

Family Literacy Guided Lesson

For Calling the Doves/El canto de las palomas

NY State Learning Standards

Learning Standards Related to English Language Arts:

Standard 1:

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written and electronically produced texts.

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About the Book

Calling the Doves/ El canto de las palomas

Juan Felipe Herrera, author and Elly Simmons, illustrator

In this poetic self-portrait, the noted Mexican-American author and poet Juan Felipe Herrera reminisces about his childhood as the much-loved son of migrant farmworkers. In addition to his memories of traveling from place to place to harvest California's crops, he recalls sleeping under starry skies, bathing in a gigantic tin bucket, eating meals cooked over an open fire, his mother's songs and poems, and his father's bird-calls. Herrera's flowing prose is enhanced by illustrator Elly Simmon's vibrant images created with colored pencils, casein, and acrylic paints on rag paper.

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The Language/Literacy Connection

Use Background Knowledge to Enhance Reading Comprehension

Comprehension is the most important purpose of reading. Making a connection between what one already knows and new information presented in the text is a strategy that good readers use to enhance their comprehension of reading material. What a reader already knows is called background knowledge. It is all the information the reader has acquired through his/her experiences including places traveled to, activities engaged in, books read, people known, etc. When readers think about their background knowledge in relation to what they are reading, they create meaningful interactions with the text that enhance their comprehension. Asking questions of readers before, during and after a book is read, and modeling thinking out loud, say: *this reminds me of (thought)*, helps inexperienced readers learn the skill of connecting their background knowledge and the text. Providing young children with experiences similar to events and ideas they read about in books, and knowledge about how to connect their experiences with printed material enhances their ability to comprehend text.

Early Childhood Education-Infant/Toddler Level

Building Background Knowledge with a Day-By-Day Book

PLS-4 Skills

Auditory Comprehension

21. Identifies

photographs of familiar objects

27. Recognizes action in pictures

Expressive Communication

26. Names objects in photographs

Before the Visit

Gather Needed Materials

- ♦ Magazine pictures of things the child has experienced
- ♦ Construction paper
- ♦ Glue
- ♦ Hole punch
- ♦ Large metal rings

Prepare Lesson Props

- ♦ On the preceding visit, ask about activities significant to the child. Is he/she learning to use a potty? Is there a family pet? Gather pictures of things the child is experiencing to make a **Day-By-Day** book.

During the Visit

- ♦ Say to the parent: *Before a child can make a personal connection with a story like Calling the Doves / El canto de las palomas, he/she must build a storehouse of background knowledge upon which to draw. That storehouse begins with memories of ordinary daily activities and of special events. For infants and toddlers, ordinary daily activities are things like morning routines, bath time rituals, and family activities. Special events are things like outings to the grocery store, visits to grandmother's house, trips to the library, holiday celebrations, or a visit from a playmate. Everything a child experiences adds to his/her background knowledge.*

Day-By-Day Book

- ♦ Say to the parent: *A **Day-By-Day Book** is a tool that helps a young child understand how his/her background knowledge is related to pictures and print in books. It is a hands-on visual display of the child's ordinary daily activities and special events.*
- ♦ **Gather pictures** that represent activities the child has experienced. For example, a picture of a cat that resembles the family pet or a picture of a spoon like the one the toddler is learning to use.
- ♦ **Glue pictures** onto construction paper, one picture per side.
- ♦ **Write a sentence** that describes the picture and its relationship to the child on each page. For example, "This cat looks like Grandma's cat." Or, "Bella saw an airplane in the sky."
- ♦ **Make a book** by punching holes along the left side of the pages and fastening them with large metal rings.
- ♦ **Talk with the child** about the pictures in the **Day-By-Day** book. If the child is preverbal, supply the language to describe each picture and draw a relationship between it and the child. For example, say: *Look at this Teddy bear. It looks like the lovely bear that sleeps with you at naptime.* If the child is a talker, ask questions that help him/her grasp how the pictures are related to him/her. Say: *What do you think this little bear likes to do?*

Sing a Song About the Day

- ♦ Make up words about the child's day. Sing them to a familiar tune such as *Three Blind Mice*.

Oh what a day!
Oh what a day!
John went out to play.
John went out to play.
He slid down hill on his little red sleigh.
He fed corn to a big blue jay.
All morning he was happy and gay.
Oh what a day.

Early Childhood Education-Preschool and School Age Level

Developing Background Knowledge Through Pretend Play

PLS-4 Skills

Auditory Comprehension

37. Makes inferences

Expressive Communication

44. Answers

questions about
hypothetical
events

65. Tells a story in

sequence, using
grammatically
correct sentences

Before the Visit

Gather Needed Materials

- ♦ A blanket (dark color)
- ♦ Black construction paper
- ♦ White writing paper cut into large star shapes
- ♦ Stick-on glow-in-the-dark stars
- ♦ Flash light

Prepare Lesson Props

- ♦ Glue large white stars onto black construction paper – one large star per sheet of construction paper.

During the Visit

- ♦ With the parent and child sitting together, read or if the child is a preschooler, “tell” *Calling the Doves / El canto de las palomas*. Highlight parts of the story that describe experiences that are similar to experiences in the child’s background. Ask questions to help the child make a connection between his/her experiences and events in the story. For example, say: *Juanito and his parents slept in a tent. Have you ever slept in a tent, maybe on a camping trip? Juanito’s family ate their meals outside. Do you think that was like the picnic you had with Mommy?* Point out objects in the illustrations that resemble things in the child’s experience such as the pickup truck on page 4, or the mother making tortillas on page 9. Say to the parent: *While (child’s name) experiences are not exactly like those of Juanito, pointing out how their experiences are similar helps him/her understand the story.*

Pretend Play

- ♦ Say to the parent: *Pretend play is another way to increase (child’s name)’s story comprehension. With just a few play props, he/she can build his/her background knowledge and use that knowledge to imagine what Juanito’s experiences were like. In his story the author wrote, “we slept huddled together under blankets and quilts and I would look up and see the stars.”*
- ♦ To recreate Juanito’s tent and the stars he looked at, throw a blanket over a small table allowing the edges to drop to the floor. Pin one side open to create a door. Stick glow-in-the-dark stars on the underside of the table. Go inside the tent with the child and parent, lie on your backs and look up at the “sky.” Use the flashlight to study the stars. After a few minutes, the glow-in-the-dark stars will have absorbed enough light to glow without the flashlight. Count the stars. Compare them for size. Notice if they form a recognized constellation. Sing *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*. Ask: *Have you looked at the stars in the sky at night? When? Where? Why do you think Juanito liked to look at the stars?*

Make a Wish

- ♦ Repeat the following poem and make a wish on a star. Say: *If I had one magic wish I would wish for _____ . What would you wish for?*

Star of Wonder

Traditional

Star of wonder, star of light

First star I see tonight,

I wish I may, I wish I might,

Have the wish I wish tonight.

- ♦ Glue a large star on a sheet of black construction paper. Ask the child to write about or draw a picture of his/her wish. He/she may enjoy writing or drawing his/her star while still inside the tent.

Parenting Education Activity

Toys Help Children Build Background Knowledge

Toys that challenge children's thinking, nurture their enthusiasm for exploration, and expand their knowledge of people, places, and events, have the potential to help them build background knowledge that can strengthen their story comprehension. To this end, the best playthings are often the least expensive and frequently are items that families have right around their homes.

Example Playthings

Playdough

¾ cup flour
¼ cup salt
¼ cup water
To color dough, add food coloring to water

Goop

Mix together:
♦ 1 cup of water
♦ ¾ cup cornstarch
♦ Food coloring

Finger Paint

Mix together:
♦ 1 cup clear dish detergent
♦ 1 tablespoon cornstarch
♦ Food coloring

♦ Using the following chart as a guide, print the name of each plaything on the front of an index card. On the back, write a brief statement that explains how the item enhances children's background knowledge.

Plaything

♦ Books

♦ Dress-Up Clothes

♦ Doll or Stuffed Animal

♦ Water

♦ Paint

What It Costs

♦ On loan from the library, low-cost if purchased at garage sales or if parent-made

♦ Things in your closets, cupboards or dresser drawers are perfect

♦ Need not be expensive, can be home-made

♦ Free

♦ Inexpensive paint and play materials can be made from household products

Give these cards and a few blank cards to the parent. Say: *Here are some playthings that help children build background knowledge.* Read the cards with the parent. Ask: *How many of these toys or playthings do you have for (child's name) to play with?*

How It Helps Build Background Knowledge

♦ Books introduce children to concepts like colors and shapes, ideas like building roads or caring for animals, and information about people and places outside their daily experience like Juanito's life as a migrant child.

♦ Dress up clothes support children's dramatic play. It encourages them to explore the experiences of others including characters in books.

♦ Dolls, puppets and stuffed animals are great companions for children to nurture, talk to, role-play with, express emotions, and act out stories.

♦ Water and other substances like sand, playdough, goop, and bubbles encourage children to explore, measure, manipulate, mix, and observe. This is the foundation of scientific and mathematic knowledge.

♦ Paint, finger paint, playdough, crayons, markers and pencils enable children to express their ideas and feelings, and communicate their thoughts and knowledge.

- ♦ Say: *Let's think about specific toys that (child's name) has.* Ask the parent to put a few of his/her child's toys on the workspace. Print the names of the toys on blank index cards. Brainstorm with the parent about how each toy promotes the development of background knowledge. Write your ideas on the back of the cards.
- ♦ Say: *Possibly the most important plaything resource your child has is you. Time spent talking to, listening to, and interacting with your child is invaluable to his/her healthy growth.*

Interactive Literacy Between Parents and Their Children

Building Background Knowledge Through Pretend Play

The limited experiences of children limit the background knowledge they have to relate to stories. Pretend play focused around information read in books lets children examine the differences between themselves and someone else and makes situations and events understandable. It is a way of learning, growing and building knowledge about the world.

Make Musical Instruments

Juanito's world included the music of his father's harmonica and songs strummed on guitars by friends at fiestas. Create your own music on homemade musical instruments.

Harmonica

To make a harmonica, wrap waxed paper loosely around a comb. Hold the comb lightly to your lips and hum a tune. With a little practice, your whole family will be creating sweet melodies.

Guitar

To make a guitar, cut a hole in the top of a shoebox. Stretch several rubber bands lengthwise around the box and strum away. Use rubber bands of different sizes to create a variety of sounds.

Recreate Juanito's Family's One Room House

What might it have been like to live in the one-room house that Juanito's father built on top of their car? Create a pretend one-room house from a large appliance box. Cut an opening for a door. Attach cardboard wheels to the bottom. Hang a flashlight from the top for an inside light. Paint the outside and hang curtains on the inside. Crawl into the box and enjoy its cozy closeness. Recite poems as Juanito's mother may have done.

Have a Picnic Breakfast

Juanito's mother cooked breakfast outside, in the open. She made huevos con papas – scrambled or fried eggs with potatoes and tortillas. On a warm summer morning, prepare and eat breakfast outside. If the weather is cold or rainy, enjoy an inside picnic. Sit on a blanket spread on the floor and enjoy your favorite breakfast foods. Make paper flowers and a few paper ants.

Try Some Bird Calls

Juanito's father called to doves by cupping his hands around his mouth and whistling deeply. While enjoying your picnic breakfast, practice dove calls by making high-pitched coo coo sounds. Listen to birds near your home. Can you recognize them by their song? Use a bird book to learn their names and habits.

Play a Game of "On the Road"

Juanito's family drove through the back roads of California to harvest crops. Experience the family's travel adventures on a miniature scale by creating a masking tape road through the house. Along the road, place pictures that represent scenes from the book – potatoes or apples to represent work in the fields, a party to represent the fiesta, a wolf to represent howls Juanito heard in the night. Add other things that you remember. Drive a pretend car down the road. As you get to each picture, stop to pretend play the scene suggested by the picture.

Play with your children. You are a great resource to them. Your imagination and sense of playfulness can make their play richer, more interesting, more exciting, and more valuable.

Adult Literacy - ABE Level

Text-to-Self Connections

Connections that readers make between stories and their own lives are called text-to-self connections. Such connections help readers understand stories. One way for readers to make text-to-self connections is to compare aspects of their own lives with events or characters in the story.

Comparing Oneself to a Character

Say: Listen as I read *Calling the Doves / El canto de las palomas*. Then use the following questions as a guide to compare your life with the life of the book's main character, Juanito Felipe Herrera. You may want to reread some pages of the story or look at the illustrations for clues to the answers.

| Juanito | Me |
|---|--|
| Who made up Juanito's immediate family? | When growing up, who were the people you lived with day-by-day? |
| Name something that Juanito remembered about his father. | Name a memory you have of your father. |
| Name a special talent or skill of Juanito's mother. | Name a special talent or skill of your mother's. |
| What sort of work did Juanito's parents do? | What sort of work do your parents do? |
| What was something that Juanito remembered about his house? | Describe something you remember about a house that you lived in when you were a young child. |
| How old was Juanito when he started school? | How old were you when you started school? |
| What was something that Juanito learned as a child that helped him as an adult? | What did you learn as a child that has helped you as an adult? |
| Was Juanito happy when he was growing up? How do you know? | Were you happy as a child? Give an example. |

Text-to-Text Connections

Text-to-text connections are connections that readers make among books they read. Making comparisons between a new text and previously read books help readers understand the new text and make predictions about its outcome. Good readers often write about or think about relationships between books they have read.

Making Connections

Juan Felipe Herrera, author of *Calling the Doves* and Amada Irma Pérez, author of *My Very Own Room**, are two successful Mexican-American writers who have written about their childhood experiences. Reflecting on their stories, and using the following questions as a guide, make text-to-text connections.

1. What are the similarities and differences between the families in these two stories?
2. What strengths do the families in the two stories have?
3. How does the main character in each story feel about his or her parents/family?
4. What is the “dream” in each story, and whose dream is it? Think carefully. The dream in one story is not easy to discover.
5. How does each family contribute to the successful achievement of the dream?

Write a Paragraph

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph about *family strengths and the importance of dreams*. Use your responses above as a basis for the paragraph. Consider the following elements of strong paragraphs.

- ♦ *Topic sentence* – Does your topic sentence state the focus of your paragraph?
- ♦ *Body* – Does every sentence contribute to your focus? Have you given explanations, examples and details? Have you organized the body in a way that makes sense?
- ♦ *Conclusion* – Does your conclusion summarize your focus?

*Note: *My Very Own Room* by Amada Irma Pérez is a book included in the Family Literacy Guided Lesson Collection. If the book is not available to you, select another book with a similar theme.

Adult Literacy - ELL Level

Getting Medical Help

Juanito's mother is a *curandera*, a healer, who uses traditional practices to cure illnesses of children in her neighborhood. The words and expressions in this lesson may be of value in supplementing or adding to traditional health remedies.

Vocabulary and Expressions

- ♦ I speak Spanish.
- ♦ My address is: _____.
- ♦ I am _____ (hurt) (sick).
- ♦ My child is _____ (hurt) (sick).
- ♦ I need _____ (a doctor) (an ambulance).

Lesson Props

- ♦ Magazine pictures of children who are sick and children who are injured
- ♦ Pictures of a doctor and an ambulance
- ♦ Toy telephone
- ♦ Doll
- ♦ Thermometer
- ♦ Gauze bandage
- ♦ Telephone book

Introduce Vocabulary

- ♦ Place the pictures of the doctor and ambulance on the workspace. Point to the doctor. Say: *This is a doctor. I need a doctor.* Ask: *What do you need?* Say: *I need a doctor.* Ask again: *What do you need?* Motion for the student to reply: *I need a doctor.*
- ♦ Repeat the procedure for doctor and ambulance until mastered.
- ♦ Place a picture of a sick child on the workspace. Say: *My child is sick.* Motion for the student to repeat: *My child is sick.* Place the picture of the sick child next to the picture of the doctor. Pointing to the pictures, say: *My child is sick. I need a doctor.* Motion for the student to repeat: *My child is sick. I need a doctor.* Repeat the procedure until mastered. Substitute and repeat until mastered.
- ♦ Using the above procedure, introduce the phrase: *My child is hurt.* Repeat until mastered.
- ♦ Place your hand on your forehead as if you have a headache and then on your stomach as if you have a stomachache. Say: *I am sick.* Motion for the student to repeat: *I am sick.* With your hand on your forehead say: *I am sick. I need a doctor.* Motion for the student to repeat: *I am sick. I need a doctor.* Repeat until mastered.
- ♦ Using the above procedure, introduce the phrase: *I am hurt.* Repeat until mastered.
- ♦ Proceed to the role-play to practice and reinforce the target vocabulary and expressions.

Role-Play

- ♦ Hold the doll and role-play taking her temperature. Say: *My child is sick. I need a doctor.* Or: *My child is sick. I need an ambulance.* Using the toy telephone as a prop, dial 911. Say into the receiver: *My child is sick. I need a doctor.* Or: *My child is sick. I need an ambulance.*
- ♦ Wrap a gauze bandage around the doll's head. Dial 911 on the telephone and say: *My child is hurt. I need an ambulance.* Or: *My child is hurt. I need a doctor.*
- ♦ Practice the phrases: *I am sick. I need a doctor. I am hurt. I need an ambulance., etc.*

Extension

- ♦ Many 911 centers are staffed with bilingual operators. In a real emergency, callers whose first language is Spanish should say in English, *I need a Spanish speaker.*
- ♦ Tele-communication technology makes it possible in most situations for 911 operators to trace the location of the caller, but not in all situations. Students should learn to say: *My address is _____.* Repeat until mastered.
- ♦ Show the student the page in the telephone book (usually the first page) that contains emergency phone numbers.