

Create Many New Great Adaptations

Developed by Sue Trainor
Great Musical Adaptations

Objective/Goal:

Beat and melody can be used as tools to lift a story off the page to create emotional connections with the characters, the setting, and the action. Because music is so patterned, playful, and repeatable, it makes it compelling to children to practice with phonemes and decoding.

Educational Impact:

- ✓ Steady beat
 - ✓ Phonological awareness
 - ✓ Decoding
 - ✓ Comprehension
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Suggestions for use with *Songs for Singing and Learning* CDs:

- ✓ "Nanfoule"

Procedure and Process:

Create musical adaptations that expand on reading a book aloud

(There are many, many options you can try; the kinds of adaptations you create will depend on your immediate goals. Notice that this experience often focuses on one aspect of a book at a time.)

Choose a book with a line or two that repeat regularly.

When you read those lines, read them in a steady beat rhythm. The children will join you, because you've made that part of the reading predictable.

Choose a familiar tune that fits the rhythm of those words, and sing them, adding motions and encouraging the children to sing along.

Focus on one aspect of a book that you'd like to teach more about, such as planting, as introduced in *The Carrot Seed*, by Ruth Krauss (New York: Harper Collins, 2004).

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Ask the children what the boy did to take care of the plant, and to create motions for those actions. Use a substitution song to pretend that you are all planting, too. For example, "This is the way we plant the seeds, plant the seeds, plant the seeds."

Ask the children to imagine that they are little seeds, and to choose a motion for growing roots that uses their whole bodies. Now ask them to choose one for growing a stem, for growing leaves, and for blooming flowers. Create a dance accompanied by recorded music, using those motions.

Perhaps the setting of a garden is unfamiliar. Use props or pictures to expand knowledge and explore observations. A cumulative song might work well to review the new information. For example, you could sing to the tune of "The Green Grass Grows All Around":

*In the garden, there was some dirt
The dirtiest dirt that you ever did see
Dirt in the garden and the garden in the yard
And the children plant all around, all around
And the children plant all around
And in that dirt, there was a seed,
The tiniest seed that you ever did see
Seed in the dirt and the dirt in the garden...*

Extend the book by inviting the children to contribute their own experiences. What do they plant at their houses? To "Old MacDonald":

*Julio he had a garden
E-I-E-I-O
and in his garden he planted beans
E-I-E-I-O*

You can also focus on the characters of a book, such as the ones in *I Went Walking* by Sue Williams (New York: Harcourt, 1992). Play singing games with the characters.

*Charlie over the ocean, Charlie over the sea
Charlie caught a black cat, can't catch me.*

Make a game like "Duck Duck Goose" to go along with the song. (See also the experience "Charlie Over the Ocean" on page 8 in the "Classic Wolf Trap Experiences" section of this book.)

Extend the story by taking your own walk in the school, around the block, through the zoo, or to the pond. Sing (to the same "Charlie" tune):

*I went walking [echo]
What did you see? [echo]
I saw a _____ looking at me.*

Create adaptations that help children differentiate between sounds

For example, if you're studying the letter "B":

- Sing "Baa Baa Black Sheep."
- Create a motion that can be done quickly with the song – preferably one that begins with "B".
- Ask the children to do the motion (e.g., bend knees, hand, finger, or arm) when they hear the "b" sound at the beginning of a word. Repeat the song with the motion.

To work with the concepts of "same" and "different", or pitch (high/low) or dynamics (loud/quiet):

- Engage the children's imaginations with props, such as Grandfather Bear and Baby Bear. Give Grandfather a low voice and Baby Bear a high voice.
- Sing a verse of "Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear" as Grandfather.
- Sing a verse as Baby Bear.
- Ask, "Are their voices the same or different?"
- Sing with Baby Bear alternating between loud and quiet.

To help children learn to identify emotion and feelings through different sounds:

- Introduce an owl prop. Ask what sound an owl makes: Whoop! (Note: the "whoop" sound is also a great vocal warm-up for singing.)
- Make up a story about the owl, such as: "This morning, Owl felt very happy that he could come to school today."
- Ask, "What do you think a happy 'whoop' sounds like?"
- Continue the story: "But Owl's mother said that he could not have his favorite food for breakfast." Ask the children to name Owl's favorite food.
- "Owl felt a little bit mad. How do you think a mad 'whoop' sounds?"
- For sadness: "And then Owl couldn't find his favorite pencil."
- For surprise: "And then Owl found his pencil and he was surprised."
- Variation: Focus on the high/low and long/short patterns in the "whoop" sounds related to feelings. How is the happy "whoop" different from the angry "whoop"?

Create adaptations that help children learn to recognize symbols

In the examples above, include visual representations in the experience.

- Ask the children to show a flashcard with the letter "B" when they hear the "b" sound in the song.
- The large Grandfather Bear and the small Baby Bear are a kind of visual representation for high and low (because children expect babies to have high voices). You can use props for each character.
- You probably have pictures or symbols of common feelings posted somewhere in your classroom. Relate the owl "whoop" exercise to those existing graphics.

Variations:

- Use a poster board (or equivalent) with a wavy line across it. Ask children to make a “who” or a siren sound, visually following the contour of the line higher and lower and from left to right. It helps if the teacher uses a pointer to follow the contour of the line. The children can use their fingers in the air to follow the highs and lows.
- Make a “B” sign in American Sign Language as the motion to use in response to hearing a letter sound in the song or chant.
- Play a “feelings” guessing game. One child picks a feeling to act out. Other children observe, guess, and imitate it, then all sing:

Hey, hey look at me, I am [happy] you can see.

