



10 things to do with any book (ASN)

Sensory book based activities for pupils with neurodiversity, disability or additional support needs

Age: 3–18

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About this resource

The activities in this resource are intended to help children with neurodiversity, disability or additional support needs engage with and enjoy books. We have given specific examples from books we know are popular in schools, but all activities in this resource are designed to be adaptable and can be used with any book.

This resource was created by Ailie Finlay of [Flotsam and Jetsam](#), a multi-sensory storytelling and puppet company based in Scotland.

If you are taking part in [Reading Schools](#), the activities in this resource could support delivery of Key Area:

- 1.5.1: Access to high-quality books
- 2.2.1: Regular opportunities to read for pleasure
- 2.2.2: Interdisciplinary book projects

Ideas and activities

Activity 1: Create a sensory scene

Choose a scene from the book and create a multi-sensory scene. This could be large or small – you could use a corner of your classroom or have everything ready in a basket for a pupil to pull out and explore.

For example, if you were sharing *Sharing a Shell*, you could have a ‘rock pool in a basket’, containing a large piece of blue fabric, shells, pebbles, toy fish. Dried out

seaweed could add smell – smells are always great to include! An ocean drum for sea sounds, or a rain stick or thunder-maker could make the weather sounds.

Activity 2: Multi-sensory page turn surprise

Turning a page is a visual surprise. Choose a page-turn from your book and make it a sensory surprise.

Look for a book with a big impact, for example in *The Koala Who Could* you might choose the page where the woodpecker starts tapping the tree and use a rattle to make a woodpecker noise. Or, in *Dear Zoo* when you get to the page with the puppy, bring out a dog puppet to bark, snuggle or run over the children!

Activity 3: Create a tactile version of the book

Make some books out of stapled together card. The pupils can stick a piece of fabric or textured paper on to each page of the book to create a simplified version of the story. For example, a tactile version of *Stick Man* might have pages like this:

- A 'stick' on the cover cut out of corrugated cardboard
- A square of fur fabric for the dog
- A square of smooth silky fabric for the river
- Feathers for the swans
- A square of sandpaper for the beach
- Cotton wool for the snow
- Autumn leaves for the Stick Man's house

Once the book is made, you can help the pupils to re-tell a simple version of the story as they explore the pages.

Activity 4: Story trace

This is a one-to-one activity that is particularly suitable for pupils who spend some of their day lying down. Prepare the activity by simplifying the story to a few sentences

and becoming familiar with these so you can tell them without the help of the book. When you are ready tell the story at the same time as tracing it on the child's hand and arm or back.

The aim here is not to be literal, but to recite the story gently with accompanying rhythmical actions. Generally, it is more relaxing for the child if your tracing is continuous, that is your hand or finger is in constant contact with the child from the beginning to the end of the story. This activity works best if it is repeated often so the child can become familiar with the flow of the words and the actions.

For example, if you were going to 'trace' *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* you could do it like this:

- A tiger came into Sophie's house. (Trace a long 'path' with your finger up the child's back)
- He ate all the sandwiches. (Trace a little circle with your finger on the child's back)
- He ate all the buns and cake. (Bigger circle with your finger)
- He ate everything! (Huge circle with your finger)
- So...Sophie and Mummy and Daddy all went to a café and had sausage and chips. (Trace a long path with your finger and finish off with a little tickle.)

Another approach to this activity would be to choose a character or setting from the story and 'draw' this on the child's back: 'Here's the tiger, with his stripy back, his long tail and his four legs...'

Activity 5: Heroes and villains

With your class make simple puppet versions of the main characters from the story. One method of making an instant puppet is to seal an envelope and cut off the bottom. This is the body of the puppet and the child's hand can go inside. A head can be cut out of card and stuck on top. The face can be decorated, and some clothes added. Note: Careful! If too much glue is used on the 'body' the envelope will get stuck together. Capes and dresses could be taped on.

Pupils can then decide who the heroes are and who the villains of the book are.

- The first child holds up a puppet. Is this a hero? Yes! Everybody cheers! Why is X a hero? Because... [Allow the child to answer if possible]
- Next child holds up a puppet. Is this a hero? No! Everybody boos! Why is Y a villain? Because...

It is fine in this activity if there is more than one puppet version of a character; the repetition will help to reinforce the message. If you think the pupils may mind having their character booed, then you could get a staff team member to make the 'villain' puppets. If your pupils will struggle with the concept of heroes and villains you could simply ask: 'Do you like [character's name]?'

Activity 6: Happy or sad

Create a sheet with two or four (as appropriate) faces displaying different emotions; happy, sad, scared, angry (or others to suit the book you are reading). Read the story and as you do so pause and ask: 'How is X [main character] feeling?'

Offer the sheet for the child to choose the emotion from. Then turn to the beginning of the book and go through the story again. This time do not read the whole text but focus on naming the emotions e.g. 'Here X is feeling sad. Here she is feeling a bit happier. Here she is very happy...'

If appropriate you could repeat this activity from another character's perspective.

Activity 7: Story dress-up

Collect together a basket full of clothes and accessories. Before you read the story dress up in an appropriate way. For example, if you're reading *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* you will want wellies and a hat and coat. If you're reading *Sharing a Shell* you will need your swimming goggles!

For some books you may want to dress and undress your costumes as you are reading the story. Or ask a pupil or one of your staff team to help you; they can sit beside you while you read and put on or take off clothes as appropriate. For example, if you are reading *Farmer Duck* your assistant can be putting on raincoats, snow mitts, an apron for washing up etc. The more you 'ham it up' with this activity the more the children will enjoy this! If possible, choose brightly coloured over-the-top clothing. You might also want to consider the other sensory qualities of your props: raincoats make a good 'rustle', furry mitts are interesting to touch, an apron can be shaken out before it is put on, making a nice breeze.

Alternatively...

- Dress up and then give the children a selection of two or three books and ask them to select the one you are dressed for.
- Or show the children the book and give them the basket of clothes so that they can choose the appropriate items.

Activity 8: Sound effect story

It's always fun to add sound effects to a story. Try the following:

- Bicycle bells and (gentle) horns for traffic
- Giggle and groan sticks for laughing or 'chatting' noises
- Bird noise toys for forests and gardens and being outside
- 'Scrunchy' fabric (the kind you find in baby toys) for crackling twigs in the woods or a fire burning

Or you can use sound effects on switch voice recorder devices.

For children who would find it difficult to follow cues and press their switch at the 'right' time you can choose a noise that will work at any moment during the story. For example, in *Jack and the Flumflum Tree* a wave sound would be fine at almost any moment, or in *Hairy McClary* you could have a dog barking at any point.

Can you re-tell the story through sound effects alone? This does not have to be a literal re-telling, but a re-creation of the atmosphere and rhythm of the story once the children are familiar with the text. For example, *Room on the Broom* might go like this:

1, 2, 3...Whoosh...

Meow, meow...Whoosh!

Woof, woof...Whoosh!

Squawk, squawk...Whoosh!

Pitter, patter, pitter, patter, pitter, patter.

Ribbit, ribbit, ribbit...Whoosh!

ROAR!

Buzz off!

Crackle, crackle, crackle...Whoosh! [Extra long whoosh at the end!]

The teacher can go through the book but instead of reading the text, the sound effects can be said. Or the sound effects could be put on voice recorder switches and the children could press these as the teacher turns the pages of the book.

A dog found Stick Man. Stick Man was thrown into the river. A swan used him for her nest. Then he floated out to sea and washed up on the beach. After many adventures he was lost in the snow. At last he was rescued by Santa and taken back to his own little house full of leaves.

Alternatively, pupils could pick just three or four textures to go with a story and make very short little books: *Stick Man went in the river. Stick Man was lost in the snow. Stick Man went home.*

After making tactile versions of a book they know the pupils might want to create their own tactile stories.

Activity 9: Make a game out of a book

Some stories are perfect for turning into a simple game. Try using the template of a well-known game; *The Farmer's in His Den* and *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* are easy ones for adapting (you will find these on YouTube if you are unfamiliar with them).

For example, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* could be turned into a version of *The Farmer's in His Den* like this:

The children form a circle. A 'Caterpillar' is chosen and goes in the middle of the circle. The children in the circle all choose a food from the story to 'be'. The Caterpillar chooses a food to come into the centre. Everyone sings:

The Caterpillar wants an X

The Caterpillar wants an X

Hey ho my daddy o

The Caterpillar wants an X

This is repeated until all the 'foods' have been chosen. Many books could be 'played' like this. For example: *Room on the Broom*, *There was a Wee Lassie Who Swallowed a Midge*, *Dear Zoo*.

There's a Bear in My Chair could be turned into a version of *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* like this:

A 'bear' is chosen to sit in the middle of the circle. The other children act out the book like this:

This is the way we glare at the bear

Glare at the bear

Glare at the bear

This is the way we glare at the bear

All day long [Staring action]

This is the way we scare the bear

Scare the bear

Scare the bear

This is the way we scare the bear

All day long [Pulling faces, gentle scaring action]

This is the way we say good bye

Say good bye

Say good bye

This is the way we say goodbye

All day long [Waving action]

This is the way we sleep on the bed

Sleep on the bed

Sleep on the bed

This is the way we sleep on the bed

All day long [Sleeping action]

Any story with clear actions could be adapted in this way. For example, *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, *Room on the Broom*, *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*.

Activity 10: Story pass the parcel

It is hard to resist the pleasure of unwrapping a parcel! Try making a pass the parcel version of your story by wrapping up an interesting prop and then adding more layers of wrapping with a sensory prompt between each layer. Then put on some music

and play the game, telling a simplified version of the story as you do. This activity works best if the object in the middle is the most interesting of the objects.

A *Gruffalo* version of pass the parcel might have the following between the layers:

1. Feathers (for the owl)
2. A square of fur fabric (for the fox)
3. A square of 'snake skin' type fabric (for the snake)

Then in the middle there could be a Gruffalo toy.

For *The Smartest Giant in Town* you could re-tell the second half of the story with a tie, shirt, shoe, sock and belt between the layers. Or small shapes of these items could be cut out of felt. In the middle would be a crown.

If you are worried that you may 'teach' the children to enjoy ripping paper, you could wrap the parcels using string rather than tape and demonstrate how to remove the paper without tearing it. It is also important that the children understand that the object in the middle is not theirs to keep! You can involve them in the making of the parcel, saying as you do, for example:

'We will wrap up our Gruffalo toy. The person who unwraps the Gruffalo can have him sitting on their desk for the day. At the end of the day we will put him back in his corner.'

Or:

'The person who unwraps the crown can wear it until break time and then give it back to me.'

Suggested books for children with additional support needs

Books with simple illustrations

- *I Am Bat or Colin and Lee Carrot and Pea* by Morag Hood
- *There's a Bear on my Chair or This Zoo is Not for You* by Ross Collins
- *Monkey and Me or Apple Pear Orange Bear* by Emily Gravett
- *Max the Brave or Banana* by Ed Vere
- *This Is Not my Hat or Square* by Jon Klassen
- *The Hueys or Lost and Found* by Oliver Jeffers
- *Look* by Fiona Woodcock
- *Pom Pom* series by Sophy Henn
- *Apple Pie ABC or One Two That's my Shoe* by Alison Murray
- *In Blossom* by Yooju Cheon
- *The Wall in the Middle of the Book* by Jon Agee
- *All Mine* by Zehra Hicks
- *The Rabbit, the Dark and the Biscuit Tin* by Nicola O'Byrne
- *Augustus and his Smile or Abigail* by Catherine Rayne

Picture books for older readers

- *This Is Not my Hat* by John Klassen
- *King of the Sky* by Nicola Davies
- *Journey* by Aaron Becker
- *The Tin Forest* by Helen Ward and Wayne Anderson
- *The Wolf's Story* by Toby Forward and Izhar Cohen
- *Farther* by Grahame Baker-Smith
- *Once upon a Raindrop* by James Carter and Nomoco
- *Once upon a Star* by James Carter
- *The Ice Bear* by Jackie Morris
- *Your Mind is Like the Sky* by Bronwen Ballard and Laura Carlin
- *The Bad Seed* by Jory John and Pete Oswald
- *Voices in the Park* by Anthony Browne
- *Just a Dream* by Chris Van Allsburg
- *Tidy* by Emily Gravett

- *The Day the Crayons Quit* by Drew Daywalt and Oliver Jeffers

Further resources

The [Disability and Neurodiversity section of the Scottish Book Trust website](#) contains further resources to support reading with children who are neurodiverse, disabled or have additional support needs, including:

- [Getting started with sensory stories](#)
- [Make your own sensory story](#)
- [Turning picture books into sensory stories](#)
- [Establishing a reading routine with children with additional support needs](#)
- [A Kind of Spark learning activities](#)
- Our book lists of [Sensory books for all](#), [Picture books featuring disability and neurodiversity](#), [Books for 9–11 year olds featuring disability and neurodiversity](#) and [Books for 12+ featuring disability and neurodiversity](#)