

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.

Being Home by Traci Sorell

Delivery Month: August

Group 5 • Four-Year-Olds

Learning Goals/Objectives

Language & Literacy

- Develop vocabulary related to homes, families, traditions, and feelings.
- Strengthen listening comprehension and conversational language.
- Retell events and personal experiences connected to home and family.
- Recognize descriptive words and emotional language.

Cognitive/Science & Social Studies

- Explore different types of homes and environments.
- Compare family traditions, routines, and living spaces.
- Identify ways people care for homes and communities.

Social-Emotional

- Develop a sense of belonging and identity.
- Express feelings connected to home, safety, and relationships.
- Demonstrate empathy and respect for differences among families and cultures.

Physical Development

- Strengthen fine motor skills through drawing, building, and collage work.
- Develop gross motor coordination through movement and dramatic play.

Arkansas Early Learning Standards

Social Emotional Development

- SE1 – Develops a positive sense of self and self-awareness.
- SE2 – Expresses feelings, needs, and preferences appropriately.
- SE3 – Builds and maintains positive relationships with adults and peers.

Social Studies Development

- SS1.1 – Demonstrates awareness of self, family, and community.
- SS2.1 – Recognizes similarities and differences among people and families.

Cognitive Development

- CD1.1 – Demonstrates curiosity, initiative, and engagement in learning.

- CD2.2 – Uses strategies to solve problems and complete tasks.

Physical Development

- PH1.2 – Demonstrates spatial awareness and body control.
- PH2.1 – Uses fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination to manipulate objects and materials.

Language Development

- LD2 – Demonstrates understanding of increasingly complex language.
- LD4 – Develops receptive and expressive language skills to communicate effectively.

Emergent Literacy

- EL1.1 – Shows interest in books and reading experiences.
- EL2.1 – Demonstrates comprehension of stories and texts.
- EL4.1 – Begins to understand that print carries meaning.

Mathematics Development

- MT3.1 – Explores and compares attributes of objects and environments.
- MT4.1 – Uses measurement concepts to describe and compare spaces and objects.

SCIENCE OF READING CONNECTIONS

This lesson plan centers heavily on oral language through:

- Conversation cards prompting back-and-forth dialogue between parents and children
- Open-ended questions during read-aloud ("How do the characters feel?" "What makes this place special?")
- Retelling activities using props and dramatic play
- Dictation activities where children verbalize ideas for adults to write
- Family sharing sessions where children practice expressive language

MATERIALS

Literacy Materials

- Being Home by Traci Sorell
- Family and home picture cards
- Chart paper and markers
- Story sequencing cards
- Blank books for dictation

Dramatic Play Materials

- Toy furniture
- Dolls and multicultural family figures
- Play dishes and household items
- Fabric pieces and pillows

Art Supplies

- Construction paper
- Crayons and markers
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Magazines for collage
- Craft sticks and recycled boxes

STEM/Math Materials

- Building blocks
- Measuring tapes
- Sorting trays
- Photos of different homes

ENGAGE (BEFORE READING)

Ask:

- “What makes a place feel like home?”
- “Who lives in your home?”
- “What are some things families do together at home?”
- “How are homes alike and different?”

Introduce vocabulary:

Home, Family, Community, Tradition, Safe, Belonging, Shelter, Apartment, House, Neighborhood

EXPLORE (DURING READING)

Read Being Home aloud.

Pause to discuss:

- “How do the characters feel?”
- “What makes this place special?”
- “What do you notice about the home?”
- “How are their experiences similar to yours?”

EXTEND (AFTER READING)

Literacy

- Create a class book called “My Home Story.”
- Children dictate sentences about their home or family traditions.
- Retell the story using dolls, puppets, or props.

Art

- Build a home collage using recycled materials.
- Create family portrait drawings or paintings.

Dramatic Play

- Transform the dramatic play area into a home environment.
- Practice family routines, welcoming visitors, and caring for others.

Math/STEM

- Build homes using blocks or recycled materials.
- Compare structures by size and strength.
- Sort pictures of homes by type, size, or location.
- Create a classroom neighborhood map.

Assessment

This lesson can be assessed in an authentic way by any of the following:

- ✓ 1-2 story retelling observations per child (documented with rubric)
- ✓ 3-5 anecdotal notes per child across different activities
- ✓ Evidence of vocabulary development
- ✓ Documentation of ability to compare homes
- ✓ Notes on social-emotional growth related to belonging and identity
- ✓ Samples of child work (drawings, dictated stories, photos of block structures)

This comprehensive data will inform instruction, parent conferences, and individualized learning plans.

Rubric for Story Retelling Assessment

Skill Area	Emerging (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)
Story Sequence	Mentions 1-2 random events	Retells 3-4 events with some order	Retells story with clear beginning, middle, end
Vocabulary	Uses general words (house, people)	Uses 2-3 story words (home, family, safe)	Uses 4+ story words with appropriate context
Comprehension	Identifies basic elements (characters present)	Describes what happened and basic feelings	Explains why events happened and character motivations

Personal Connection	No connections made	Makes 1 simple connection ("I have a house too")	Makes detailed connections with explanations
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Rubric for Comparing Homes (Observation-Based)

Skill Area	Emerging (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)
Identification	Names 1 type of home	Names 2-3 types of homes	Names 4+ types of homes with details
Similarities	Does not identify similarities	Identifies 1-2 obvious similarities (both have doors)	Identifies 3+ similarities including abstract concepts (both keep families safe)
Differences	Does not identify differences	Identifies 1-2 physical differences (size, color)	Identifies multiple differences and explains why they exist
Respect for Diversity	Shows limited awareness	Acknowledges different homes exist	Expresses value for all types of homes and families

DIFFERENTIATION

Modified Activities

Art/Collage:

- Pre-label magazine pictures with simple English words
- Provide picture choice boards: "Do you want to draw your house or your family?"
- Use photo examples of completed projects

Dramatic Play:

- Label all props with picture-word cards (bed, table, chair, door)
- Model play scenarios with simple, repetitive language: "I'm cooking. Now I'm eating. Now I'm sleeping."
- Create a visual schedule showing play center routines

Assessment Adaptations:

- Accept responses in home language and document with translation
- Use pointing, gesturing, or picture selection as valid responses
- Provide extra wait time (10-15 seconds) for language processing

- Score based on concept understanding, not English fluency

TEACHER RESOURCES & REFLECTION

Which activity or discussion was most engaging for children, and why?

How did children use new vocabulary during conversations or play?

How did I ensure all family structures and home experiences were represented and respected?

What evidence showed that children met the lesson's learning objectives?

Which children may need additional support or enrichment based on today's lesson?

What surprised me about children's responses, questions, or creations?

FAMILY CONNECTION

Group 5 August

Family Night Activity (20–30 Minutes)

"Home Is Where Our Story Lives"

Inspired by *Being Home* by Traci Sorell

Purpose

Families will explore what makes a home feel special—not the building itself, but the people, traditions, memories, and love inside it. Parents and children will create a keepsake together while practicing conversation and early literacy skills they can continue at home.

Big Idea: *Home isn't just where we live—it's where we belong.*

Learning Outcomes

Families will:

Build vocabulary about home, family, and belonging.

Practice back-and-forth conversations (a key language-building strategy). Strengthen family connections through storytelling.

Create a take-home reminder that encourages continued reading together.

Materials

11x17 construction paper (folded in half like a house)

Pre-cut paper house shapes (or house outlines)

Crayons, markers, colored pencils

Glue sticks

Family-themed stickers (optional)

Magazines for cutting pictures (optional)

"Conversation Cards" (printed)

Book copy for facilitator

Optional snack: cookies or goldfish and juice

Agenda (25 Minutes)

1. Welcome & Read Aloud (7–8 minutes)

The facilitator briefly introduces the book.

"Tonight we're going to think about something everyone has—a place that feels like home. Every family's home looks different, and every family has traditions that make them special."

Read **Being Home**, pausing briefly to ask:

What makes this place feel like home?

Who helps you feel safe?

What is your favorite thing to do at home?

Keep discussion brief and interactive.

2. Family Conversation Game (5–7 minutes)

Each family receives 5–6 conversation cards.

Parents draw one card at a time and let their child answer first.

Examples:

What is your favorite room in your home?

What smells remind you of home?

What makes you laugh at home?

Who cooks your favorite meal?

If your house could talk, what story would it tell?

What is your favorite bedtime routine?

What makes you feel safe?

What is one tradition your family has?

What is something your family always does together?

Encourage parents to answer too so children hear storytelling modeled.

3. Family Keepsake Activity (10–12 minutes)

Our Home Is Filled With...

Families decorate a large paper house together.

Inside the house they draw or write:

♡ People we love

☐☐ Favorite meal

☐☐ Favorite song

☐☐ Favorite thing to do together

☐☐ Something that makes our family special

☆ One family tradition

Adults write children's words if needed.

Younger children simply draw.

Older preschoolers may attempt letters or words.

4. Family Share (3–5 minutes)

Invite several families to share ONE thing they added. Examples:

"Our house is full of dance parties."

"Grandma's pancakes make home feel special."

"Every Friday we watch movies together."

Celebrate that every family's home story is unique.

Closing Literacy Connection (2 minutes) Give each family this challenge:

This Week's Reading Challenge

Each night after reading:

Ask ONE question:

What part reminded you of our family?

What was your favorite picture?

What made the character feel at home?

What makes YOU feel at home?

Explain that talking about books builds children's vocabulary, comprehension, and confidence—even before they can read independently.

Optional Take-Home

"Our Family Traditions" Page

Families complete at home:

This is something we always do together...

One food everyone loves...

Someone who makes us feel safe...

A place that feels like home...

Our favorite book to read together...

Bring it back next month or add it to a family reading binder.

Why This Activity Works

This family night mirrors the themes of *Being Home* while reinforcing early literacy through conversation, oral language, and storytelling. It is developmentally appropriate for ages 3– 5 because it emphasizes talking, drawing, and shared experiences rather than writing. Parents leave with a simple, repeatable strategy they can use every time they read: ask open-ended questions, listen to their child's ideas, and connect the story to their own family's experiences.

Family Conversation Cards

(to be used with Being Home Family Night Activity Plan)

Cut along the dotted lines and place the cards in a basket or bag for families to draw during Family Night.

What is your favorite room in your home?

What smells remind you of home?

What makes you laugh at home?

Who cooks your favorite meal?

If your house could talk, what story would it tell?

What is your favorite bedtime routine?

What makes you feel safe?

What is one tradition your family has?

What is something your family always does together?	
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