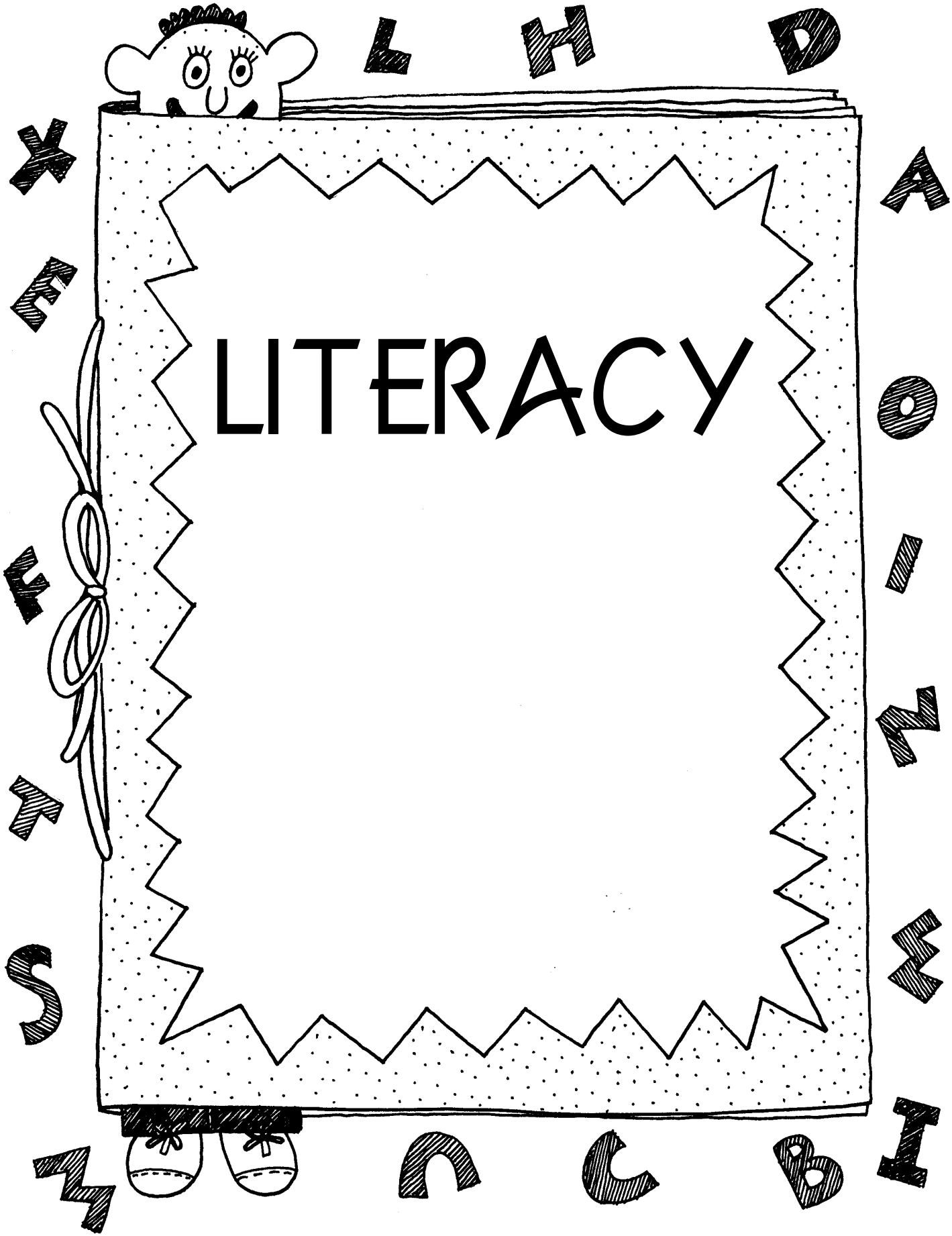
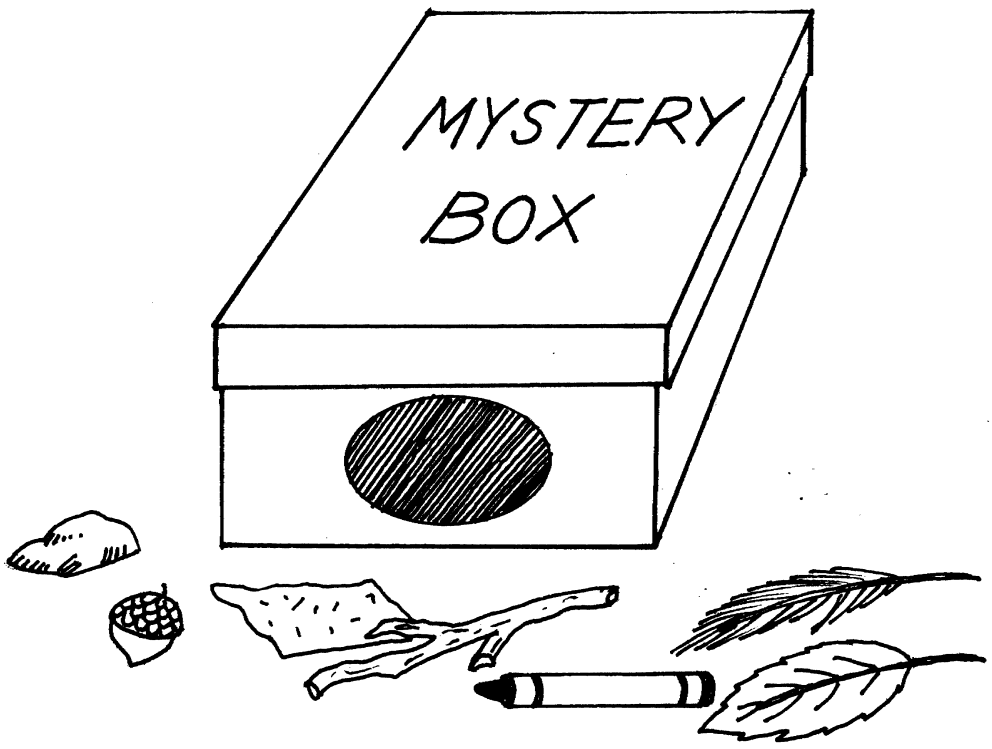

LITERACY

Touch-and-Tell Mystery Box

3 to 6



HOME CONNECTION

Encourage parents to use descriptive language when they speak with their child. Encourage patience, as young ones ask constant questions. Although at times children's search for information can be bothersome, adults must remember that children are in fact looking for information about the world. Their questions let us know their interests and focus from moment to moment. Help parents appreciate this fact when you share this activity with them by sending home a short note.

Purpose: Children use the sense of touch to explore and evaluate experience. The touch-and-tell mystery box is an instructive addition to the literacy area because children expand their vocabularies as they describe what they feel. This mystery box activity involves nature items, but the variety of objects that can be contained in the box is endless. This experience focuses on the children's ability to feel, observe, and communicate their observations. They discuss number, texture, shape, and size. They develop the ability to discriminate tactilely between various items.

Materials: medium-sized box
collection of rocks, acorns, branches, leaves, shells, feathers

Preparation:

1. Cut a hand-sized hole in a medium-sized box.

2. Collect 2 of a variety of items: rocks, feathers, acorns, tree branches, leaves, shells, etc.

Activity: Put 1 item into the mystery box. Place between 2 and 5 items on the table in the sight of the child. One item must be the same as the item that is in the mystery box. Ask a child to put his hand inside the box and guess which of the items on the table is also in the box. Encourage the child to look at that item on the table and use texture words to describe the item in the box.

Extensions and variations:

- Rather than placing 1 set of items within view of the child, place 2-5 items in the mystery box. Then place 1 object from the other set in front of the box. Ask the child to search the mystery box for the one object.

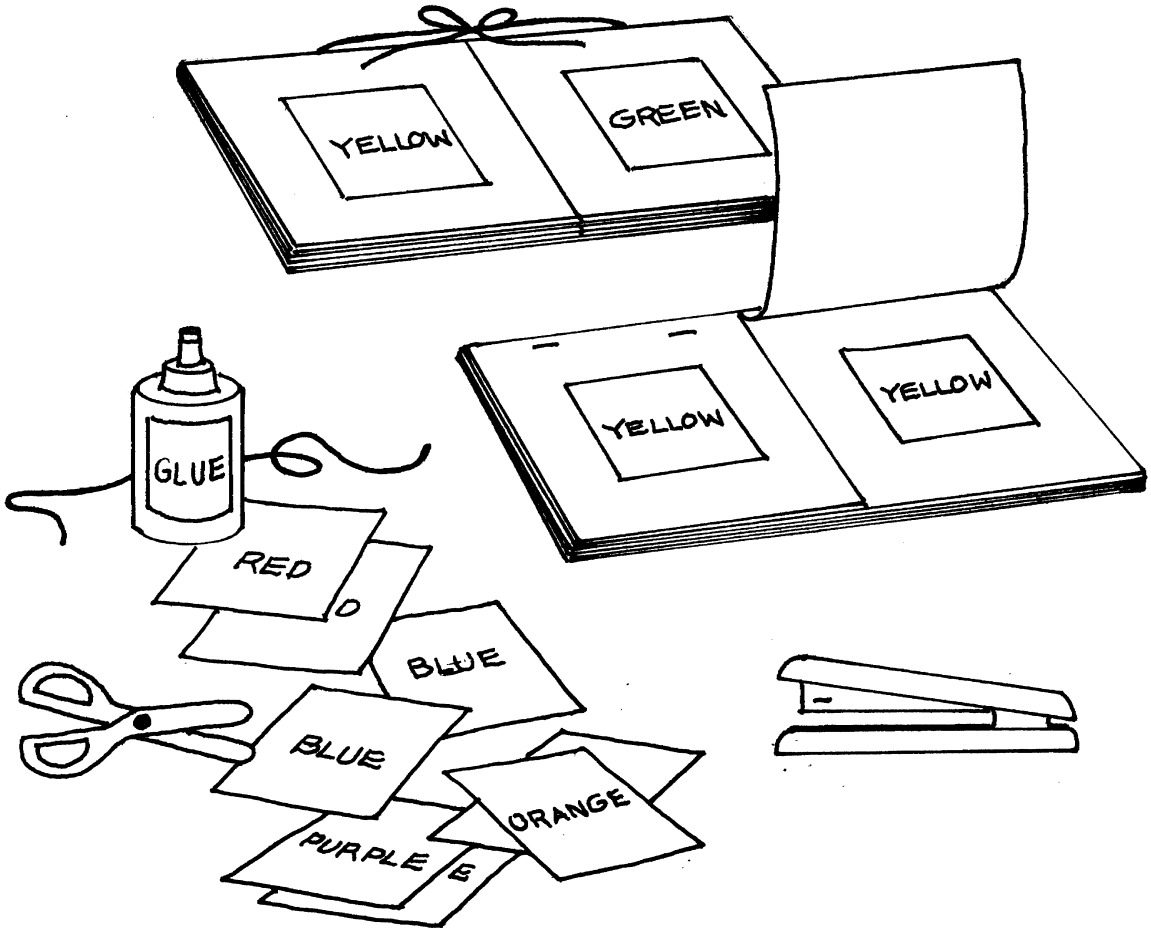
- In a small group of 2 or 3 children, each child reaches into the box and describes 1 of the items. In teaching descriptive attributes, a teacher may ask the child if the item is hard or soft, rough or smooth, cold or warm. The children take turns guessing what the item is, based on the description given. Encourage the use of descriptive language to build vocabulary.

- Teach shapes by placing in a large bag items such as a ball, square wooden block, and a musical triangle.

- Place 3 pencils of different lengths in a large bag. Ask the child to reach in and remove the shortest pencil. Replace the pencil and ask for the longest pencil. Replace the pencil and ask for the "middle-sized" pencil.

Color Flip Book

3 to 4



HOME CONNECTION

This simple activity can be adapted at home by parents and children. It is a book for matching colors or pictures that are the same. Parents can start with a child's interest in dogs, for example, and make a flip book with matching pictures of different kinds of dogs.

Purpose: A color flip book is composed of solid color pages. It helps children match or identify colors. The content of a flip book can be changed or added to; the teacher can start with primary and secondary colors for young children and add pastels for older ones.

Materials:

- colored paper
- scissors
- glue
- stapler or string
- string

Preparation:

1. Fold 4 or 5 sheets of colored paper in half. This will give you an 8- or 10-page book.
2. Staple or tie the papers together.
3. Cut up the center with a scissors. Do not cut the bottom page.
4. Cut out the colored squares and glue them on the paper. Use 2 squares of each color, but not opposite one another.
5. Children can now "flip" to mix and match.

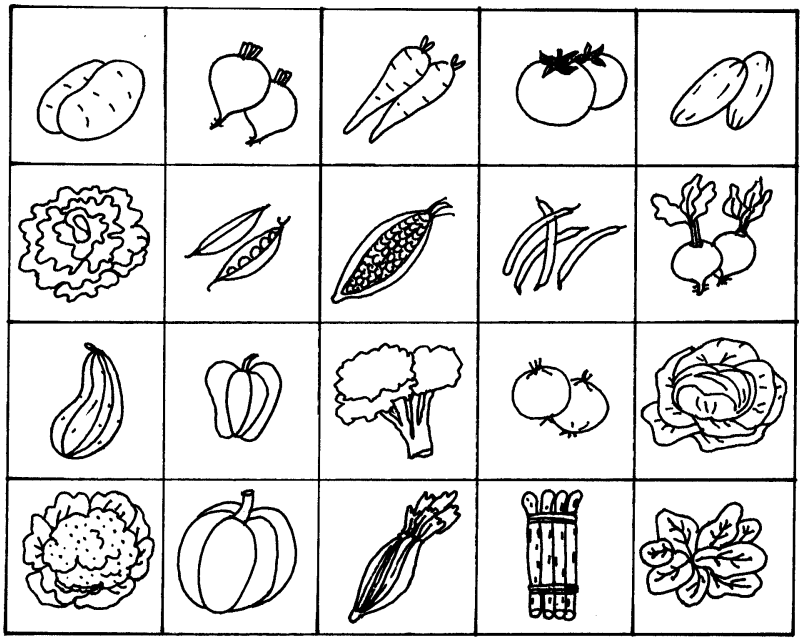
Activity: The book can be used in several ways. Give children time to just flip through all the pages. Beginning with the first color on the left side, ask the child, "Can you flip to the same color on the other side?" After the child has done that, move to the second color on the left-hand side. Again ask the child to flip to the same color. Once the child has grasped the idea, you can ask other kinds of questions, for example, "Can you find your favorite color on both sides?

Extensions and variations:

- Flip books lend themselves to multiple uses. For 5- and 6-year-olds make one that matches simple words. A mathematics flip book could match numerals and quantities of objects. Enlist the help of an artistic parent to make matching flowers, leaves, and trees.

Lotto Boards

3 to 6



Purpose: Lotto boards are boards with pictures or numerals affixed; they are the basis for a variety of matching games. They come in a variety of types, yet they all require observation, comparison of likenesses, and recognition of differences. These matching skills are paramount in learning science, math, and reading readiness concepts. Lotto boards can involve identification of colors, numerals, fruits, and pictures of people and can be created to supplement social studies themes. For example, if types of foods are being studied, a teacher can create fruit, vegetable, and protein lotto boards. By asking open-ended questions, the teacher helps the children to expand their vocabularies.

Materials:

- large piece of cardboard or thick paper
- pencil or marker
- large envelope or file folder
- drawings or pictures from magazines
- cards
- glue
- scissors

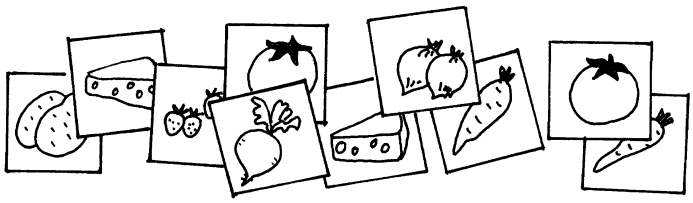
HOME CONNECTION

Simple matching activities can be done at home as parents help their child get ready for the day, prepare meals together, and do the marketing. Parents must learn to appreciate the learning involved in such seemingly simple activities and provide time to consider daily activities from the child's point of view.

Preparation:

1. Using a pencil or marker, divide the cardboard into equal sections. (The board could have from 9 to 20 sections.) Make sure the sections are large enough to hold the pictures being glued onto the board.

2. Make matching cards to correspond to the pictures on the boards.



3. Store each lotto board and its matching pieces in a large envelope or file folder and place in the manipulative area.

Activity:

As an individual activity: Place 2 large clips on each matching card for the lotto board. Mix up the pieces. Ask the child to use a magnet to pick up one piece at a time and place it on the corresponding board picture. For a more advanced activity, give the child two lotto boards and 2 sets of cards.

As an activity for 2 children: Two children can play lotto with 2 boards. They take turns. First, one is the caller and the other receives and matches the corresponding card. Then they switch to the second board and the first receiver becomes a caller and the other the receiver/matcher.

Extensions and variations:

- As a small group activity: Prepare many lotto boards with matching drawings or pictures of colors, shapes, names, dots, numerals, fruits, vegetables, people, etc. Give each child a different board. Mix all the matching cards. Select a caller, either an adult or an older child.

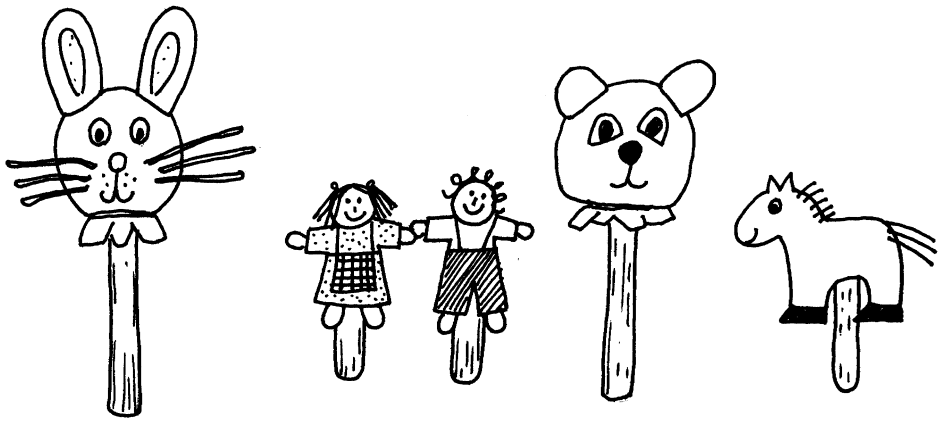
- As a multicultural activity: Prepare a board with pictures from diverse countries.

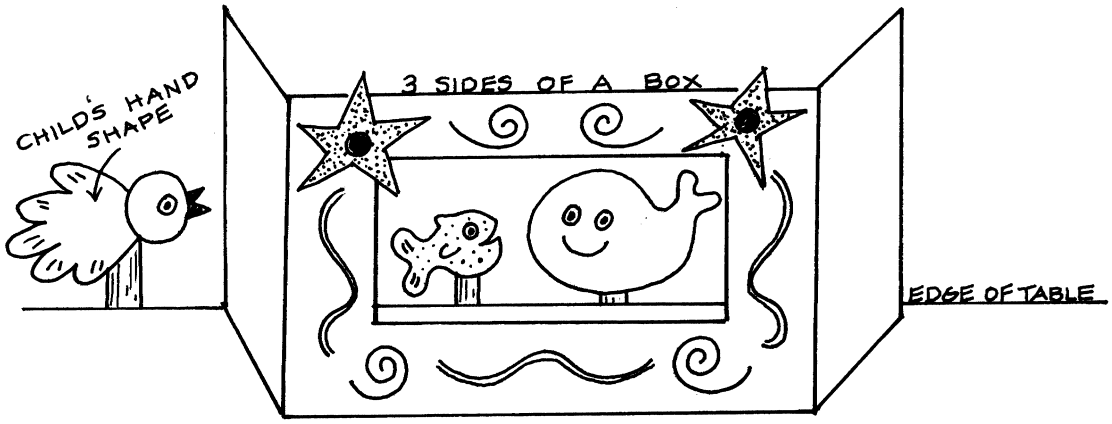
- Make texture lotto boards out of a variety of fabric scraps. This activity is particularly good to increase tactile awareness for children with low vision. Ask children to describe the textures—slippery, soft, bumpy—as they play. Make lotto boards by gluing fabric swatches to heavy board. Outline each texture with sticks or straws and secure with glue or tape.

Puppets

3 to 6

Submitted by Croatia and Slovenia





Purpose: Puppets are used for many dramatic play experiences. Whether acting out a scene from a story, reliving a life situation, or role-playing a dream, children use puppets to say out loud the things that are on their minds. Puppets stimulate a child's natural use of language. Beside the numerous language, social, and emotional benefits of using puppets in dramatic play, making puppets lets children express their creativity and imaginations. Using a variety of puppets (stick puppets, finger puppets, and bag puppets) allows for choice, encourages new situations, and adds interest.

HOME CONNECTION

Request volunteers to come into the classroom to assist children who may need help. Ask some parents to work together to build a puppet theater for the classroom. This can become an extension of the dramatic play area.

Materials:

- sticks, large twigs, or tongue depressors
- decorations - yarn, string, buttons
- scissors
- small paper bags
- fabric scraps, paper scraps
- glue
- newspaper or cotton

Preparation:

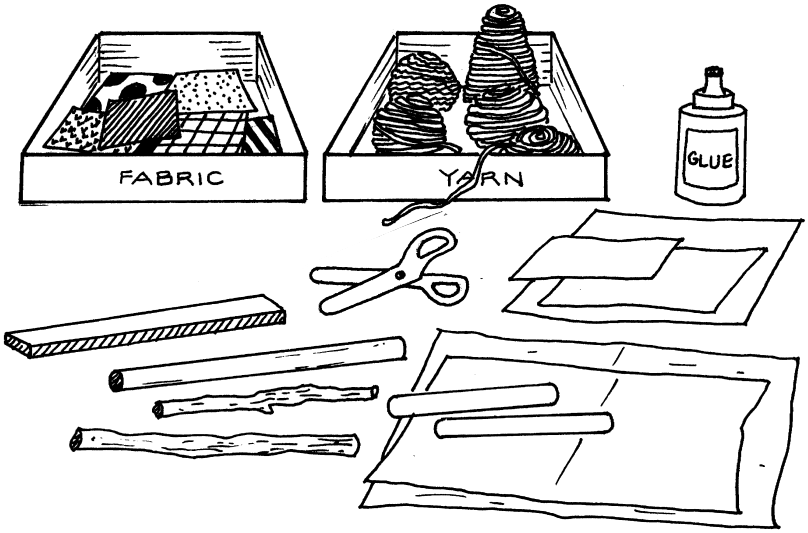
1. A younger child can put a bag over the stick and stuff the bag with newspaper or cotton.

2. The teacher helps tie the top of the bag to the stick, making a head.

3. The child can paint or glue decorations to the head or face.

4. The child dresses the puppet by selecting scraps of paper or fabric.

5. Older children enjoy painting story characters onto durable paper. After they cut out their characters, they glue them onto cardboard and attach them to wooden sticks.



Activity: Some children are reluctant to talk at group times or story times. Almost magically, when these children are holding puppets, they will pretend that the puppet is doing the talking, and they become part of the dialogue. Here are some examples of teacher questions and comments to facilitate language: "This baby will not sleep without a story. Can your puppet tell the baby a story?" "Which does your puppet like best for dessert—fruit, ice cream, or cake?"

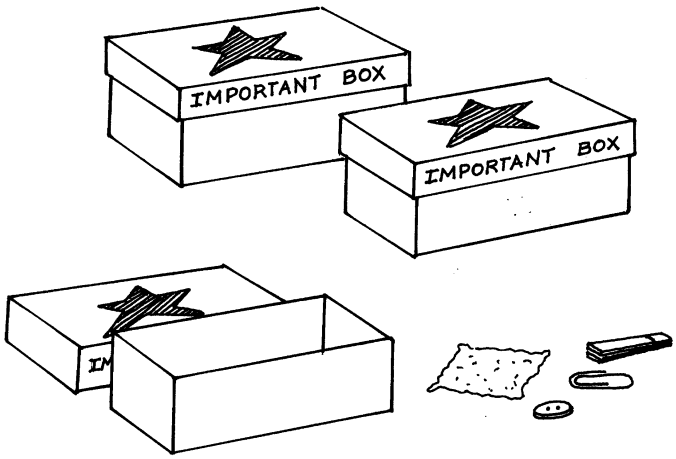
Extensions and variations:

- With older children, create a stage set (a large cardboard box works well) or back drop (with a flat sheet). The children paint the scene for puppet play. In Slovenia, children worked together to paint a house for puppet play.

The Important Box

4 to 5

NAME	DATE	OBJECT



HOME CONNECTION

Meet with the parents of the class. Explain that you are beginning a project to give each child a turn to talk to the class at meeting time. Show the boxes to the parents. Every day, three children will take home a box. Each parent will have two responsibilities:

1. Help the child choose a simple, yet important, item that fits into the box—for example, a clothespin, a button, a piece of fabric.

2. Talk with the child about why this item is important. For example, a clothespin lets you hang clothes outdoors to dry. At home, let the child practice how to explain to the class the importance of the item.

Purpose: This activity encourages the development of children's ability to reason and think critically. Children choose an object that is important to them and explain why. The activity expands skills of expressive language that are fundamental to literacy development.

Materials: 3 boxes of the same size
paper
marker

Preparation:
1. Label each box "THE IMPORTANT BOX."

2. Prepare a chart with the names of the children in the class.

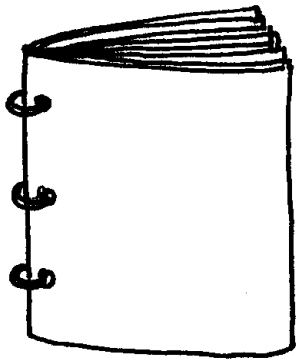
Activity: Meet with the children and explain that the class is starting a project about things that are important to each person in the class. Show them the boxes. Tell them that they will each have a turn to take a box home and choose something that is important to put in the box. They should think about why the object is important and be ready to tell everyone in a loud clear voice. Let the children know that you have explained the activity to their parents, who will help them get ready when it is their turn.

As the activity progresses, keep a chart on the wall that tells what each child brought in.

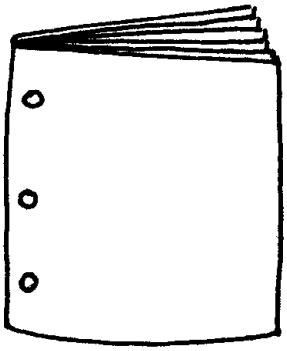
Extensions and variations:
- After each child has had a turn, write a simple report to be sent home to parents giving them a list of objects brought in.

- Place the objects in a bag and have the children take turns trying to find their items by feeling only.

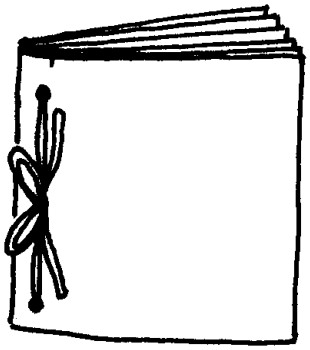
A Book about Me



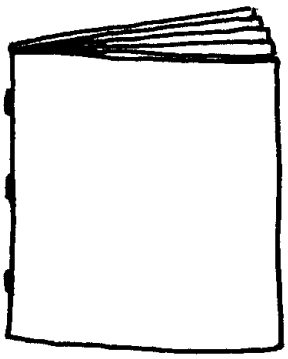
RINGS



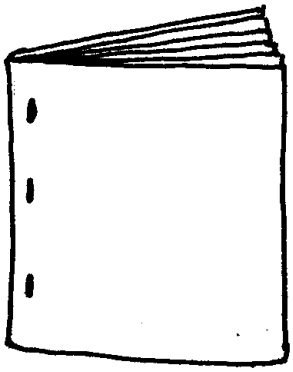
BRADS



STRING



STAPLE



STAPLE

HOME CONNECTION

Announce that you are having a book-making meeting for parents, at which the parents will make blank books for children to use to create their own stories. (See the list of materials that parents will need to make the books.) If possible, have refreshments available to make this an opportunity for people to get to know one another and build spirit.

Purpose: Literature gives children new insights and understanding. It stimulates thinking and language development. To encourage a love of books, read to children every day and plan opportunities for children to make their own books. This activity provides a chance for choices as children select their own topics and build on their own interests. The activity also invites children to think about different ways of assembling books. Making books with children allows teachers to customize content for any teaching domain. "A Book about Me" fits with the study of personal growth as children look back to their younger years. In this way, a child begins to appreciate changes in nature and growth over time.

Materials:

- thick colored paper
- scissors
- stapler
- rubber bands
- cardboard
- cord or yarn
- glue
- hole puncher
- paper fasteners
- old magazines, catalogs, greeting cards, etc.

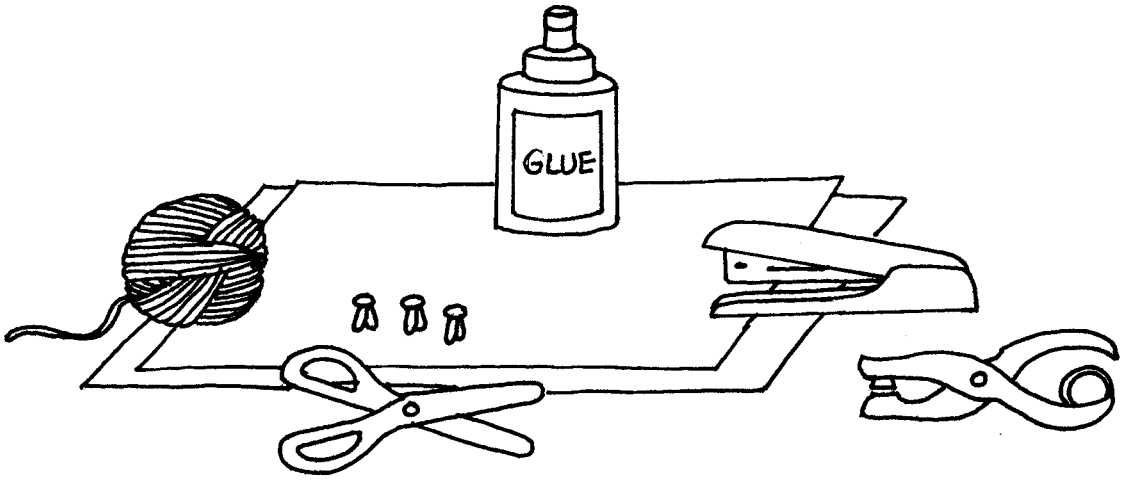
Preparation:

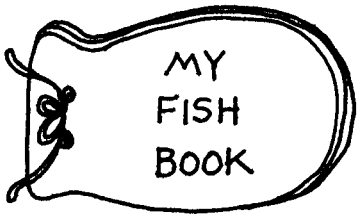
1. This activity takes place over several months. After the parents have prepared the blank books, children work in small groups or individually to fill the pages in their books. The teacher should take a photo of each child for the book cover and paste it on to cardboard.

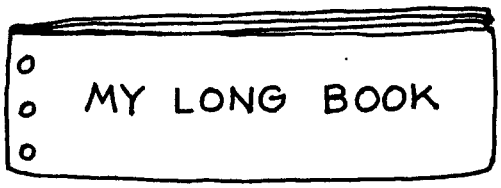
2. As the children learn about color, seasons, measurement, senses, and physical growth, they add new drawings, pictures, and words to their books.

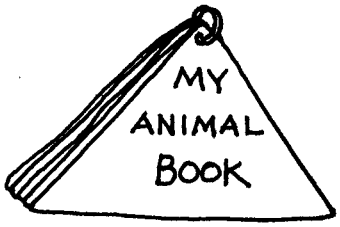
Activity: During circle time or morning meeting, explain to the children that they will be making "A Book about Me." Each book will be a little different because each person is unique, but all people are alike in many ways too. "What are some ways we are all alike?" Over time, some of the activities that might be included in the book are my hand prints, footprints, finger prints; how many members in my family; color of my eyes; my favorite color; a story about me when I was a baby; my favorite thing to do. The children can dictate to the teacher and draw pictures to accompany the narrative.

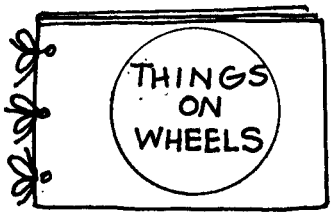
When the books are completed, the teacher should place them in the literacy area for the children to look at. They will love seeing themselves and other children. The activity helps children build a positive approach to differences as they gain greater awareness and understanding of their own characteristics and those of their classmates.


GLUE


MY
FISH
BOOK


MY LONG BOOK


MY
ANIMAL
BOOK


THINGS
ON
WHEELS


MY
FACE
BOOK

Extensions and variations:

- Prepare several samples of different shape books. Children choose the shape and topic for the books. Some suggestions may be helpful: people, numbers, cars, airplanes, animals, fruits, vegetables, faces, pets, etc. Make a front and back cover for the younger children and fill it with several blank pages.

- Older children may, with help, select and cut their own shapes and choose their own titles and topics. They cut and paste selected pictures on the blank pages. Younger children may want to dictate stories for adults to write.

- Give the children a choice of different ways to fasten the pages of their book. For example they may choose to staple or sew their books together with yarn or thread.

- Have children make a book of numbers that are important to them. These can include their ages, house or apartment numbers, number and ages of people in their families, favorite numbers, birthdays, etc.

4 to 5

The Big Catch

Submitted by Russia

HOME CONNECTION

Children learn pre-reading skills first by listening to spoken stories. At bedtime retell or read verses to your children that you learned when you were young. Tell them childhood stories about you and your family.

Purpose: This literacy activity is an illustrated child's rhyme that contains a simple math problem to solve by counting, adding, or subtracting. The picture and verse help the children to learn both by sight and by sound.

Materials:

paper	black marker
paints, chalk, or crayons	tape

Preparation:

1. Select a short, simple rhyming verse and write it in bold, clear lettering.
2. Draw a picture of the action that takes place in the verse, clearly illustrating the math problem that the children must solve.
3. Attach the picture and story together by taping them to heavy paper.

Activity: Although the charm of the Russian rhyme is lost in this literal translation, the simple mathematical elements are apparent in the following verse:

> Two fisherman were sitting on bank.
> Grandpa Korny caught three perch.
> Grandpa Yersey caught a carp.
> How many fish did the fishermen pull out of the river?

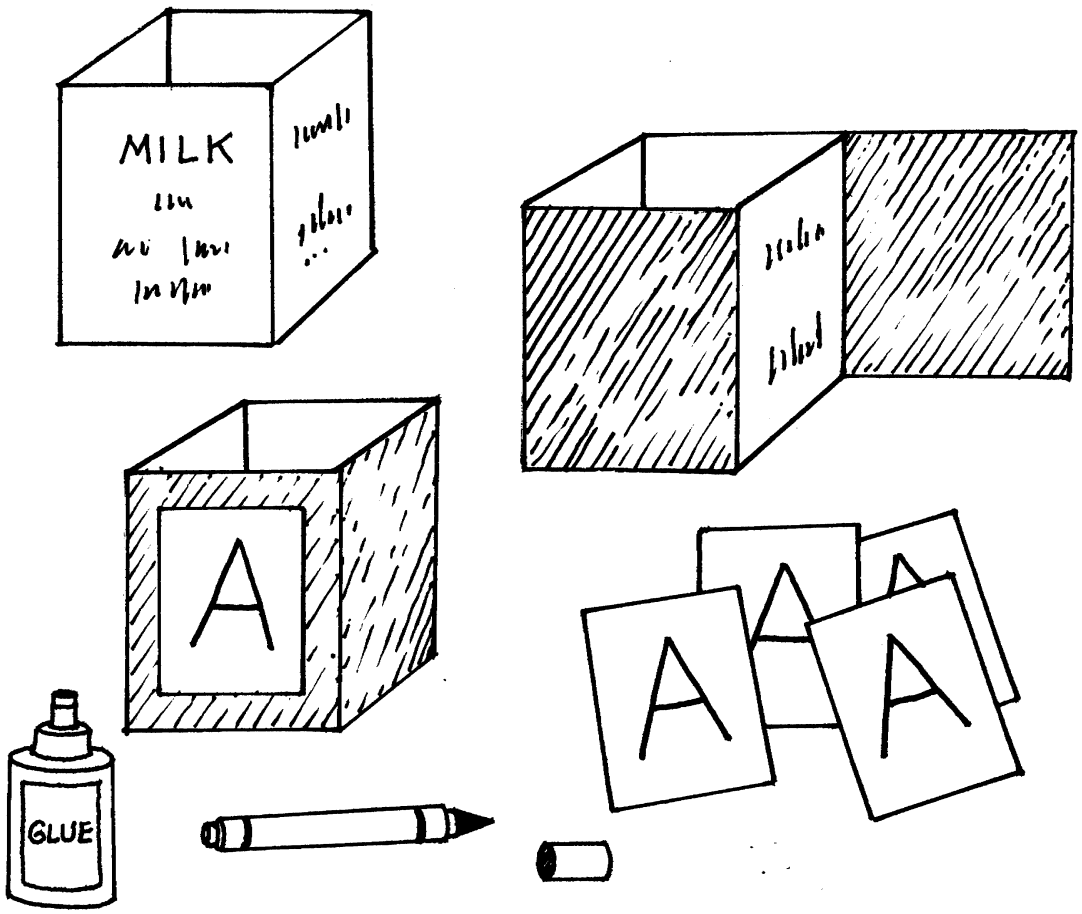
During the morning meeting, the teacher reads the verse to the children once or twice. She points to the words as she reads them and asks, "What is happening in the picture?" Together they count the fish. "How many fish did Grandpa Korny catch? How many fish did Grandpa Yersey catch?" Repeat the verse frequently during clean-up time or while walking outdoors.

Leave the picture and verse in the literacy center. The children will return to it, retell the poem, and make up other problems.

Extensions and variations:

- Use verses that relate to classroom themes: boats, fish, astronauts, etc.

Letter Cards



HOME CONNECTION

Parents should read to their child each day to support growth in literacy skills and language development. Reading together regularly—even if only for a short time—can become an anchor of stability for a young child in a busy day. Send home a note requesting that parents save cartons for use with this activity, which builds pre-reading skills.

Purpose: Distinguishing likenesses and differences is a skill necessary in the development of literacy. In early childhood, children become familiar with letters and how letters form the printed word. They then learn to sort like alphabet letters. In this activity, children build pre-reading skills by matching, sorting, and comparing letter forms.

Materials:

- milk cartons
- thick colored paper
- cards (5 for each letter)
- clear contact paper (if available)
- scissors
- glue
- markers

Preparation:

1. Collect as many milk cartons as letters in the alphabet.

2. Trim the cartons and cover them with thick colored paper, then with clear contact paper (if available). Attach 1 letter card to the front of each carton.

3. Make four more cards of each letter of the alphabet.

Activity: Ask the child to sort the letters into the cartons with the matching letters. "Can you name the letters?" Some 5 year olds can begin making sound-symbol associations.

Extensions and variations:

- Similar sorting cartons can be made for colors, shapes, and numbers.

- To develop sight words, attach cards with short (2- and 3-letter) words to the sorting cartons. Make the corresponding cards to go in the cartons.

- As children learn the sounds of each letter, they can select cards with pictures of objects that begin with the same initial sound, such as "S" for snake, sun, stick, soap.