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.

Something Wild by Molly Ruttan
Delivery Month: November
Age Group: 6 Preschool

Learning Goals/Objectives

Language & Literacy: Retell story events, describe characters and setting, expand nature vocabulary, make text-to-self connections.
Science: Observe living things and natural environments, compare habitats, investigate plants and animals.
Math: Sort, classify, count, compare, and create patterns using natural materials.
Social-Emotional: Develop curiosity, confidence, self-regulation, and appreciation for nature.
Physical Development: Strengthen fine motor and gross motor skills through outdoor exploration.

Arkansas Early Learning Standards

SE1.1 Develops a positive sense of self and self-awareness.

SE2.1 Expresses feelings, needs, and preferences appropriately.

SE3.1 Builds and maintains positive relationships with adults and peers.

LD1.1 Attends to and understands language.

LD2.1 Follows increasingly complex directions and conversations.

LD4.1 Develops receptive and expressive language skills to communicate effectively.

EL1.1 Demonstrates interest in and engagement with books and other print materials.

EL2.1 Demonstrates comprehension of stories and informational texts.

EL3.1 Demonstrates awareness of sounds in spoken language.

EL4.1 Demonstrates understanding that print carries meaning.

EL5.1 Demonstrates beginning phonological awareness by noticing and playing with sounds in spoken language.

MT1.1 Demonstrates understanding of numbers and counting.

MT4.1 Uses measurement concepts to describe, compare, and order objects and spaces.

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

CD2.1 Uses reasoning and problem-solving skills to make sense of the world.

SC1.1 Uses senses to explore and investigate the environment.

SC2.1 Makes predictions and observations during investigations.

SCIENCE OF READING CONNECTIONS

Oral Language: Rich discussion before, during, and after reading.
Vocabulary: Explicit teaching of wild, habitat, observe, explore, creature, nature, camouflage, environment.
Phonological Awareness: Rhyming, syllable clapping, beginning sounds from story vocabulary.
Comprehension: Prediction, questioning, summarizing, and retelling.
Print Awareness: Tracking print, identifying author/illustrator, noticing story structure.

MATERIALS

Book, nature items, magnifying glasses, clipboards, vocabulary cards, chart paper, art materials, sensory bin supplies, counting manipulatives, science journals.

ENGAGE (BEFORE READING)

Nature Mystery Bag: Place leaves, pinecones, bark, feathers, and rocks inside a bag. Children explore items and predict what the story may be about.

Create a KWL chart (What We Know, Wonder, Learned) about nature and wild places.

EXPLORE (DURING READING)

Interactive read-aloud with vocabulary instruction, prediction stops, character discussion, and comprehension questions.
Teacher prompts:
• What do you notice?
• What makes this place wild?
• How do the characters feel?
• What do you think will happen next?

EXTEND (AFTER READING)

Literacy Center: Story retelling cards and nature vocabulary matching.
Writing Center: Draw and label a wild place.
Science Center: Nature observation station with magnifiers.
Math Center: Sort natural objects by size, color, and texture.
Art Center: Create a collaborative 'Something Wild' nature mural.
Sensory Center: Forest sensory bin with natural materials.
Music & Movement: Move like forest animals and create sound patterns.
Dramatic Play: Nature explorer station with maps, journals, and binoculars.
Outdoor Investigation: Nature walk and scavenger hunt.

ASSESSMENT

Observe vocabulary use, story retelling, inquiry skills, classification abilities, participation in discussions, and cooperative play. Collect anecdotal notes, photographs, and work samples.

DIFFERENTIATION

Visual Supports: Picture vocabulary cards and visual schedules.
Language Supports: Sentence starters and partner discussions.
Fine Motor Supports: Larger tools and adaptive writing materials.
Sensory Supports: Quiet exploration areas and choice-based participation.
Enrichment: Research local wildlife and create informational class books.

TEACHER REFLECTION

To what extent did children meet the learning objectives, and what evidence supported their learning?

Which instructional strategies or activities were most effective in engaging children?

How did I differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of all learners?

What are my next instructional steps to extend or strengthen children's learning?

FAMILY CONNECTION

Take a family nature walk. Collect safe natural items, discuss observations, read the story together, and complete the sentence: 'Something wild I discovered was _____.'

Group 6 November
Family Night Activity (20–30 Minutes)

Wild About Imagination

A Family Preview of *Something Wild* by Molly Ruttan

Literacy Focus: Prediction • Vocabulary • Storytelling • Oral Language

Creative Thinking Focus: Imagination • Problem Solving • Creative Expression

Big Idea: *Books help our imaginations grow. When we imagine, we become storytellers, problem-solvers, artists, and explorers.*

Learning Outcomes

Families will:

- Build excitement for reading *Something Wild* together.
- Use illustrations to make predictions and tell stories.
- Expand vocabulary through descriptive language.
- Practice imaginative thinking through collaborative play.
- Leave with a take-home activity that encourages storytelling at home.

Materials

Each family receives:

During Family Night

- "Something Wild" picture prompt cards (animals, weather, places, objects)
- Crayons or markers
- Blank drawing paper

Make-and-Take Kit

- Small spiral notebook or mini blank journal
- Box of 4 crayons (or colored pencils)
- "Wild Wonder Challenge" cards
- Gallon-size zip-top bag labeled **My Imagination Kit**

Agenda (20–30 Minutes)

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

Show the cover of *Something Wild.*

Without reading the story, invite families to become "story detectives."

Ask:

- What do you notice?
- What do you think "Something Wild" could be?
- Where do you think this story takes place?
- What do you think might happen?

Introduce vocabulary:

- Imagine
- Wild
- Adventure
- Curious
- Explore
- Wonder

Explain:

> "Tonight we're going to discover that every great story begins with one powerful thing—our imagination!"

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2. Family Activity

What Happens Next? (8–10 Minutes)

Display several illustrations from the book (or use prepared picture prompts if you're avoiding spoilers).

Families work together to answer:

- What do you think happens next?
- Who is this character?
- What might they be feeling?
- What adventure could happen?

Encourage children to answer first.

There are **no wrong answers.**

This builds:

- Prediction
- Vocabulary
- Oral language
- Story comprehension

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3. Family Activity

Create Something Wild! (10 Minutes)

Each family draws one card from three categories:

Who?

- Bear
- Rabbit
- Bird
- Fox
- Child

Where?

- Forest
- Beach
- Backyard
- Park
- Mountain

What Happens?

- Finds a treasure
- Makes a new friend
- Gets lost
- Builds something
- Discovers a surprise

Families have 5–7 minutes to invent a silly story together and draw one picture from their adventure.

Invite a few families to share.

Celebrate every idea to reinforce that imagination is unique.

Closing (2 Minutes)

Share:

> "Every time we read a book, our imagination grows stronger. Stories help us wonder, ask questions, and dream about new possibilities. The best stories are often the ones we create together."

Take-Home Challenge

My Wild Wonder Kit

Each family takes home:

- Mini notebook
- Crayons
- Wild Wonder Challenge cards

Challenge families to complete one prompt each week after reading together.

Examples:

🪶 Imagine an animal that has never existed.

☁️ Draw what you would find if you followed a rainbow.

🐻 What would you do if a bear came to your backyard?

🌳 Design your dream treehouse.

🌙 Imagine a nighttime adventure.

🦋 Create your own magical creature.

Why This Works

Research consistently shows that imaginative play strengthens vocabulary, narrative skills, creativity, and problem-solving—all essential foundations for later

reading success. This Family Night invites families to become co-storytellers, demonstrating that books are not just for reading but for inspiring conversation, curiosity, and creative thinking. The take-home **Wild Wonder Kit** extends the experience beyond the event, encouraging families to build a habit of storytelling together long after *Something Wild* arrives in the mail.