

Lesson Plan # 1

Lesson Title: Reading Using Illustrations with The Busy Little Squirrel

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Grade: Kindergarten

Learning Objectives:

I can say what is happening in a story when I look at the pictures.

I can identify the season of a book.

Curriculum Connection:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.7](#): With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).
- Westbrook's Science and Social Studies curriculum includes the topic of Seasons under the Geography and Culture theme.
- This lesson is part of Mrs. Gundersdorf's Fall unit.
- This lesson connects to students' prior experiences with read alouds in the first month of kindergarten. They have seen and heard books read aloud and have been asked questions about plot, characters, feelings, predictions, and illustrations.
- In a previous reading lesson, Mrs. G taught students that they can use illustrations to read a book. For example, "If you see a picture of a deer in the desert, you know that the words say 'Deer live in the desert.'"

Knowledge of Students:

- As mentioned above, the students have already learned that they can "read" a book by looking at pictures and guessing what the words say. I will remind them of this and reinforce it.
- For this lesson to be successful, the students must be familiar with read alouds (which they are) and at least generally familiar with seasons (which I believe they are).
- Student strengths: All students appear interested in read alouds and are able to attend for the duration of a book of this length, as long as the reading is captivating enough (which it will be).

- Potential barriers: Some students may lose focus or interest with this number of questions post-read aloud. To prevent this, I will keep the questions-and-answers moving at a quick pace, and I have varied the mode of response (turn and talk, thumbs up, individual responses) throughout. I will also keep an eye out for disengagement (especially for the students who I know tend toward it) and pose picture-related questions to those who seem like they might lose focus.
- Individual needs: None of our students have IEPs or 504s, although we have identified at least two that may need them, both for behavioral issues. For those two, it will be most important to keep the lesson engaging and inclusive of them. Three of our students come from ELL families, but all three of them have demonstrated fluency in speaking and understanding English. Two or three students will probably need prompting to efficiently engage in the Turn and Talks. One student in particular may need support in answering questions related to the seasons and animals' habits. I will keep an eye on her and prompt her during Turn and Talk and with hints during group discussion.

Assessment: (name method and specific criteria)

- Personal Communication
- I will assess prior knowledge by reminding them of the reading lesson with Mrs. G and asking who can tell me about it (see Lesson Procedure).
- During the lesson, I will observe student responses. Immediately after the lesson, I will record them in a chart (attached).
- The responses I observe will be at my requests for thumbs up/down, hands raised and responses given, and conversations during Turn & Talk.
- If I am unsure of any students' understanding or do not remember their response well enough, I will briefly interview those students one-on-one during choice time that afternoon.
- Criteria: To show understanding (depending on what kind of response I've asked for), students should raise their hands, show thumbs up, and speak accurately about illustrations in relation to the story.

Instructional Strategies:

- Modeling — to show students how they can “read” a book
- Turn & Talk — to vary mode of response and encourage everyone to think, especially for those who don't usually raise their hands
- Group discussion/brainstorming — to share ideas from some students that others may not have thought of

- Picture walk — to familiarize students with the book and with the idea of looking at pictures to derive meaning
- Thumbs up/down to show agreement and understanding — to vary mode of response and encourage everyone to think, especially for those who don't usually raise their hands

Lesson Procedure:

The students will sit in their spots on the rug; I will sit in my chair in front of them.

12:55-12:59 Activator - 4m

- I will introduce and give a very brief summary of the book
- Picture walk: I'll flip to a few pages and ask students what they see, in ways that construct a summary of the story
- On a few pages, I will ask them to look in detail at the illustrations to guess "what's happening" and "who is this"
- I'll get them to help me guess what's happening at a point in the story and then ask for predictions

12:59-1:03 Reading Pictures lesson - 4m

- "You can use the pictures in a book to figure out what is happening. You've practiced this before, and we did it again just now!"
- [Assessment of prior knowledge] "Raise your hand if you remember how to use pictures to figure out what is happening." If anyone seems unsure, I will keep my eye on them as I model, to make sure they're getting it.
- I will quickly model "reading with pictures" as Mrs. G did in a previous reading lesson. If anyone seems to still not get the idea, I will ask what questions they have, demonstrate again, and possibly ask a student to demonstrate as well.

1:03-1:06 Read aloud - 3m

- I will
 - continuously point to illustrations that relate to the words I'm reading
 - comment on illustrations to connect them to words on that page (i.e. "The squirrel is hanging onto the bird feeder!")
 - act out and dramatize the story, to engage them and encourage them to do the same

1:06-1:12 Post-read aloud - 6m

- "Now we're going to stand up and act out what we see in the pictures!"
- I will point to the mice and ask, "What kind of animals are these?" and then "What are the mice doing in this picture?" The students will hopefully say that the mice are asking the squirrel to join them (and maybe be

specific — “he’s asking the squirrel to come nibble the pumpkin”). Then “What is the squirrel saying back to them?”

- I will divide the room in half. I will tell them that one side is going to act like mice, the other side like the squirrel. “Act like a mouse! [I demonstrate] Say ‘Come nibble a pumpkin!’ (or whatever phrase they came up with) Now this side, act like a squirrel and say ‘I can’t, I’m too busy!’ Now quickly, mice then squirrels!”
- [If there’s time] I will do the same with the frog and dog.
- I will open to some pages where the squirrel gathers food and ask for raised hands to tell me what he’s doing/getting. Then all act out gathering that food.
- All sit
- I will open to last page and ask for hands up to answer these questions:
 - “Where is the squirrel?”
 - “What else is in the tree trunk?” I’ll encourage them to list each thing they see (berries, apples, corn husks, acorns).
 - “What is the squirrel doing?”
 - Be the squirrel (demonstrate making a squirrel face & sleeping)
- I’ll point to each related image as I say: “Okay, thumbs up if you think the squirrel is in a tree trunk. [I do visual check for all thumbs up.] Thumbs up if you think that he’s in there with different types of squirrel food and nesting. [Visual check] Thumbs up if you think the squirrel is sleeping. [Visual check]” I will say, “I wonder why the squirrel gathered all of those things instead of playing with the other animals...”

1:12-1:19 **Seasons** - 7m

- Ask if they’re familiar with seasons, by show of thumbs up. [Alternative plan] If they need support, have one or multiple student(s) list the seasons.
- I’ll display pages of book. Thumbs up if they think this book happens in winter, then spring, then summer, then fall. Ask them why they think it happens in fall (or, if we get a lot of responses for another season, why that one). “What did you see that looks like fall? What colors/what are fall colors? What plants or foods?”
- Ask for raised hand to answer “What season comes right after fall?”
- “What is the weather like in winter?” Turn & talk, then come back together and share what you heard. “How do animals stay warm in winter?” Turn & talk, then come back together and share what you heard.

- eat lots in fall, gather store of food, shiver, make cozy nest
- [Open to last page] “So this book happens in fall. Is there anything you see on this page that tells us that Winter is about to come, right after fall?”

1:19-1:22 **Squirrel Habit - 3m**

- [Last page] “We talked about how the squirrel ended up in a tree trunk, with lots of food and a nest, sleeping.”
- Ask for raised hand to answer “How do squirrels stay warm in winter?”
- [Alternative plan] If they don’t already grasp the idea, ask the group to think for a minute about “Why was the squirrel gathering food in the fall?” Then ask for raised hands to answer.

1:22-1:25 **Summarize - 3m**

- “Some animals work hard during fall to save up food for winter.”
- I’ll remind them of how reading the book using pictures works by briefly modeling “reading” one of the pages myself.
- Tell them they did a great job of reading the book using pictures, and they can do the same with any book.

1:25 **End of lesson**

Materials, Equipment:

- Book: [The Busy Little Squirrel](#) by Nancy Tafuri

Other adults in the room:

- Mrs. G will be sitting in her chair, also facing the students. She will be reminding students to show whole body listening, as needed. She may also comment or ask a few questions as she sees fit.

Lesson Reflections:

Did you meet your target? What is your evidence?

I believe all students left the lesson with an understanding of how to connect pictures to story and how to identify the season of a book. Overall, the class appeared interested and engaged. As noted in my assessment spreadsheet for the lesson, every student gave a thumbs up to the question asking if the squirrel is sleeping in a tree with

food and nesting, and to the question asking if this book happens in fall. Though a few were not as engaged as most students, all participated in the turn and talks and in acting out the illustrations. I realize that my mode of assessment is far from perfect. Even though a child may raise their hand or put their thumb up, it does not mean that they understand. And even though a child may not raise their hand, it does not mean they don't understand. There are other factors that may cause a child to raise their hand or not, such as level of introversion or extraversion, security or insecurity, or having a learning style that tends more toward observing or participating. Throughout lessons in the following weeks, I will continue to monitor whether this lesson was successful. Theme time will be devoted to leaves and apples; during these lessons I will monitor whether they understand the concept of fall. I will see whether students can "read" using pictures during private and partner reading in Reading Workshop.

I believe I achieved my goal of recognizing learner differences to ensure an inclusive learning environment. I gave wait time several times throughout the lesson -- to give students a chance to consider whether their thumb should be up or to give them time to think about my question before calling on anyone or turning and talking. After noting at the very beginning of the lesson that not all students seemed to remember the concept of reading with pictures, I reinforced it throughout the lesson, specifically pointing out that I was showing them how to do it both at the beginning and at the end of the lesson. I called on a variety of students, making sure that each student who raised their hand had at least one chance to answer over the course of the lesson. I asked simple questions that any child could answer ("What kind of animal is this?" for dog), and then specifically called on students who did not always raise their hands. I varied the mode of student involvement -- sometimes it was raised hands, but I also included physical activity related to both objectives, for children who don't learn as well when speaking or listening. I accepted all ideas and answers, even if not directly related to my questions, so that all students would feel recognized, included, and consider themselves good readers.

How did you pre-assess, activate prior knowledge or build on prior knowledge?

Only about two-thirds of students raised their hands when asked if they remembered how to use pictures to figure out what is happening in a book, so before beginning the read aloud, I modeled doing so with several pages, and reminded them that they do this every day during reading workshop. Since they use this strategy daily, my guess is that they all did remember how to do it, and some didn't raise their hands simply because they don't tend to participate in that way. I activated prior knowledge by asking about familiarity with the seasons, and built on prior knowledge by having them discuss with a partner what winter is like and how animals stay warm in winter.

How did you adjust the lesson during instruction? Why?

I shortened my introduction because our previous lesson ran long. As it turned out, I finished the lesson a few minutes early, so I wish I hadn't abbreviated the beginning of it. For the question about familiarity with seasons, I asked for raised hands instead of my original plan of thumbs up. I made this change in the moment so that I could more easily see who was not already familiar with them. I then adjusted my lesson slightly by asking one reliable student to list the seasons, because I noticed that not everyone had raised their hand. After asking students how squirrels stay warm in winter, I also asked them why the squirrel had been gathering food in fall. Even though they answered the first question correctly, I decided to also ask the second because I realized that I had a few extra minutes and wanted to deepen and extend the conversation.

What did you learn for next time?

My priority for my next lesson will be finding ways to pay closer attention to student understanding. I struggled with simultaneously teaching and observing student reactions. I hope to learn strategies to help with this in my classes and through my own conversations and research. I might do more turn and talks and more assessing everyone's understanding using thumbs up or raised hands. The lesson included many questions geared toward individuals who tend to raise their hands. This works for at least half of this class, but some students are reluctant to raise their hands (perhaps out of shyness or being unsure that they know the answer). So I'd like to include more activities and assessments that every student feels comfortable participating in.

Overall, my mentor teacher was pleased with the lesson and my delivery of it. She had three helpful suggestions, all related to the beginning of the lesson, that I will definitely take into account in the future. Mrs. G recommended I include more of an introduction to the lesson, telling students that it is Theme Time and that we are going to continue to discuss fall. She also suggested engaging a specific student at the beginning of the lesson. He has behavioral issues and tends to struggle with transitions, so Mrs. G said that I should directly ask him if he feels he can join the class on the rug and remind him that there will be a fun read aloud (since he loves read alouds). Lastly, she reminded me that at the beginning of any lesson, I should go over my behavioral expectations with the students: quiet voices, eyes on the teacher, seated appropriately on the rug.

My supervisor, Beth Cote, suggested I slow down my pace in future lessons, and I agree. I was speaking quickly for three reasons: it is my natural tendency, I thought I was under a time crunch, and I feared that lag time would cause students to become disengaged and possibly act out. But, as I have experienced when delivering other lessons at a more reasonable pace, slowing down instruction doesn't make students

disengaged, as long as the instruction is deliberate and purposeful. Next time, I would like to allow more time for children to digest what I'm saying and to think. Beth also noted that the turn and talks were too fast. I spoke with Mrs. G about this; we discussed how turn and talk timing in kindergarten is a tough balance — five-year-olds can get off task quickly when chatting in a pair, but of course we want to allow enough time for each student to actually talk about the question. I use turn and talks in almost every literacy lesson I teach, so I will have many opportunities to get them into the timing sweet-spot.

For the assessment piece, Beth suggested that in the future, I could make mental — and even actual — sticky notes about what I'm hearing and seeing from students, especially during turn and talks when everyone has to be engaged. I love this idea, because I find that lessons fly by so quickly that I don't usually have time to notice how they are responding. And if I'm unsure about how anyone processed the lesson, I will check in with them at a free time within twenty-four hours of the lesson, like choice time or lunch, to see what they understand. Beth also suggested that I could do one-on-one picture assessments afterwards (i.e. "What season is it in this picture? What is the squirrel doing here?") She had a great suggestion for bolstering the confidence of students who are struggling: I will make a point of listening to them during turn and talks and give shout-outs to their responses when we've all reconvened.

I was grateful for the opportunity to teach a lesson that I had created from scratch, and I especially appreciate what I learned from the experience. Going forward, I hope to use these learnings to influence my work in Mrs. G's and in my own, future classroom.