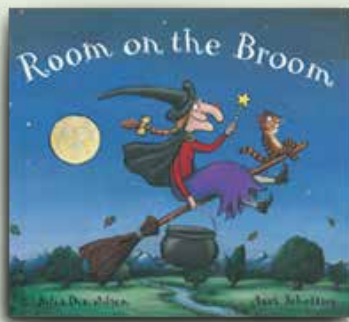


Book Nook

This month's Book Nook topic is...



Building Sound Awareness with *Room on the Broom*

Helping children understand that words can be broken down into individual sounds is called sound awareness or “phonological awareness”. This is an essential skill that leads to better reading and writing later on. One of the first signs of a child developing sound awareness is their recognition of rhymes. We use a strategy called “Listen... and Find One Like It” to help children tune in to words that start (alliteration) or end (rhyme) with the same sound.

Let's get started!

My chosen book:

Room on the Broom. Written by Julia Donaldson, and illustrated by Axel Sheffler.

Why I picked it:

Room on the Broom is an engaging tale with great illustrations, and the entire story is told in one long rhyme, which makes it a perfect match for the Hanen strategy “Listen... and Find One Like It” – a fun technique to build children’s sound awareness.

What it’s about: *Room on the Broom* is about a friendly witch who is out for a ride on her broom. Our heroine keeps losing her possessions - starting with her pointed hat. Luckily, the items are retrieved by friendly animals who simply want a ride on the broom in return. All goes well until the broom breaks and the characters are sent hurtling towards a dragon!

Listen... and Find One Like It

This strategy works exactly how it sounds.

Step 1 – Listen

When reading (or singing) with children, point out rhyming words. If you're reading *Room on the Broom*, you could say: "Listen, 'room' and 'broom' rhyme – they sound the same at the end. Listen. 'Room'. 'Broom'.

Step 2 – Find One Like It

Have the child help you find another rhyming word. You could say: "Let's think of another word that sounds like 'room' and 'broom'. How about 'zoom'? 'Zoom' sounds like 'room' and 'broom'. 'Zoom,' 'room' and 'broom' all rhyme. They all sound the same at the end of the word.

Many children won't yet be able to produce a rhyme – that's fine! Exposing them to the idea of rhyming words will build their sound awareness. Offer many of your own examples of rhyming words before expecting them to come up with their own the first time you introduce the "Listen... and find one like it" game.

The first time you read the book:

During the first read, you can emphasize the words that rhyme (there are rhyming words on every page of the book).

For example, on the first page you could say:

"But how the witch wailed
and how the cat **spat**,
When the wind blew so wildly,
it blew off her **hat**."

As you read, you can pause before the second rhyming word ("hat" in this example) to see if your child wants to try to fill in the missing word.

The second time you read the book:

Now that you've been through the book once, you can be more explicit about the rhyming words. You can read a page, and say "Listen. 'spat' sounds like 'hat'. 'Spat' and 'hat' rhyme. Say the words with me. 'Spat'. 'Hat'. Do you hear how they sound the same at the end of the word? 'Spat'. 'Hat'."

After the child repeats the words once or twice say: "Let's think of another word that rhymes with 'spat' and 'hat'. How about 'bat'? 'Bat' sounds like 'spat' and 'hat'. 'Spat,' 'hat,' and 'bat' all rhyme. They all sound the same at the end of the word." You can do this on almost every page of the book – and often children find this to be a fun activity.

The third time you read the book:

You can point out other rhymes that you may have missed during the second reading. For example, in the book the author rhymes 'frog' and 'dog' on several occasions. Point out that rhyme in exactly the same way as you did for 'spat' and 'gone' and see what rhyming words the child can come up with.

Since the child has now heard many rhyme examples, for the "find one like it" part of the strategy, you can ask him or her to come up with a word. You can say "Can you think of another word that rhymes with 'frog' and 'dog'?" Then wait to see if they attempt to fill in a word. If you wait (for five to ten seconds) and your child doesn't respond, then you can help them by saying "What about 'log'?" "Frog,' 'dog,' and 'log' all sound the same at the end – they all rhyme."

This strategy can be a lot of fun and gets really silly quite quickly – as children will tend to make up nonsense words when they can't think of a real word that rhymes. After a while, try to get your child to find rhymes in other books and songs that you read together.

Get creative!

You can also try to make up your own rhyme. Here's an example of a rhyme that one of the children I worked with created:

We put a dog
on top of a frog
sitting on a log
in a dark bog

It may not be award winning material, but it certainly helps to reinforce the idea of "words that sound the same at the end", and the child was proud of being able to come up with his own rhyming story.

I hope you enjoyed this Book Nook topic. I'd love to hear which books you use to build sound awareness. Please send me your feedback.



A little more about me

I'm a Speech-Language Pathologist working at The Hanen Centre as a Program Specialist. I combine my background in language and literacy development with my knowledge of adult learning to offer evidence-based face to face and online trainings to early childhood educators, SLPs and parents.

The Book Nook combines my passion for children's literature with my knowledge of language and literacy development. I hope you enjoy it!

Tamara