

ARKANSAS IMAGINATION LIBRARY
Building the Reading Brain
Birth–5 Teacher Guide & Family Literacy Activities



Every Arkansas Imagination Library book is an opportunity to build the reading brain. This guide provides developmentally appropriate, play-based learning experiences aligned with the Arkansas Early Learning Standards to strengthen language, literacy, and school readiness through meaningful interactions with books.

The Animal Song by Jonty Howley

Delivery Month: August

Group 3 • Two-Year-Olds

Learning Goals/Objectives

Language & Literacy

- Develop oral language through singing, storytelling, and discussion.
- Increase vocabulary related to animals, sounds, movement, and music.
- Strengthen listening comprehension and story retelling skills.
- Identify and produce rhyming words and repeated sounds in songs.

Cognitive/Math

- Sort, classify, and compare animals by characteristics.
- Count animals and compare quantities.
- Recognize patterns through movement and music sequences.

Social-Emotional

- Participate in group music and movement experiences.
- Express feelings and ideas through dramatic play and creative movement.
- Demonstrate cooperation and turn-taking during group activities.

Physical Development

- Strengthen gross motor skills through animal movements and dance.
- Develop fine motor skills through art, sorting, and manipulation activities.

Arkansas Early Learning Standards

Social Emotional Development

- SE1 – Develops a positive sense of self and self-awareness.
- SE3 – Builds and maintains positive relationships with adults and peers.

Cognitive Development

- CD1.1 – Demonstrates curiosity, initiative, and engagement in learning.
- CD2.1 – Uses reasoning, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills.

Physical Development

- PH1.1 – Demonstrates body awareness and movement skills.
- PH1.3 – Demonstrates increasing control, coordination, and strength in gross motor movements.
- PH2.1 – Uses fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination to manipulate materials.

Language Development

- LD1 – Attends to and understands language.
- LD4 – Develops receptive and expressive language skills to communicate effectively.

Emergent Literacy

- EL1.2 – Demonstrates interest in and engagement with books and stories.
- EL2.1 – Demonstrates comprehension of stories and informational texts.
- EL3.1 – Demonstrates awareness of sounds in spoken language.

Mathematics Development

- MT1.1 – Demonstrates understanding of numbers and counting.
- MT3.1 – Explores, identifies, and compares attributes of objects.
- MT5.1 – Recognizes, creates, and extends simple patterns.

SCIENCE OF READING CONNECTIONS

This lesson plan aligns with science of reading principles **while honoring the developmental stage of two-year-olds**:

- * **Oral Language Priority:** Emphasizes listening and speaking before print-based skills
- * **Concrete Experiences:** Uses real objects, movements, and sounds rather than abstract symbols
- * **Playful Learning:** Embeds skill development in engaging, meaningful activities
- * **Family Partnership:** Extends language-rich experiences into the home environment with practical, accessible activities

MATERIALS

Literacy Materials

- The Animal Song by Jonty Howley
- Animal picture cards
- Chart paper and markers
- Story sequencing cards
- Puppets or stuffed animals

Music & Movement Materials

- Rhythm sticks
- Scarves
- Music player
- Animal movement cards

Math & STEM Materials

- Animal counters
- Sorting trays
- Pattern cards
- Counting mats

Art Supplies

- Construction paper
- Crayons and markers
- Glue sticks
- Animal stickers
- Paint and brushes

ENGAGE (BEFORE READING)

Ask:

- “What do you think this story is about?”
- “What makes you think that?”
- “What are some sounds animals make?”
- “How do different animals move?”

Introduce vocabulary:

Animal, Song, Rhythm, Beat, Roar, Chirp, Stomp, Flutter, Habitat, Pattern

EXPLORE (DURING READING)

Read The Animal Song aloud.

Pause to ask:

- “What animal do you see?”
- “How do you think this animal sounds?”
- “Can you move like this animal?”
- “What animal might come next?”

EXTEND (AFTER READING)

Literacy

- Create a class book called "Our Animal Song."
- Children dictate sentences about their chosen animal.
- Retell the story using puppets or stuffed animals. (Gather a Story Retelling Basket w/props)

Art

- Create animal masks using paper plates and craft materials.

Dramatic Play / Music & Movement

- Participate in an Animal Parade with movement and sounds.
- Create an Animal Orchestra using rhythm instruments.

Math/STEM

- Sort animals by habitat, size, or number of legs.
- Create and extend movement or sound patterns.
- Count animal counters and compare quantities.

Assessment

- Anecdotal observations
- Participation in discussions and movement
- Story retelling attempts
- Counting and sorting activities
- Child artwork and dictated responses

ASSESSMENT

Language Observation Checklist for Two-Year-Olds

Animal-Themed Activities

Observation Area	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet	Notes
Oral Language				
Uses animal names (e.g., lion, bird)				
Imitates animal sounds (e.g., roar, chirp)				
Uses simple animal phrases (e.g., "big dog")				
Responds to questions about animals				
Vocabulary				
Uses new words (e.g., stomp, flutter)				
Names animals in pictures or props				
Repeats rhyming words from songs				
Uses action words (e.g., hop, waddle)				
Story Retelling				
Points to or names animals during retelling				
Imitates animal movements				

| Uses simple sentences to describe animals | | | |
| Participates in group retelling with props | | | |

Instructions: Observe during animal activities. Mark "Yes" (consistent), "Sometimes" (occasional), or "Not Yet." Use Notes to record examples and guide next steps.

DIFFERENTIATION

Language Supports

- Use picture vocabulary cards and sentence starters.

Fine Motor Adaptations

- Offer larger crayons and pre-cut shapes.

Sensory Supports

- Provide quieter spaces and optional headphones.

Gross Motor Adaptations

- Allow seated animal movements when needed.

Learning Styles

- Visual: Picture cards and charts
- Auditory: Songs and sound repetition
- Kinesthetic: Animal movement activities
- Creative: Mask-making and storytelling

TEACHER RESOURCES & REFLECTION

What went well in this lesson?

What did students learn? How do I know?

What would I do differently if teaching this lesson again?

FAMILY CONNECTION

Activity 1: Our Family Animal Song

Invite families to choose a favorite animal and create a simple song using a familiar tune such as *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* or *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*.

Example:

*"Bunny, bunny, hop so high,
Hop and hop and touch the sky.
Wiggle ears and twitch your nose,
That's the way our bunny goes!"*

Encourage children to:

- Move like the animal
- Make animal sounds
- Repeat key words from the song

Supports: Oral language, vocabulary development, memory, rhythm, and phonological awareness.

Activity 2: Animal Sound Walk

Take a walk around the neighborhood, park, or backyard and listen for animal sounds.

Ask:

- What animals do you hear?
- What sound does that animal make?
- Can you move like that animal?
- How many birds, squirrels, or insects can you find?

Count the animals together.

Supports: Observation skills, counting, vocabulary, and science exploration.

Activity 3: Animal Book Basket

Gather books featuring animals and read together throughout the week. EX *Giraffes Can't Dance*, *Rumble in the Jungle*, *Barnyard Dance*

After reading, ask:

- What animal was your favorite?
- What did the animal do?
- What sound does it make?
- Can you find an animal that is big? Small? Fast? Slow?

Encourage children to point to pictures and name animals.

Supports: Vocabulary development, comprehension, print awareness, and expressive language.

Activity 4: Family Animal Parade (Also a great transition activity)

Choose several animals and take turns acting them out.

Examples:

- Hop like a rabbit
- Stomp like an elephant
- Waddle like a duck
- Slither like a snake

Add music and create a family parade around the house.

Supports: Gross motor development, listening skills, following directions, and imaginative play.

Activity 5: Animal Counting Challenge

Using stuffed animals, toy animals, or pictures:

Ask children to:

- Count the animals
- Sort them by size or color
- Group animals that live on a farm, in the ocean, or in the forest

For older preschoolers:

- Create simple patterns (cow, pig, cow, pig)

Supports: Early math skills, classification, and problem-solving.

Activity 6: Animal Talk at Mealtime

During meals, families can play "Animal Questions."

Examples:

- If you could be any animal, what would you be?
- What animal is the biggest?
- Which animal can fly?
- Which animal swims?

Encourage children to explain their answers. Why? How do you know?

Supports: Oral language, reasoning, vocabulary, and conversation skills.

Family Literacy Night Activities



The Animal Band & Quiet Critters Lab

Inspired by *The Animal Song* by Jonty Howley

Literacy Focus: Vocabulary • Oral Language • Rhyming & Rhythm • Asking & Answering Questions

Science Focus: Animal Behaviors & Adaptations • Noise vs. Quiet Habitats • Sound & Vibration

Big Idea: Every animal has its own unique way of expressing itself! Some love to make loud, rhythmic music, while others prefer peace, quiet, and camouflage.

Learning Outcomes

Families will:

- Explore animal behaviors by discussing why certain animals make loud sounds and why others prefer quiet, restful spaces.
- Build DIY household instruments to explore rhythm, beat, and sound creation using recycled materials.
- Design animal masks (Paper Plate Band Members or Quiet Critters) to express emotions, characteristics, and animal habits through dramatic play.
- Strengthen oral language and gross motor skills by participating in a cooperative, rhythmic Animal Band Parade.
- Create a DIY Home Rhythm Instrument to continue making music, storytelling, and practicing patterns together at home.

Materials

Each Family Receives:

- Family Band Kit

- Paper lunch bag or small carry bag
- 2 paper plates
- 1 empty cardboard tube (paper towel or toilet paper roll) OR small plastic container with lid
- 2 wooden craft sticks
- Dry beans, rice, or pasta (pre-portioned in small cup)
- Jingle bells, rubber bands, and masking tape
- Crayons or markers
- Elastic string or yarn (for masks)

Maker Station Materials (Shared Among Families)

- Child-safe scissors
- Glitter stickers or animal stickers
- Construction paper scraps (for ears, whiskers, trunks, and beaks)
- Feathers and googly eyes
- Glue sticks or tape

Agenda (25–30 Minutes)

1. Welcome & Interactive Read Aloud (7–8 Minutes)

Introduce the story by saying:

"Tonight, we are joining the ultimate jungle jam! In *The Animal Song*, animals love to roar, chirp, stomp, and sing. But just like people, some animals love making big, loud music—and some animals prefer peace and quiet so they can rest or hide. Tonight, your family gets to join the band OR become one of our cozy, quiet critters!"

Pause throughout the story to ask:

- *What sound does this animal make? Can you make it with your voice?*
- *Look at this animal's face—do you think they want to join the loud song or find a quiet spot? Why?*
- *Why do you think a lion might roar loudly, but an owl or a turtle might stay quiet?*

Introduce key vocabulary:

- Rhythm
- Beat
- Habitat
- Band
- Loud
- Quiet

- Camouflage
- Behavior

2. Family Activity: Maker Station — Masks & Household Instruments (10–12 Minutes)

Invite families to work together at their tables to build their band gear and choose their animal roles.

Explain:

"First, decide what kind of animal you want to be! Are you a Loud Jammer (like a roaring lion or stomping elephant) who wants to play in the band? Or are you a Quiet Critter (like a sleepy owl, a hiding frog, or a timid mouse) who wants a quiet resting spot?"

Step A: Craft Your Animal Mask

- Use paper plates, ears, feathers, and markers to design an animal mask.
- Loud Jammers: Add big open mouths, bright colors, and bold ears!
- Quiet Critters: Add sleepy eyes, soft ears, or camouflage patterns.

Step B: Build Your DIY Household Instrument

- Shakers: Fill a tube or container with rice/beans and secure the ends with tape.
- Rhythm Sticks: Decorate craft sticks to tap together for a crisp beat.
- Rubber Band Guitars: Stretch rubber bands over open containers or small boxes.

As families build, encourage discussion by asking:

- *Why did you choose your animal? How does this animal act in real life?*
- *How does your instrument make sound? What happens when you shake it fast vs. slow?*
- *If your animal doesn't like loud noise, where would it go in the wild to hide or rest?*

3. Family Activity: The Big Animal Parade & Jam Session (8–10 Minutes)

Explain:

"Now it's time for our grand finale! Our Loud Jammers will lead the Animal Band Parade, while our Quiet Critters show us how their animals move silently, hide, or cheer quietly from the side!"

- Put on masks and grab instruments.

- Play a simple rhythm on a drum or tap sticks together (1-2, 1-2, 1-2-3).
- Lead families in a movement parade around the room:
 - Loud Jammers: Stomp, shake instruments, roar, and keep the beat!
 - Quiet Critters: Tip-toe, flutter, hide behind leaves/hands, and move smoothly without making a sound.
- Swap roles for a second round so every child experiences both quiet self-regulation and loud rhythmic play!

Closing (2 Minutes)

Invite a few children to share their mask or instrument.

Close by saying:

"Whether your animal loves to sing at the top of its lungs or sit quietly under a tree, every voice and every rhythm makes our world special! Keep making music and exploring animal sounds at home!"

Take-Home Family Challenge

Household Jam & Forest Rest!

Take your DIY Shaker and Animal Mask home!

1. Find 3 new household instruments in your kitchen (a plastic bowl drum, wooden spoon drumsticks, or a box guitar).
2. Play a fast beat, then a slow beat.
3. Freeze Game: Play your family song—when someone says "*Quiet Critter!*", everyone must freeze, hide like their quiet animal, and stop making noise for 5 seconds!

Why This Works

This activity seamlessly bridges creative art, STEM/physics of sound, emotional literacy, and dramatic play. Children who thrive on high-energy movement can express themselves through rhythm, while children who prefer quiet spaces get to explore animal behavior and camouflage without feeling left out. By creating instruments out of simple household items, parents see how easy and affordable it is to support early music, pattern recognition, and language development at home.

Materials to Prepare

Family Band Kit (One Per Family)

- Paper lunch bag or tote

- 2 paper plates (pre-punched with side holes for string)
- 1 cardboard tube or plastic container with tight lid
- 2 wooden craft sticks
- Pre-portioned cups of dry rice/beans
- Yarn/elastic string

Maker Stations

Set up tables with trays containing:

- Construction paper cutouts (ears, trunks, beaks, paws)
- Markers and crayons
- Tape and glue sticks
- Googly eyes and craft feathers
- Safety scissors