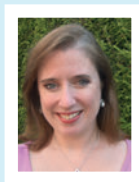




Story Time



In picture books anything is possible, and that makes them ideal for inspiring creative activities for your children, says **Alison Davies...**

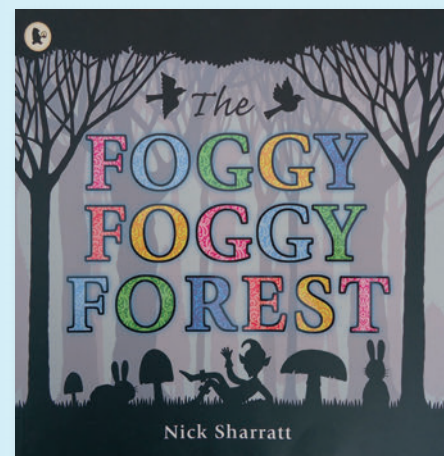
In the world of picture books everything can be exaggerated, from the flamboyant use of images to nonsensical rhymes. The content doesn't have to make sense in the real world. This is because the book is a trigger for the imagination. It's like taking a trip in Dr Who's TARDIS - you don't know what you'll find until you get there, but you're guaranteed to have an enjoyable ride and experience some surprises along the way.

Some adults feel that picture books should be all about learning, but this happens to be a by-product of what they're really about: stimulating children's creativity. When you provide a child with a story setting and then back it up with vivid pictures and fun language, you're giving them the key to the TARDIS. From there they can go anywhere and learn any number of things!

Stuff and nonsense

When it comes to using picture books in your setting, embrace the absurd and let it spark imaginations. The more ridiculous the content, the more potential there is to learn, because the book is open for interpretation, leaving children to take the lead. The sillier the story, the more fun you'll have exploring the pages, and there's certain to be lots of scope for follow on activities.

Here are three titles that fit the bill perfectly...

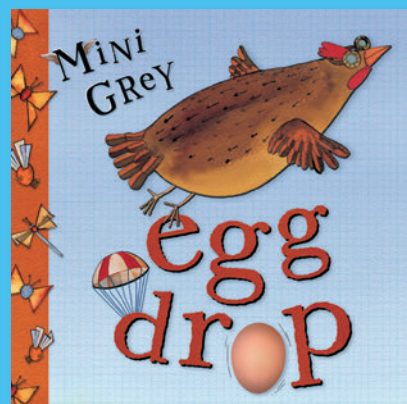


The Foggy, Foggy Forest
(Nick Sharratt, Walker Books)

This gorgeous picture book by Nick Sharratt is a fantastic storytelling tool. With see-through pages that allow children to guess what's coming next, and some wonderful rhyming phrases, you'll be surprised at the strange delights you find lurking in the foggy forest.

Creature features (0-2 years)

For every page and shadowy shape the book asks, "What could this be in the foggy, foggy forest?" As you turn each page the answer is revealed: "An ogre doing yoga", or "a unicorn blowing a horn". Come up with sounds and actions for each answer and encourage the children to join in. Once they've got to grips with each movement, mix it up and change the order that they



Egg Drop (Mini Grey, Red Fox)

First published in 2002 *Egg Drop* is a quirky tale about an egg who longs to fly. The story details what happens when he takes to the sky. With fantastic illustrations and plenty of potential for fun and games, *Egg Drop* is an enjoyable read for all ages.

Eggy rhymes (0-2 years)

The story of the egg is based on the nursery rhyme 'Humpty Dumpty'. Once you've read the book, and gone through the nursery rhyme together try to think of a new rhyme, this time based on the egg's adventures. So you might say, "The egg was brave, the egg was small. He wanted to fly above them all. To flap some wings, to wiggle and rock. But the egg only fell, like a tiny egg drop!"

Give each phrase an action, for example, make an egg shape with your hands to demonstrate his size, flap your arms for wings, and wiggle and twist. Now put the rhyme together and encourage the children to join in. Repeat, speeding up the rhyme and adding in more actions.

Smashing! (2-3 years)

When the egg in the story falls to the ground he breaks into lots of different pieces and they try to put him back together again using everything from chewing gum to sticky tape. Split the children into smaller groups. Trace an egg shape on a piece of A3 card, and cut out chunks until you have an egg jigsaw. Ask the children to have a go at putting the egg back together again and making the pieces fit. Once they've stuck the egg together encourage them to colour it in and decorate it.

The great eggs-plorer (4-5 years)

Imagine that the egg in the story didn't fall to the ground, that, instead, he landed in a hot air balloon. What happens next? Ask the children to think up a different ending for the story. Where does the egg travel to? Perhaps he sets sail on the high seas and becomes an egg pirate, or maybe he finds himself in the jungle and meets lots of different animals? How does he survive? Ask the children to come up with a series of pictures and captions to chart the egg's adventures. Give them the opportunity to show and tell their story to the rest of the group.



Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me (Eric Carle, Simon & Schuster)

This charming book by Eric Carle is about a father trying to catch the moon for his daughter. It's an impossible task that captures the magic of the moon and the way it changes shape in the sky.

Moon dance (0-2 years)

Once you've read the book encourage little ones to become the moon and chart its journey. Starting as a tiny ball they should slowly growing in size until they're up on tiptoes, with their hands and arms outstretched to make the full moon. Then, gradually, they become small again until they disappear from the sky. Put the whole thing to music to create a moon dance!

Lunar tales (2+ years)

Ask the children to draw the moon in its different phases and decorate each one with patterns and shapes, then attach them to string and hang from the ceiling. Use glitter to create stars and space rockets that you can hang at different levels for a space age effect!

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appear in the story. Take the actions on the move. Lead a trail in a circle, moving as characters in the story. So you might say "How does an ogre move through the forest?" Or "How does a fairy princess move on a trampoline?" Get the children jumping, skipping and crawling!

Forest fun (2-3 years)

Turn the space you have into a forest. Create shadowy trees and patches of undergrowth using cushions and mats. Give each child the shape of a creature that might be lurking in the forest. Ask them to colour in the picture and guess what the creature might be. Take this a step further by asking them to draw a creature that might live in the forest. Take some time at the end of the session so that each child can share their ideas with the rest of the group. Encourage them to describe their creation - what does it look like, what sound does it make, how does it move, what does it eat and where might it live in the forest?

Matching pairs (4-5 years)

This activity requires some preparation, but it's definitely worth it! Collect together pictures of characters from books or fairy tales. Next gather pictures of objects that the children are familiar with, for example, a bath or a bicycle. Put the characters in one box and the objects in another. Read the book together and then split the children into smaller groups or pairs. Tell them that they're going to write their own foggy, foggy forest book by picking out characters and objects, and then putting them together in a picture and adding words. For example, they might pick Humpty Dumpty and a toothbrush, so they might decide to draw a picture of him brushing his teeth, or scratching his back with it!

Next they need to come up with a few words in answer to the question 'What could this be in the foggy, foggy forest?' So they might say "Humpty brushing his teeth, sat on a leaf". Encourage them to share their ideas by chanting the question as a group, so that they can reveal their answer.

find out more

Alison Davies is a creative practitioner and author. Her new book, *Using Festivals to Inspire and Engage Young Children: A Month-by-Month Guide*, published by Routledge, is available now. Her other titles include *Reading to your baby*, published by Carroll & Brown, and *Read me a story*, published by Bloomsbury.