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TWENTY-FOUR CREATIVE,
INTERACTIVE STORY PROGRAMS
FOR PRESCHOOLERS

ROB REID



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Rob Reid is the very popular author of numerous books on children's programming for ALA Editions. He has also written resources for Upstart Books and is the author of two picture books. In addition, he writes regular columns on programming and children's literature for *LibrarySparks* magazine and has a column in *Book Links* magazine titled "Reid-Aloud Alert." Rob is a senior lecturer at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire and conducts workshops across North America on ways to make literature come alive for children. Rob can be contacted through www.rapnrob.com.

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For Harris

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INTRODUCTION

I was flipping through the shelves of new picture books at my local library when I was struck by the high number of books that featured animals. Granted, animals have always been popular with children and have been a staple in children's books for decades. But I couldn't get over the high percentage of titles featuring both realistic and anthropomorphic critters. One thing led to another, and I was off creating a new series of story program lesson plans featuring our four-legged, no-legged, winged, scaled, and feathered friends.

The preschool lesson plans (they also work well for K–2 grade levels) are in the style of my previous ALA Editions story programming books, such as *Family Storytime*, *More Family Storytimes*, *Something Musical Happened at the Library*, and *What's Black and White and Reid All Over?* Each program is approximately thirty minutes in length and is composed of a mix of “newer” picture books (all published between 2010 and 2014) and “in-between” activities. I had a blast creating seventy new “in-between” activities—fingerplays and movement activities, songs and musical activities, chants, creative dramatics, and imagination exercises.

Please feel free to use these and all of the ideas in *Animal Shenanigans* in your own story programs.

And while you're using them, have a howling, barking, clucking, roaring good time!

THE PROGRAMS



LET'S ACT LIKE ANIMALS

STORIES AND ACTIVITIES ABOUT IMAGINATION

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

- ★ Opening Picture Book: *The Purple Kangaroo* by Michael Ian Black and Peter Brown
- ★ Picture Book: *I'm a Frog!* by Mo Willems
- ★ Movement Activity: "Tiny Little Frogs" by Rob Reid
- ★ Picture Book / Movement Activity: *It's a Tiger!* by David LaRochelle and Jeremy Tankard
- ★ Song: "Use, Use, Use Your Mind, Part One" by Rob Reid
- ★ Picture Book: *Ernest, the Moose Who Doesn't Fit* by Catherine Rayner
- ★ Musical Activity: "Use, Use, Use Your Mind, Part Two" by Rob Reid
- ★ Closing Picture Book / Movement Activity: *You Are a Lion! And Other Fun Yoga Poses* by Taeun Yoo

Opening Picture Book

The Purple Kangaroo by Michael Ian Black. Illustrated by Peter Brown. Simon & Schuster, 2010.

A monkey talks directly to you, the reader, and brags, “I can read minds. It’s true. In fact, I can read YOUR mind.” The monkey asks you to think of something so spectacular “that nobody has ever thought of it in the entire history of thinking about things.” The monkey guesses that you are thinking of a purple kangaroo. Not only that, you are thinking of “a purple kangaroo looking for his best friend, a wild-eyed chinchilla named Señor Ernesto de Pantalones.” The monkey goes on to elaborate that you are thinking of the purple kangaroo wearing roller skates, juggling bananas, blowing a bubble-gum bubble out its nose, riding in a blimp, and flying to the moon. The book’s punch line is that if you, the reader, weren’t thinking of that before, you’re thinking of it now.

STORYTELLING TIPS: Read the monkey’s voice as a salesperson or huckster—in other words, in a “slick,” energetic style.

Picture Book

I’m a Frog! by Mo Willems. Illustrated by the author. Hyperion, 2013.

Piggie pretends that he is a frog and hops around while saying “Ribbit.” His friend Gerald is confused and then worried. “What if I become a frog? Hopping all day . . . Eating flies!” Piggie teaches Gerald about “pre-tend,” when someone acts like something he or she is not. Gerald responds with “And you can just *do* that?” Gerald refuses to act like a frog, instead preferring to act like a cow.

STORYTELLING TIPS: There are a couple of true Mo Willems nods to the adults reading the book that you can reflect with your voice. The first is when Piggie tells Gerald that even grown-ups pretend to be something else. “All the time,” he says, with a wink to the reader. Draw that line out, and if there are any adults in your audience, give them a “knowing look.” A fun exchange to read is when Piggie and Gerald trade the lines “No, I can’t!” and “Yes, you can!” After the two characters go back and forth a few times, we turn to a page with a total of fifteen word balloons with these phrases. Start to point to the word balloons, and the children in the audience will automatically join in with these short chants.

Movement Activity

“Tiny Little Frogs” by Rob Reid.

Tell everyone to imagine they are frogs. Start with everyone down in a “pre-hopping position,” similar to the image of Piggie on the cover of *I’m a Frog!* After the first verse, lead the kids into imagining themselves as other animals.

Tiny little frogs,
Jumping up and down, (*Jump up and down.*)
Making funny sounds, (*Make frog noises—“Ribbit,” “Croak,” etc.*)
Tiny little frogs.

Tiny little calves,
Leaping up and down, (*Move around on all fours in little bursts.*)
Making funny sounds, (*Moo.*)
Tiny little calves.

Tiny little ducklings,
Waddling all around, (*Waddle with arms tucked in as wings.*)
Making funny sounds, (*Quack.*)
Tiny little ducklings.

Tiny little owls,
Swooping all around, (*Hold arms out as wings and glide around.*)
Making funny sounds, (*Hoot.*)
Tiny little owls.

Tiny little monkeys,
Swinging all around, (*Pretend to swing from overhead branches.*)
Making funny sounds, (*Make monkey noises like “Ooo-ooo.”*)
Tiny little monkeys.

Tiny little mice,
Scurrying all around, (*Back on all fours, make little darting movements.*)
Making funny sounds, (*Squeak.*)
Tiny little mice.

Ask the children to use their imaginations and come up with other animals to act out in this rhyme pattern.

Picture Book / Movement Activity

***It's a Tiger!* by David LaRochelle. Illustrated by Jeremy Tankard. Chronicle, 2012.**

A child pretends that he (or she) is in the jungle “where the tall trees grow and the monkeys swing from vine to vine.” The child looks closer and realizes that he’s not looking at a monkey; it’s “a tiger! Run!” He leads us to a cave where we see shadows. One of the shadows turns out to be the tiger! We climb out of the cave and tiptoe past snakes. Unfortunately, one of the snakes turns out to be the tiger’s tail. We run once more and swing onto a pile of orange leaves. Yes, the leaves turn out to be a tiger. We get a ride on a boat but notice that the captain has a tail. “A TIGER! Not AGAIN!” We jump overboard and swim to an island. We open a treasure chest and, yes, find the tiger inside. We learn he doesn’t want to eat us. He wants us to rub his belly. The boy starts telling the tiger a different story. This one has us back in the jungle watching out for “A CROCODILE!”

STORYTELLING TIPS: Pause each time before you say the word “Tiger” and allow the children to yell it out. The narrator tells us to do a variety of things to get away from the tiger. Have the children mime those instructions as they occur in the story, even if they have to stand to do so. Examples include running (slap legs), ducking heads as everyone enters the cave, climbing a ladder out of the cave, tiptoeing past the snakes, swinging from a rope, climbing rocks, and swimming.

Song

“Use, Use, Use Your Mind, Part One” by Rob Reid.

Sing to the tune of the traditional song “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” The melody can be found on the Internet as well as the following children’s music recordings: *I Found You* by Caspar Babypants (Aurora Elephant Music, 2013), *Rise and Shine* by Raffi (Troubadour, 1982), and *Wee Sing and Pretend* by Pamela Beall and Susan Nipp (Price Stern Sloan, 2001). As you chant each verse, pause after the phrase “Tell me what you say” and let the kids fill in with the proper animal sound.

Use, use, use your mind,
In a special way,
Imagine that you are a Bee,
Tell me what you say: “Buzz!”

Use, use, use your mind,
In a special way,
Imagine that you are a Coyote,
Tell me what you say: “Howl!” (or “Yip! Yip!”)

Use, use, use your mind,
In a special way,
Imagine that you are a Dolphin,
Tell me what you say: “Eee! Eee! Eee!” (or “Click! Click! Click!”)

Use, use, use your mind,
In a special way,
Imagine that you are a Donkey,
Tell me what you say: “*Hee-haw!*”

Use, use, use your mind,
In a special way,
Imagine that you are a Llama,
Tell me what you say: “_____!” (*Make a pretend spit noise. Entirely optional, of course, but the kids will laugh.*)

Ask your audience if they can add any other animals and their sounds to the song.

Picture Book

***Ernest, the Moose Who Doesn't Fit* by Catherine Rayner. Illustrated by the author. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010.**

Ernest the moose is RATHER LARGE and does not fit on the pages of the book. “Luckily, Ernest is also a very determined moose. He’s not going to give up easily.” With the help of a little chipmunk, Ernest shifts, shuffles, and squeezes back and forth on the pages, but we still only see his middle. The chipmunk comes up with a creative idea, and the two grab some masking tape and paper. They finally finish their project. We learn they made a large foldout page at the very end of the book. “Ernest may be a RATHER LARGE moose . . . but now he has a RATHER LARGE book . . . and he fits in perfectly.”

STORYTELLING TIPS: As you read about Ernest’s efforts to fit on the pages, tighten your voice to show his struggles. When you begin to unfold the final pages, slow down and build up the excitement as we finally see Ernest’s entire body for the first time.

Musical Activity

“Use, Use, Use Your Mind, Part Two” by Rob Reid.

Sing to the tune of the traditional song, “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”

Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you’re an Alligator,
Show me how you move!
(Make alligator jaws out of arms, open and shut them.)

Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you’re a Butterfly,
Show me how you move!
(Flap arms as you slowly move around the room.)

Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you’re a Hummingbird,
Show me how you move!
(Flap arms very quickly as you dart around the room.)

Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you’re a Lobster,
Show me how you move!
(Click thumbs on both hands as if they were claws.)

Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you’re a Turtle,
Show me how you move!
(Get on all fours, move slowly, stop and pull head into shoulders.)

Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you're a Cheetah,
Show me how you move!
(Run around the room in a circle as fast as you can!)

Closing Picture Book / Movement Activity

You Are a Lion! And Other Fun Yoga Poses by Taeun Yoo. Illustrated by the author. Nancy Paulsen, 2012.

Children gather in a garden and perform a variety of yoga poses. When a child sits on his heels with his hands on his knees and tongue out, he is told to imagine he is a lion. Another child sits with feet together, holding her toes, and flapping her legs. She becomes a butterfly. Other yoga scenarios have the children imagine they are a dog, a snake, a frog, and a cat. The children also stand and reach. "You are a . . . / Mountain / Soaring up high / Solid and mighty / Touching the sky." At the end, the children lie on their backs, relaxing in silence.

STORYTELLING TIPS: Have the children perform the same yoga poses along with the characters in the book. Read slowly and wait several seconds before moving on to the next exercise. At the end of the book, when your own audience is on their backs, quietly whisper, "Storytime is over for today."

5 Fun Backup Picture Books

Hey, Rabbit! by Sergio Ruzzier. Illustrated by the author. Roaring Brook, 2010.

A rabbit opens a suitcase for a dog. The dog, who had wished for a bone, is surprised to find a cake lined with several bones. A toucan looks inside the suitcase and finds an entire jungle. A bear gets a bed

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