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Action Book Nursery Rhymes and Favorite Tales

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Nursery rhymes and favorite tales have a timeless appeal to young children. Many nursery rhymes and favorite tales are now available as action books. Action books are often called pop-up, pull-tap, or lift-the-flap books. Children trigger movement by turning pages, lifting flaps, sliding tabs or moving wheels. Actions books is an inclusive term used to identify books with moving parts. The most common action in books is the pop-up; as the pages are opened an illustration pops up giving a three-dimensional effect.

Action books for children date back to England in the 1760s, when Robert Sayer first published pop-up and action-tab books. The paper engineers of today's action books have created the movement technology to send the cow jumping over the moon, to hide Peter Rabbit behind a pop-out watering can and to glide Pooh Bear to the top of a honey tree.

Action books of rhymes and tales are well suited for use with young children to help develop prereading skills and foster a lively interest in books. It is the purpose of this article to present a rationale and guidelines for using action book nursery rhymes and favorite tales with preschool and kindergarten children. A booklist has been compiled to assist parents and teachers in choosing a resource collection.

Rationale

The purpose for using action rhymes and tales in the home or early childhood classroom is to develop children's representational understandings and a sense of story structure. In addition, action books help children enjoy print, an important motivational aspect for successful beginning reading.

Action books are useful in helping young children build representational understandings (McGee & Charlesworth, 1984). The movables serve as a transition between real
objects and actions and the flat representations in picture books. Pictures can aid the transition from the concrete to the abstract (Smardo, 1982). However, for some children pictures are often not enough. Action books with movable parts, on the other hand, allow for a degree of concreteness to accompany print.

Helping young children develop a "sense of story" is an important prereading skill (Petty, Petty & Becking, 1985; Stewig, 1983). Action books can serve as an aid for children to help them develop a sense of plot and story sequence. Shannon and Samuels (1985) suggest that action books help children organize thought in order to produce meaning. The moving visuals are a natural media for helping children understand and order the sequence of a plot. Young children can sequence simple storytelling by following the actions of the movables. The oral reprocessing of the rhymes and tales help children gain an awareness of story structure.

Action rhymes and tales help foster a love of literature. A child who loves books is on his or her way to becoming a successful reader (Barron & Burley, 1984; Durkin, 1983). Children enjoy action books because they are able to participate in a story and find the involvement exciting. Abrahamson and Stewart (1982) point out that books with movables show children that experiences with print can be enjoyable. Children should always be introduced to the traditional picture books of nursery rhymes and favorite tales. The action books offer an additional dimension to the traditional picture books for helping children enjoy experiences with print.

Guidelines

The following four steps are guidelines for using action rhymes and tales with young children. The steps follow the releasing story power sequence suggested by Burke (1986). The guidelines focus on reading as a shared experience.

1. Prepare the children. Tell them to watch for surprises. Read the tale or rhyme and model the action triggers yourself.
2. Go back and show the children how to use the lift-flaps, pull-tabs, turn-wheels and pop-up pages. Read the rhyme or tale again. Guide the children's participation with the action triggers.
3. Have a child hold the book, turn the pages, lift the
flaps or turn the wheels while you model telling the story in your own words or repeating the rhyme. Have a child tell the story, with assistance if needed, as he or she triggers the action tabs.


Resource Booklist

Action rhymes and tales for reading in the home or classroom should be selected based on durability and simplicity. In most cases the action books of rhymes and tales of today are paper engineered for hard use. The lift-flaps are sturdy and the pop-out figures and objects are securely glued. Fragile pop-ups should be avoided for use with young children. The interest and pleasure of an action book is for the child to be able to participate.

The accompanying text for action books should be simple. Long complicated texts are not in keeping with a young child's attention span. A simple text will allow the child to tell back the rhyme or tale based on the sequence of pop-ups. However, a too abbreviated text can be a disservice to a favorite tale or rhyme. Care must be taken to have a balance between simplicity and retaining the richness of the original tale or rhyme.

The following booklist has been annotated to assist both parents and teachers in selecting durable and simple action book rhymes and tales for the home and early childhood classroom.

Nursery Rhymes


Favorite Tales


tales fold out as a lively sequence of the favorite tales.


REFERENCES


