

Second Grade Overview

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

Grade 2

Resource Book



Oak Meadow

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Course Materials	2
How the Course Is Set Up	4
How to Begin	5
Creating a Daily Structure and Rhythm	7
Creating a Supportive Homeschooling Environment	9
Nurturing a Healthy Imagination	11
Introduction to the Subjects	14
Language Arts	14
Social Studies	18
Mathematics	19
Science	20
Arts & Crafts	21
Music	25
Health	27
Assessment Measures in Second Grade	28
Information for Students Enrolled in Oak Meadow School	29
Language Arts Resources	31
Word Families	31
Consonant Blends and Digraphs	33
Short Vowel Words	34
Long Vowel Words	36
Stories: Social Studies	37
Loawnu and the Fallen Sky: A Tale of Ancient China (lesson 1)	37

The Fish Basket Goddess: A Tale from Ancient China (lesson 2)	38
Sundiata: Child of Mali (lesson 3)	40
Anansi and the Firefly (lesson 4)	42
Tiger and the Big Wind: A Nigerian Fable (lesson 5)	44
Columcille of Ireland (lesson 6)	45
Bridget of Ireland (lesson 7)	46
Fair Exchange—A Celtic Folktale (lesson 8)	48
Deidre of Ulster: Life in Ancient Celtic Ireland (lesson 19)	50
Luoyang City: Marketplace of Dreams (lesson 20)	51
Nansa: Child of Mali (lesson 21)	52
The Mali Marketplace (lesson 23)	52
Erin and the Ring Money (lesson 24)	53
The Movement of the Lakota (lesson 26)	55
The Lion and the Mouse (lesson 28)	56
The Fox and the Stork (lesson 29)	57
Mercury and the Woodsman (lesson 30)	58
The Boy Who Cried Wolf (lesson 31)	59
The Frogs Asking for a King (lesson 32)	59
Rosa Parks: Courage to Stay Seated (lesson 33)	60
Susan B. Anthony: A Lesson in Fair (lesson 34)	62
Stories: Math	63
Mr. Placevalue's Houses (lesson 11)	63
Mr. Placevalue's New House (lesson 12)	65
Mr. Placevalue's Millions (lesson 13)	66
Moving Day in Mr. Placevalue's Houses (lesson 14)	67
Borrowing from the Neighbors (lesson 26)	68
Stories: Science	71
The Ant and the Cricket (lesson 2)	71
The Blackberry Bush (lesson 10)	72
The Cloud (lesson 10)	73
The Little Pink Rose (lesson 10)	75
Margery's Garden (lesson 11)	76
The Little Cotyledons (lesson 11)	81
The Flight of the Worker Bee (lesson 15)	84

Life in the Sahara (lesson 21)	85
The Adventures of Fuzzy Fieldmouse (lesson 30)	87
Delphi to the Rescue (lesson 30)	88
Kingfisher (lesson 31)	90
Roadrunners, Lizards and Toads, Oh My! (lesson 32)	92
Recipes	95
Additional Activities	97



Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

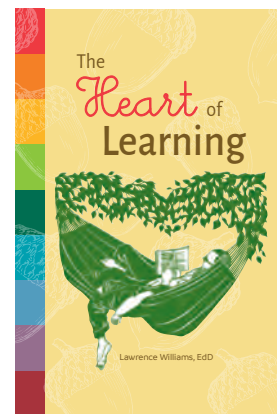
- **Unfold the potential within yourself so that you can respond more deeply and spontaneously to your child.** In order to refine the strengths in your child, you must also strive to unfold and refine your own strengths. It is the light of your own understanding, and the love you have for your child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

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

Course Materials

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

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



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

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

Supplies Needed throughout the Year

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

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

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

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

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

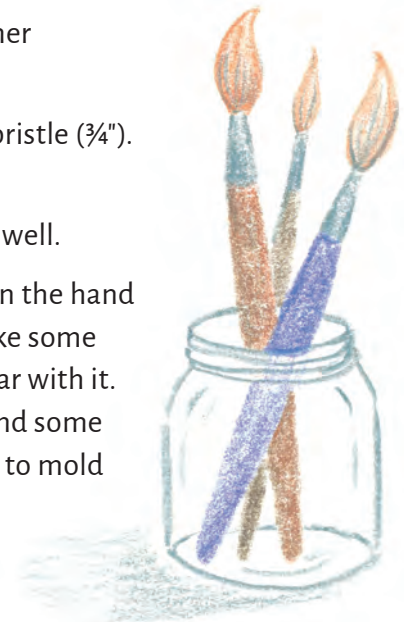
Watercolor Paintbrushes: We recommend brushes with a broad bristle ($\frac{3}{4}$ "). You will want one for you and one for your child.

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

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

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

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



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

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

How the Course Is Set Up

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How to Begin

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

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

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

How to Use the Main Lesson Book

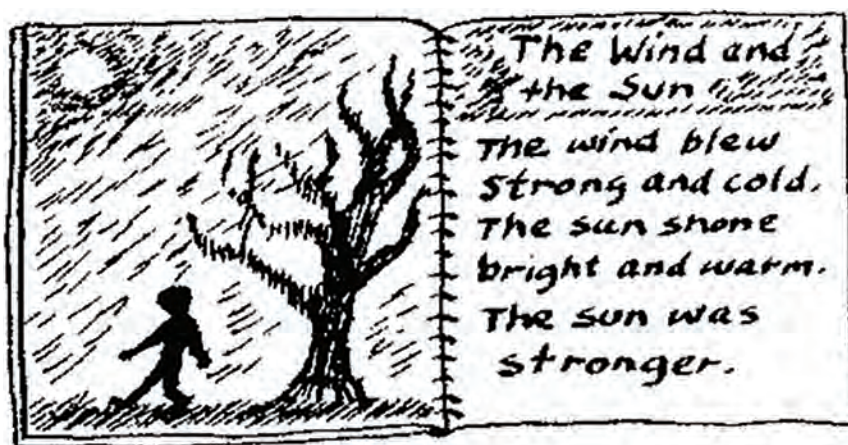
The main lesson book (MLB) serves as a way to collect all of your child's work in one place. You may want to have a set of books for your child and another set of books for yourself—this way you can work together side by side.

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

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

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

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



Circle Time

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

Here are some tips for a successful circle time:

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

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

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

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

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

Creating a Daily Structure and Rhythm

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Creating a Simple Bedtime Routine

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Creating a Supportive Homeschooling Environment

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

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

Imitation Activities

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

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

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

Creative Play

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

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

We offer the following list of classic creative play ideas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Nurturing a Healthy Imagination

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

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

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

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

The Importance of Fairy Tales

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

Some tips for using fairy tales:

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

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

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

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

The Influence of Screen Time and Media

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

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

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

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

Introduction to the Subjects

This introduction contains important introductory material 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 second grade language arts, we will explore reading and writing as our points of focus. We will build on these skills both through reading from printed readers, and by adding literary elements to the main lesson book, which allows your child to create their own book of stories.

Second graders sometimes show a tendency to flip back and forth between being well behaved one moment and explosive or sulky the next. To help meet the child at this phase of development, we use stories of people who exemplify the highest qualities of humanity, juxtaposed against fables, where animals sometimes represent the less ideal side of our human nature. In this way, the child feels supported by the story and naturally drawn to the content.

Most lessons incorporate a retelling of a story read at bedtime, and an artistic rendition of a favorite scene from the story. Encourage your child to fill the page with color, and add as many elements from the story as possible. Allow your child to watch you draw, as this will encourage them in their own artistic endeavors. Once a picture has been created, your child will write two

or three sentences about the story on the facing page. You can write the sentences on a separate paper for them to copy into the main lesson book.

Do not worry about teaching your child about the structure of a sentence yet, but do draw attention to the capital letter in the beginning and the punctuation at the end of the sentence, and make sure they include these elements in their own sentences. In third grade, students will learn about punctuation in more detail, but for now modeling your own use of punctuation is sufficient.

When writing sentences into the main lesson book, your child may prefer to use the colored pencils instead of crayons. In second grade, children have a greater degree of focus and can be more detail oriented than in first grade so the colored pencils can be a useful tool. Your child may enjoy using both crayons and colored pencils in the same picture. Crayons are useful for covering large areas with color, while the pencils can add the extra detail that children at this age are becoming naturally focused on. When your child is finished writing the sentences, have them color in the background, adding visual interest to the page.

The next step is to have your child read out loud the sentences in the main lesson book. You may have to read each word together at first, but soon they will become familiar with the words and be able to sound them out independently.

While it might seem natural to discuss the moral lessons involved in tales and fables, let these messages remain a part of the visual images that the student relates to the story. Once you speak or write the moral statement attached to a story for your child, it can lose its appeal and effect.

As they work on writing sentences, notice any letters that present difficulties and have your child practice them on a separate piece of paper. This practice should be done with a positive focus. Give your

child a lot of praise for the letters that are formed correctly, and gently model the correct form of any letter they are having trouble writing.

Writing Fatigue

You may find that writing causes your child's hands to become tired or sore, especially when they begin to write in sentences and paragraphs. Stretches can help relax tired fingers and hand exercises can build strength in the child's hands.

In addition to using the fingerplays in *Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades* as a fun way to get small fingers moving and develop the strength needed for sustained writing, here are some tips for avoiding writing fatigue:

- Take frequent breaks from writing, especially active breaks that give your child time to use large muscles and give the small writing muscles a rest.
- Encourage your child to write lightly. It may help to practice writing in sand or a tray of rice for a while before writing with a pencil. This will help them experience “light” writing before putting pencil to paper.
- Check that your child's seating and posture are comfortable. Their feet should be able to rest easily on the floor or a foot rest. Help them place the paper at a comfortable angle and far enough up onto the writing surface to really support the forearm all the way to very close to the elbow. Give reminders that the paper must be moved and arm position adjusted as you make your way down the page. A relaxed writing arm, hand, and body lead to beautiful handwriting. Be patient as your child learns these behaviors.
- Have your child hold a tennis ball, or other similar-sized ball in their dominant hand, and use the fingertips to walk the ball slowly up one leg and across the stomach and down the other leg. Use a walking motion, rather than a grabbing motion.
- Hold a handful of six to ten beans or other small objects, and place the objects one at a time into an egg carton or other container. Do this one-handed.
- Try squashing, rolling, and squeezing clay or Play-Doh between writing assignments.
- Hold their writing-dominant hand palm down, and create a crocodile mouth with the other hand, using the thumb as the bottom of the “mouth” and fingers as the top. Use the crocodile mouth to slowly bend back the fingers of the dominant hand. Use the crocodile mouth thumb as a support for the back of the hand. Hold the stretch for a slow count of ten.
- Try a fun song, like “Shake Your Sillies Out,” to encourage your child to shake out tired fingers and increase blood flow to the hands. (You can find videos of this song by searching online.)
- Try a vigorous but quick massage of the forearm for fatigue. Roll your child's forearm quickly between your two hands like you would if you were rolling a Play-Doh snake, using moderate pressure. It can relax those tired muscle connections between arm and fingers. You can

experience this muscle connection by putting one hand on the forearm of your writing arm while you write. You can really feel how hard your forearm is working when you write!

Reading from Printed Readers

Once your child has had some practice reading the MLB sentences, it is time to begin reading from printed readers. If you used Oak Meadow in first grade, you may have *Oak Meadow Word Families*, which is a great first reader. Available with Oak Meadow second grade curriculum are *Ben and Meg* and *Four Fun Friends*, both selected because they are written at a second grade level and because they provide practice with the word families and sounds introduced in first grade. We suggest that you begin with *Ben and Meg* and follow it with *Four Fun Friends*, which can be more difficult to read.

Pacing

The most important thing to remember is to relax and trust your child's innate intelligence while learning to read. If your child is not ready for the second grade readers, continue with the first grade readers as long as necessary. There is a tremendous amount of cultural pressure that makes parents feel worried about their child not reading by a certain age. Instead, try to look at reading like any other innate skill that will develop over time, like walking or talking. Just try to enjoy the process of learning letters and sounds until your child is ready to approach reading more directly.

Children learn how to read words through two different processes. One approach is the "look-say" method for reading sight words, and the other is through learning what is sometimes known as phonics. In the "look-say" method, students are looking at sight words, and imitating the pronunciation of the word. Phonics is learning letter combinations and sound blends and sounding out other words letter by letter or syllable by syllable. Both of these methods are valid and important to know and use.

One of the biggest obstacles to learning to read is the stress that can be attached to the process. To avoid this, always try to maintain reading as a positive interaction between you and your child. Practice recognition of consonant sounds and word families through games and word play. Keep these activities lighthearted and always make reading a fun thing that you do together.

Be sure your child sees you enjoying reading by yourself, and continue the practice of daily reading together. Reading aloud to your child every day helps them develop an appreciation of books and the richness of the spoken and written word, and an innate understanding of the cadence and structure of the language.

Poetry

Poetry is a form of language that uses rhythm most effectively. Rhythm can aid in the development of reading and writing skills. Rhyming poems also reinforce phonetic letter sounds. Poetry tends to evoke powerful images and feelings that can be inspiring for children of this age.

When selecting poems for your child, remember that the best poems for children contain rhyme, rhythm, and visual imagery (not pictures, but words that paint pictures in the mind). The steady pulse

of rhythm, repetition of rhyming sounds, and images that stretch the imagination are more important for children than any abstract image or interpretation. Poems that we may appreciate as adults may have no meaning to a child because we tend to read poems with our heads rather than our hearts.

Try different types of poems with your child, to see what type of poetry appeals to them. You will find a wide selection of poems in the *Oak Meadow Guide to Teaching the Early Grades*, and wonderful books of children's poetry are available in most public libraries.

When writing or copying poetry in the main lesson book, try to vary the style, format, and placement of writing and pictures. These books are meant to be artistic, so to have page after page set up the same way can become monotonous. Be creative with the way you present your poems, and try to choose poems that are fairly short, so that your child does not have to take too long to write them out. Help your child design an artistic presentation that is in keeping with the mood of the poem. Don't forget to have them practice reading the poem aloud after writing it down. Also, choose a diverse selection of children's poetry so that your child can begin to become more familiar with a wide assortment of lyrical styles.



Social Studies

The second grade curriculum uses stories of ancient people to connect children with themes in history, geography, economics, and civics. Legends and fables often speak to children of this age who are beginning to negotiate the challenges of daily life and decision-making. Storytelling is a way to bring history alive, and allows your child to connect and empathize with the figures of the past and the struggles they endured. By awakening their feelings in this way, your child is learning more holistically and with their heart.

Chinese, African, and Celtic cultures, among others, will be explored this year through stories and other activities. Students will complete a variety of art projects and drawings that will support and reinforce the stories they have heard. They will also complete some simple writings in their main lesson books.

Another focus of second grade social studies is to further develop a child's sense of time, which is essential to understanding history. One way this is achieved is through a calendar project that will allow your child to gain a better understanding of the seasonal cycles of the year. In this project, they will identify important dates like holidays, birthdays, and other celebrations as well as become more familiar with the amount of time that passes between events. Another way to become aware of the passing of time and the Earth's rhythms is by taking note of the moon cycles and other natural cycles that occur around us. Experiences like watching the sun set or rise, and observing other natural changes in our surroundings helps a child to develop a sense of stability in the cyclical order inherent in nature. A child will gradually develop a sense of time, and there is not a need at this point to teach them to tell time on a watch. This will be a part of the third grade curriculum.

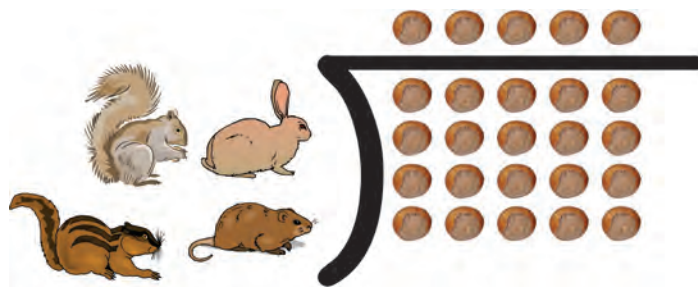
In second grade social studies, your child will also continue to expand an understanding of their place in the world and within your own community. In earlier grades, your child became familiar with your local community, the people who live in it, and the work that people do that makes the community a nice place. Continue to have your child participate in activities in your local community as much as possible. Have them assist you with shopping, mailing your letters, and running other errands around town. This helps your child develop a sense of involvement in the community. It is also a good idea to involve them in some group activities within your own family and eventually with a community organization. Working with a group helps your child to learn to cooperate to accomplish a job, even if they are only doing one simple task related to the job. Remember that a lot of praise, encouragement, and modeling can help develop confidence, independence, and your child's sense of value as a human being.



Mathematics

In second grade, you will find that your child is more detail oriented and able to retain and utilize math skills in a variety of ways. Because second graders are such physical beings, each lesson attempts to engage the whole body before doing any drawing, writing, or computing. The more your child can move as part of the curriculum, the more that they will be moved by the curriculum. In turn, they will be better able to retain the information and concepts learned.

In second grade math, you will encounter simple geometry, multiplication tables, number bonds, and fast tricks with the four operations, as well as place value, carrying and borrowing, odd and even numbers, and comparing and ordering numbers. We also introduce mirrored form drawings.



The use of stories can help your child understand math concepts in the same way they are used to connecting with themes in social studies and language arts. The fables, folktales, and other stories read during the year mirror the child's development. By experiencing these stories, we hope that second graders are able

to see the qualities in the characters mirrored in themselves and in the world around them. As the home teacher, there is no need to explain this relationship, or to assign moral value to these stories. Simply allow your child to experience the form drawings and the process of mirroring the forms with their whole being.

These form drawings introduce the geometric concepts of rotation, reflection, transformation, parallel, congruent, similar, translation, horizontal, and vertical within the context of free-hand drawings. Your child will become more familiar with this vocabulary in later years, but the primary focus of this year is the experience. By offering many opportunities to create in the early elementary grades, your child will look back and be able to relate these rich experiences to the definitions of these words.

In arithmetic, your second grader will continue to develop an understanding of the four processes and become increasingly familiar with the times tables. The importance of learning the multiplication tables cannot be overemphasized. If a child knows the tables well, the rest of math can be approached joyfully. If a child does not, math can become tedious.

$$\begin{array}{r} 5 \\ 4 \overline{)20} \end{array}$$

We will present the 1–12 times tables in second grade, but do not expect your child to master all of them for another year. Rhythm is an excellent tool for learning the multiplication tables because most second graders are experiencing a need for rhythmic activities. Jumping rope, tossing a beanbag, and clapping and stomping games can all help children experience the multiplication tables through their bodies. Keep in mind that some students are less centered in their bodies and more centered in their heads. For these students, physical activities and rhythms of this nature may not be as helpful as they might be for other students. When you

introduce rhythmic activities to your child, take note of their reaction. If they would rather talk about the activity than participate in it, or have trouble keeping a rhythm, then it is possible that your child is more centered in the head than the limbs. Rhythmic activities will not be as effective. Nonetheless, all learning is best done through a combination of thinking, feeling, and doing, so always try to offer a variety of these types of activities.

If your child is not able to grasp the multiplication tables yet, don't push it. Learning should continue to be fun and full of joy. If it is becoming less joyful and more drill-like, take a break for a few days or weeks and focus on other things. Enjoy your time together. Return to the multiplication tables later, with a fresh heart and a renewed joyful approach.

Remember to keep working with manipulatives and imaginative pictures before asking your child to do abstract work with numbers and mathematical symbols. Above all, remain flexible with your timetable for learning these concepts, enjoy the experience together, and take advantage of the fact that in homeschooling you can work according to your child's own natural rhythms and needs.

Science

Second grade science focuses on observation skills, as it did in first grade. These observation skills will be honed and sharpened with a focus toward the more detailed aspects of life in the wider world, especially within the animal kingdom. An enhanced awareness of the physical characteristics of animals, and the manner that different species interact will help your child understand the interconnectedness of all life.

Encourage your child to make observations in silence, and to use the different senses when observing the world. They should record observations in a science journal (or the MLB). Science journaling will be an important part of second grade. You will find that your child, without much assistance, will use the journal to record patterns and cycles that they find in nature.





Language Arts Resources

Word Families

ACK: sack black snack pack back track

AD: had pad lad sad tad mad glad

AIL: snail rail pail nail wail

AIN: plain grain main rain Spain

AM: ram jam Sam gram

AN: man plan fan pan ran span can

ANK: Hank plank blank crank bank sank

AP: cap flap map lap strap snap crack

AR: car jar star far

AT: rat hat fat cat mat flat

AY: play bay way day gray stay today okay

ED: bed sled red fed

EED: steed speed feed seed

ELL: dell well bell fell yell

EN: glen hen den then ten men

ENT: tent event went cent

EST: quest best nest west rest

EW: few crew stew brew grew drew new

ICK: chick pick brick click thick stick quick kick trick

IGHT: knight light bright delight sight

ILL: bill will mill hill fill still spill

IN: in thin fin spin twin grin

INE: dine pine line shine nine vine

ING: wing swing king sing bring thing spring

INK: pink drink sink blink wink

IP: ship trip drip slip grip flip trip

IT: sit knit quit it bit

OCK: flock dock rock sock clock

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

ORE: shore tore wore store more sore

OT: hot pot tot trot got not

OUT: scout about trout snout shout

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

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

UCK: duck stuck muck cluck pluck luck

UG: bug dug snug slug shrug

UM: drum plum hum glum gum

UN: fun run sun spun

UNK: skunk junk trunk bunk plunk

Y: fly shy cry my try dry

Consonant Blends and Digraphs

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

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



Stories: Social Studies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Fish Basket Goddess: A Tale from Ancient China

Lesson 2

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When Rabbit was certain that Tiger was tied tightly, he called to the animals to come and gather the pears.

“Tiger,” Rabbit said as the animals happily ate the juicy pears, “one may not keep for themselves what is meant for all to share.”

Columcille of Ireland Lesson 6

The day was clear and the sun was shining the morning Columcille was born. His mother rejoiced, for while Columcille’s birth had brought with it the light of day, times were hard and darkness fell over the land. Columcille was born the son of a king in a corner of Ireland that had been worn and battered by the rough ocean winds.

People of those times had forgotten the beauty of days past and lived only to do battle. They fought for the simplest of things: a crust of bread, a slab of earth. This was a time when people forgot to read and write. Words no longer had any value and ignorance cast a shadow over people’s minds. Few people knew, or cared, about learning, and much of the joy that came from the stories of their fathers was lost. Books were destroyed and those who knew their secrets were rare.

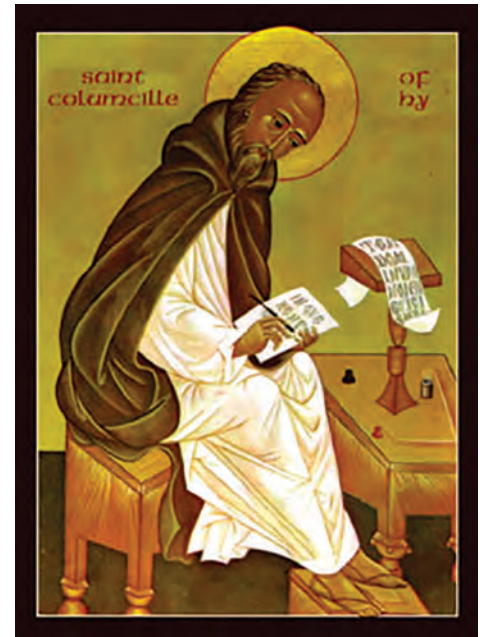
Columcille was one of them. It was said that when Columcille was a young lad he was fed a cake filled with the letters of the alphabet. In this way, words became part of his very soul. It was true that as Columcille grew in this time of darkness, his love of learning burned within him, as bright as all the stars in the heavens combined.

When the time came for Columcille to choose his path, he turned away from the riches of princedom, and instead became a monk. Here he was free to devote tireless hours to copying books of old. He hid his labors to save the world from losing their stories forever.

One night, as he sat in the cold, damp tower of his monastery, writing by the soft light of a single candle, he came upon an ancient book of psalms. He began copying it, though he was ordered not to. The man who owned the book wanted its contents for himself.

When the copy was finished, it was so glorious that a great battle was waged over who had the rights to own it. Columcille was deeply saddened. His works were meant to bring peace, beauty, and healing to a dark and frightened world. He had never intended his writings to be part of the wars that tore apart his lands.

Columcille was ashamed. He and his closest friends built a small boat and covered it with leather. In this vessel, they set sail over stormy and blackened waters. The waves tossed and threatened them, but they held fast to their hope of bringing the light of language to the world.



At last Columcille landed on a small island. They built a small community there and together began their life's work of writing. Every day was devoted to keeping learning alive. Columcille and his followers copied thousands of books and sent them over the seas to lands where people waited anxiously for them. In this way, the stories of our fathers were preserved, saved by a man who cared more for words than for wealth.

Bridget of Ireland **Lesson 7**

Bridget was born to a nobleman and his wife. The moment her parents looked down on her, they knew she would be a special child, for the light within her was bright. She was born in times of darkness. The people of her village prayed that someday one would come who would bring warmth to their hearts. And Bridget was still very young when those who knew her began to wonder if, perhaps, she was not the one for whom they had waited so long.

Bridget was a lovely child. Her hair was as golden as the sun and her eyes reflected the blue of the sky. When she came of age, many young men from far and wide asked for her hand in marriage. But Bridget was saddened by their attentions. Since she was very young, Bridget longed only to help those in need. She knew that if she married, she would not be able to attend to those who desired her care.

One night, she prayed that she be made ugly. And, when she awoke, she was startled by the hideous reflection looking back at her. Her wish had been granted. With her newly disfigured form, her suitors soon left her and Bridget was free to follow her heart.

She left her home, taking only the cloak around her shoulders, which was the color of the woodland forest, to give her warmth in her travels. Everywhere she went, she looked inside herself to see if this was where her work should begin, for she believed that her heart would know. Many weeks and months she traveled, but she was not alone. Bridget had discovered that she understood the animals of the forest and they soon learned to trust her kindness. The animals did not fear her misshapen form and loved her from the moment she entered their forest home.

The animals were not the only ones who saw Bridget's good heart. As she traveled from town to town there were four maidens who put down their daily tasks and set about to follow Bridget on her journey. They understood that here was one who would bring hope to all who knew her.

One day, Bridget came upon the castle of the King of Leinster. He was known as a cruel and greedy man and so it was that when Bridget arrived at his court in naught but a ragged cloak, tattered clothes, and a form that was frightful to behold, all the lords and ladies snickered. "What ever could this young woman be thinking?" they said to themselves. "She and her maidens shall be tossed out on the street!"

But Bridget only quietly begged to seek audience with the king. He relented, for he was curious to see what this creature had to say. "My king"—Bridget bowed her head—"I have come to ask for a parcel of land. It is here that I am to build a shelter for those in need." The court was silent.

All at once laughter burst forth from the room. "What!" the king roared. "Why on Earth should I give you, a beggar woman, a scrap of land!"

Nansa: Child of Mali Lesson 21

The griots of Mali have told us great tales of battles won. The great Lion King Sundiata has come to make us free, build great cities, and bring peace to our land. My family and I have gone on a pilgrimage to Niana on the River Niger, for it is here that the Lion King chose to build his city. We have been told that he built vast buildings that reach to the sun. In these, people live, work, study, and pray.



They say that the wealth of a king speaks to how powerful he is. If this is so, then the tales the griots tell of King Sundiata must indeed be true, for his cities are wide and tall. My family and I passed many men building structures out of bricks made from rice husks, earth, and water. They climb the walls and plaster the cracks so that the buildings will be strong and last forever. Some are four stories high! When my brother and I stopped to stare, it felt like our necks would break to view the top. On top of the tallest spires the men have carved ostrich eggs that will bring good fortune and fertility.

Moving through Niana, my mother breathes in sharply and points. On the horizon, men are building mosques for prayer to Allah. Thousands of soldiers ride by on their horses; their armor and weapons of steel sparkle and send sharp diamond light to meet my family's wondering eyes.

The riverside is filled with silent traders—swapping salt for gold, their eyes and backs speak the words that their mouths do not. My sister and I hold hands as we pass the mosque, for it is a holy place, and I say a silent prayer, thanking Allah for these gifts he has brought and allowed us to build for him here on Earth. Our king built this city with the love of Allah in his heart. These buildings are our strength and our hope for the future. As my family leaves the city I glance back to see the sun setting behind the great buildings and the tools that built them. I am grateful.

The Mali Marketplace Lesson 23

The sun danced and shimmered along the Niger River as Inan and his father entered the market. Inan was excited. At last his father had agreed to show him the way of the trade. He had listened closely to his father's instructions as they left that morning. "Do not speak, Inan. This is the way of the trade. The salt merchant will bring his salt and set down an amount on the trading table. He will walk away, and wait for my response. I will place my gold dust down on the table next to his salt. If he agrees to the amount I have bartered, then he will take my gold dust and I, in turn, will gather the salt. If he feels his goods have been received unfairly, he will turn his back and allow me time to rethink the amount I have offered. When he is satisfied, he will take his gold dust and leave me with the salt. At no time, Inan, are words to be spoken. Remember this, for it is the way of our people."

Inan remembered. He had heard his father's words and knew how important they were. His father was a well-respected merchant. He obtained gold dust from the mines in the south and exchanged it for salt and other goods, such as spices, cloth, and even books of the scholars. Inan's father knew the nomads who traveled the desert well and had bartered fairly with them for years. They offered slaves as well as other goods, but Inan's father had no need for slaves. He dealt solely in the gifts of the earth, for he said he trusted where they came from most.

This day, Inan's father was to trade with nomadic merchants from across the desert. Inan had seen the caravans the day before and was anxious to look at these strange men from the north. Inan's father hurried along as the sound of the "deba" drums began. This was a sign that the merchants were ready to trade. They stood now before their tables, ready to bargain for gold dust and other goods.

Inan's father went to the salt table. There were many merchants about, so he and Inan waited for a moment before they could begin. Inan kept his silence as the salt merchant left the table, his salt piled up in varying amounts. Inan's father moved to a large pile and placed a similar amount of gold dust beside it. Salt was very valuable, Inan knew, for it was used to preserve meat in the hot Mali sun. Inan's mother used salt for the health of her family, and often applied it to their food.

The merchant returned and looked at the amount of gold next to his salt piles. Inan's father was still and quiet as the merchant paused to consider the amount. He looked up at Inan's father and for a moment Inan was certain he would turn his back, instead he reached down and, nodding his head slightly, scooped up the gold dust next to his salt pile. Inan's father gathered the salt into a large sack and then turned to view the other tables nearby. By the strength and lightness in his step, Inan could tell his father was happy with his trade. Inan proudly watched his father move among the tables, the deba drum calling out to buyers. "Come!" it said. "Come and buy!"

"Someday," he thought, "Someday I will move among the tables like my father before me and I will know just how much gold dust to put down beside the salt. I will barter and trade like my father and the merchants will not turn their backs on me!" He nodded to himself, just like the merchant had, and rushed ahead to walk beside his father and learn more.

Erin and the Ring Money **Lesson 24**

It was hot in her father's blacksmith shop, so Erin was grateful when she heard the children of the village call for her. "Erin!" they called excitedly, "Erin, you must come, lass!" Erin ran out of the shop and down the mud-packed road to the green hilltop where her friends stood, their hands cupped around their mouths. Erin brushed her red hair away from her eyes. Erin's hair was much like the rest of her—it preferred moving about to sitting in one place.

"What is it?" Erin demanded. Truth be told, she should not have left her father's shop. She was minding the store while her father cooled the ornaments he was making. He had a very important buyer coming that day and he wanted everything to go well. "Erin, look down the road. What do you see?"



Stories: Math

Mr. Placevalue's Houses Lesson 11

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

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

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

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

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

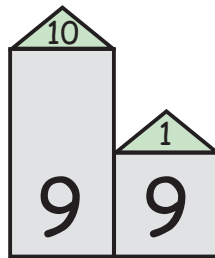
And finally came the THOUSANDS house, which would hold 9,000 people, but no more. The sign on the front of that read 1,000. Of course, each house was 10 times as tall as the last, so the THOUSANDS house was absolutely immense.



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

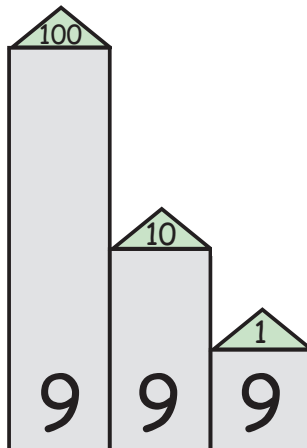


That reminded him that there were 9 people living in the ONES house. Later, as he fixed the TENS house, he rented that too. People were eager to live in the funny-looking houses, and soon it had 90 people living in it. So he wrote in his book:



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

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



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



Stories: Science

The Ant and the Cricket Lesson 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Recipes

Simple Homemade Modeling Dough (Uncooked)

Ingredients:

4 cups flour

2 cups water

1½ cups salt

food coloring (optional)

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

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

Simple Homemade Modeling Dough (Cooked)

Ingredients:

2 cups baking soda

1 cup cornstarch

1¼ cups cold water (add food coloring if desired)

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

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

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



Additional Activities

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 corn meal 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 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 small handfuls of it up, and then allow it to drip down into a pile, adding to it bit by bit as it grows into an unusual castle.