

The Letter A Storytime Annotation

Bilan Mohamoud, Katherine McKinley, Mark Bachofer

San Jose State University

INFO 281 Section 19: Early Literacy Storytime

Amanda Choi

August 5, 2024

The Letter A Storytime Outline

Storytime Audience: Preschoolers

Parent Welcome/Storytime Expectations (ALL)

Hello/Welcome song (ALL)

Song: ABCs

First Story: Ah-Choo! by Lana Wayne Koehler and Gloria G Adams

Second Story: *Albert's Tree* by Jenni Desmond

Action Rhyme: The Ants Go Marching (with scarves)

Third Story: Hey, Little Ant by Phillp and Hannah Hoose

Fingerplays: 10 Red Apples Falling from a Tree

Mystery Box

Goodbye Song (ALL)

Parent Welcome/Storytime Expectations - 0:00

Setting expectations at the beginning of our storytime is important for a number of reasons. First of all, it establishes a groundwork that we can build the rest of our presentation off of - conferring the rules and policies of the library and storytime-specific space to our children and caregivers. Secondly, it sets a precedent of listening to us for instruction and guidance: first we discuss the rules, then we get to have fun. Finally, we ensure that the caregivers know that our event is not just for their children. Storytime is a collaborative effort, and we want to be sure to have everyone involved. This collaborative environment doesn't end with our goodbye song either - the skills we are learning have relevance at home, and can be practiced easily anywhere!

Hello/Welcome Song - 1:04

First, the welcome song is a great way to get children excited to be joining the storytime and expend as much of their energy as possible before getting ready to sit down. In a physical library, the welcome song would allow for the perfect opportunity for latecomers to arrive inconspicuously, yet still participate fully in our event. The welcome song we chose, *Wake Up and Wiggle*, also encourages the early literacy skills of singing and playing, aids in the development of motor skills, and again, continues to establish a routine.

Additionally, the participation of all three storytime presenters is key! By demonstrating to the adults in the audience that we are willing to get up and be silly, we therefore encourage them to do the same. This turns our introductory song into even more of a bonding experience. Finally, the postscript to the song reinforces the rules that we set up at the beginning, requesting our audience to use their arms, ears, and legs in a manner that will allow for a enjoyable storytime for all.

Alphabet Song 2:20

The theme of our storytime was alphabets with a particular focus on “the letter A” and the alphabet song was a great way to introduce this to our group. As described in the Albright et al., (2009) article, this song encourages “letter knowledge” by teaching them the different letter names and their alphabetical order (p 15). The alphabet song also reinforces the early literacy practice: ‘singing’. This practice helps children “develop listening skills and allows to hear the different sounds that make up words” (Colorado State Library, n.d.). To further accomplish this goal, the alphabet song was sung in a tune different then the original in order to give children another way to hear all of the letters (Depper, 2015). Historically, when the ABCs is sung, the letters ‘LMNOP’ get squished together, preventing children from hearing the name of each individual letter name. To conclude, this song encourages early literacy development through letter knowledge and singing helping children build the skills to eventually start reading.

First Picture Book: *Ah-Choo!* 4:12

Ah-Choo is a children’s story that explains two siblings quest to try and find a pet to bring home that won’t cause them to sneeze. The story was interactive in nature as the siblings try and bring a home plethora of different animals engaging the children throughout these chronicles. The book allowed for children to understand the different meaning sneezes can have, for instance, the understanding of allergies as this is something they may begin to notice during pre-school. The story was chosen not only for its relation to our theme of “the letter A”, but its also engaging and has many participatory elements that will help children build their early literacy skills.

In the story, the children are constantly bringing home different animals to see if they are allergic and the constant sneezing, “Ah-Choo”, is a great place for children to chime in. This encourages dialogic reading through repetition and it also encourages “print awareness” as children can start to sense the way the storyline is going and what the next line of the book may be (Albright et al., 2009, p.16). Another way I incorporated dialogic reading and “print awareness” in this story was through the use of questions:

“What animal is that?”, “Where’s the Hen?”, “Did you see a bear in this story?”. These questions allow the children to notice the different illustrations in the book and recall the animals as we prompt them. Furthermore, this story encourages vocabulary building naming and illustrating many different animals throughout the book.

Second Story: *Albert’s Tree* by Jenni Desmond - 9:31

Albert’s Tree made for an excellent storytime inclusion for a number of reasons. Of course, Albert’s name ensures that we have our consistent theme of the letter A taken care of. But more importantly, this book was the perfect one to be adapted for a feltboard storytime. In our unit on feltboard stories, we were warned away from books like *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, as despite the age-appropriateness of Eric Carle’s book, it is filled with an abundance of foods - which would be difficult to prepare for a feltboard. In contrast, there are only five main characters in *Albert’s Tree*: Albert himself, Rabbit, Caribou, Owl, and Tree. Additionally, the simple narrative, paired with multiple attempts to solve an ongoing problem, encourages critical thinking - and demonstrates positive emotional interactions.

As discussed in *Touchpoints at a Glance*, children in the age range of 3-4 are in the process of developing complex emotions. In this book, Albert the bear encounters an upset tree, and tries to make it stop crying. He attempts play, food, and, when frustrated, roaring loudly. However, none of these attempts bear fruit - it is only when he takes a moment to hug the tree and quietly ask what is wrong that he achieves success. This models a very healthy and adult way to interact with others who are upset, and creates a good example that caregivers can point back to in the future.

Action Rhyme: The Ants Go Marching (with scarves) 16:35

This action rhyme blends a well-known song with an opportunity for more fun with scarves - and secretly builds early literacy skills along the way. This song was selected both so that it could transition into the other stories later in this storytime, and so that it fit our overall ‘letter A’ theme. However, as the children count up with the ants and the presenter, they are working on their number skills, as well as their rhyming abilities. Rhyming is a key application of phonological awareness, which explores the different sounds of certain syllables. As an added bonus, we also get to improve the storytime participants’ fine motor skills, as they mimic the presenters scarf motions and swing it back and forth to the beat.

Third Story: *Hey, Little Ant* by Phillp and Hannah Hoose 18:39

“Hey, Little Ant” by Phillip and Hannah Hoose is a children's story depicting the complicated relationship between a boy and an ant. The story uses rhyme, interactive reading through back-and-forth dialog and expressive illustrations to immerse children and adults into the story. This story was chosen not only for the theme of the letter ‘A’, but also to encourage discussion and moral development in preschoolers. I used dialogic reading techniques when asking the children contextual questions about the story’s plot, such as “what the ant was doing in the picture” or “what do you think the little boy will do?”. The book helps with narrative skills by ending with an open-ended question to the reader; to choose if the boy should squish the ant. The story highlights the similarities between all creatures, in particular the ant and boy. It encourages the children to express empathy and kindness not only to the boy in the story, but also for the ant.

During this reading, I paused the story to include a literacy aside for the caretakers. I suggested that books with strong morals are great choices for preschoolers, since they are just beginning to participate in cooperative learning and play. They are beginning to be around their peers and the emphasis of empathy and kindness reflected in storytime is nothing short of beneficial. I also encouraged the caretakers to ask open ended questions to their children to encourage discussion and help improve narrative skills. *The Evolution of Early Literacy* highlights the importance of the caretaker's role in storytime and how an active and engaging storytime can be beneficial to children’s early literacy development.

Fingerplays: 10 Red Apples Falling from a Tree 24:06

10 Red Apples Falling from a Tree is a fantastic fingerplay for toddlers. Most importantly, it has repetition and rhyme to help with language development and phonological awareness. As highlighted in *Getting Back to Basics: 5 Reasons to Use Fingerplays in Sessions*, fingerplays are great for supporting motor development. I chose 10 Red Apples not only for the theme of the letter ‘A’, but also because this fingerplay utilizes finger counting, which helps with motor development, hand-eye coordination as well as number recognition. This finger play also encourages the early literacy practices of sing and play. 10 Red Apples Falling from a Tree combines fun and imaginative play, rhythmic hand movements and counting skills all in which helps support early literacy development.

Mystery Box 26:23

The Mystery Box allows for excitement, audience participation, and, of course, mystery! This was a storytime element that my storytime instructor included, and I

immediately included it into my own repertoire. Every storytime, the Mystery Box is filled with items that are associated with the presentation's theme - in this case the letter A - and provides a perfect opportunity for Level 3 dialogic questions. By describing one of the items contained within, the presenter gets to challenge the audience to think critically and develop theories on what it might be. Finally, when the audience guesses correctly, they feel rewarded for participating in storytime.

The Mystery Box is placed last in the storytime itinerary, so that it can act as both a pseudo-ending to the event, thus building a routine, and so that the session ends on an exciting, happy note.

Goodbye Song - 29:17

The goodbye song marks the ending of our storytime and acts as a transition signaling the end of the program for the children. It allows the program to end on an engaging and positive note that leaves the children with a positive association about libraries and storytimes. Our closing song, "See You Later, Alligator", promotes vocabulary learning through the enumeration of various animals. It also serves as a conclusion that still maintains a connection to our theme of 'the letter A.'

References

- Albright, Meagan, Delecki, Kevin & Sarah Hinkle, "The Evolution of Early Literacy: A History of Best Practices in Storytimes." *Children and Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children*, 2009.
- Brazelton Touchpoints Center. (2016). *Touchpoints At-a-Glance*.
- Bub, B. (2023, February 16). *The Ants Go Marching - Kids Song - Bottle Bub Kids Songs*. [Adpated by Mark Bachofer]. Youtube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yj2modOw4ys>
- Depper, M. (2015, October 6). *Early literacy storytime: Singing abcs*. Mel's Desk.
<http://melissa.depperfamily.net/blog/early-literacy-storytime-singing-abcs/>
- Desmond, J. (2018). *Albert's tree*. [Adpated by Mark Bachofer]. First U.S. edition. Somerville, Massachusetts, Candlewick Press.
- Erwin, L. (2018). *Getting back to basics: 5 reasons to use fingerplays in sessions*. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.
- Home. Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy. (n.d.).
<https://www.clel.org/early-literacy/early-literacy-story-times/five-early-literacy-practices/>
- Hoose, P., Hoose H. (1998). *Hey little ant*. (D. Tilley, Illus.). Berkeley, California, Tricycle Press.
- Horrocks, D., & Krabbenhoft, L. (2015, October 6). *The abcs to 5 different tunes*. [Adapted by Bilan Mohamoud]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rwNra4sntI>
- Johnson County Library. (2014, July 9). *Ten Red Apples*. [Adapted by Katherine McKinley]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGgXYJwjpK_A

Koehler, L.W. & Adams, G.G. (2016) *Ah-Choo!* (K. Min, Illus.). Sterling Publishing