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.

A Unicorn, Dinosaur, Shark Were Riding a Bicycle by Jonathan Fenske
Delivery Month: November
Group 5 - Ages 3-5

Learning Goals/Objectives

Language & Literacy: Develop prediction skills, retell story events, identify characters and settings, expand descriptive vocabulary, and create original stories.

Social-Emotional Development: Practice cooperation, flexible thinking, and perspective-taking.

Cognitive Development: Strengthen problem-solving, sequencing, and imaginative thinking.

Mathematics: Explore patterns, positional words, graphing, and counting.

Creative Arts: Design imaginative creatures, create stories, and participate in dramatic play.

Arkansas Early Learning Standards (ELPS)

SE2.1 Positive interactions with peers
SE3.1 Cooperative play and problem-solving
LD2.1 Engages in conversations
LD4.1 Expands vocabulary and language use
EL1.1 Interest in books and stories
EL2.1 Story comprehension
EL3.1 Phonological awareness
EL5.1 Emergent writing and drawing
CD1.1 Curiosity and persistence

CD2.1 Problem solving
MT1.1 Counting and quantity
MT2.1 Patterns and relationships
MT4.1 Spatial relationships
CA1.1 Creative expression

SCIENCE OF READING CONNECTIONS

Vocabulary, Phonological Awareness, Fluency, Print Awareness

MATERIALS

Book, story sequencing cards, toy animals, blocks, bicycles pictures, chart paper, art supplies, dice, puppets, graphing materials, dramatic play props.

ENGAGE (BEFORE READING)

Show pictures of a unicorn, dinosaur, shark, and bicycle.

Ask:
• Could these characters ride a bicycle together?
• What might happen?
• Which character would you choose for an adventure?

Vocabulary:
adventure, imagination, bicycle, cooperate, problem, solution, creature, journey

Phonological Awareness:
Generate rhyming words for shark, bike, ride, and horn.

Prediction Activity:
Children vote on what they think will happen in the story and graph the results.

EXPLORE (DURING READING)

Pause to encourage predictions and inferencing.

Discuss:
• What problem are the characters facing?
• What might happen next?

• How are the characters working together?
• Which part seems real and which part seems imaginary?

Print Awareness:
Identify title, author, punctuation, and repeated phrases.

Story Structure:
Characters, setting, problem, solution, ending.

EXTEND (AFTER READING)

Literacy Center: Story Builders
Children roll picture dice and create silly stories using characters, places, and objects.

Writing Center:
Draw and dictate 'My Impossible Adventure.'

Math Center:
Graph favorite characters.
Create AB and ABC patterns using unicorn, dinosaur, and shark pictures.

STEM Center:
Build a bicycle or vehicle for an unusual animal using blocks and recycled materials.

Creative Arts:
Invent a new imaginary creature by combining two animals.
Name the creature and describe its features.

Dramatic Play:
Adventure Station where children act out journeys and solve problems together.

Gross Motor Activity:
Obstacle course where children 'ride' through an imaginary adventure using positional words such as over, under, around, and through.

ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT

Observe prediction skills, story retelling, vocabulary use, cooperative play, creative storytelling, problem-solving, and participation in graphing and pattern activities.

DIFFERENTIATION

Provide visual story cards, sentence starters, puppets, and picture supports. Use adaptive art materials and alternative communication support as needed. Visual learners benefit from story maps; auditory learners from storytelling and discussion; kinesthetic learners from dramatic play and obstacle courses; creative learners from invention and art activities. Offer simpler or more complex story-building challenges depending on developmental level.

TEACHER REFLECTION

How did children demonstrate imagination and creativity?
Which activities encouraged the most oral language?
How did children use prediction and problem-solving skills?
What evidence showed growth in comprehension and storytelling?
Which adaptations best supported participation?

FAMILY CONNECTION

These activities use imagination and everyday materials to make learning playful and meaningful at home!

Story Creation and Retelling

- **Family Silly Story Night:** Pick three unusual characters (like a unicorn, dinosaur, and shark) and take turns adding to a silly story. Use drawings or puppets to act it out before bedtime.
- **Story Bag:** Put character names or pictures in a bag. Each family member pulls out one and creates a new story featuring those characters.
- **Story Sequencing:** Draw or print pictures of story events. Mix them up and have children put them in the right order to retell the story.

Vocabulary Growth

- **Word Treasure Hunt:** Find and talk about new words from the story like *adventure*, *imagination*, *cooperate*, and *journey*. Look for these words in books, signs, or around the house.
- **Rhyming Games:** Play rhyming word games using words from the story (shark, bike, ride, horn). For example, “Can you think of a word that rhymes with shark?”
- **Character Descriptions:** Describe each character using new adjectives. For example, “The unicorn is sparkly and magical.”

Early Writing

- **My Impossible Adventure:** Encourage children to draw and write (or dictate) about their own impossible adventure with any characters they like.
- **Label the Picture:** Have children draw one of the story’s characters or their own imaginary creature and label parts with simple words.
- **Story Starters:** Provide sentence starters like “Once upon a time, a dinosaur and a shark…” to help children begin writing their stories.

Playful Math

- **Character Graphing:** Create a simple graph to show family members' favorite characters. Use stickers or drawings to mark votes.
- **Pattern Play:** Make AB or ABC patterns using pictures or toys of the unicorn, dinosaur, and shark. For example, unicorn-dinosaur-unicorn-dinosaur or unicorn-dinosaur-shark-unicorn-dinosaur-shark.
- **Counting Adventures:** Count how many "rides" or "jumps" each character makes during a pretend play adventure.

Group 5 November
Family Night Activity (20–30 Minutes)

Family Night Activity (20–30 Minutes)

Who's Riding the Bicycle?

Inspired by *A Unicorn, a Dinosaur, and a Shark Were Riding a Bicycle* by Jonathan Fenske

Literacy Focus: Repeated Story Patterns • Story Retelling • Prediction • Oral Language

Science of Reading Focus: Oral language development, repeated text, sequencing, vocabulary, and comprehension through interactive storytelling.

Big Idea: *Strong readers notice patterns in stories. When we recognize repeated words and events, it helps us become stronger readers and storytellers.*

Learning Outcomes

Families will:

- Recognize and repeat a story pattern.
- Practice sequencing the beginning, middle, and end of a story.
- Strengthen oral language by retelling a story together.
- Build confidence speaking in complete sentences.
- Create a take-home storytelling tool families can continue using after Family Night.

Materials

Each family receives:

Puppet Materials

- Paper character cutouts from the story
- Popsicle sticks
- Tape or glue dots
- Crayons (optional)
- Child-safe scissors (if needed)

Story Materials

- Story sequencing mat labeled:
  - Beginning
  - Middle
  - End
- Story pattern sentence strip:
  - "A _____, a _____, and a _____ were riding a bicycle."

Agenda (25–30 Minutes)

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

Introduce the book by saying:

> "Tonight we're going to discover something readers do all the time—they notice patterns! When authors repeat words and ideas, it helps us predict what comes next and remember the story."

As you read, pause to ask:

- What do you notice happening again?
- Who do you think will join the bicycle next?
- What makes this story funny?
- What happened first?
- What do you think will happen after this?

Encourage families to join in whenever they recognize the repeated sentence pattern.

---

2. Family Activity

Build Your Puppet Crew! (8–10 minutes)

Each family receives paper character cutouts and popsicle sticks.

Parents help children:

- Color the characters (optional)
- Tape or glue each character to a popsicle stick
- Name each character together

Once everyone has finished, invite children to hold up the correct puppet as each character is named.

Extend vocabulary by asking:

- Which character is biggest?
- Which character lives in the water?
- Which character is pretend?
- Which one is your favorite?

---

3. Family Activity

Tell It Again! Puppet Story Theater (10–12 minutes)

Families use their puppets and the Beginning–Middle–End sequencing mat to retell the story together.

The facilitator guides the group through each section.

Beginning

Ask:

- Who was riding the bicycle first?
- Where did the story begin?

Families place the appropriate puppet(s) in the Beginning section of the mat.

Middle

Ask:

- Who joined next?
- What happened after that?
- What made the story sillier?

Families continue placing puppets in the Middle section while retelling the events.

End

Ask:

- How did the story end?
- What happened last?
- Which characters were together at the end?

Families place the remaining puppets in the End section and complete the story retelling.

Once everyone has finished, invite families to tell the story aloud together using their puppets.

Story Pattern Practice

Display the sentence strip for everyone to read together:

"A _____, a _____, and a _____ were riding a bicycle."

Using their puppets, families substitute different characters into the repeated sentence.

Examples:

- "A unicorn, a dinosaur, and a shark were riding a bicycle."
- "A penguin, an elephant, and a dragon were riding a bicycle."
- "A firefighter, a puppy, and a robot were riding a bicycle."

Encourage children to create silly combinations while maintaining the repeated sentence pattern.

Explain to families:

> "Repeated phrases help children recognize patterns in language. As children begin repeating these patterns, they are developing important early reading and storytelling skills."

Closing (2 Minutes)

Invite a few families to use their puppets to quickly retell part of the story or share one of their silly new bicycle combinations.

Close by saying:

> "Tonight you practiced two powerful reading skills—recognizing patterns and retelling stories. Every time children tell a story in order and repeat familiar language, they are strengthening the brain pathways that support future reading success."

Take-Home Reading Challenge

Puppet Story Time

Take your popsicle stick puppets home and use them during bedtime reading.

After reading a story, ask your child:

- What happened at the beginning?
- What happened in the middle?
- What happened at the end?
- Can you tell the story using your puppets?

Then invite them to create their own silly stories using the sentence:

> "A _____, a _____, and a _____ were riding a bicycle."

The more children retell stories and play with repeated language patterns, the stronger their vocabulary, comprehension, sequencing, and oral language skills become.

Why This Works

Retelling is one of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension because it

requires children to organize events, use vocabulary, and communicate ideas in sequence. The popsicle stick puppets provide a hands-on tool that makes story retelling engaging and accessible for young learners, while the repeated sentence frame builds confidence through predictable language. Families leave with a reusable literacy resource that transforms future read-alouds into interactive storytelling experiences.