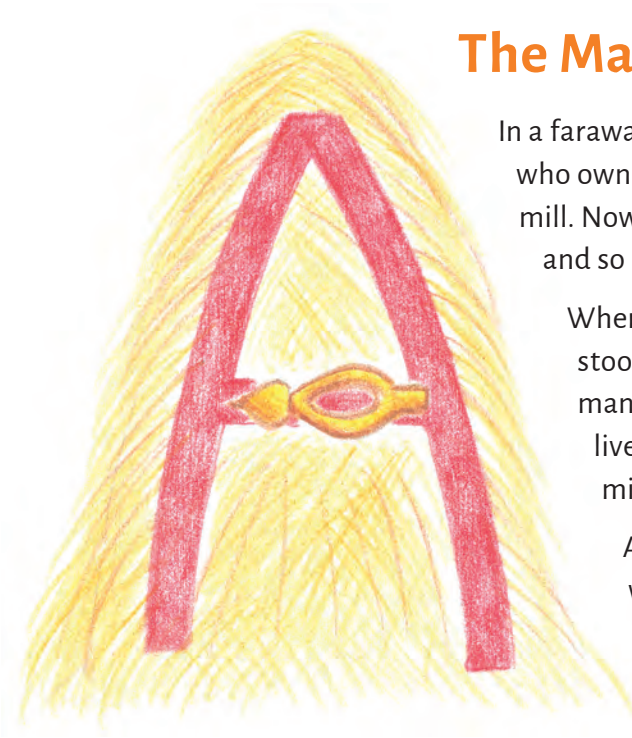
**For summer:**

- Beautiful flowers
- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Seashells
- Sand
- Anything else that represents summer to you





Stories: Language Arts



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.

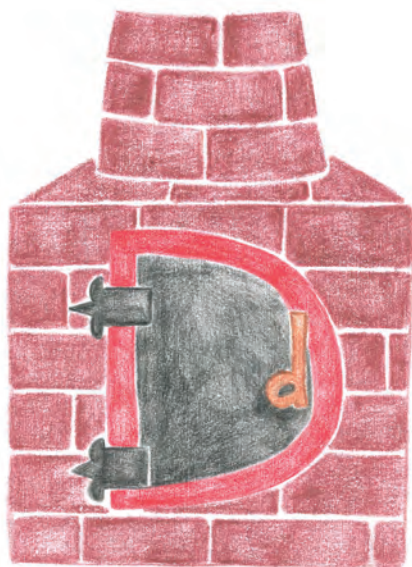
The next day, Jordan and Maria decided to take a walk in the forest. They both felt very sad, but walking through the beautiful old trees always made them feel better. The birds began chirping cheerfully as they passed, as if to say, “Don’t worry—be happy! Life is beautiful!” They noticed the squirrels 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.

pot, grabbed the hen by her legs, and ran for his life! But before they were out the door, the hen started cackling so loudly that the giant woke up!

“Where’s my hen?” he thundered angrily, and looked up just in time to see Jack running down the road with the black hen. Jack was quick, but the giant’s stride was three times as long, and when Jack reached the beanstalk first, the giant was only a dozen yards behind him! There was no time to think. He grabbed the vine with his free hand and slid down it like a firepole, holding tightly onto the magic chicken’s legs with his other hand. Jack knew it was life or death, so he slid down even faster. When he neared the ground, he called out to his mother, “Mother! Mother! Come quickly! Bring an ax!”

As luck would have it, his mother was out in the yard chopping wood. Just as Jack landed on the ground, he handed her the magic hen, grabbed the ax, and gave a mighty blow to the base of the beanstalk. Jack was safe at last.

Jack built a special henhouse for the magic hen and treated her with love and kindness. In return, she provided him with a golden egg every time he said, “Lay!” She laid enough eggs for everyone in the village to have all their needs supplied, and Jack and his mother lived happily to the end of their days.

Prince Darling Lesson 6

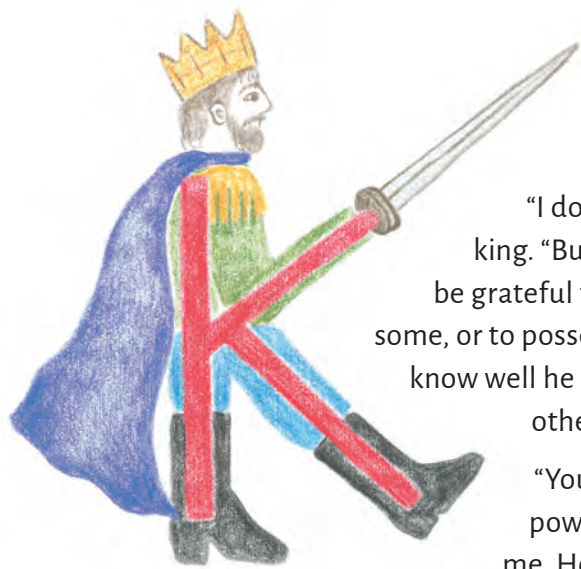
Once upon a time, there lived a king who was so just and kind that his subjects called him “the Good King.” It happened one day, when he was out hunting, that a little white rabbit, which his dogs were chasing, jumped into his arms for protection. The king stroked it gently, and said to it, “Well, little bunny, as you have come to me for protection, I will see that nobody hurts you.”

And he took the rabbit home to his palace and made it a comfortable little house in a pretty yard where it could wander about freely and where there were all sorts of nice things to eat.

That night, when he was alone in his room, a beautiful lady suddenly appeared before him. Her long dress was as white as snow, and she had a crown of white roses on her head. The good king was very much surprised to see her, for he knew his door had been tightly shut, and he could not think of how she had got in.

She said to him, “I am the Fairy Truth. I was passing through the wood when you were out hunting, and I wished to find out if you were really good, as everybody said you were. I took the shape of a little rabbit and came to your arms for shelter, for I know that those who are merciful to animals will be still kinder to their fellow men. If you had refused to help me, I should have been certain that you were wicked. I thank you for the kindness you have shown me, which has made me your friend forever. You have only to ask me for anything you want and I promise that I will give it to you.”

“Madam,” said the good king, “since you are a fairy you no doubt know all my wishes. I have but one son, whom I love very dearly, which is why he is called Prince Darling. If you are really good enough to wish to do me a favor, I beg that you will become his friend.”



"With all my heart," answered the fairy. "I can make your son the handsomest prince in the world, or the richest, or the most powerful. Choose whichever you like for him."

"I do not ask any of these things for my son," replied the good king. "But if you will make him the best of princes, I shall indeed be grateful to you. What good would it do him to be rich, or handsome, or to possess all the kingdoms of the world if he were wicked? You know well he would still be unhappy and would bring unhappiness to others. Only a good man can be really contented."

"You are quite right," answered the fairy, "but it is not in my power to make Prince Darling a good man unless he will help me. He must himself try hard to become good. I can only promise to give him good advice, to scold him for his faults, and to punish him if he will not correct and punish himself."

The good king was quite satisfied with this promise. Very soon afterward, he died, happy because he knew his son had such a good and caring friend. Prince Darling was very sorry, for he loved his father with all his heart, and he would willingly have given all his kingdoms and all his treasures of gold and silver if he could have kept the good king with him.

Two days afterward, when the prince had gone to bed, the Fairy Truth suddenly appeared to him and said, "I promised your father that I would be your friend, and to keep my word I have come to bring you a present." And she put a little gold ring on his finger.

"Take great care of this ring," she said, "as it is more precious than diamonds. Every time you do a bad deed, it will prick your finger. If, in spite of its pricking, you go on in your own evil way, you will lose my friendship, and I shall become your enemy." So saying, the fairy disappeared, leaving Prince Darling very much astonished.

For some time, he behaved so well that the ring never pricked him, and that made him so contented that his subjects called him Prince Darling the Happy. One day, however, he went out hunting, but was unable to catch anything. This put him in a very bad temper. It seemed to him as he rode along that his ring was pressing into his finger, but as it did not prick him he did not pay any attention to it. When he got home and went to his own room, his little dog Bibi ran to meet him, jumping and yipping around him with pleasure.

"Get away!" said the prince, quite gruffly. "I don't want you near me right now. You are in the way." The poor little dog, who didn't understand this at all, pulled at his coat to make him at least look at her, and this made Prince Darling so cross that he gave her quite a hard kick.

Instantly, his ring pricked him sharply, as if it had been a pin. He was very much surprised, and he sat down in a corner of his room feeling quite ashamed of himself. "I believe the fairy is laughing at me," he

thought. “Surely I can have done no great wrong in just kicking a tiresome animal! What is the good of my being ruler of a great kingdom if I am not even allowed to kick my own dog?”

“I am not making fun of you,” said a voice, answering Prince Darling’s thoughts. “You have committed three faults. First of all, you were out of temper because you could not have what you wanted, and you thought all men and animals were made only to do your pleasure. Then you were really angry, because your dog greeted you happily when you were irritable. Lastly, you were cruel to the poor little animal, kicking her when she was only trying to love you, and did not in the least deserve to be ill-treated. I know you are far above a little dog, but if it were right and allowable that great people should ill-treat all who are beneath them, I might at this moment beat you, or do other hurtful things to you, for a fairy is greater than a man. The advantage of possessing a great empire is not to be able to do the evil that one desires, but to do all the good that one possibly can.”

The prince saw how naughty he had been, and promised to try and do better in the future, but he did not keep his word. The fact was that he had been brought up by a foolish nurse, who had spoiled him when he was little. If he wanted anything, he only had to cry and fret and stamp his feet and she would give him whatever he asked for, which had made him very self-willed. Also, she had told him from morning to night that he would one day be a king, and that kings were very happy because everyone was bound to obey and respect them, and no one could prevent them from doing just as they liked.

When the prince grew old enough to understand, he soon learned that there could be nothing worse than to be proud, obstinate, and conceited. He had really tried to cure himself of these defects, but by that time, all his faults had become habits—and a bad habit is very hard to get rid of. Not that he was naturally of a bad disposition. He was truly sorry when he had been naughty, and said, “I am very unhappy to have to struggle against my anger and pride every day. If I had been punished for them when I was little, perhaps they would not be such a trouble to me now.”

As time went on, the prince’s ring pricked him very often, and sometimes he stopped what he was doing at once; but at other times, he would not attend to it. Strangely enough, it gave him only a slight prick for a trifling fault, but when he did really mean things to others, it made his finger actually bleed. At last, he got tired of being constantly reminded, and wanted to be able to do as he liked, so he threw his ring aside, and thought himself the happiest of men to be rid of its teasing pricks. He gave himself up to doing every foolish thing that occurred to him, until he became quite wicked and nobody could like him any longer.

One day, when the prince was walking about, he saw a young girl who was so very pretty that he made up his mind at once that he would marry her. Her name was Celia, and she was as good as she was beautiful.

Prince Darling fancied that Celia would think herself only too happy if he offered to make her a great queen, but she said fearlessly, “Sire, I am only a shepherdess, and a poor girl, but, nevertheless, I will not marry you.”

“Do you dislike me?” asked the prince, who was very much angered at this answer.

“No, my Prince,” replied Celia. “I cannot help thinking you very handsome, but what good would riches be to me, and all the grand dresses and splendid carriages that you would give me, if the bad deeds that I should see you do every day made me hate and despise you?”

The prince was very angry at this speech, and he commanded his officers to make Celia a prisoner and carry her off to his palace. All day long, the remembrance of what she had said annoyed him, but as he loved her he could not make up his mind to have her punished.

One of the prince’s favorite companions was his cousin, whom he trusted entirely. Unfortunately, this cousin was not at all a good man. He gave Prince Darling very bad advice, and encouraged him in all his evil ways. When he saw the prince so downcast, he asked what was the matter. The prince explained that he could not bear Celia’s bad opinion of him and was resolved to be a better man in order to please her. His evil adviser said to him, “You are very kind to trouble yourself about this girl, but if I were you, I would soon make her obey me. Remember that you are a king, and that it would be laughable to see you trying to please a shepherdess, who ought to be only too glad to be one of your slaves. Keep her in prison, and feed her on bread and water for a little while. Then, if she still says she will not marry you, lock her in a tower forever to teach other people that you mean to be obeyed. Why, if you cannot make someone like that do as you wish, your subjects will soon forget that they are put into this world only for our pleasure.”

“But,” said Prince Darling, “would it not be a shame if I had an innocent girl locked up forever? Celia has done nothing to deserve such punishment.”

“If people will not do as you tell them, they ought to suffer for it,” answered his cousin. “Even if it is a little unjust, it is better for you to be accused of that by your subjects than for them to find out that they can insult and disobey you as often as they please.”

In saying this, he was touching a weak point in the prince’s character. The prince’s fear of losing any of his power made him at once abandon his first idea of trying to be good, and he resolved to try and frighten the shepherdess into consenting to marry him. The wicked cousin continued to stir up the prince’s anger against Celia by telling him that she had laughed at his love for her. At last, in quite a furious rage, the prince rushed off to find her, declaring that if she still refused to marry him, she should be sold as a slave the very next day.

When he reached the room in which Celia had been locked up, he was greatly surprised to find that she was not in it, though he had the key in his own pocket all the time. His anger was terrible, and he vowed vengeance against whoever had helped her escape. His bad friends, when they heard him, resolved to blame it on an old nobleman who had formerly been his teacher—a man who still dared sometimes to tell the prince of his faults, for he loved him as if he had been his own son. At first, Prince Darling had thanked him, but after a time, he grew impatient and thought it must be just mere love of faultfinding that made his old teacher blame him when everyone else was praising and flattering him. The prince’s unworthy friends feared that he might some day take it into his head to recall his old teacher to the palace, so they thought they now had a good opportunity of getting him banished forever. They lied to the prince, telling him that the old teacher had boasted of helping Celia escape. The prince, in great anger,

sent his cousin with a number of soldiers to bring his teacher before him, in chains, like a criminal. He ordered the old man to move far away from the palace, never to return again.

After giving this order, he went to his own room, but he had scarcely got into it when there was a clap of thunder that made the ground shake, and the Fairy Truth appeared suddenly before him.

“I promised your father,” said she sternly, “to give you good advice, and to punish you if you refused to follow it. You have despised my counsel, and have gone your own evil way until you are only outwardly a man; really you are a monster—the horror of everyone who knows you. It is time that I should fulfill my promise, and begin your punishment. I condemn you to resemble the animals whose ways you have imitated. You have made yourself like the lion by your anger, and like the wolf by your greediness. Like a snake, you have ungratefully turned on one who was a second father to you. And lastly, your bad temper, rudeness, and stubbornness have made you like a bull. Therefore, in your new form, you will take the appearance of all these animals.”

The fairy had scarcely finished speaking when Prince Darling saw to his horror that her words were fulfilled. He had a lion’s head, a bull’s horns, a wolf’s feet, and a snake’s body. At the same instant, he found himself in a great forest beside a clear lake, in which he could see plainly the horrible creature he had become. A voice said to him, “Look carefully at the state to which your wickedness has brought you. Believe me, your soul is a thousand times more hideous than your body.”

Prince Darling recognized the voice of the Fairy Truth and turned in a fury to catch her and eat her up if he possibly could. But he saw no one, and the same voice went on, “I intend to punish your pride by letting you fall into the hands of your own subjects.”

The prince began to think that the best thing he could do would be to get as far away from the lake as he could, so at least he would not be continually reminded of his terrible ugliness. He ran toward the wood, but before he had gone many yards, he fell into a deep pit that had been made to trap bears. The hunters, who were hiding in a tree, leaped down and secured him with several chains, and led him into the chief city of his own kingdom.

On the way, instead of recognizing that his own faults had brought this punishment upon him, he accused the fairy of being the cause of all his misfortunes, and he bit and tore at his chains furiously. As the hunters approached the town, he saw that some great rejoicing was being held. When the hunters asked what had happened, they were told that the prince, whose only pleasure it was to torment his people, had vanished in a clap of thunder. Four of his courtiers—those evil friends who had encouraged him in his wicked doings—had tried to seize the kingdom and divide it among them, but the people, who knew it was their bad advice that had so changed the prince, had banished them and given the crown to the old teacher the prince had left chained in prison. This noble lord had just been crowned, and the deliverance of the kingdom was the cause of the rejoicing.

“He is a good and just man,” said the people, “and we shall once more enjoy peace and prosperity.”

Prince Darling roared with anger when he heard this, but the hunters simply heard the roar of a monster. It was still worse for the prince when he reached the great square before his own palace. He saw

his old teacher seated on a magnificent throne, and all the people crowded around, wishing him a long life that he might undo all the mischief done by the prince who had come before.

The new king made a sign with his hand that the people should be silent and said, "I have accepted the crown you have offered me, but only that I may keep it for Prince Darling. He is not dead as you suppose. The fairy has assured me that there is still hope that you may someday see him again, good and virtuous as he was when he first came to the throne. Alas," he continued, "he was led away by flatterers. I knew his heart, and I am certain that if it had not been for the bad influence of those who surrounded him, he would have been a good king and a father to his people. We may hate his faults, but let us pity him and hope for his return to goodness. As for me, I would die gladly if that could bring back our prince to reign justly and worthily once more."

These words went to Prince Darling's heart. He realized the true affection and faithfulness of his old teacher, and for the first time, he reproached himself for all his evil deeds. At the same instant, he felt all his anger melting away, and he began quickly to think over his past life, and to admit that his punishment was exactly what he had deserved. He stopped tearing at the iron bars of the cage in which he was shut up, stopped screaming and roaring, and became as gentle as a lamb.

The hunters who had caught him took him to a great zoo, where he was chained up among all the other wild beasts, and he determined to show his sorrow for his past bad behavior by being gentle and obedient to the man who had to take care of him. Unfortunately, this man was very rough and unkind, and though the poor monster was quite quiet, the keeper often beat him without rhyme or reason when he happened to be in a bad temper.

One day, when this keeper was asleep, a tiger broke its chain, and flew at him to eat him up. Prince Darling, who saw what was going on, at first felt quite pleased to think that he should be delivered from his cruel caretaker, but he soon thought better of it.

"If I were only free of this cage, I would return good for evil," he said to himself, "and save the unhappy man's life." He had hardly wished this when his iron cage flew open, and he rushed to the side of the keeper, who was now awake, and was trying to defend himself against the tiger. When he saw the monster had got out, he gave himself up for lost, but his fear was soon changed into joy, for the kind monster threw itself on the tiger and very soon killed it, and then came and crouched at the feet of the man it had saved.

Overcome with gratitude, the keeper stooped to caress the strange creature that had done him such a great service. Suddenly, a voice said in his ear, "A good action should never go unrewarded." At the same instant, the monster disappeared, and the keeper saw at his feet only a pretty little dog!

Prince Darling, delighted by the change, frisked about the keeper, showing his joy in every way he could, and the man, taking him up in his arms, carried him to the king, to whom he told the whole story.

The teacher's wife, who was now the queen, said she would like to have this wonderful little dog, and the prince would have been very happy in his new home if he could have forgotten that he was a man and a king. The queen petted and took care of him, but she was so afraid that he would get too fat that

she consulted the court physician, who said that he was to be fed only bread, and was not to have much even of that. So poor Prince Darling was terribly hungry all day long, but he was very patient about it.

One day, when they gave him his little loaf for breakfast, he thought he would like to eat it out in the garden, so he took it in his mouth and trotted away toward a brook that was quite a distance from the palace. But he was surprised to find that the brook was gone, and where it had been stood a great house that seemed to be built of gold and precious stones. Numbers of people splendidly dressed were going into it, and sounds of music and dancing and feasting could be heard from the windows.

But what seemed very strange was that those people who came out of the house were pale and thin, and their clothes were torn, and hanging in rags about them. Some fell down sick as they came out before they had time to get away. Others crawled farther with great difficulty. Others again lay on the ground, fainting with hunger. They begged a morsel of bread from those who were going into the house, but they would not so much as look at the poor creatures.

Prince Darling went up to a young girl who was trying to eat a few blades of grass, she was so hungry. Touched with compassion, he said to himself, “I am very hungry, but I shall not die of starvation before I get my dinner. If I give my breakfast to this poor creature, perhaps I may save her life.”

So he laid his piece of bread in the girl’s hand, and saw her eat it up eagerly. She soon seemed to be quite well again, and the prince, delighted to have been able to help her, was thinking of going home to the palace, when he heard a great outcry. Turning around, he saw Celia, who was being carried against her will into the great house.

For the first time, the prince regretted that he was no longer the monster, because then he would have been able to rescue Celia. Now he could only bark feebly at the people who were carrying her off, and try to follow them, but they chased and kicked him away. He blamed himself for what had befallen Celia, and he determined not to leave the place until he knew what had become of her.

“Alas!” he said to himself, “I am furious with the people who are carrying Celia off, but isn’t that exactly what I did myself? If I had not been prevented, did I not intend to be still more cruel to her?”

Here, he was interrupted by a noise above his head—someone was opening a window, and he saw with delight that it was Celia herself, who came forward and threw out a plate of most delicious-looking food. Then the window was shut again, and Prince Darling, who had not had anything to eat all day, thought he might as well take the opportunity of getting something. He ran forward to begin, but the young girl to whom he had given his bread gave a cry of terror and took him up in her arms, saying, “Don’t touch it, my poor little dog. Everything that comes out of that house is poisoned!”

At the same moment, a voice said, “You see, a good action always brings its reward,” and the prince found himself changed into a beautiful white dove. He remembered that white was the favorite color of the Fairy Truth, and began to hope that he might at last win back her favor.

But just now, his first care was for Celia. Rising into the air, he flew around and around the house until he saw an open window he could enter, but he searched through every room in vain. No trace of Celia

was to be seen, and the prince, in despair, determined to search through the world until he found her. He flew on and on for several days, until he came to a great desert, where he saw a cavern, and, to his delight, there sat Celia, sharing the simple breakfast of an old hermit.

Overjoyed to have found her, Prince Darling perched on her shoulder, trying to express by his caresses how glad he was to see her again. Celia, surprised and delighted by the tameness of this pretty white dove, stroked it softly and said, though she never thought of its understanding her, "I accept the gift that you make me of yourself, and I will love you always."

"Take care what you are saying, Celia," said the old hermit. "Are you prepared to keep that promise?"

"Indeed, I hope so, my sweet shepherdess," cried the prince, who was at that moment restored to his natural shape. "You promised to love me always. Tell me that you really mean what you said, or I shall have to ask the fairy to give me back the form of the dove, which pleased you so much."

"You need not be afraid that she will change her mind," said the fairy, throwing off the hermit's robe in which she had been disguised and appearing before them. "Celia has loved you ever since she first saw you, only she would not tell you while you were so obstinate and ill-mannered. Now that you have repented and mean to be good, you deserve to be happy, and so she may love you as much as she likes."

Celia and Prince Darling threw themselves at the fairy's feet, and the prince was never tired of thanking her for her kindness. Celia was delighted to hear how sorry he was for all his past follies and misdeeds, and she promised to love him as long as she lived.

"Rise, my children," said the fairy, "and I will transport you to the palace, and Prince Darling shall have back again the crown he gave up by his bad behavior."

While she was speaking, they found themselves in the hall at Prince Darling's old palace home. The old teacher's delight was great at seeing his dear prince once more. He gave up the throne joyfully to the prince, and remained always the most faithful of his subjects.

Celia and Prince Darling reigned for many years, and he was so determined to govern worthily and to do his duty that his ring, which he took to wearing again, never once pricked him severely again.

Stone Soup Lesson 6

One day long, long ago, an old man was wandering through the mountains. He was tired and hungry, for he had been walking all day with nothing to eat. Finally, he came to a small village, and knocked at the door of a farmhouse. A woman came to the door and said rudely, "I can't let you in, for my husband is not at home. And I haven't a thing to give you to eat. You'll have to go somewhere else." She was scornful toward the man she thought was a beggar.

"If you have no food in the house, then you would probably be very happy to know about my soup stone," the old man replied. And from his pocket, he removed a very ordinary-looking stone.

“Soup stone?” said the woman, with an eager look on her face. “You have a stone that can make soup?”

“Oh yes,” he said. “If I just had a big pot of water heating over a fire, I could show you how it works. This stone and boiling water make the best soup you’ve ever eaten.”

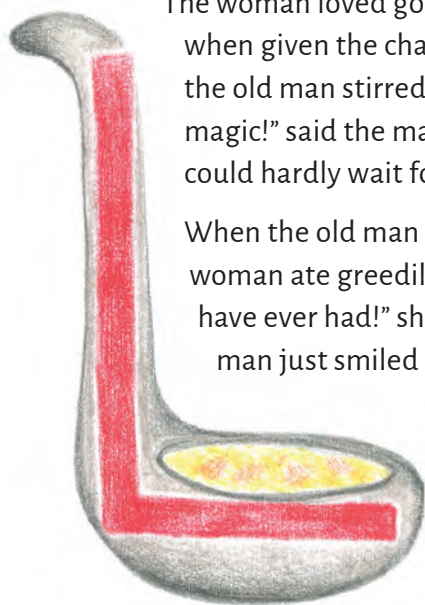
“Why don’t you show me?” said the woman, her curiosity and desire for an easy meal overcoming her suspicious nature. “I have a big pot and it will take only a moment to build a roaring fire in my cooking stove. Let me just fill the pot with water and then you can put the stone in.”

Soon, the pot of water was boiling merrily. The old man dropped in his stone and stirred it around with the woman’s big soup ladle. Then he tasted the hot water. “The stone is working quickly, and the soup is already delicious. But it would be even better if it had a little salt and a handful of barley,” he said. “And some butter would make it truly tasty.” So the woman brought salt, barley, and butter, and he added them to the pot, stirring them well with the big ladle.

The crafty old man tasted the soup again. “Much better!” he cried. “You are going to love this soup. Do you like it very thick and hearty? Then all we need is a few vegetables. Of course the stone can make it thick without the vegetables, but the vegetables will help the stone make a perfect soup. Perhaps carrots, onions, and potatoes would be the right thing. Do you not have any of these in your larder? Turnips and beans would bring a wonderful flavor to the soup too.”

“Let me see what I can find,” said the woman. She was becoming very excited about the miracle soup that could be made from only a stone in a pot of boiling water. As the old man stirred the big pot with the ladle, the woman ran down to her cellar to get the vegetables he had mentioned.

After the mixture had boiled for some time with all the vegetables in it, the man put the ladle in and stirred it once again. “The soup is coming along very well. It is nearly as good as I’ve ever tasted it,” he said. “The stone is working just as it should. The only thing I can think of that could possibly make it any better would be some chunks of meat or chicken, and a little meat broth.”



The woman loved good thick soup, and she was eager to see just what the stone could do when given the chance. So she ran to get some meat broth and chunks of chicken, and the old man stirred them into the soup pot with the big ladle. “Soup stone, do your magic!” said the man. And he and the woman sniffed the savory smell of the soup and could hardly wait for it to be finished.

When the old man finally said the soup was ready, he ladled it out into big bowls. The woman ate greedily, slurping and gulping the soup. “I declare that this is the best soup I have ever had!” she cried. “And all from your soup stone. I can hardly believe it!” The old man just smiled and ate his soup contentedly. The two ate their fill, and—thanks to the magic stone—there was still enough left over for the woman’s husband’s supper.

As evening approached and the old man knew the husband would soon be arriving home, he prepared to depart. “Many thanks to you for the use of your fire and your pot. My soup stone

never lets me down, and it performed as well today as I've ever seen it." Using the ladle, he fished the stone up from the bottom of the soup pot, licked it clean, and put it into his pocket.

"Please come again," said the woman, thankful for such a delicious and fulfilling meal. "You are welcome here any time."

"I will indeed," said the old man, and he walked down the road and out of the village.

The Princess on the Glass Mountain Lesson 7

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there lived an old farmer. He had a barn, a flock of sheep, a beautiful meadow by a mountain, and three fine sons. For many years, the small farm prospered. But one night, on midsummer's eve, when the hay in the field was standing at its very tallest, it was all eaten up so not a bit was left. This happened again the following midsummer, and the farmer grew tired of losing his crop. On the third midsummer's eve, he called his three sons to him and said, "Tonight, one of you shall spend the night in the barn by the field. Do not sleep! Keep a sharp lookout for the thing that has been stealing our hay!"

"I'll go, Father," said the eldest son. "I'll guard our hay so well that no one shall steal a single stalk of it!" When the sun had set, he went to the barn and lay down to rest. In a short while, he had fallen fast asleep.

He had not slept long when he was startled awake by the sound of great hoofbeats. The earth began to rumble and quake so hard that the walls and roof of the barn rattled. The eldest son jumped up and ran off in fright as fast as he could. The next day, the field was empty again. Not a single stalk of hay was left.

Midsummer's eve came again, and again the farmer was afraid of losing his crop. "I'll go guard the hay, Father!" said the middle son. He went off to the barn, and soon was asleep and snoring on the floor. The hoofbeats came, and the earth began to tremble. Soon, the barn was shaking, more terribly than it had the year before. The middle brother jumped up and ran home in fright. Again, the following morning, the field was empty, and not a single stalk of hay was left.

Another year passed, and again, it was midsummer's eve. "There is nothing to be done!" the old farmer cried. "Who can save my crops, when my two sons have tried and failed?"

"There's still me, Father," said the youngest brother. "I will spend the night in the barn." This youngest son was called "Cinderlad" by his brothers, for they always made him clean the fireplace, and do many other chores besides. He was often covered in soot, from head to toe.

"You!" The brothers laughed. "You, little brother, will be so frightened of the noise and shaking that you'll run home crying in no time!"



Stories: Social Studies

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

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?"



Stories: Math

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.



Math Gnome Stories

The following stories are included to provide another option for creating a continuing story line around math operations. These stories provide a jumping-off point for you to create multiple word problems to help your child envision and practice math concepts.

The Gnome King's Treasure

In a deep, deep cave under a mountain, the gnomes are always busy working to gather jewels for the Gnome King's treasure cave. All of the gnomes bring in 12 jewels each and every day. They know how many they have by counting their ten fingers and two ears. When they have just as many jewels as that, they know that their day's work is done, and they can take their jewels to the king. The king is very kind to them, and he always sees to it that they have warm beds for sleeping and plenty to eat and drink. The king was the one who showed them how to count to 12 using their fingers and ears, because he knew they couldn't count very well.

However, there are four gnomes who are very different—they never bring in 12 jewels. Sometimes they bring fewer and sometimes more, but the king understands them and loves them, for he knows they do the very best they can. These four gnomes are the most interesting of all the gnomes that work for the king. The four gnomes are called PLUS, MINUS, TIMES, and DIVIDE.

PLUS is a very fat, green, greedy gnome. He is always thinking, "3 plus 3 plus 3 plus 3 are 12." When he begins filling his pockets with jewels for the king, he often can't stop and stuffs more in for himself. When he comes to the king and gives him 12 jewels, the king always hears Plus's pants rattling with extra stones and turns him upside down to shake out all the extra jewels so they can be given to the other gnomes that don't have enough.

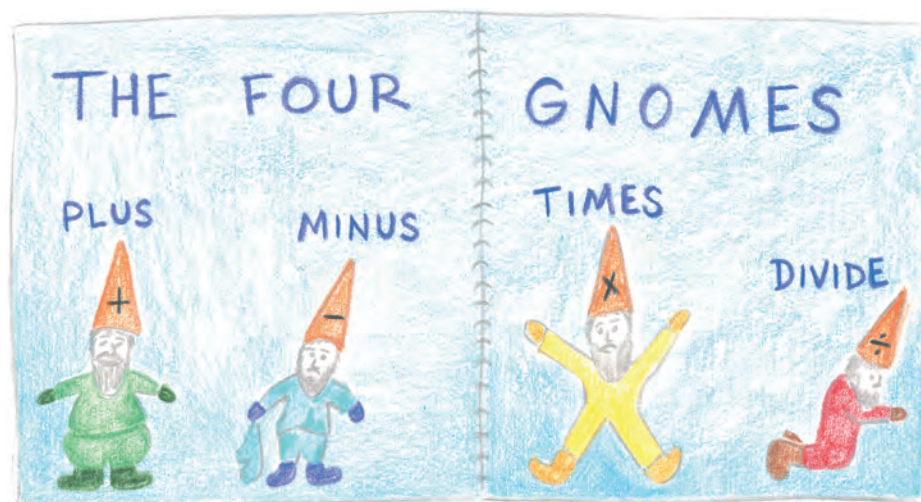
MINUS is a sad, blue, ragged gnome who carries a sack to hold the jewels he gathers for the king. However, he has holes in his pockets and in his sack, so when he comes to the king to give his jewels, he never has as many as he thought he had.

TIMES is a quick little gnome, yellow as a candle flame. He lights up the dark, hidden places in the caves and finds more jewels than all the rest. He loves the king very much and tries to bring him at

least two times more than 12 jewels every day. To do this, he often has to make two trips, but he enjoys the chance to show the others how much he is doing for the king.

DIVIDE is the fourth gnome. He is deep red in color, and is always thinking of how he can help others. When he hears other gnomes crying because they can't find enough jewels, Divide rushes right away and gives them half of his jewels so that they will have enough to give the king.

The king understands these four gnomes very well. He knows that Minus will always be losing most of his jewels, but that Plus will find them to add to his pile. He also knows that Divide will never have enough because he is kind enough to share what he has. However, Times will always bring in extra jewels. So, in the end, everyone will have all the jewels that they need.



The King's Special Signs

One day, the king heard the sound of shouting in the caves where the gnomes were working. He hurried to see what was wrong and found Plus, Minus, Times, and Divide having a terrible fight. They had bumped into one another and dropped their jewels and their hats.

You see, a gnome's hat is a very special thing, and he will never let anyone else wear his hat. The difficulty was that all of their hats were the same color, a bright orange. So when they dropped their hats, they couldn't tell which hat belonged to which gnome, and they were loudly arguing, trying to straighten it out. When they saw the king, they stopped fighting and bowed very low before him, for they all loved and respected him deeply.

The king asked them what the trouble was and when they told him, he began to laugh, because he thought they were such funny, lovable little gnomes. Then he reached down and picked up the largest of the orange hats and said, "Plus, this is yours, because you have the biggest head of all the gnomes."

But before he gave it to him, he did something very strange. He took his royal pen, which he always kept with him to sign important papers, and he made a mark on the hat. The mark was like this: +

"Plus," the king said, "this is your very own sign. With this on your hat, you will always know that it is yours. I give you this sign because it reminds me of your big pockets bulging with the extra jewels you find." Plus put the hat on his head and gave a big smile.

The king then reached down and picked up another hat; this one was ragged and torn. "Minus, this is your hat," he said. "I can tell because it is ragged like your clothes." Then the king made a special mark on it like this: –

"Minus, this is your special sign. With this on your hat, you will always know that it is yours. I give you this sign because it reminds me of the rips and holes in your sack and pockets through which you always lose your jewels." Minus came forward timidly and thanked the king, then put the hat on his head.

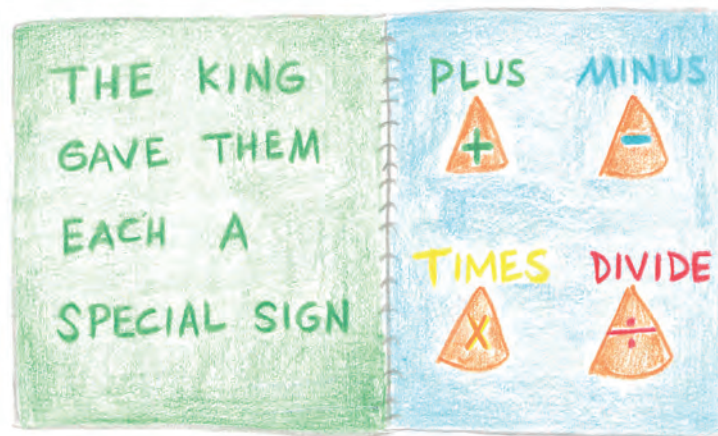
"And now, Times, I know this is your hat because it is so bright and clean, just like you." The king reached down and picked up the third hat. "Your special sign is this: \times "

As he marked the hat, he said, "This reminds me of you, because your arms are always outstretched trying to carry twice as many jewels as the others." Times proudly walked forward, bowed low, and put his hat on his head.

The king then picked up the last hat and marked it like this: \div

"Divide," he said, "you are loved by all gnomes because you share what you have with others. To you, I give a special sign that will always remind you that sharing with others is what pleases me most." Divide walked slowly to the king and bowed, then put his hat on his head.

"Now you all have your hats and your special signs. Divide, give everyone an equal share of the dropped jewels. Work hard and I'll see you at the end of the day." With that, the king returned to his chamber and the gnomes returned to their work. They never forgot their special signs, though, and what each sign stands for.





Stories: Science

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



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!

dying. If that happens, many of the sea animals that depend on it to live and grow will die. That would be really sad.”

“That’s really serious!” said Johnny, jumping up and standing next to Allie, looking out over the wide expanse of water that lay before them. “We have to do something before it’s too late!” Just then, as if in response to Johnny’s words, a pod of dolphins started jumping out of the water, just beyond where the waves were breaking. The sun was setting, turning the sky a beautiful apricot color, and the dolphins seemed to be asking the children to help save the ocean for all life.



A Tomato Grows Lesson 23

by Jan Ronan

When the air is cold and crisp and the ground is frozen from the winter’s chill, something very special takes place in a warm, moist building called a greenhouse. There, a gardener takes a small handful of tiny tomato seeds, places them all together in a very small pot, and buries them in the dirt. He waters them and keeps the soil moist. For a long time, nothing happens.

The seeds are surrounded by darkness, each lonely and lost in its own thoughts. It is warm and moist in the soil, and something magical begins to bring each seed to life. The seeds begin to grow and to reach up toward the light and up out of the soil until five or six plants are entwined together, hugging one another for joy in the light.

When they are strong enough, the gardener gently lifts the soil out of the pot, separates the baby plants, and puts each new tomato plant in a pot of its own. He continues to water each one and keep the soil moist. The plant thrills to be alive and stretches up and branches out. When the tomato plant is strong enough and about eight inches tall, the gardener puts it out in the nursery to sell.

That's when you find it and choose the one that calls out to you. You pay the gardener and take the young plant home to your garden.

Before you place the tomato plant in the soil, you have to loosen the dirt with your trowel, dig a hole about two inches deep, and add some special growing foods. You need to make a wire cage that is about twice the size of the root ball around the bottom of the tomato plant, and lower the cage into the hole. This will protect the plant from gophers or other creatures under the earth that might like to nibble on the tomato plant's roots. Then you can gently lift the tomato plant out of the pot and place it in the cage inside the hole. You cover up the hole and pack the dirt against the plant's fragile stem to about the same height as the ball of dirt that the plant is already growing in. Last, you water the plant and welcome it to your garden right next to the marigolds and beans.



That little plant is so glad to have a home and people who love it and care for it! In the warm sun and with the good water and food you give it, it begins a dance that goes on for a long time. Very slowly, it stretches out its branches to the sun and climbs the cage. The plant's stem becomes thicker and stronger and the plant looks so healthy!

Then one day, you find some caterpillars eating your plant's leaves and some black and orange bugs attacking the stem. Your little plant is struggling to stay alive. You rush out and lift off these unwanted intruders and take them far away from your tomato plant. You clear away the weeds and grass that are crowding close to your plant and tell it everything is okay again. It breathes a sigh of relief, sways gently, and continues to grow toward the sun. You water it every day until it is almost six feet tall and three feet wide. Then something even more wonderful happens.

All over this green tomato plant, little yellow blossoms appear until the plant is dressed in flowers all over. A few days later, you notice the petals have begun to drop off. You discover just behind each petal is a little green bud. Each day as you watch, the round, green balls get bigger and bigger and bigger, until one day they are as big as your fist!

Then you notice a few dark spots and worm holes on some of the fruit. Another attack! You quickly go to work defending your tomato plant. You spray the plant with a mixture of garlic and water and the bugs disappear! After that, you watch every day to keep your plant free from danger, because it depends on you to help it produce its lovely fruit.

One day, a large green tomato starts to ripen; it turns yellow, then orange, then red, and then brighter red. When it is the brightest red, you give the tomato a gentle twist and it falls off the plant into your hand. You slice it and put it on your sandwich.

Soon, lots of tomatoes are ripe. You pick them and wash them. Some you eat, some you share with friends, some you put in jars, and some you freeze for spaghetti sauce.

As you pick your last tomato, you are grateful for the gifts your plant has given you and sad that it must end. But now the plant's work is over; it is ready to help prepare the soil for next year's crop. You let the plant die down into the earth. It withers away and turns brown, then you dig it under the soil. The plant is dead. Yet even then it works a deep magic! Tiny insects and worms crawl all over the decayed plant and mix it with the soil, making it rich and warm and lovely. You let it stay that way all fall and winter. Then one warm spring day, you start all over again! You toss the soil and turn it, mixing up the remains of last year's glorious plant. Then you are ready to plant another little tomato and begin again the magnificent cycle of a tomato.

Beaver Pond Lesson 26

by Shari Mueller

Mike and his sister, Diane, lived in the country. Their house was nestled in an area of natural beauty, surrounded by trees, with a creek running through the gentle, rolling hills. They spent many hours roaming the hills and playing hide-and-seek among the trees. They learned about the animals who lived in their area, but none were as fascinating as the family of beavers who moved in one spring.

They first noticed the beavers when they came across trees that had been cut down with strange markings. They learned that the beaver uses his strong teeth to cut right through the wood! One day, they decided to hide near the creek to watch the beavers at work.

"There's one!" said Diane excitedly as she spotted the first beaver. "He's getting ready to cut down that tree, I think."

"Shhhh!" cautioned Mike. "We don't want to scare them away. Dad said that beavers build dams across streams that back up the water enough to make little ponds. Then they build their houses underneath the water in the pond. It would be so neat if this family of beavers made us a pond! Then we could ice-skate on it in winter and fish in it in summer." Mike dreamed of all the fun things they could do with a pond. It did seem as if this was what the beavers had in mind.

Soon, the children saw several more beavers approach. They cut down a tree and dragged it into place across the creek. All day, the busy beavers worked at their home-building project. They collected all shapes and sizes of sticks and twigs—even stones and mud were used. The children noticed that as the dam was taking

