

Activating Books with Dance and Movement

Tips for Parents and Caregivers

Adding movements - even small gestures - into the reading experience can help engage your child with reading and build their literacy skills! This is especially easy to do with movement or action-packed books, like Sandra Boynton's *Barnyard Dance*, but these techniques can be used with almost any book you have on hand. Below are some ideas for how to activate books with your child and examples from some of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's favorite books to use during our Pre-K Creative Movement program.

Let them Lead

Let your child sit on your lap, hold the book, and be in charge of turning the pages. You can also guide their hands to follow along with the words, or point out the action in the pictures.

Act it out

Explore characters' voices and movements through acting out sections of the story.

Rhyme Time

For books with lots of rhymes, create a movement for each different rhyming sound you hear when reading. Have your child perform that movement when they hear that sound. *Example:* Stomp your feet for the "uck" sound used in *One Duck Stuck*.

First Letter

Take the first letter of a character's name (or even your child's name!) and think of actions that begin with that letter. *Example:* In *Barnyard Dance*, there is a cow that might crawl, catch, crouch, or clap.

Scavenger Hunts

After you've read through a book, plan a scavenger hunt to search for objects related to the story.

Dance it out

Find "action sequences" with rich verbs in the book. Review the sequences with your child and have them dance it out!

Clap and tap

Clap or tap out a steady beat for any chants that are repeated throughout a book.

Example: In *Barnyard Dance*, clap out and chant the following: "With a BAA and a MOO and a COCKADOODLEDOO Everybody promenade two by two."

Where are we?

Explore the environment of the book through movement. *Example:* In *Fletcher and the Falling Leaves*, have your child move around like leaves being blown in the wind (breeze, gusts, etc.). In *Where the Wild Things Are*, have your child wade through the water and walk through the forest. Encourage him/her to use their imagination to "feel" the ground they are walking on, to "feel" the weather of the environment they are in.

Air writing

Did your child encounter a new word in the book? Have them explore that word through "air writing" the word with their whole body, letter by letter and sound by sound.

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Use props

Use household “props” to move like things you encounter in a story. Props are a great way for children to visualize the movements that they create with their body. Props might include scarves, pillowcases, small blankets, spoons for rhythm sticks, toilet paper, etc. *Example:* In *Barnyard Dance*, use scarves to explore the different action verbs, such as twirl, bounce, strut, prance, and skitter.

Mood Music

Play music appropriate for that book and have your child free dance. Encourage them to see how the music makes them feel like they want to dance. *Example:* For *Barnyard Dance*, you might play country western or banjo music. For *Fletcher and the Falling Leaves*, you might play Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*.



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