

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.

Grilled Cheese? Yes, Please! By Tim Kley

Delivery Month: August

Group 6 • Five-Year-Olds

Learning Goals/Objectives

Language & Literacy

- Build vocabulary related to food, cooking, taste, and preferences.
- Strengthen listening comprehension and sequencing skills.
- Develop expressive language through describing foods and personal choices.
- Identify beginning sounds in food-related words.

Cognitive/Science

- Explore how heat changes food during cooking.
- Observe and describe textures, smells, and changes in ingredients.
- Practice predicting and problem-solving during cooking activities.

Social-Emotional

- Express preferences respectfully.
- Practice turn-taking and cooperation during group cooking and dramatic play.
- Build confidence in trying new foods and sharing ideas.

Physical Development

- Strengthen fine motor skills through spreading, stacking, sorting, and art activities.
- Develop hand-eye coordination during food preparation and manipulative play.

Arkansas Early Learning Standards (ELPS)

Social Emotional Development

- SE2 – Expresses feelings, needs, and preferences appropriately.
- SE3 – Builds and maintains positive relationships with adults and peers.

Cognitive Development

- CD1.1 – Demonstrates curiosity, initiative, and engagement in learning.
- CD3.1 – Uses observation and investigation skills to learn about the environment.

Physical Development

- PH2.1 – Uses fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination to manipulate materials.
- PH2.2 – Demonstrates increasing independence in self-help and daily living skills.

Language Development

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

Emergent Literacy

- EL2.1 – Demonstrates comprehension of stories and informational texts.
- EL3.1 – Demonstrates awareness of sounds in spoken language.
- EL4.2 – Demonstrates awareness that print can represent spoken words.

Science Development

- SC1.1 – Uses senses to explore and investigate the environment.
- SC2.1 – Makes predictions and observations during investigations.

Mathematics Development

- MT1.1 – Demonstrates understanding of numbers and counting.
- MT5.1 – Recognizes, creates, and extends simple patterns.

SCIENCE OF READING CONNECTIONS

Sound Awareness: Activities prompt children to identify beginning sounds in food words ("What sounds do you hear in the word *cheese*?")

Rhyming Exploration: Auditory learners engage with rhyming food words during cooking discussions

-Word Segmentation: Recipe sequencing helps children break down multi-step processes into individual components

Vocabulary Building: Explicit introduction of tier-two words (ingredients, recipe, spread, crunchy, melt) with multiple exposures through read-aloud, cooking, and dramatic play

Conversational Turns: Structured opportunities for back-and-forth dialogue during book discussions, cooking activities, and family conversations

Descriptive Language: Children practice using adjectives to describe textures, tastes, colors, and smells—building semantic knowledge

Sentence Complexity: Sentence starters scaffold increasingly complex oral language ("My sandwich has..." → "It tastes...")

MATERIALS

Literacy Materials

- Grilled Cheese? Yes, Please! by Tim Kley
- Picture cards of foods and kitchen tools
- Chart paper and markers
- Sequencing cards

Dramatic Play Materials

- Play kitchen
- Pretend food items
- Aprons and menus
- Toy plates and utensils

Art Supplies

- Construction paper
- Glue sticks
- Crayons and markers
- Scissors
- Yellow, orange, and brown paper squares

STEM/Cooking Materials

- Bread slices
- Cheese slices
- Plastic knives
- Sandwich bags
- Toaster or electric skillet (teacher use only)
- Measuring cups and spoons

ENGAGE (BEFORE READING)

Ask:

- “What foods do you like to eat?”
- “Have you ever eaten grilled cheese?”
- “What happens when bread is toasted?”
- “What foods are hot or cold?”

Introduce vocabulary:

Cheese, Toast, Melt, Crunchy, Ingredients, Recipe, Spread, Sandwich, Taste, Cook

Create a class graph:

“What is your favorite sandwich?”

EXPLORE (DURING READING)

Read Grilled Cheese? Yes, Please! aloud.

Pause to ask:

- “What ingredients do you see?”
- “What do you think will happen next?”
- “How would this sandwich taste?”
- “What sounds do you hear in the word cheese?”

Encourage children to describe:

- Colors
- Shapes
- Smells
- Textures

Discuss how heat changes the cheese and bread.

EXTEND (AFTER READING)

Literacy

- Create a class recipe chart for grilled cheese sandwiches.
- Children dictate steps for making a sandwich.
- Retell the story using sequencing cards.

Art

- Create paper grilled cheese sandwiches using cut paper shapes.
- Make “favorite food” collages from magazines.

Dramatic Play

- Set up a pretend restaurant or sandwich shop.
- Children take orders, prepare pretend meals, and serve customers.

Math/STEM

- Count sandwich ingredients.
- Sort foods by hot/cold or healthy/sometimes foods.
- Explore melting by observing cheese or butter.
- Create food patterns using pretend ingredients.

Cooking Experience

- Help prepare a simple grilled cheese sandwich or cold sandwich alternative.
- Practice spreading, stacking, and sequencing steps safely.

ASSESSMENT

- Anecdotal observations
- Participation in cooking and discussions
- Sequencing and retelling skills
- Vocabulary use
- Fine motor control during art and cooking
- Cooperative dramatic play participation

DIFFERENTIATION

Language Supports

- Use picture recipe cards and visual schedules.
- Provide sentence starters:
 - “I like...”
 - “My sandwich has...”
 - “It tastes...”

Fine Motor Adaptations

- Use larger spreading tools and adaptive scissors.
- Provide pre-cut art materials.

Sensory Supports

- Allow children to explore foods through touch and smell before tasting.
- Offer alternatives for children sensitive to textures or smells.

Gross Motor Adaptations

- Adapt dramatic play tasks for seated participation when needed.

Learning Styles

- Visual Learners: Recipe charts, food photos, sequencing cards
- Auditory Learners: Cooking discussions and rhyming food words
- Kinesthetic Learners: Pretend cooking and hands-on food preparation
- Creative Learners: Food collages and imaginative restaurant play

TEACHER REFLECTION

How did children demonstrate their understanding of sequencing, vocabulary, and story comprehension during the read-aloud and follow-up activities?

What evidence showed that children used their senses to make predictions and observations about how ingredients changed during the cooking investigation?

How did children demonstrate cooperation, communication, and respect for others' preferences during dramatic play and the cooking experience?

What instructional adjustments or extension activities will help deepen children's literacy, science, math, or fine motor learning based on today's observations?

FAMILY CONNECTION

“Family Sandwich Night”

- Families create sandwiches together at home.
- Children help count ingredients and describe textures and tastes.
- Encourage children to explain the recipe steps.

Conversation Starters

- “What is your favorite sandwich?”
- “How do foods change when cooked?”

- “What ingredients would you add?”
- “How can we help in the kitchen safely?”

Family Night Activity (20–30 Minutes)

The Perfect Pair: From Farm to Sandwich

A Family Preview of *Grilled Cheese? Yes, Please!* by Tim Kley

Literacy Focus: Vocabulary, Matching, Oral Language, Prediction

Science Focus: Where Food Comes From, Observation, Healthy Foods

Big Idea: *The food we eat has a journey! Before ingredients become a grilled cheese sandwich, they come from farms, gardens, animals, and nature.*

Learning Outcomes

Families will:

- Build excitement for next month's Arkansas Imagination Library book.
 - Learn where common grilled cheese ingredients come from.
 - Strengthen vocabulary through matching and conversation.
 - Practice observation and classification skills.
 - Take home a fun scavenger hunt to continue learning when the book arrives.
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Materials

Each family receives:

Matching Game

Picture cards of:

- Bread
- Cheese
- Butter
- Tomato

Matching picture cards of where they come from:

- Wheat
- Cow
- Milk
- Garden

(Optional extension cards: Apple → Apple Tree, Pickle → Cucumber Plant, Ham → Pig, Egg → Chicken)

Take-Home Kit

- "Find It in Your Kitchen" Scavenger Hunt
 - Crayons
 - Pencil
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Agenda (20–30 Minutes)

1. Welcome & Book Preview (5–7 Minutes)

Show families the cover of *Grilled Cheese? Yes, Please!*

Ask:

- What do you notice?
- What do you think this story might be about?
- What do you think someone needs to make a grilled cheese sandwich?
- Which ingredient do you think is the most important?

Explain:

"Next month this book will arrive in your mailbox! Tonight, we're going to become Food Detectives and discover where the ingredients for a grilled cheese sandwich come from."

Introduce vocabulary:

- Ingredient
- Garden
- Farm
- Wheat
- Dairy
- Milk
- Butter

- Cheese
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2. Family Activity

The Perfect Pair Matching Game (12–15 Minutes)

Spread the ingredient cards and the "where it comes from" cards face up on the table.

Families work together to match each food with its source.

Examples:

 Bread →  Wheat

 Cheese →  Milk

 Butter →  Cow

 Tomato →  Garden

After each match, encourage families to talk together.

Ask:

- Have you ever seen wheat growing?
- Where have you seen tomatoes growing?
- What other foods come from cows?
- Which ingredient surprised you?

Once all the matches are complete, invite children to sort the ingredients into categories:

Foods that come from plants

- Bread
- Tomato

Foods that come from animals

- Cheese
- Butter

Explain that many of the foods we eat come from farms, gardens, and animals before they arrive in our kitchens.

3. Family Preview Activity

Food Detective Challenge (5 Minutes)

Explain:

"When your new Arkansas Imagination Library book arrives next month, become Food Detectives again!"

Each family receives a **Find It in Your Kitchen Scavenger Hunt**.

Families will search their kitchen together for foods that come from:

- ☐ A plant
- ☐ A garden
- ☐ A tree
- ☐ A cow
- ☐ A chicken
- ☐ Wheat

After finding each item, encourage families to ask:

- Where did this food come from?
- Is it from a plant or an animal?
- Have we eaten this before?
- Which one is your favorite?

Closing (2 Minutes)

Close by saying:

"Every meal has a story! Tonight you discovered that the ingredients for a simple grilled cheese sandwich begin on farms, in gardens, and with the people who grow and care for our food. Next month, when you read *Grilled Cheese? Yes, Please!* together, see how many ingredients you can recognize and talk about where they came from."

Take-Home Family Challenge

Find It in Your Kitchen!

When *Grilled Cheese? Yes, Please!* arrives in the mail:

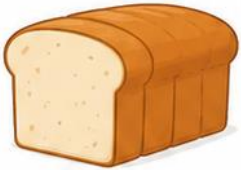
1. Read the story together.
2. Complete the **Food Detective Scavenger Hunt**.
3. Find foods in your kitchen that come from plants and animals.
4. Talk about where your favorite foods come from.
5. Celebrate becoming Food Detectives together!

Why This Works

Young children are naturally curious about the world around them. This Family Night uses a familiar food to introduce early science concepts while strengthening vocabulary and family conversations. The simple matching activity builds classification and observation skills, and the take-home scavenger hunt extends learning beyond the event, encouraging families to explore their own kitchens and continue talking, reading, and learning together.

FOOD DETECTIVE MATCHING CARDS

INGREDIENT CARDS – CUT OUT



bread



cheese



butter



tomato



apple



egg



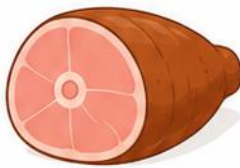
pickle



grapes



lettuce



ham



strawberry



corn

FOOD DETECTIVE MATCHING CARDS

SOURCE CARDS – CUT OUT



wheat



milk



cow



garden



apple tree



chicken



cucumber plant



grapevine

