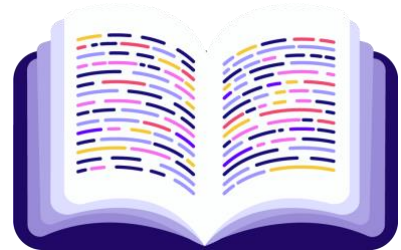


Module: Comprehension

Teaching Early Literacy with the Learning Toolkit+

Welcome to the CSLP's Teaching Early Literacy with the Learning Toolkit+. As you move through these modules, you will familiarize yourself with each broad literacy skill and its corresponding sub-skills, gain a deeper understanding of various teaching approaches and practical tips, and explore how the CSLP's Learning Toolkit+ also known as LTK+ supports the development of these literacy skills.



These modules can be used in a variety of settings; from asynchronous and fully online to synchronous, blended and in-person workshops. Each of the modules has a similar structure, outlined in a table of contents. All of the modules focus on explanations, practice, and interactive content to insure understanding and engagement. We hope these modules provide you with new knowledge, useful suggestions on how to integrate the various literacy tools into your teaching, and helps you develop your expertise in early literacy instruction.



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Introduction

Introduction

The goal of reading is comprehension. Readers must be able to interpret what they read in order to gain meaning from the text. To do this, children need to use a variety of skills. They must be able to recognize or decode the words and then use their prior knowledge to understand the words or context, or recognize when they have problems with comprehension and resolve it using reading strategies.



Module Objectives

This module will help you make the most of the ABRA activities in your teaching. At the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Describe comprehension and vocabulary skills.
- Identify specific comprehension monitoring skills that children in your class(es) need to develop.
- Select activities in ABRA that support the development of those skills.
- Prepare a plan for integrating ABRA comprehension and vocabulary activities into your classroom teaching.

Pause and Think

Activity: Group Discussion or Individual Reflection

Small Group Discussion

15 minutes

If you are doing this module with peers, form small groups of 3-5 participants. Use the following questions to discuss your experiences with comprehension instruction.

Individual Reflection

Use your course notebook (see *Appendix A*), or sign into ePEARL, to reflect on and answer these questions:

- How can you tell if a child has understood what they read?
- What teaching strategies have you tried in your classroom to foster learners' comprehension skills? What worked and what didn't?
- How are your learners' comprehension skills impacted by their vocabulary knowledge?
- What questions do you have about comprehension and vocabulary instruction?



Understand Text

What do you Need to Know and do to Understand Text?



Comprehension

Comprehension is the ability to understand information within a text. It not only requires the reader to use their alphabetic and fluency skills, but to also engage with the text in a thoughtful manner. To help children understand a text, they should use their prior knowledge to make sense of the context, pause periodically and question what the text is conveying, try to predict what might come next, and summarize what they have read to ensure they understood.

See video script below.



Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the words we use to communicate successfully. An individual's vocabulary can help their ability to comprehend what they hear or read. Improving one's vocabulary entails more than just learning the dictionary definition of the word. For example, a word's specific meaning is sometimes affected by the context that surrounds the word's use.

See video script [below](#).

What is Comprehension? (Video Script)

In the [online version of this module](#), there is a video that describes core comprehension skills. The transcript is provided in the PDF version of the module.

In this video, you will learn about reading comprehension, which involves finding meaning in a text. Reading comprehension is a fundamental literacy skill. After all, why read something if you can't understand it!

In order to understand a text, people must actively search for meaning. They must use their skills in alphabetic, fluency, and vocabulary as well as their general knowledge of the world.

So how do teachers encourage children to become active and engaged readers?

Researchers have identified four key strategies that help children to improve their reading comprehension. These strategies are summarizing, mapping stories, monitoring comprehension, and asking questions. Let's explore each one.

Summarizing involves selecting the most important points in a text and then restating those points in your own words. You may summarize a text at the end or at several different moments while reading. Summarizing helps children to identify and remember



the main ideas in a text. It is a very powerful and effective strategy for improving reading comprehension.

A second useful strategy is called story mapping, which involves identifying or sequencing parts of the story. For example, children might describe what happens at the beginning, middle, and end of a text. Research shows that story mapping helps readers to pay closer attention to the text, which improves overall understanding.

A third strategy is comprehension monitoring, which means paying attention to what you do and don't understand in a text. Children with good comprehension monitoring skills will stop when they don't understand a particular word or phrase. They will try to figure out what is meant, maybe asking a teacher or friend for help. Comprehension monitoring requires children to pay close attention to their own knowledge and understanding. In doing so, they become more independent readers, able to solve difficulties they encounter in a text.

Finally, the fourth strategy involves asking and answering questions about the text. For example, children might ask each other questions by using words like **who**, **what**, **where**, **when**, **why**, or **how**. As children try to figure out the answers, they must think more deeply about what they are reading.

Each of these four strategies--summarizing, mapping stories, monitoring comprehension, and asking questions--can be used alone. But most teachers will use several strategies during a reading lesson. Children can also use the activities in ABRACADABRA's *Understanding the Story* section to practice their comprehension skills.

The ABRACADABRA training and support materials will provide more guidance in how best to use *Understanding the Story* activities to support reading comprehension.

Pause and Think

Activity: Individual Reflection

Use your course notebook (see *Appendix A*) to answer the following questions:

- What did I learn from this video?
- What questions do I have after watching this video?



What is Comprehension Monitoring?

Comprehension Monitoring is checking that a learner understands what they read. Periodically, children need to stop and think about what they are reading. This could happen after each paragraph, or at the end of the page. Learners should be able to summarize what they read. If not, they reread the text and/or ask questions to help them understand the meaning of the text.

Comprehension monitoring is a skill that is automatic for strong readers. Train learners to stop and think until it becomes automatized.

Story Elements & Structure

Multiple-Choice Activity



Asking your learners to identify the common elements in a story allows you to quickly check their understanding of what they have read. Have students practice identifying the setting, characters, plot, problem & solution.

You can use the questions in this activity with your class.

First read this story: The Little Red Hen (see *Appendix B*)

Question 1: What is the title and setting of the story?

Story title:

- a) Adventures of Farm Animals
- b) How Wheat Grows
- c) The Hen and the Lazy Animals
- d) The Little Red Hen
- e) The Hen’s Little Farm Garden

Story Setting:

- a) A field
- b) A jungle
- c) A farm
- d) A city
- e) A beach



Question 2: Who are the characters of the story?

Main Character:

- a) A dog
- b) A rooster
- c) A hen
- d) A cow
- e) A pig

Supporting Characters:

- a) An elephant, a tiger, and a parrot
- b) A cow, a pig, and a dog
- c) A farmer, a dog, and a cow
- d) Two pigs and a rooster
- e) The townspeople and their pets

Question 3: What was the problem and the solution of the story?

The problem:

- a) The other animals ate the wheat
- b) The farm needed maintenance
- c) Everyone was extremely tired
- d) The hen was sick
- e) The hen needed help

The solution:

- a) The other animals helped the hen
- b) Everybody took a nap
- c) The hen did everything herself
- d) All the animals cleaned the farm
- e) The farmer helped the hen

See answer key on next page.



Answer Key

Question 1: What is the title and setting of the story?

- Story title: The Little Red Hen
- Story Setting: A farm

Question 2: Who are the characters of the story?

- Main Character: A hen
- Supporting Characters: A cow, a pig, and a dog

Question 3: What was the problem and the solution of the story?

- The problem: The hen needed help
- The solution: The hen did everything herself

The Main Idea

Multiple-Choice Activity

What is the story about? Being able to articulate this is a crucial skill that needs to be reinforced. If children have not understood what they’ve read, they will give a superficial answer. Help your learners develop this by asking them the main idea for everything they read.

An Example

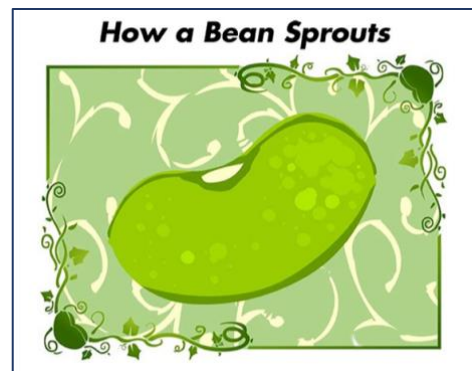
If children read a story about how to properly care for a dog, they might answer this question with “**it’s about dogs.**” In order to answer this question properly, children need to drill down and identify the **health care aspect.**

How a Bean Sprouts

First read the story (see *Appendix C*)

What is the main idea?

- Plants need soil and water
- It’s about beans
- The stages and factors related to how beans develop
- You can watch a bean grow



The Little Red Hen

First read the story (see *Appendix B*)

What is the main idea?

- a) The Little Red Hen made her own bread and ate it
- b) Life on a farm
- c) Nothing in life is free, but with hard work and determination, you can achieve great things
- d) The hen is a hard worker, but the others are lazy and expect to be rewarded.



Answer Key

How a Bean Sprouts

What is the main idea?

- a) Plants need soil and water
This is an important part of the text, but it doesn't help explain the whole content. This book also describes the stages of a bean sprout's growth.
- b) It's about beans
The story is focused on bean sprouts, but this answer is too general. "Bean" is not a main idea.
- c) The stages and factors related to how beans develop**
This text is about what is needed for a bean to grow, and how you can track the changes of that growth.
- d) You can watch a bean grow
This doesn't quite encompass the main idea. This book explains the phases of how beans grow. While you can observe these changes, the main idea also includes what's needed for it to grow.



The Little Red Hen

What is the main idea?

- a) The Little Red Hen made her own bread and ate it
This is the conclusion of the story. While it touches upon the self-sufficiency of the main character, this answer does not tell us why that is important.
- b) Life on a farm
This is too general. The characters do live on a farm, but this answer does not tell us the point of the story.
- c) Nothing in life is free, but with hard work and determination, you can achieve great things**
Yes! This is the moral lesson about right and wrong behaviours that the author is trying to convey.
- d) The hen is a hard worker, but the others are lazy and expect to be rewarded.
This is a surface answer for the plot of the story. While it shows the reader has grasped the main events in the story, it doesn't go into the deeper meaning of the story. What is the moral the author is trying to teach?

What is Vocabulary? (Video Script)

In the [online version of this module](#), there is a video that describes core vocabulary skills. The transcript is provided in the PDF version of the module.

In this video, you will learn about vocabulary, meaning the words people know and use to communicate effectively.

It is helpful to distinguish between oral vocabulary and reading vocabulary. Oral vocabulary refers to the words we recognize and use when talking and listening. Reading vocabulary refers to words we understand in a written text.

Both types of vocabulary play an important role in learning how to read.

Oral vocabulary helps children make links between words they have heard and those they see in print. If children see the word cat in a text, they may sound it out: /c/a/t/. Eventually, they realize it is a word they have heard before: cat.

Reading vocabulary is essential for understanding written texts. Children can't grasp the meaning of a text if they don't know what the words in it mean.

So how can you help children acquire a strong vocabulary?

Children build their vocabulary when they talk with adults. Ideally, adults use a variety of words and, if necessary, explain what the words mean. Children can also listen as an adult reads stories out loud. As well, children can read by themselves because they will encounter and learn new words.



But, is it worthwhile to teach vocabulary words directly to children given that there are potentially thousands of words to learn? Researchers say yes, such direct instruction is valuable. This instruction should focus on two elements: teaching the meanings of specific words and giving children strategies for learning new words.

Let's start with teaching word meanings. Your school may have a list of required vocabulary words for each grade, so you will need to use those. Otherwise, you might want to teach some of the more complex or difficult words found in the texts your children will read.

As you teach word meanings, have children use their new vocabulary in many different ways. Ask children to create several different sentences with the new word. See if they can act out the word or draw an illustration of it. Encourage them to use their new vocabulary as often as possible.

Of course, children will eventually encounter words they don't know. So, they also need strategies for figuring out word meanings on their own.

Many teachers tell children to look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary. This is a good strategy but there are others available too.

You can suggest children use the context to guess what a word means. For example, photos or illustrations may provide important clues to the meaning.

As well, teachers can help children use word parts and endings to build their vocabulary. For example, explore how the word legend can be changed to legends and legendary by adding different endings. This strategy helps children use their previous word knowledge to gain new vocabulary words.

Children can also use the vocabulary activities in ABRACADABRA's *Understanding the Story* section to practice these skills. The ABRACADABRA training and support materials will provide more guidance in how best to use certain activities to build children's vocabulary skills.

Pause and Think

Activity: Individual Reflection

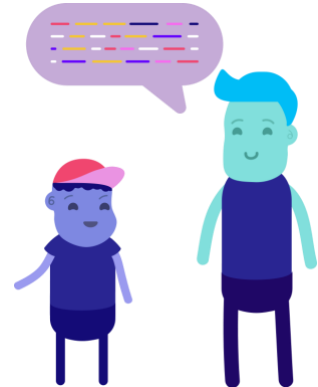
Use your course notebook (see *Appendix A*) to answer the following questions:

- What did I learn from this video?
- What questions do I have after watching this video?



How does Vocabulary Develop?

Children acquire most of their vocabulary indirectly, through conversations with adults or reading texts. Young children have an easier time decoding regular words that are already in their oral vocabulary when they encounter them in a text. For rare words and complex concepts, children need to be taught these words directly.



What are Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 Words?

Before you read a book with your class, it is a good idea to divide the words within it into tier 1, tier 2, and tier 3 word lists. This can help you select keywords for your course content. Identify what they should know already, and what they should know at the end of your lesson.



Tier 1: These are basic words that your learners will learn from spoken language. Because children hear them frequently, you do not have to spend time explicitly teaching the meaning of these words.
Examples: copy, school, truck, wood.

Tier 2: These words are common, but learners might see them more often in print than spoken language. These words appear across different content areas. Some of these words have multiple meanings. Learners may be familiar with one meaning, but need to learn a familiar words can be used in more than one way.
Examples: attention, consequence, instead, wonder.

Tier 3: These are specialized vocabulary words. They are crucial words for specific content areas, such as a science or social studies. Teachers focus on these vocabulary words when they are relevant to a specific unit they teach.
Examples (Math): graph, minus, parallel, rhombus.

Tier 2 Vocabulary Words

Select One/Many

Recall: Tier 2 are high frequency words that appear across different content areas. They more often appear in print than in oral conversation. Some examples include: attention, consequence, instead, wonder.

A lot of the vocabulary words you'll explicitly teach will be classified as Tier 2 words. You can do an activity like this one with your class.



Example

The word 'Ring' means:

"A typically circular band of metal or other durable material."

But it could also mean:

- "To give forth a clear resonant sound, as a bell when struck."
- "Any object or mark that is circular in shape."
- "A circular path or course."

And many more.

References

Cambridge Dictionary: English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

Everything After Z by Dictionary.com (2019, October 29). Retrieved from <https://www.dictionary.com/e>

Select the definition(s). Some words could have more than one meaning.

Question 1: What does 'Annoy' mean?

- a) to give pleasure or satisfaction; be agreeable
- b) a blustering, quarrelsome, overbearing person who habitually badgers and intimidates smaller or weaker people
- c) to disturb or bother in a way that displeases, troubles, or slightly irritates
- d) to put an end to; extinguish
- e) a person given to pretentious display

Question 2: What does 'Coast' mean?

- a) The salt waters that cover the greater part of the earth's surface
- b) Move easily without the use of power
- c) Any area in which few forms of life can exist because of lack of water, permanent frost, or absence of soil
- d) Physical power or strength possessed by a living being
- e) The land next to the sea

Question 3: What does 'Disappointed' mean?

- a) Content
- b) By, through, or as a result of an appointment (often in contrast with elected)
- c) The mental position, attitude, etc. from which a person views and judges things
- d) Depressed or discouraged by the failure of one's hopes or expectations
- e) Hopeless or despairing; pessimistic



Question 4: What does 'Fabric' mean?

- a) Framework, structure
- b) To join or attach by stitches
- c) The soft, lustrous fiber obtained as a filament from the cocoon of the silkworm
- d) A natural or chance marking, configuration, or design
- e) A cloth made by weaving, knitting, or felting fibers.

Question 5: What does 'Jealous' mean?

- a) A feeling of wonder, pleasure, or approval
- b) Feeling resentment against someone because that person's rivalry, success, or advantages
- c) Full of, characterized by, or due to zeal; ardently active, devoted, or diligent
- d) Affected by unhappiness or grief; sorrowful or mournful
- e) An opponent or rival whom a person cannot best or overcome

Question 6: What does 'Note' mean?

- a) A short explanation or an extra piece of information
- b) A single sound at a particular level
- c) To pay close attention
- d) A brief letter, usually of an informal nature
- e) An emotion or way of expressing something

Answer Key

Question 1: What does 'Annoy' mean?

- a) to give pleasure or satisfaction; be agreeable
This is the definition for 'Please'.
- b) a blustering, quarrelsome, overbearing person who habitually badgers and intimidates smaller or weaker people
This is the definition for 'Bully'.
- c) to disturb or bother in a way that displeases, troubles, or slightly irritates**
- d) to put an end to; extinguish
This is the definition for 'Destroy'.
- e) a person given to pretentious display
This is the definition for 'Boast'.

Question 2: What does 'Coast' mean?

- a) The salt waters that cover the greater part of the earth's surface
This is the definition for 'Sea'.
- b) Move easily without the use of power**



- c) Any area in which few forms of life can exist because of lack of water, permanent frost, or absence of soil
This is the definition for 'Desert'.
- d) Physical power or strength possessed by a living being
This is the definition for 'Force'.
- e) **The land next to the sea**

Question 3: What does 'Disappointed' mean?

- a) Content
This is the definition for 'Satisfied'.
- b) By, through, or as a result of an appointment (often in contrast with elected)
This is the definition for 'Appointed'.
- c) The mental position, attitude, etc. from which a person views and judges things
This is the definition for 'Standpoint'.
- d) **Depressed or discouraged by the failure of one's hopes or expectations**
- e) Hopeless or despairing; pessimistic
This is the definition for 'Gloomy'.

Question 4: What does 'Fabric' mean?

- a) **Framework, structure**
- b) To join or attach by stitches
This is the definition for 'Sew'.
- c) The soft, lustrous fiber obtained as a filament from the cocoon of the silkworm
This is the definition for 'Silk'.
- d) A natural or chance marking, configuration, or design
This is the definition for 'Pattern'.
- e) **A cloth made by weaving, knitting, or felting fibers.**

Question 5: What does 'Jealous' mean?

- a) A feeling of wonder, pleasure, or approval
This is the definition for 'Admiration'.
- b) **Feeling resentment against someone because that person's rivalry, success, or advantages**
- c) Full of, characterized by, or due to zeal; ardently active, devoted, or diligent
This is the definition for 'Zealous'.
- d) Affected by unhappiness or grief; sorrowful or mournful
This is the definition for 'Sad'.
- e) An opponent or rival whom a person cannot best or overcome
This is the definition for 'Nemesis'.



Question 6: What does 'Note' mean?

- a) A short explanation or an extra piece of information
- b) A single sound at a particular level
- c) To pay close attention
- d) A brief letter, usually of an informal nature
- e) An emotion or way of expressing something

All of the meanings are correct.

Using ABRA to Support Comprehension

Understanding the Story

ABRA offers 8 activities to support children as they learn and practice comprehension skills. Six of these activities are focused on comprehension and two activities on vocabulary. Many of these activities work best if children work in groups or with an adult who can provide feedback.

Comprehension

Comprehension, which is reading for meaning, is the goal of learning how to read. Children should combine their decoding skills with vocabulary recognition, reading strategies, and their own experiences and knowledge of the world.

Discover the ABRA activities that help children develop their comprehension skills.

- Comprehension Monitoring
- Sequencing
- Story Elements
- Prediction
- Summarizing
- Story Response

Comprehension Monitoring

To access this activity in ABRA:

- 1) Click on *Understanding the Story*



2) Click on *Comprehension Monitoring*



[Watch a demo of this activity online.](#)

Learn more about [this activity](#) by visiting the ABRA resources site.

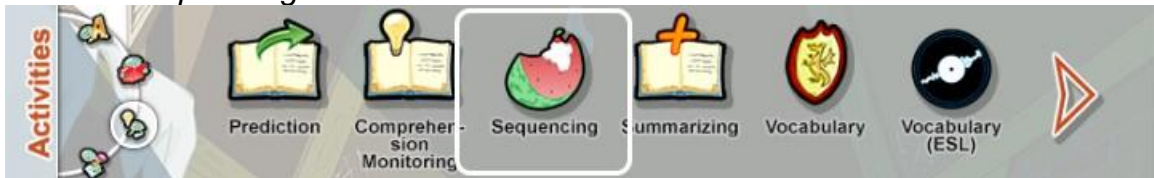
Sequencing

To access this activity in ABRA:

1) Click on *Understanding the Story*



2) Click on *Sequencing*



[Watch a demo of this activity online.](#)

Learn more about [this activity](#) by visiting the ABRA resources site.

Story Elements

To access this activity in ABRA:

1) Click on *Understanding the Story*



2) Click on *Story Elements*



[Watch a demo of this activity online.](#)

Learn more about [this activity](#) by visiting the ABRA resources site.

Prediction

To access this activity in ABRA:

1) Click on *Understanding the Story*



2) Click on *Prediction*



[Watch a demo of this activity online.](#)

Learn more about [this activity](#) by visiting the ABRA resources site.

Summarizing

To access this activity in ABRA:

1) Click on *Understanding the Story*



2) Click on *Summarizing*



[Watch a demo of this activity online.](#)

Learn more about [this activity](#) by visiting the ABRA resources site.

Story Response

To access this activity in ABRA:

1) Click on *Understanding the Story*



2) Click on *Story Response*



[Watch a demo of this activity online.](#)

Learn more about [this activity](#) by visiting the ABRA resources site.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is an important part of comprehension. Readers need to know what the words mean in order to understand what they have read. Direct vocabulary instruction should focus on words that are used frequently at school but that children have not learned in other contexts, for example at home or on the playground.

ABRA offers two activities that directly teach learners vocabulary words.

Discover the ABRA activities that help children develop this vocabulary.

- Vocabulary
- Vocabulary (ESL)



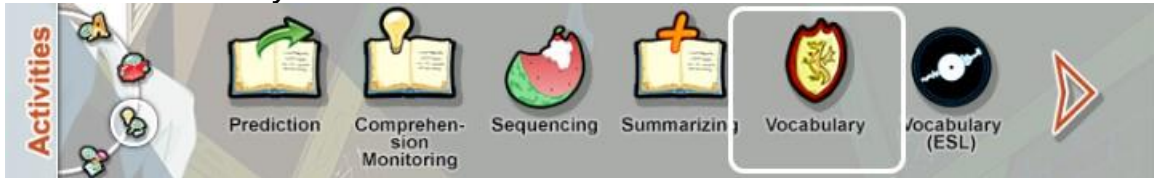
Vocabulary

To access this activity in ABRA:

- 1) Click on *Understanding the Story*



- 2) Click on *Vocabulary*



[Watch a demo of this activity online.](#)

Learn more about [this activity](#) by visiting the ABRA resources site.

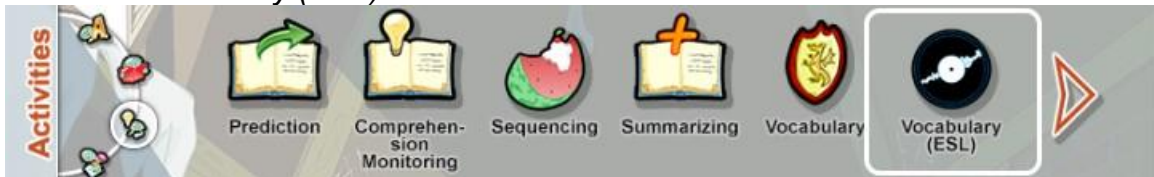
Vocabulary (ESL)

To access this activity in ABRA:

- 1) Click on *Understanding the Story*



- 2) Click on *Vocabulary (ESL)*



[Watch a demo of this activity online.](#)

Learn more about [this activity](#) by visiting the ABRA resources site.



Pause and Think

Activity: Individual Reflection. If Possible, Followed by a Group Discussion

Individual Reflection

Use your course notebook (see *Appendix A*), or sign in to ePEARL, to consider these questions:

- 1) Which comprehension skill do your learners struggle with the most?
- 2) Which ABRA activities could you use to build these skills?
- 3) How can you use these activities? Make a specific plan.
- 4) What challenges do you see in carrying out this plan? How can you overcome them?

Group Discussion

Form small groups of 3-5 participants. Everyone should share their individual reflection answers and get feedback from their peers on:

- The learners' needs and the activities selected.
- The plan to get children using the ABRA activities.
- The challenges teachers have identified.

Your Teaching

Let's Go! Tips and Techniques

Suggestions for Incorporating Comprehension in your Classroom

Tips

- Use a combination of narrative texts (stories) and explanatory texts (textbooks). This will introduce learners to different structures and vocabulary.
- Relate new vocabulary words to learners' personal experiences to help them understand and remember the words.

Teacher Aids

The CSLP has prepared a number of resources for teachers. These include technical support for the ABRA tool, pedagogical support for helping children build their literacy skills, and classroom activity and resource suggestions.

Comprehension Strategies for the Classroom

There are different reading comprehension methods you can try in your classroom.

Collaboration & Reflection

Suggested strategies on how teachers can learn from their own experiences, receive input from colleagues, and provide feedback to support their peers.



Tips

Here are some ideas to help you get started.

- Select text that is at an appropriate level for the learner so they focus on comprehension strategies rather than decoding.
- Enhance your read aloud sessions by discussing the text before, during, and after reading.
 - Before reading, directly teach the vocabulary words they do not know.
 - While reading, connect vocabulary words to words your learners already know. Summarize what has happened already in the text.
 - After reading a book to a child, have a conversation about the story. Encourage the child to relate it to their own experiences.
- Teach vocabulary words around a theme. For example, you can teach them several words relating to the theme of "plants": dig, grow, leaf, rain, roots, seed, soil, sprout, stem, sun, water.
- Provide learners with a context and ask them to select appropriate vocabulary word(s) to finish a sentence. For example, use the context "For supper last night, I ate..." and learners can select words like "bread" or "corn" from a vocabulary list.
- Some words have more than one meaning. When encountering these words in a sentence, review some possible definitions with your class. Ask learner to determine which definition makes sense given the content. Replace that word in the sentence with the definition to determine if it's correct.

Teacher Aids

The following resources suggest ways to teach comprehension using ABRA.

Interview Character (see *Appendix D*)

This classroom activity requires learners to use their summarizing, prediction, and comprehension monitoring skills to generate and respond to critical thinking questions.

A Mixed Bag (see *Appendix E*)

These classroom activities outline ways you can connect the themes in the story 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' to learners' knowledge of the world around them.

Sequencing: Invisible Alligators (5 excerpts) (see *Appendix F*)

This worksheet presents 5 sections of the story 'Invisible Alligators' and asks the learners to list the order each section happened in the story.

Inferencing: Comprehension Monitoring (see *Appendix G & H*)

These worksheets provide learners with 5 sentences and ask children to draw their understanding of what's happening periodically.



Connections: Understanding the Story (see *Appendix I*)

This document provides an overview of how the ABRA activities are connected, allowing learners to build and practice their comprehension and vocabulary skills.

To get more resources, please visit the ABRA Teacher Resource website:
<https://literacy.concordia.ca/resources/abra/teacher/en/>

Comprehension Monitoring Strategies for the Classroom

Consider the following suggestions to help you approach comprehension and vocabulary instruction in your classroom.

Be explicit with your learners when tackling one of these suggestions in your classroom. That is, explain the strategy, model how they can use it to improve their comprehension, assist them as they try the strategy themselves, and help them practice until they can apply the strategy on their own.

Here are some strategies to explore:

- Teach Learners Comprehension Monitoring Strategies.
- Recognize Standard Story Structure.
- Direct Vocabulary Instruction.

Teach Learners Comprehension Monitoring Strategies

Guide learners to develop their self-regulation skills, by helping them see where they are having comprehension problems and how they could clear up their confusion.

Ask your learners to:

- Stop periodically and check to see if they understand what they have read so far.
- Restate the text in their own words.
- Identify which sentence, paragraph or page they are struggling with.
- Articulate what they find confusing about this section.
- Review what they've read before to help clear up the current context.
- Skim ahead to see if the text might provide some guidance.

Recognize Standard Story Structure

Explain to learners that there are different story elements that appear in the structure of every story. Instruction on how stories are organized helps improve learners' comprehension. Review the following:

- Title (the name of the book)
- Author (the person who wrote the story)
- Illustrator (the person who drew the pictures)
- Characters (the people or animals that are in the story)



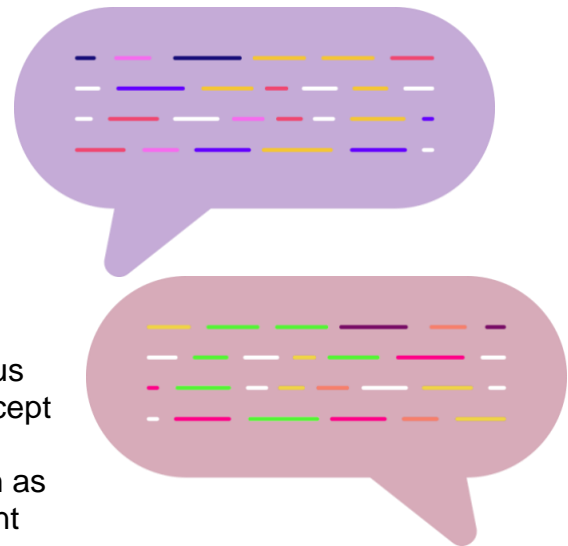
- Setting (when and where the story takes place)
- Plot (the events of the story)
- Conflict/Problem (what the character wants to do)
- Resolution/Solution (how the problem was solved)
- Theme (the message or lesson the story is trying to teach)

Consider having your learners make posters for each of these elements. Posters should have the story element, description, and image. They can be hung them around the classroom to remind learners while they read a new story. Alternatively, you can dedicate a part of your board for this activity, or create these posters on a computer and print them out if possible.

Direct Vocabulary Instruction

When directly teaching learners new vocabulary words, ensure that this instruction is carried out over an extended period of time and is used in multiple contexts. Make sure that learners work actively with the words by engaging them in a conversation about the concept of the word and having them create their own sentences using that word.

When selecting words for direct vocabulary, focus on the ones important to understanding the concept of a text, the words they are likely to see more frequently in other texts, and difficult words such as the ones that have the same spelling but different meanings.



Collaboration and Reflection

Here are some ideas to help you get started.

Lesson Plans

Work with a colleague that teaches the same grade as you. Together create lesson plans (see *Appendix J*), brainstorm activity ideas, and share worksheets. Once you have implemented the lesson, regroup to share your experiences. Discuss both successes and difficulties. Share strategies on how to overcome those difficulties.

- For ePEARL users: attach the lesson or activity to your ePEARL account. *If you don't use ePEARL, write your reflections in your course notebook (see Appendix A).*



- Send a copy to the LTK trainer for evaluation and this will contribute towards attaining a mastery certificate.

Filming Your Lessons

Consider filming your classroom when you're teaching a comprehension lesson, then:

- Share with colleagues to get feedback and/or provide a model for newer teachers.
- For ePEARL users: attach the video to your ePEARL account. After watching the lesson, reflect on the process.
If you don't use ePEARL, write your reflections in your course notebook (see Appendix A).
- Send a copy to the LTK trainer for evaluation and this will contribute towards attaining a mastery certificate.
- Use this template (see *Appendix K*) to create a parental permission form.

Summary

Summary

In this module you learned...

- Comprehension is the goal of reading. It requires the reader to construct meaning using a variety of skills and their own prior knowledge.
- Vocabulary is knowing what words mean. It helps us understand and communicate with others.
- Children develop most of their vocabulary indirectly through conversations with others. Some words require direct instruction.
- Children can use a variety of skills to help them understand a text, such as identifying story elements, predicting future events, and summarizing what they have just read. It is important for children to monitor their own comprehension and develop strategies for when they don't know what a text is about.
- ABRACABABRA has 8 activities to help children develop these skills.





Appendices

- A: Comprehension Course Notebook
- B: The Little Red Hen
- C: How a Bean Sprouts
- D: Interview Character
- E: A Mixed Bag
- F: Sequencing: Invisible Alligators (5 Excepts)
- G: Inferencing: Comprehension Monitoring (Rain)
- H: Inferencing: Comprehension Monitoring (Giraffe)
- I: Connections: Understanding the Story
- J: Lesson Plan Template
- K: Parental Permission Form Template





Reflect on Your Past Experiences

How can you tell if a child has understood what they read?

What teaching strategies have you tried in your classroom to foster learners' comprehension skills? What worked and what didn't?

How are your learner's comprehension skills impacted by their vocabulary knowledge?





What questions do you have about comprehension and vocabulary instruction?

Understand Text: Watch the Videos

What did I learn from these videos?

Comprehension: _____

Vocabulary: _____

What questions do I have after watching these videos?





ABRACADABRA

Which comprehension skills do your learners struggle with the most?

Which ABRA activities could you use to build these skills?

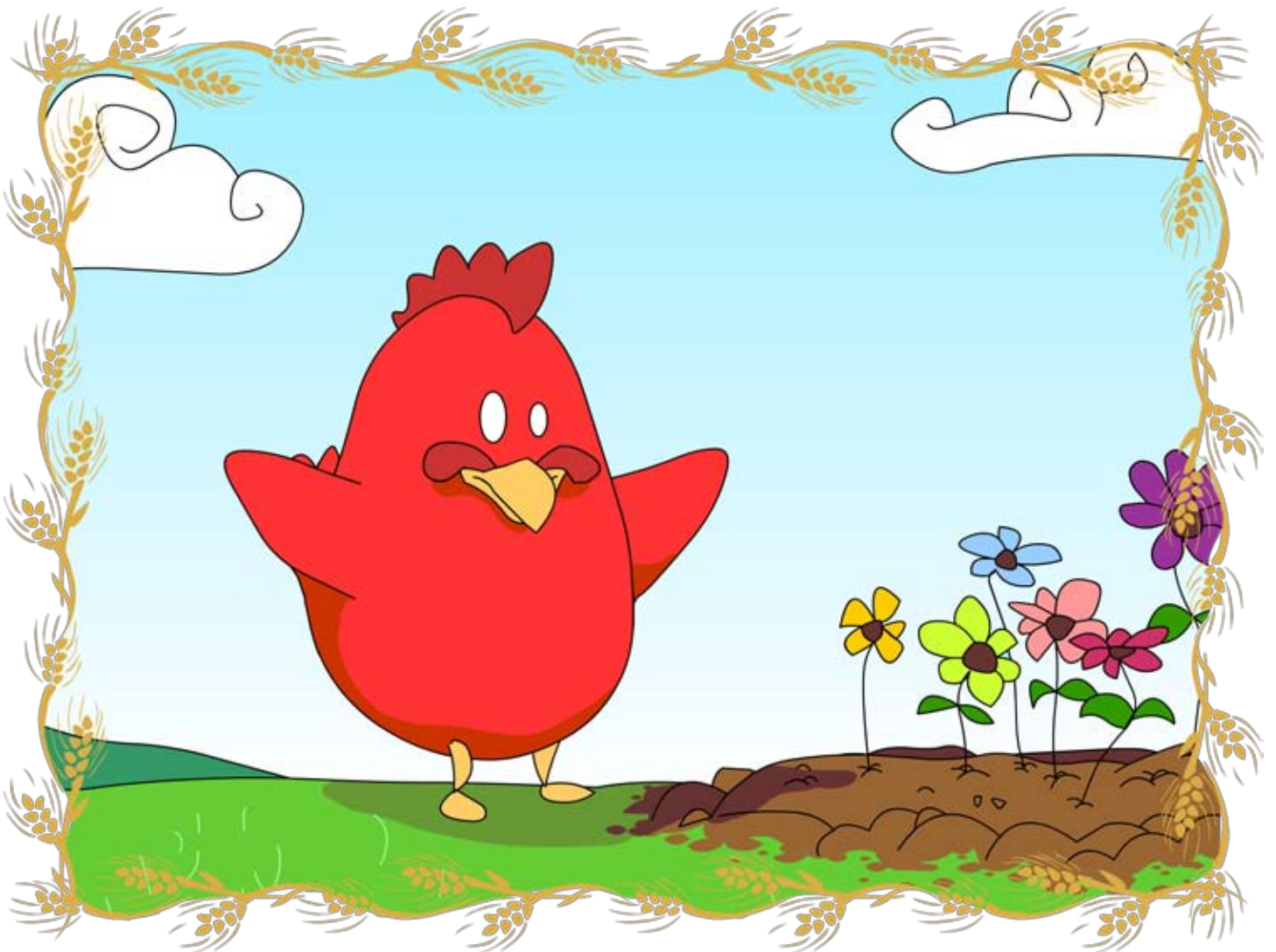
How can you use these activities? Make a specific plan.

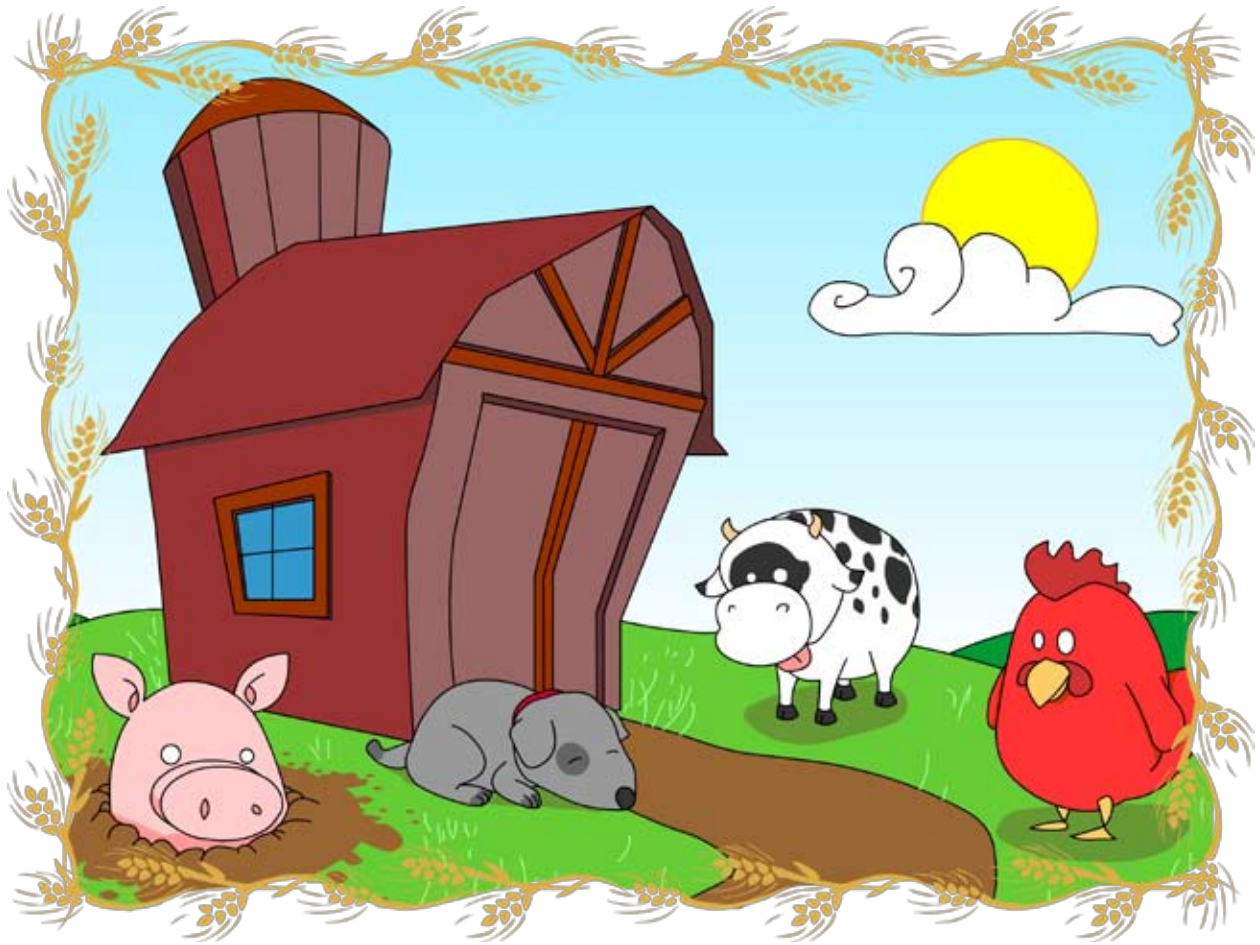
What challenges do you see in carrying out this plan? How can you overcome them?

NOTE: If possible, meet with your colleagues to go over your plan.



The Little Red Hen





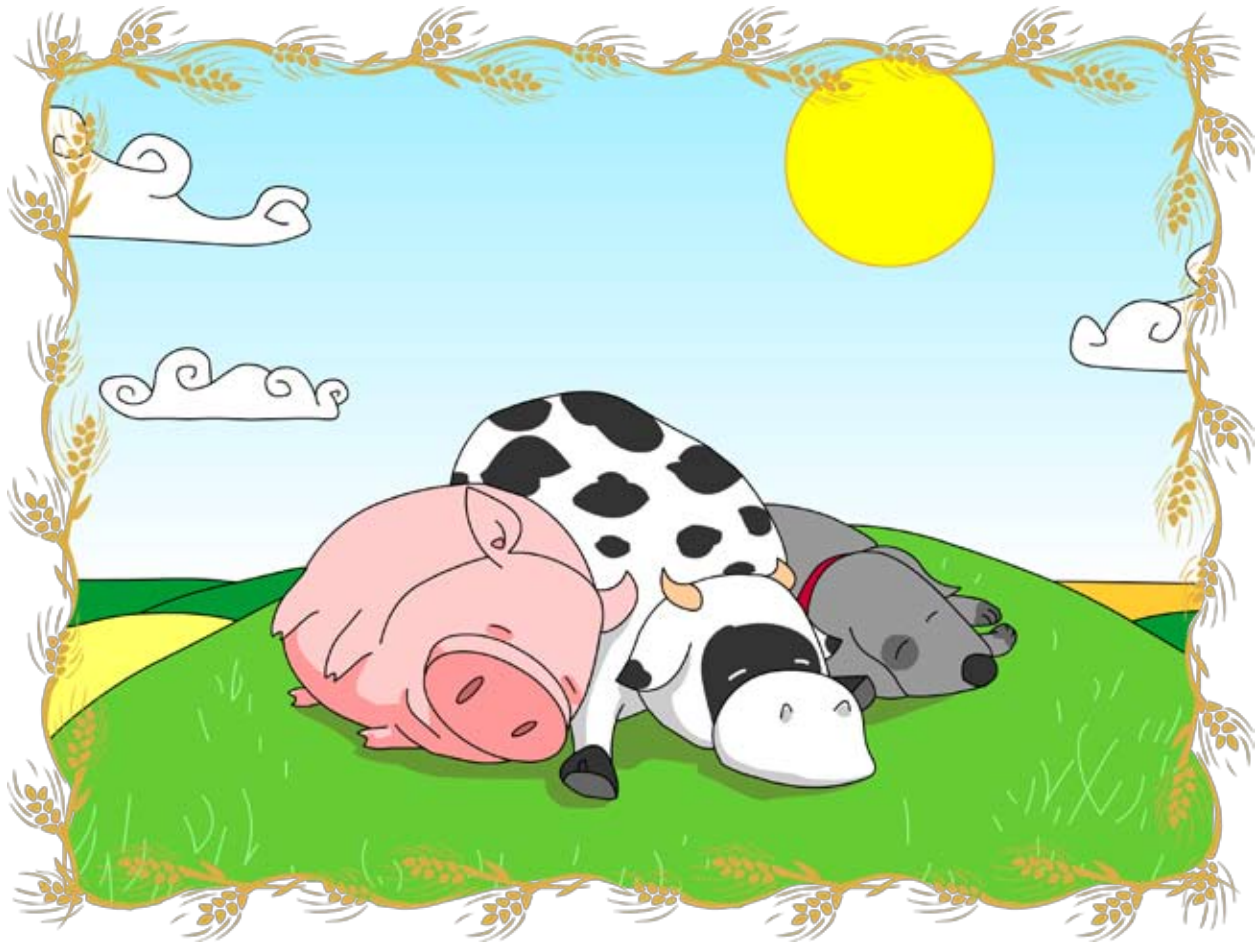
Once upon a time, Little Red Hen lived on a farm with a dog, a pig and a cow.





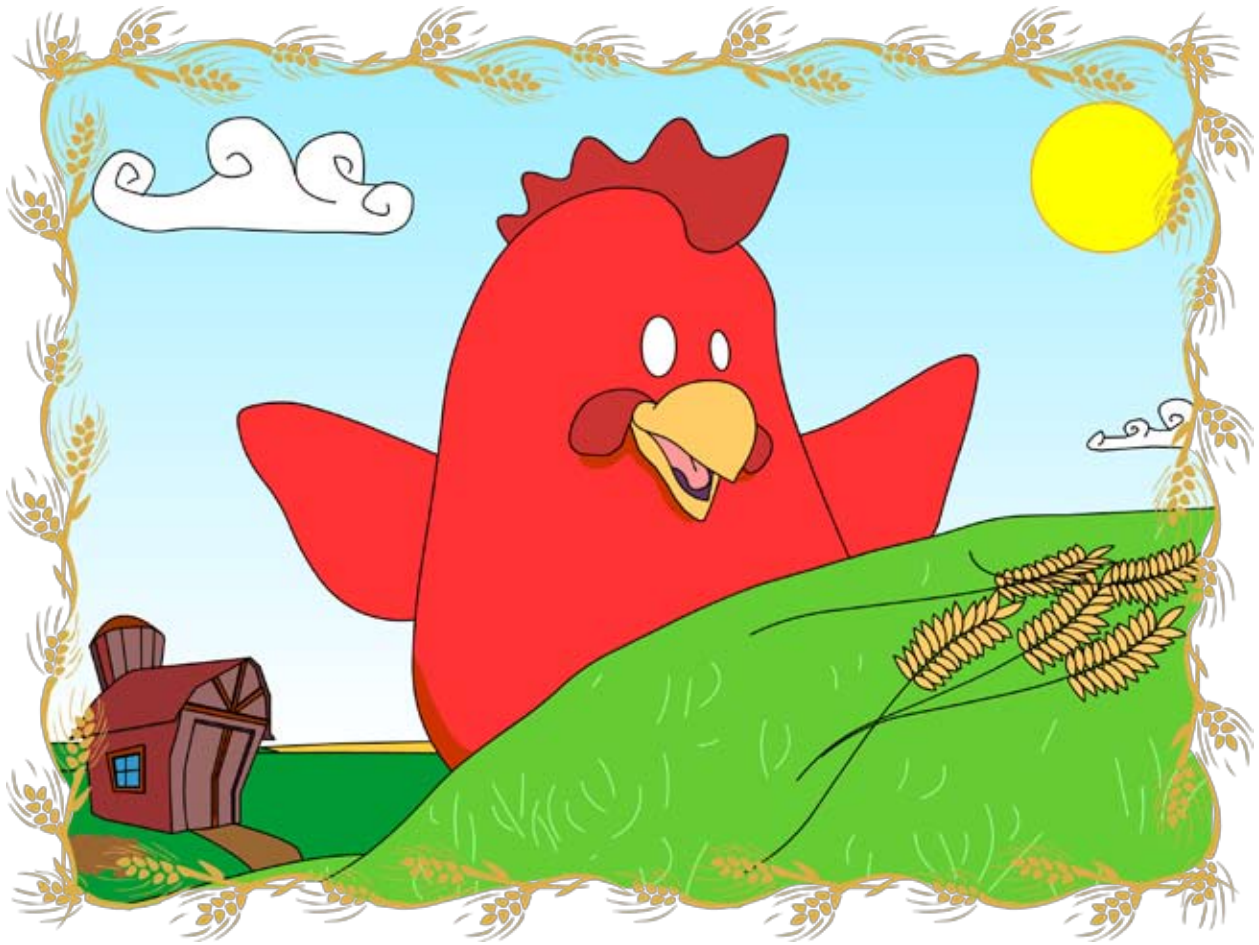
Little Red Hen worked hard every day to grow plants in her garden.





The dog, the pig, and the cow did nothing but sleep all day in the warm sun and watch Little Red Hen work in her garden.





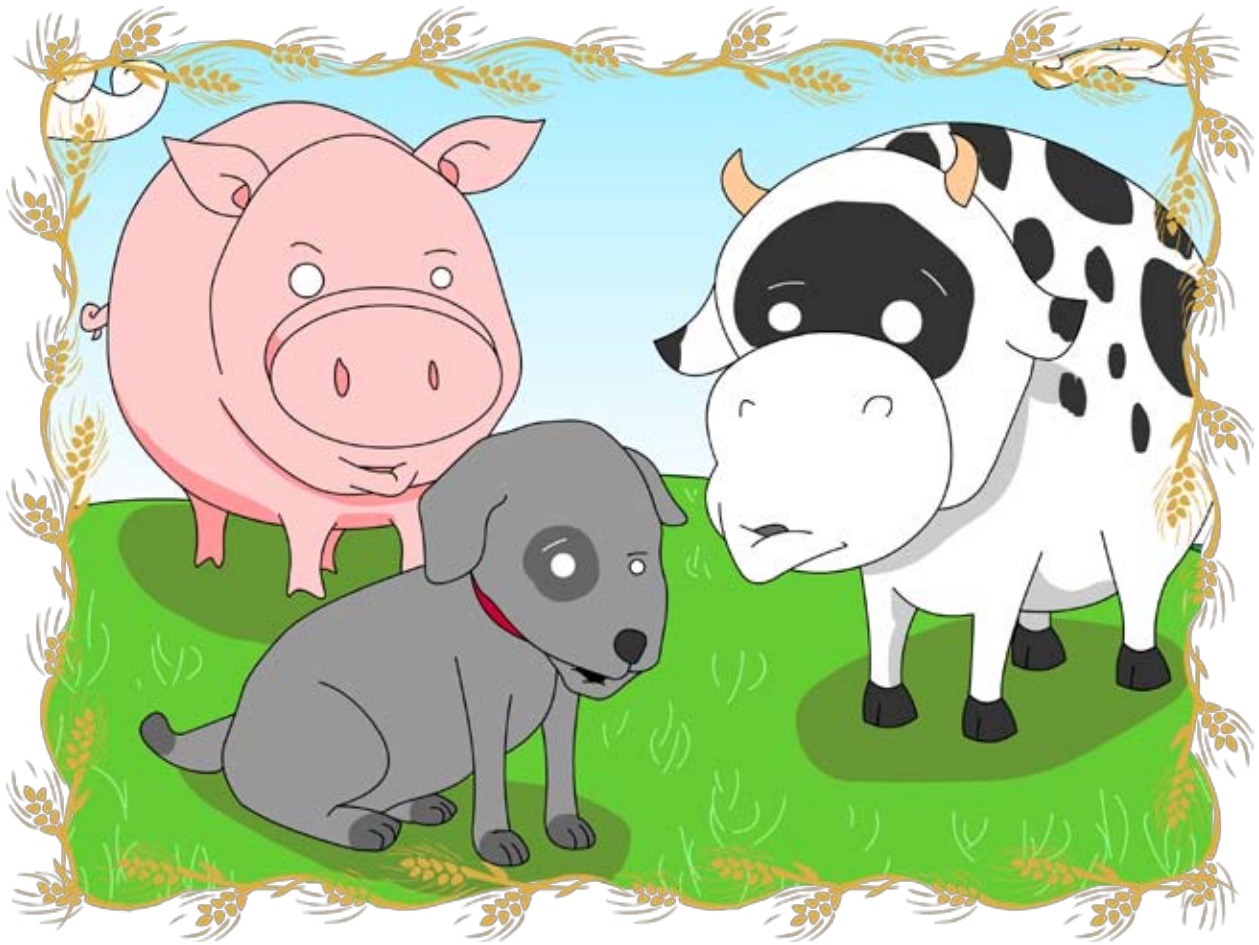
One day, Little Red Hen found a grain of wheat.





“Who will help me plant this wheat so that we can eat fresh bread?” she said.





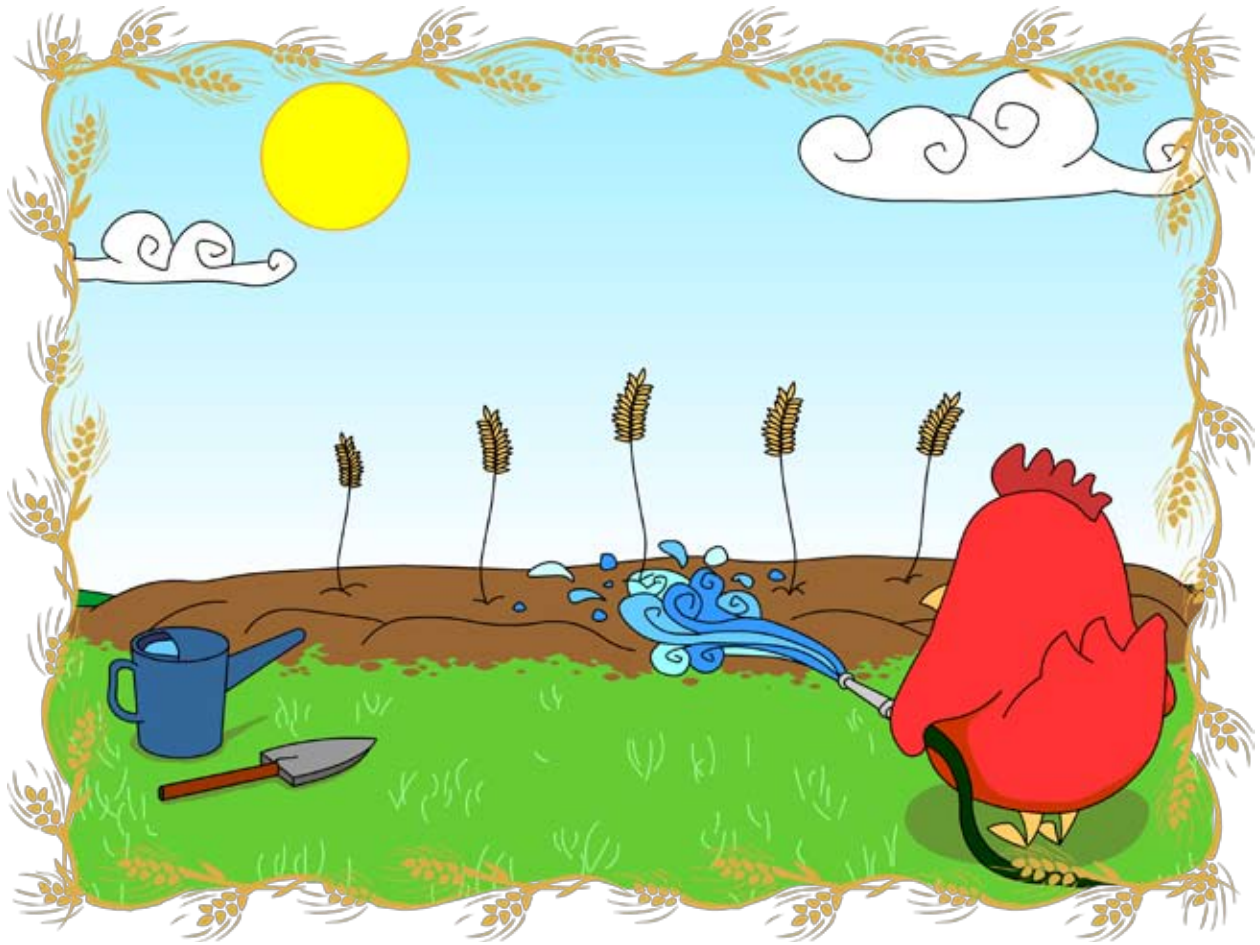
"Not I," said the dog.
"Not I," said the pig.
"Not I," said the cow.





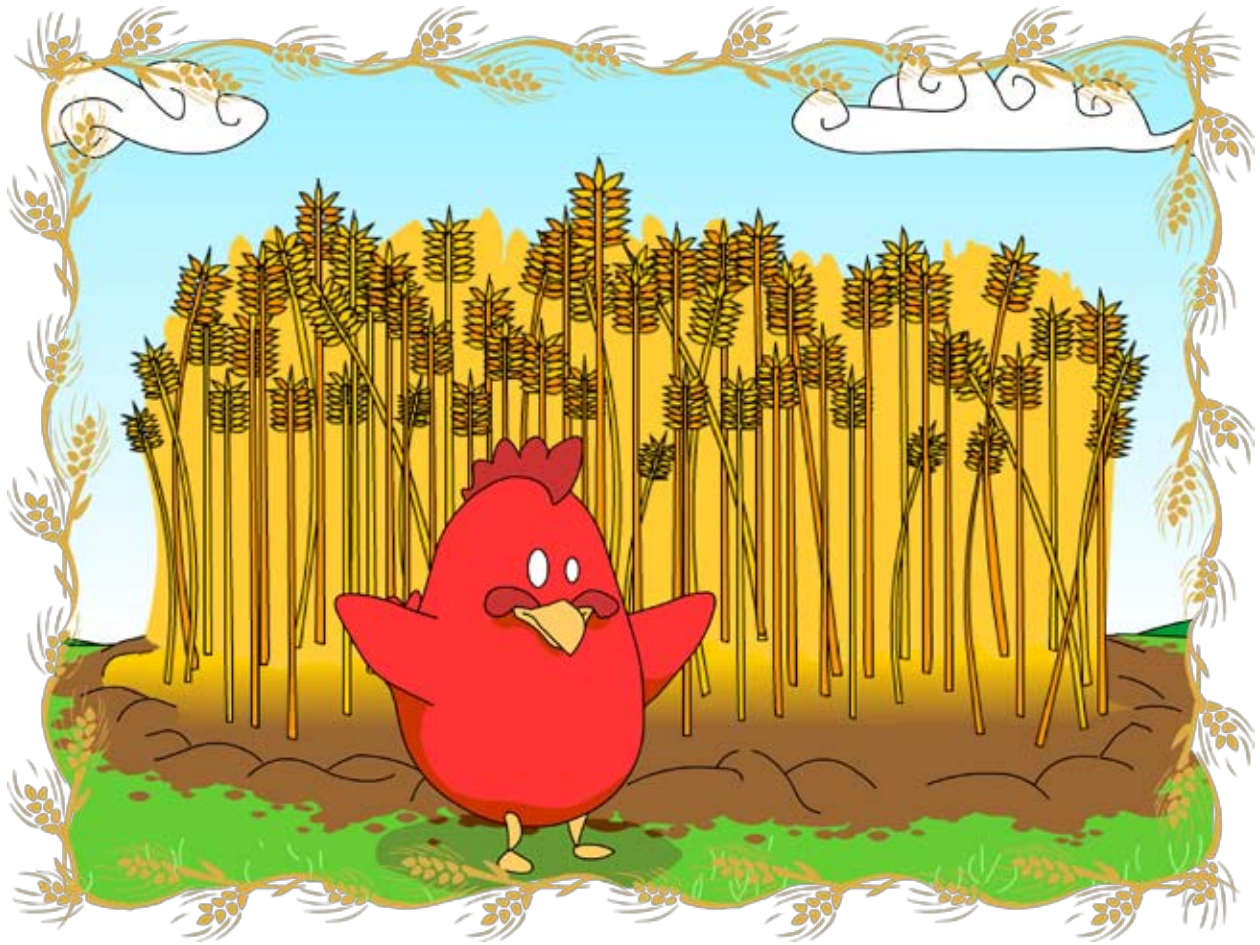
“I will plant it myself then,” said Little Red Hen, and she planted the grain of wheat.





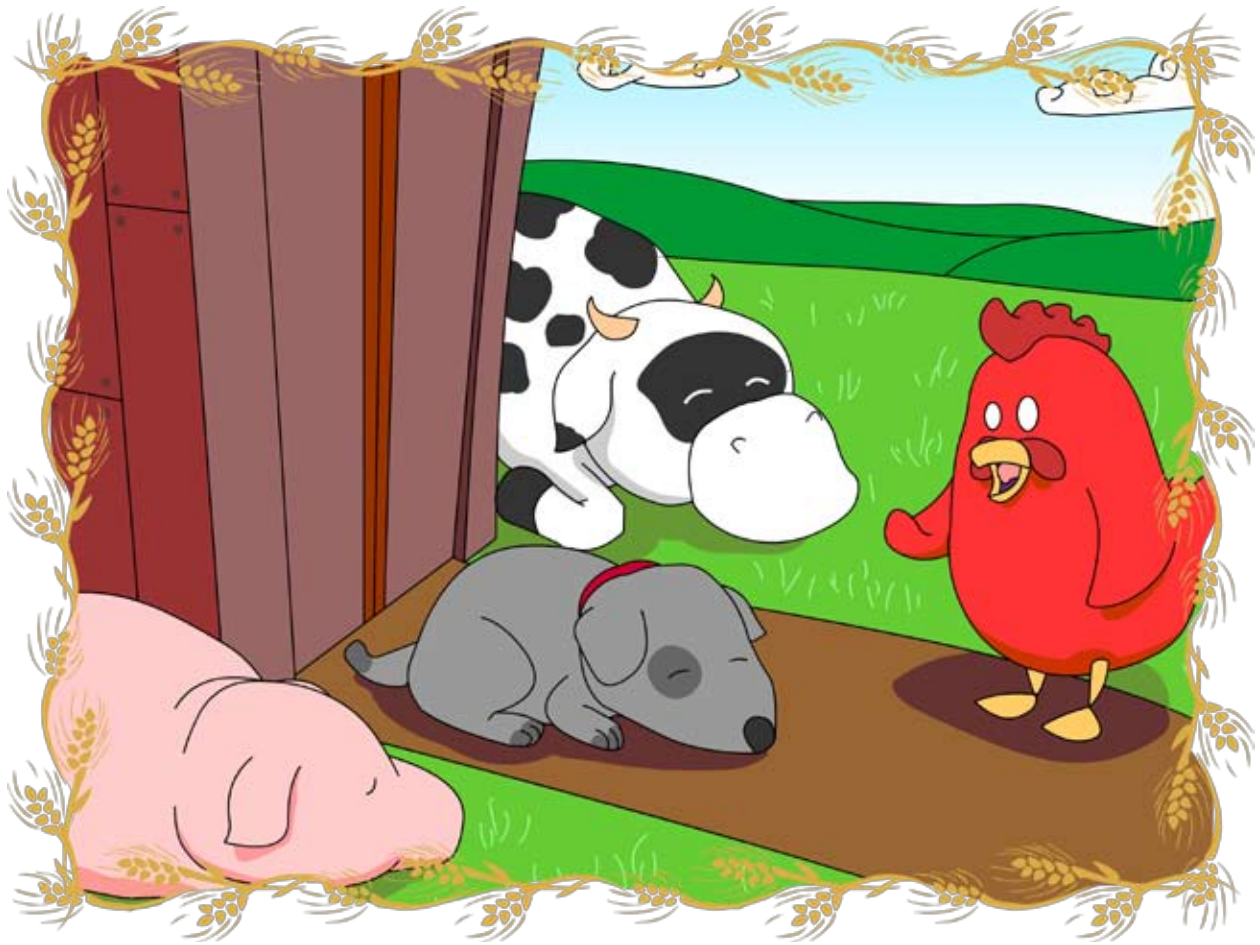
Little Red Hen took good care of her wheat,
but the dog, the pig and the cow said they were
too tired to help.





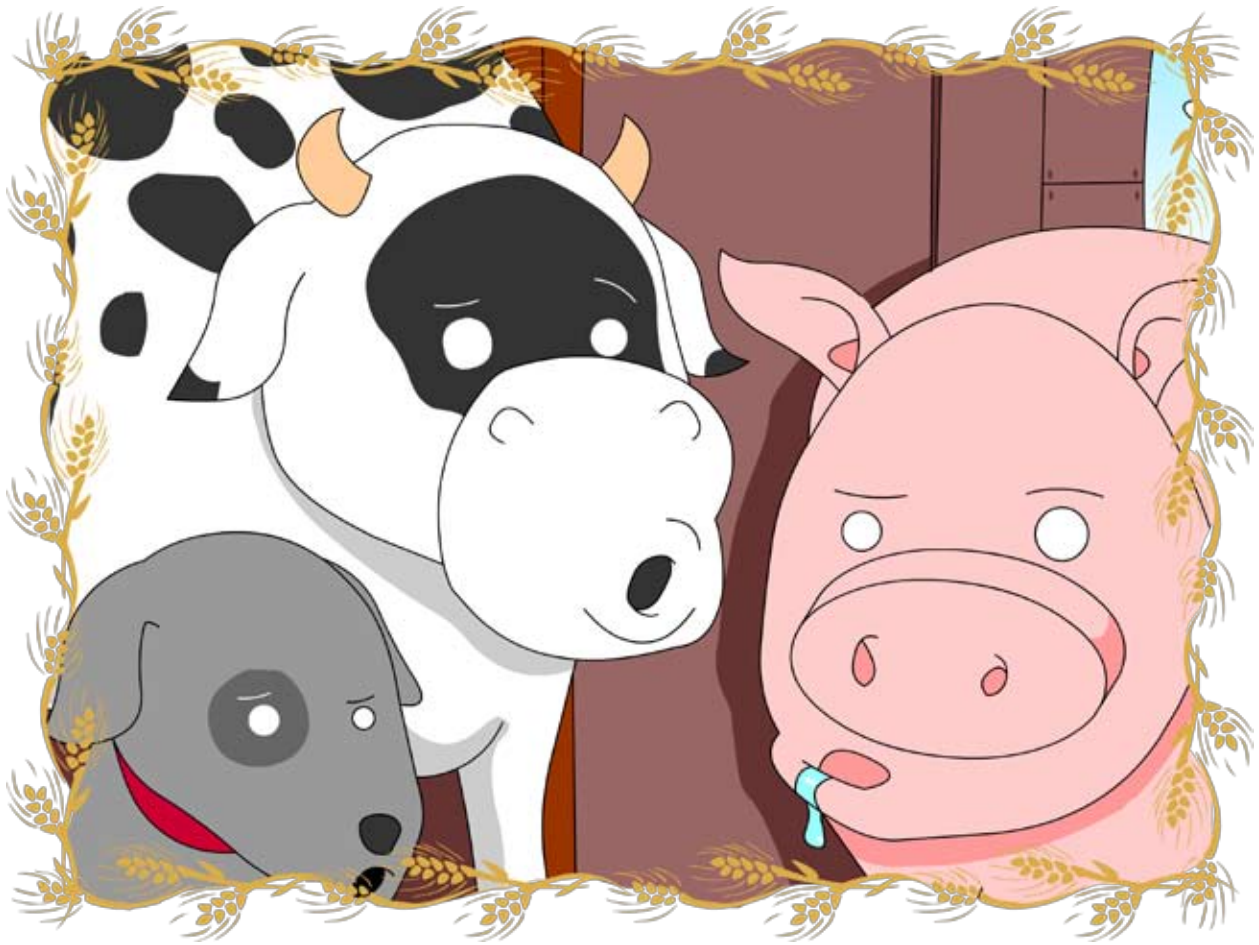
By the end of the summer, the wheat grew very tall. It was time to cut the wheat and take it to the mill.





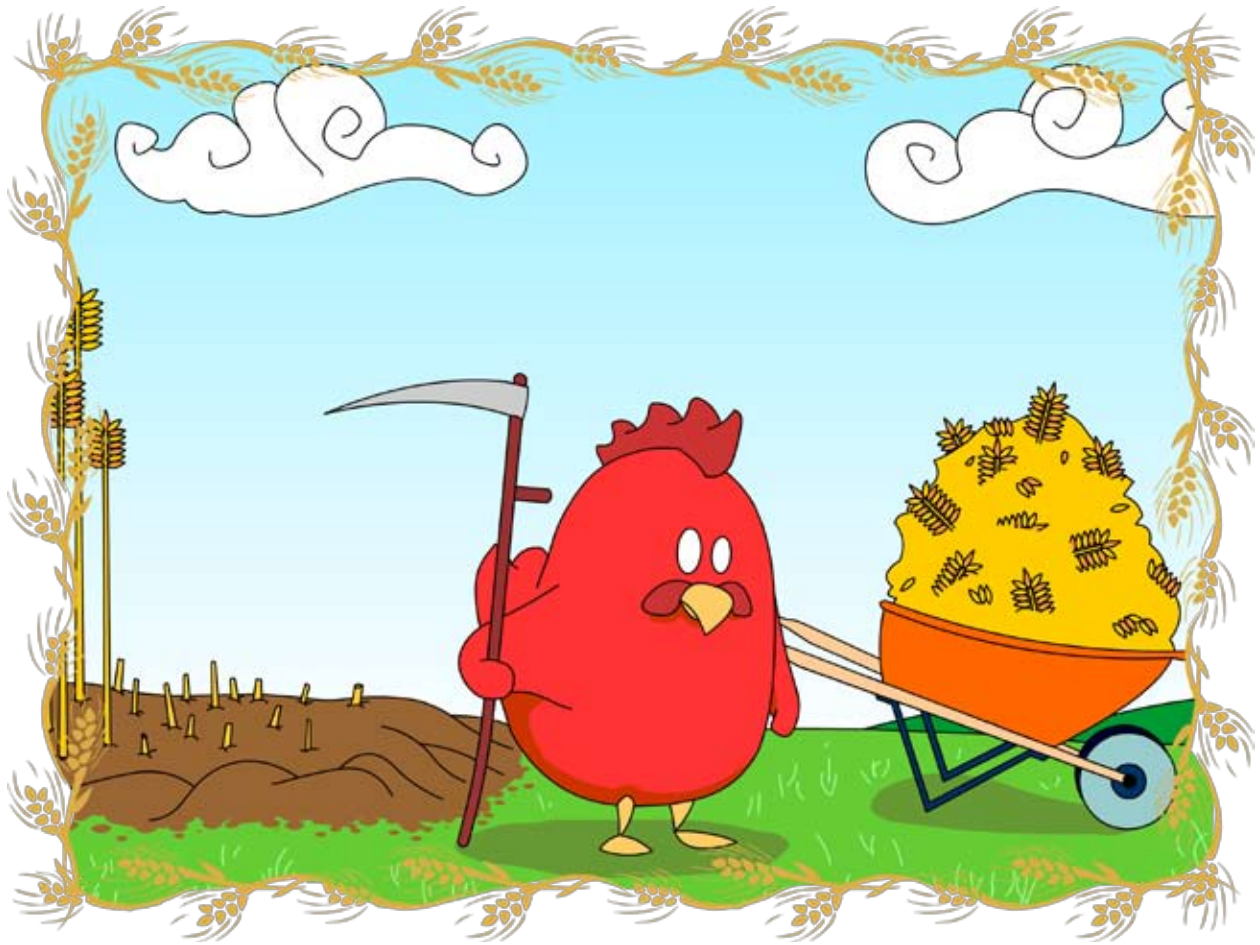
“Who will help me cut the wheat and take it to the mill so that we can have fresh bread?”





"Not I," said the dog.
"Not I," said the pig.
"Not I," said the cow.





“Well then, I will take it to the mill myself,”
said Little Red Hen, and she cut the wheat and
set off for the mill.





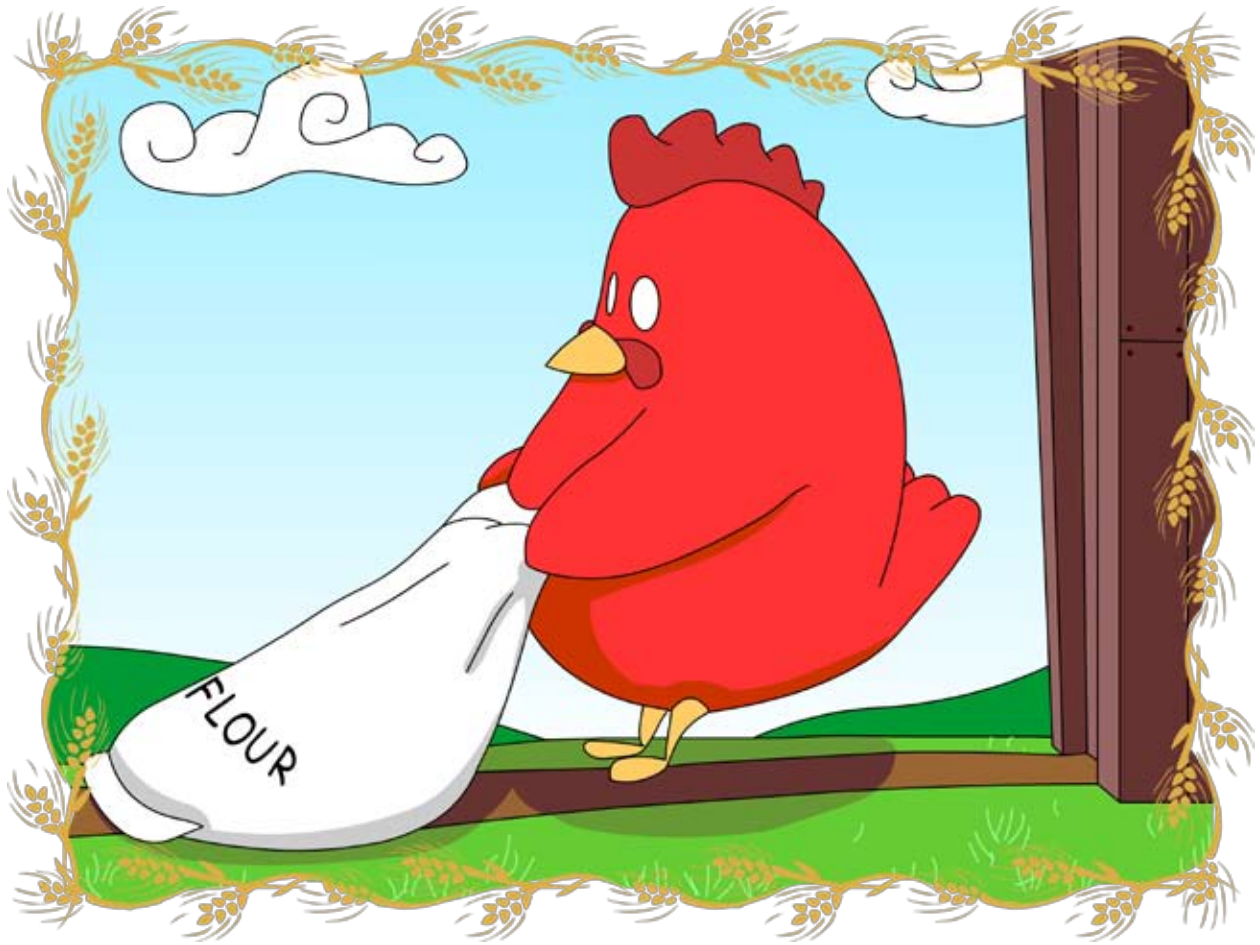
After the miller made wheat into soft flour, she came back to the farm and asked, "Who will help me bake the bread?"





"Not I," said the dog.
"Not I," said the pig.
"Not I," said the cow.





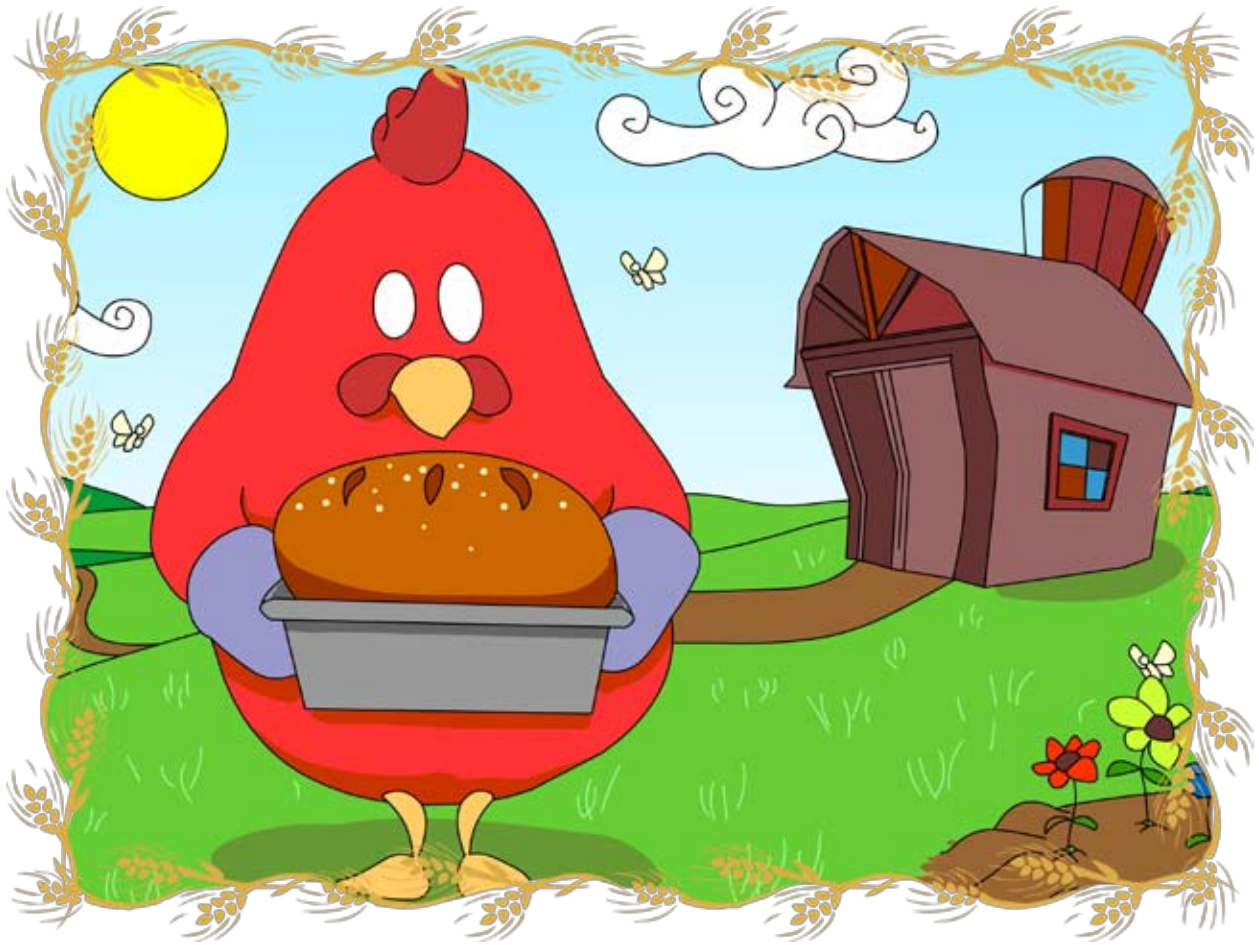
“Well then, I will bake the bread myself.”
And she did just that!





She mixed the flour with salt and yeast to make the dough. After the dough rose, she put it in the oven to bake.





When the bread was done, she asked,
“Who will help me eat the bread?”





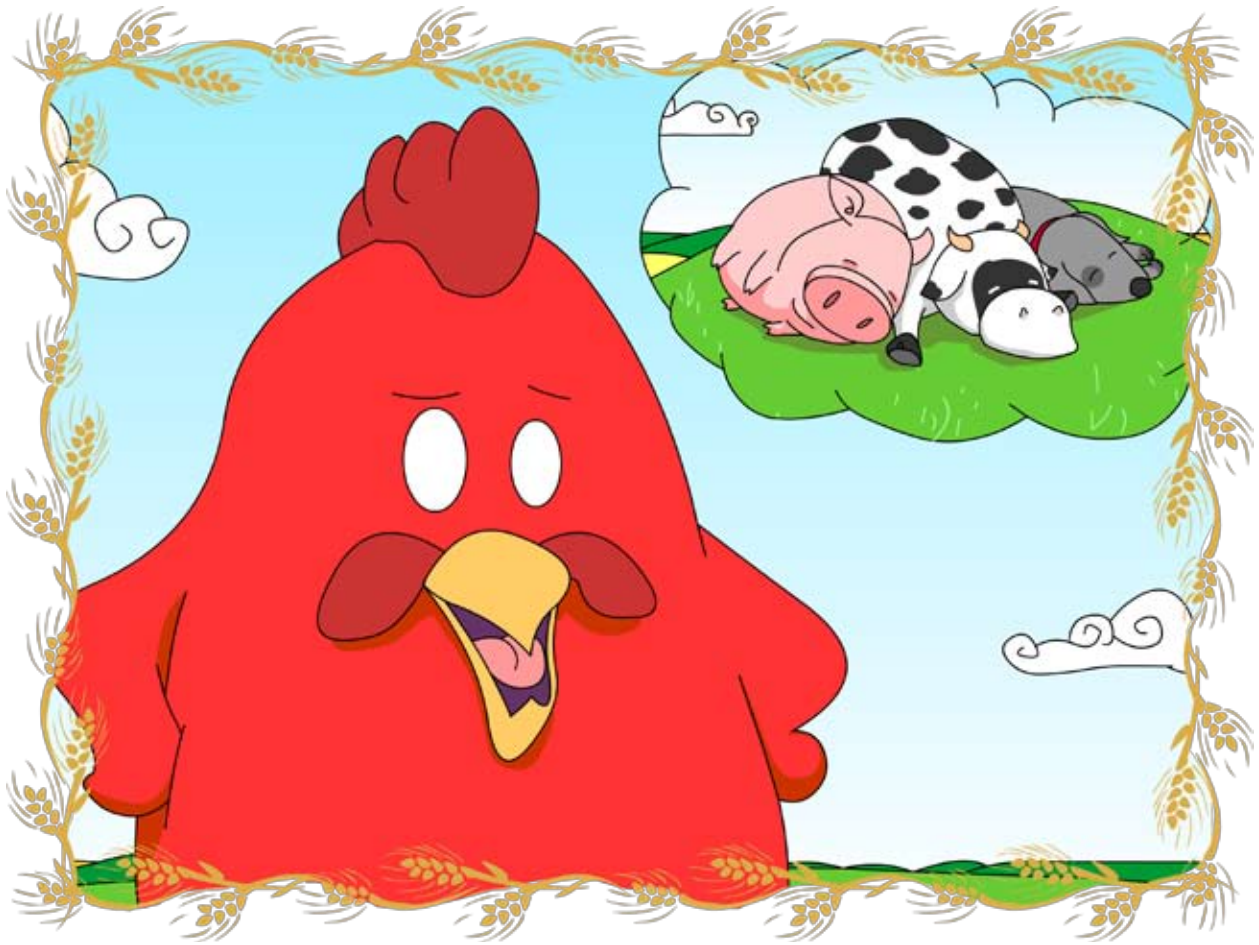
"I will", said the dog.
"I will", said the pig.
"I will", said the cow.





"No, you will not," said Little Red Hen.





“You did not help me plant the grain, and you did not help me care for it. You did not help me cut it and take it to the mill. You did not even help me make the bread. I will eat it myself.”

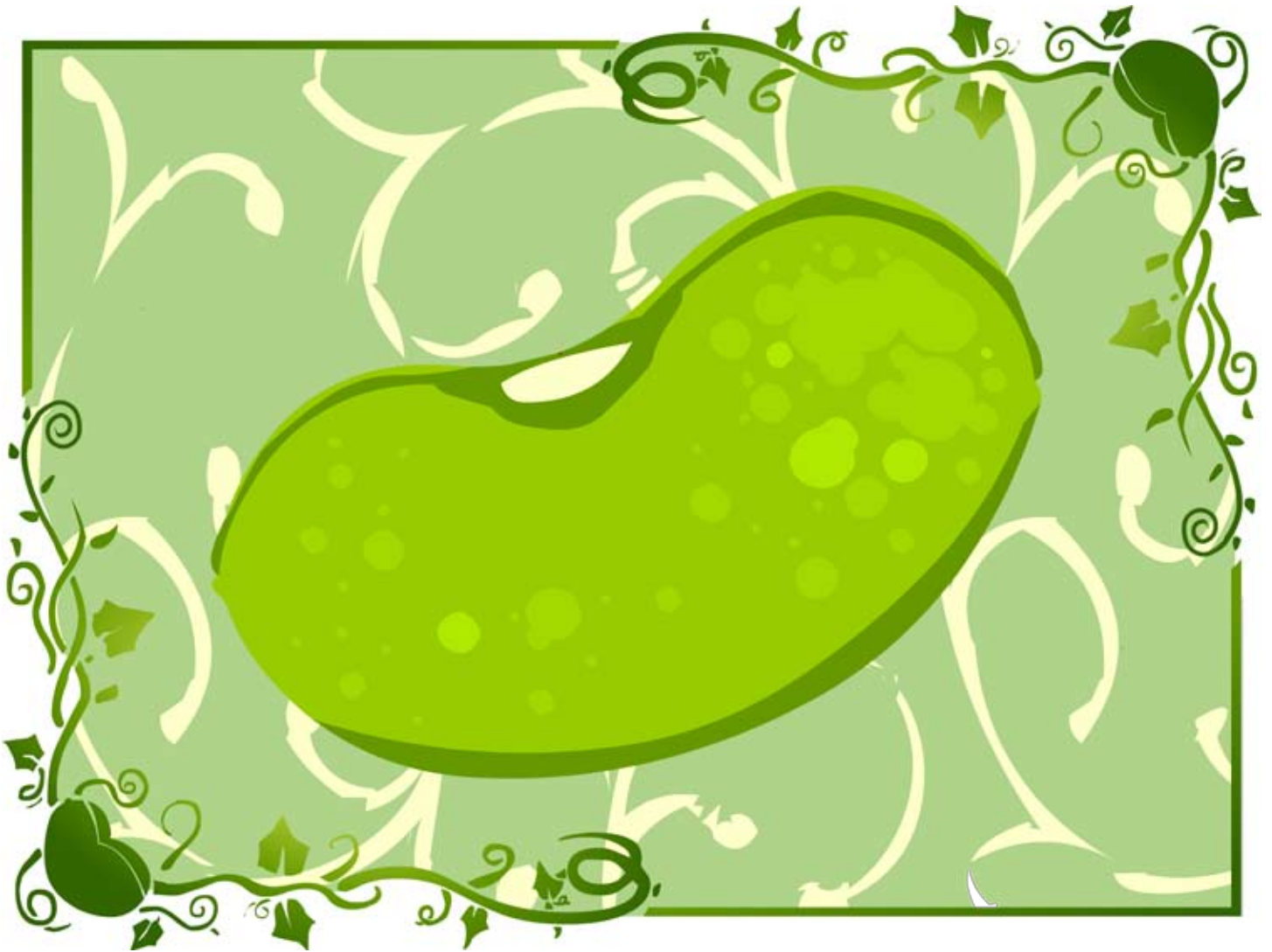


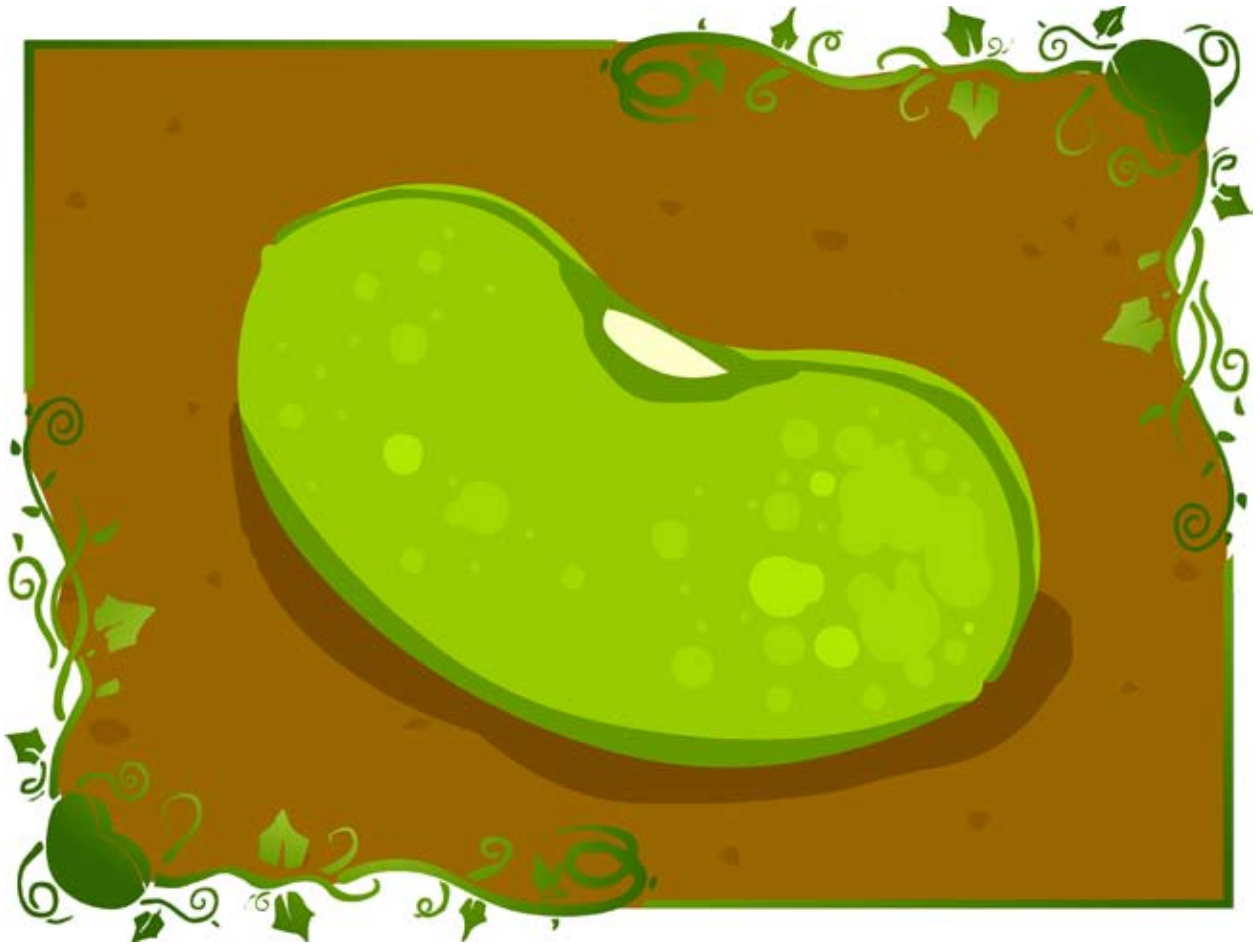


And she did.



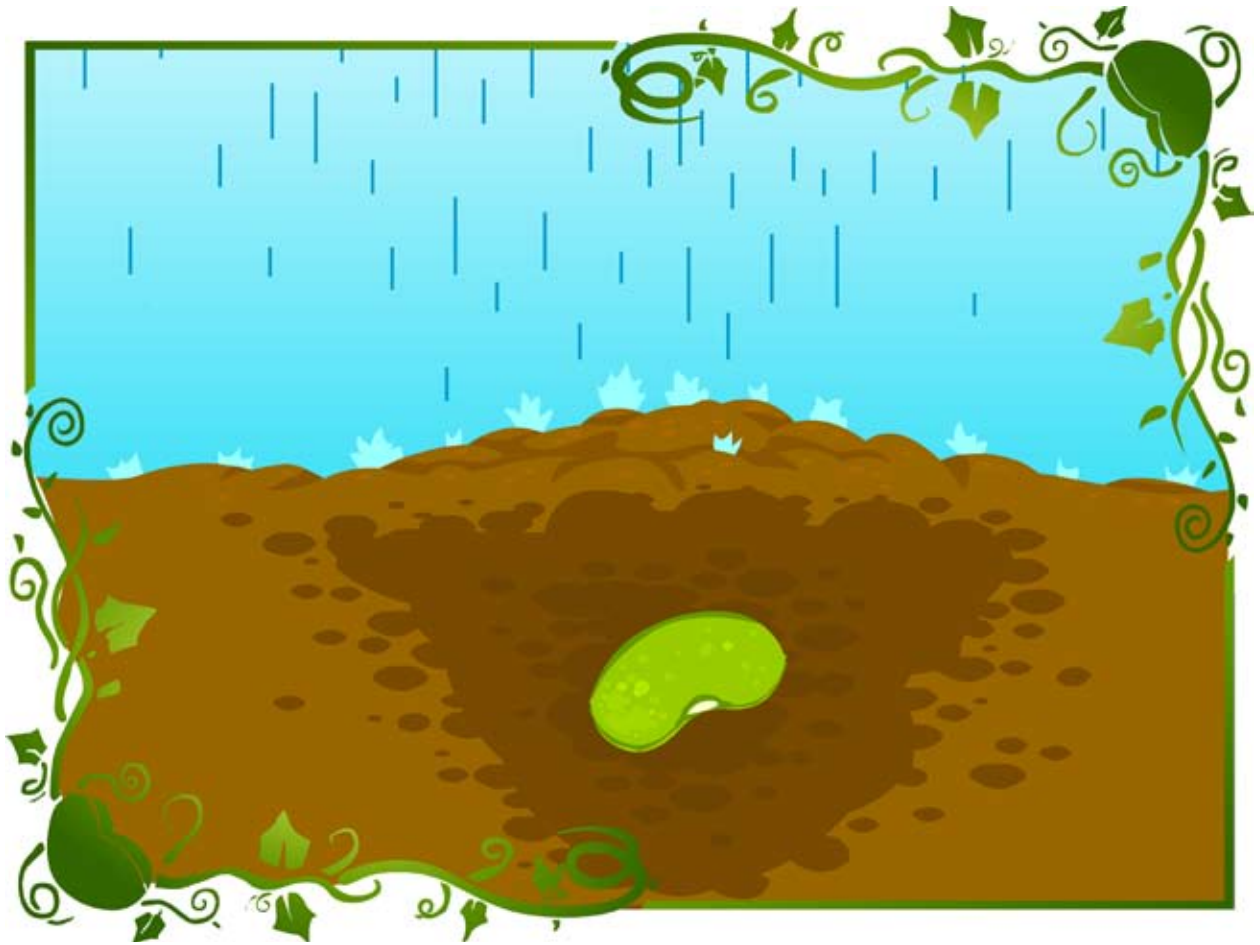
How a Bean Sprouts





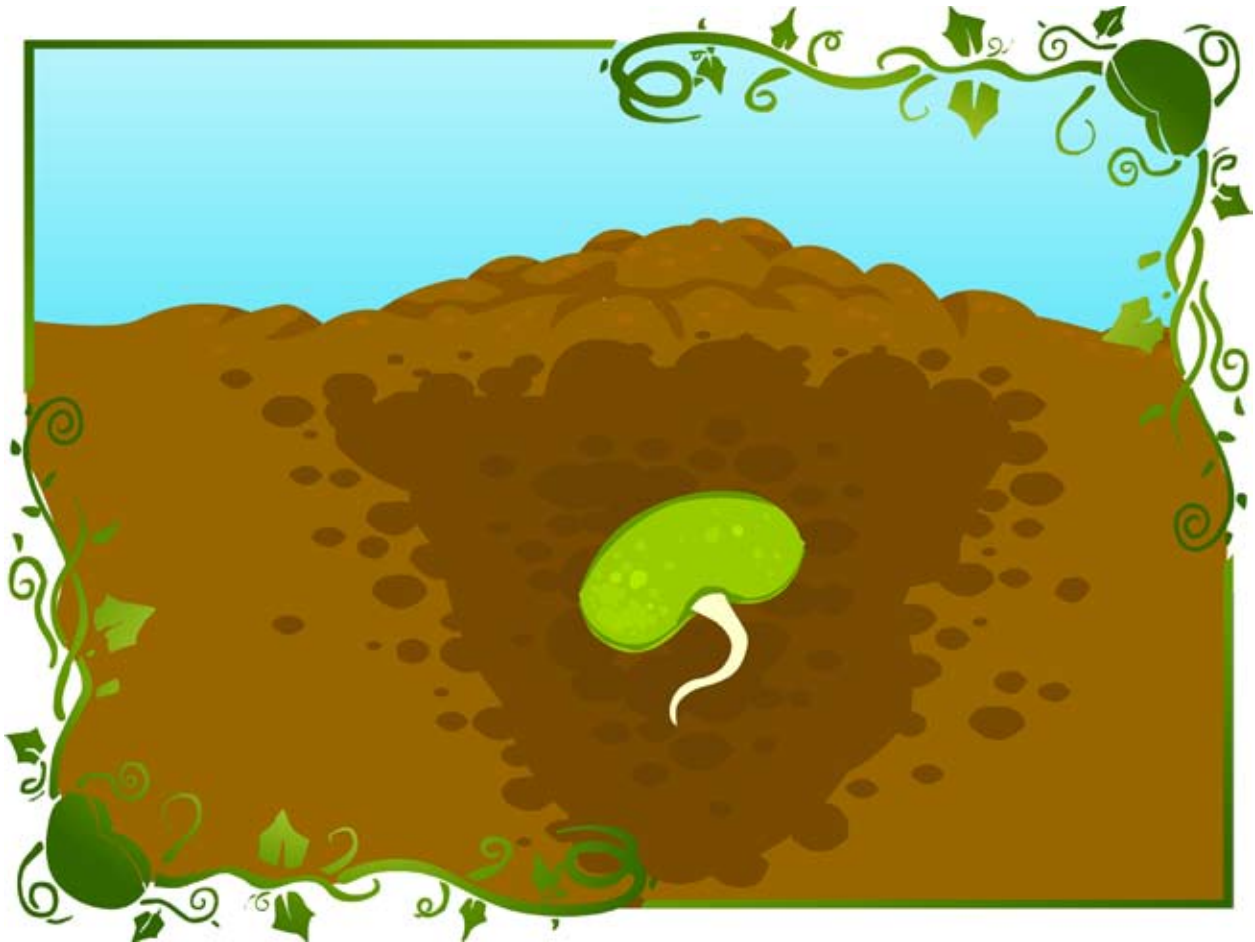
This is a bean. You can plant a bean and watch it grow.





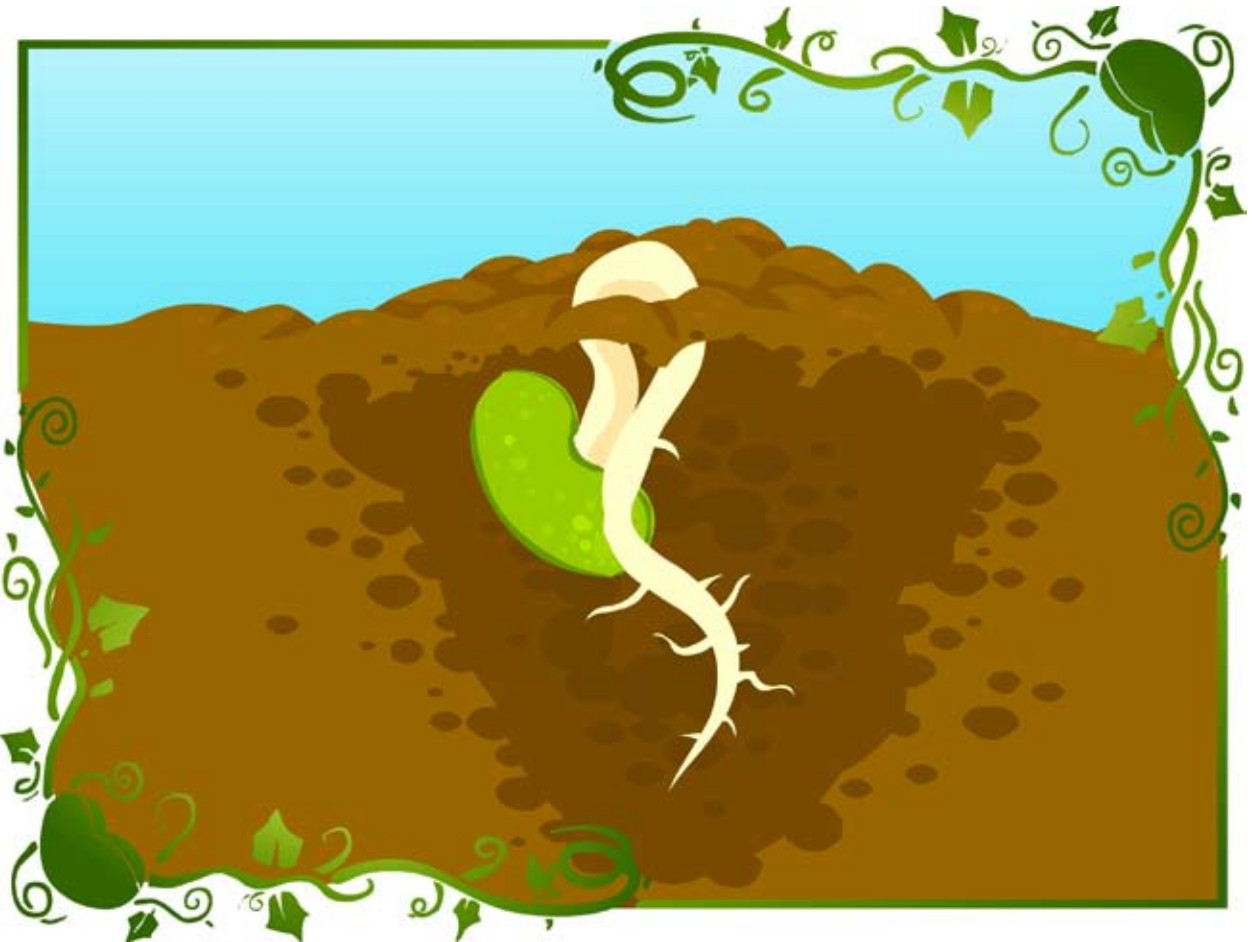
A bean seed must be planted in wet soil.





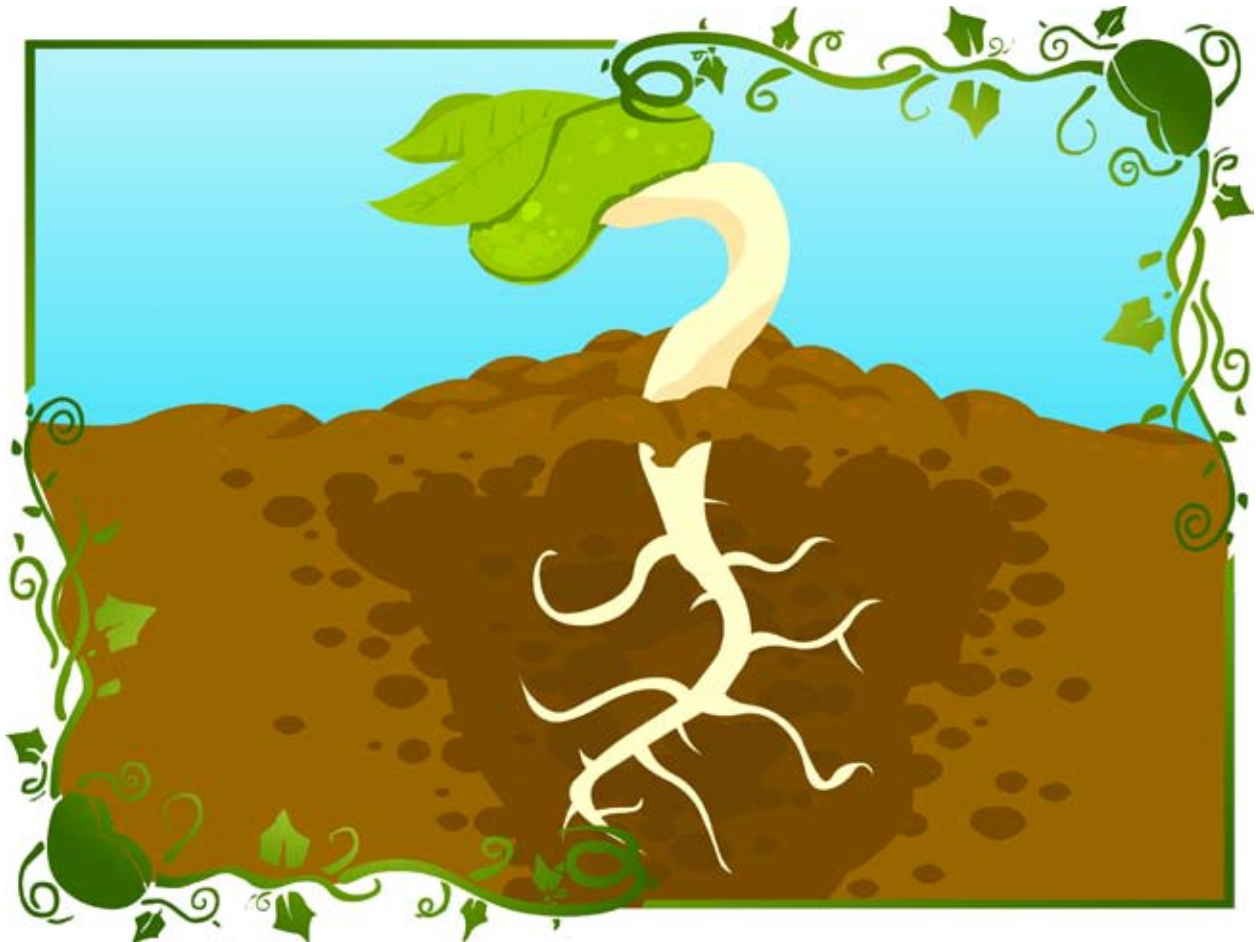
After many days in the soil, the first root begins to grow. It pushes down into the wet soil to get food.





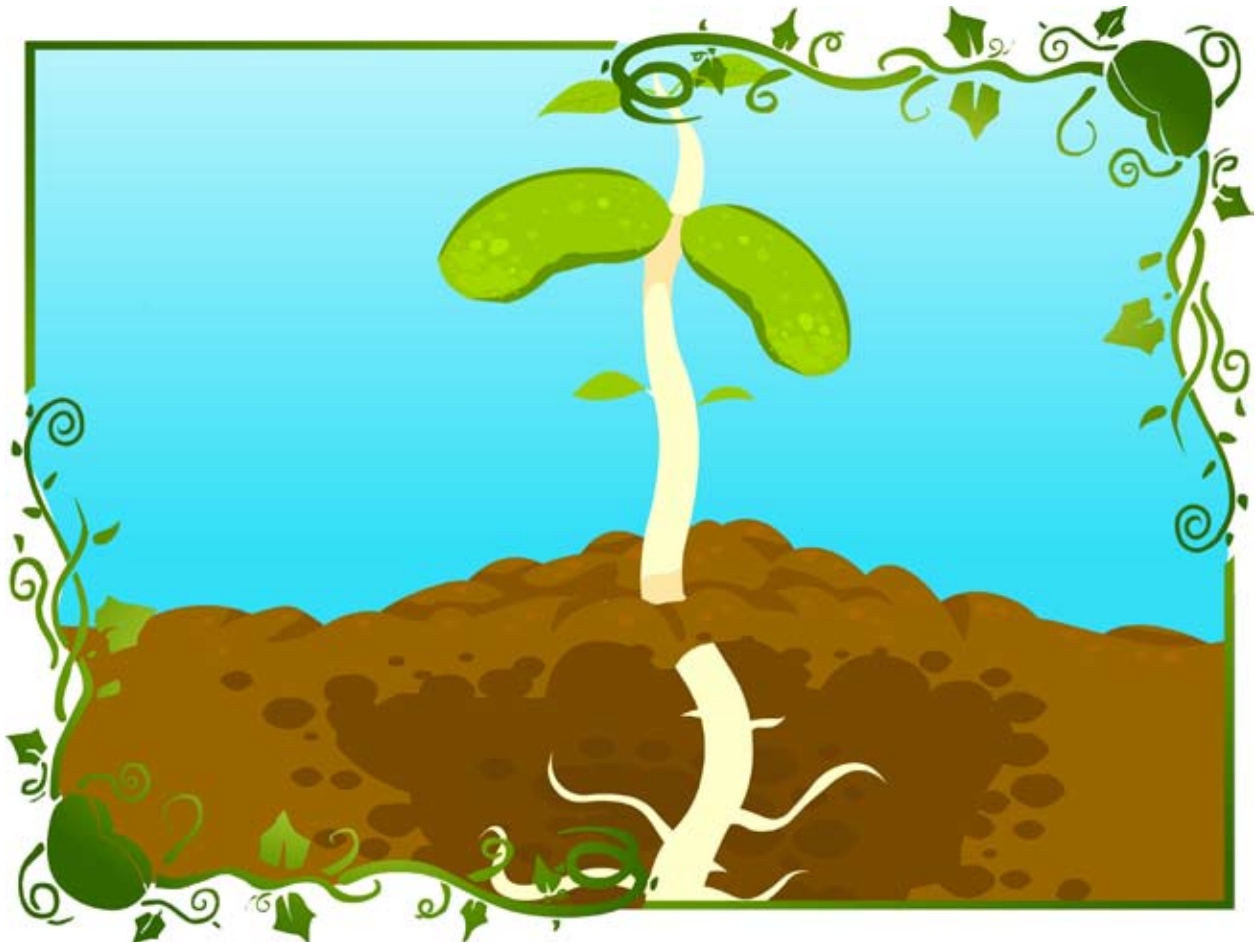
Each day the root grows deeper and deeper into the soil. The part of the root that is near the top begins to push itself out of the soil. This part of the root will become the stem.





Day after day the stem becomes stronger. It becomes so strong that it pulls the bean seed out of the soil. The first leaves begin to grow out of the bean seed.





At last, the stem has become so strong that it stands tall towards the sky. The strong stem is called the shoot. Leaves begin to sprout from the shoot.





The shoot grows and grows to become a bean sprout.



INTERVIEW CHARACTER

Develop Critical Thinking Through Interviews

OBJECTIVE

The learner will be able to generate and respond to critical thinking questions.


TIME

45 minutes.

MATERIALS

Computer, and writing materials.

WARM UP: READ A STORY IN ABRA

1. Sign in to ABRACADABRA.
2. Choose the category *Understanding the Story*.
3. Choose *Story Response* from the activity list. 
4. Select a story from the available list.
5. Click on *Go*.
6. Click on *Play*.
7. Watch and assist as the child does this activity.

PLANNING THE INTERVIEWS

1. Pick an ABRA story.
2. Group learners into pairs or groups of four.
3. Direct learners to brainstorm questions to ask the main character.
4. Suggest groups answer the questions as if they were the main characters.
5. Learners should write down their favourite 5 questions.

Possible questions:

- Use *Story Response* questions.
- What do you think the other characters should have done?
- Why did you [action in plot]?
- What are you really good at?
- Is there anything you'd change? Why?

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

1. Pair off learners.
2. Assign a role to each learner: interviewer or main character.
3. Give learners time to practice their questions and answers. Interviewer should also have a script to introduce them.
4. Set up the front of the class as if it was a TV interview set. *You could record for future use or to share with parents.*
5. Have each group come up for their interview.
6. Discuss the similarities and differences between interview questions once all groups have presented.

A MIXED BAG

Activities around The Three Billy Goats Gruff

OBJECTIVE

The learner will practice themes related to *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* story.

TIME

45 minutes.

MATERIALS

Cue cards, puppets, writing/colouring materials.

WARM UP: READ A STORY IN ABRA

1. Sign in to ABRACADABRA.
2. Choose the category *Fiction* in the Books section.
3. Select *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* from the available list.
4. Click on *Go*.
5. Click on *Read*.



CENTRES: ABOUT THE STORY

Divide learners into groups. They will rotate through the following centres:

Sequencing: print out the images of the story and cut into their own cards. Shuffle the cards. Pick 5 at random. Learners arrange the cards in order. You can write the sequence order on the back so they can check their work.

Theatre: Re-enact the story using teacher-made puppets and a puppet theater. Cue cards can be placed at the center in case they need help.

Note: Alternatively, learners can take on the role of the troll, goats, and/or narrator for their re-enactment.

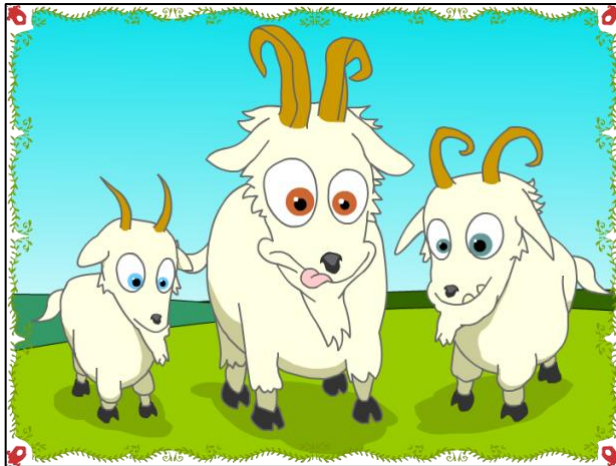
CENTRES: BEYOND THE STORY

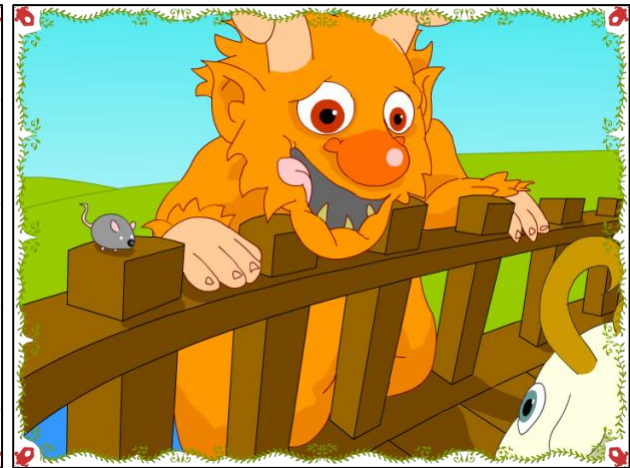
Divide learners into groups. They will rotate through the following stations:

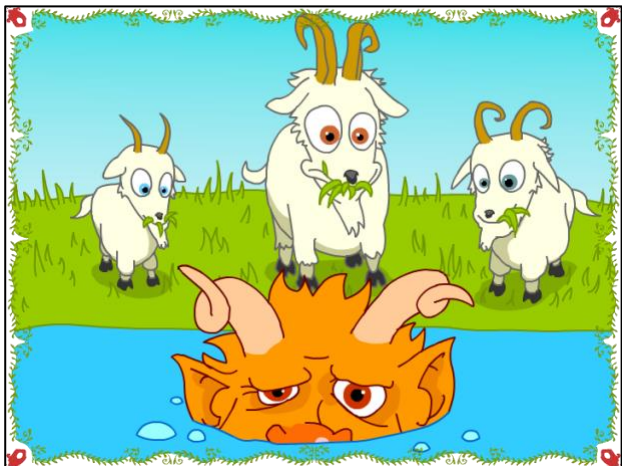
Math: Do a math activity based on the concept of big, bigger and biggest. For example, print out and cut the cards on page 5. Arrange the cards in ascending order on the desk. Using items around the classroom, ask learners to categorize similar items (beads, the learners' shoes, print out of the ABRA characters, etc.).

Morals: Discuss in groups how to deal with potential bullying situations presented on cards (sample cards on page 6). They can draw a picture of how to deal with the situation and how that situation would make them feel.

Print out the following images for the sequencing centre.







Print out the following cards for the math centre.

Big

Bigger

Biggest

Small

Smaller

Smallest



Print out the following cards for the morals centre.

Sally said she did not like Alex's hair.

Moe pushed Myung.

Jayden, Zain, and Rico told Marcia she had funny glasses.

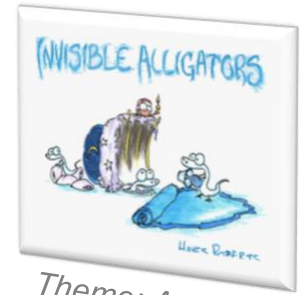
Shelly hit Corey because he pulled her hair.

Neha told Irina that she thinks Penny is ugly.

Minako told the whole class embarrassing stories about Anton.



SEQUENCING: INVISIBLE ALLIGATORS



Theme: Animals

- 1) Read the story Invisible Alligators in ABRACADABRA.
- 2) In the table below, write the order of the events.

Order	Part of the Story	
	That night she stayed awake long after bedtime. Long enough to hear the rustling of long tails under her bed.	
	She flipped her bed over and found invisible alligators all over her room. "What's going on here?" she demanded.	
	Then she found her stairs covered in toys. She tripped on one and had to pick them all up.	
	A young monkey named Sari woke up one morning and knew there was trouble.	
	She'd had enough.	

INFERENCING / COMPREHENSION MONITORING




Read the following sentences. Where there is a box, draw a picture to show what has happened in the story so far.

John went outside to play.

He came home soaking wet.

His mother was mad because he made a mess.



John's brother helped him clean up.

John took an umbrella when he went back outside to play.



Name: _____ Date: _____

INFERENCE / COMPREHENSION MONITORING



Read the following sentences. Where there is a box, draw a picture to show what has happened in the story so far.

The giraffe was looking for a new home.

The giraffe found a nice spot with lots of grass and trees.

The elephant told the giraffe she already lived there.

The giraffe walked until he found a new spot with fewer trees but was just as nice.

The giraffe ran away when he spotted a lion sleeping in the sun.



ABRACADABRA

HELPING STUDENTS BUILD THEIR READING SKILLS

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY (Comprehension)

The goals of literacy are to be able to construct meaning effectively from a written text and to encode written text accurately in writing. In order to do this, students need to master a number of skills. Activities in ABRACADABRA are inter-related, therefore, if you notice your student is struggling in one area, you may want to suggest doing another activity that focuses on the same broad skill. You could also use this list to determine where students can extend the practice of recently acquired skills. This allows them to practice and develop their mastery of these skills.

Comprehension, which is reading for meaning, is the goal of learning how to read. To fully comprehend a text, readers need many skills including word decoding, vocabulary recognition, reading strategies, and a set of experiences of the world.

COMPREHENSION MONITORING

- ◆ Accuracy
- ◆ Prediction
- ◆ Sequencing
- ◆ Speed
- ◆ Story Elements
- ◆ Story Response
- ◆ Student Stories
- ◆ Summarizing
- ◆ Vocabulary
- ◆ Vocabulary ESL

Comprehension Strategies

PREDICTION

- ◆ Accuracy
- ◆ Comprehension Monitoring
- ◆ Sequencing
- ◆ Story Elements
- ◆ Story Response

Comprehension Strategies

SEQUENCING

- ◆ Prediction
- ◆ Reading Practice
- ◆ Summarizing

Comprehension Strategies

STORY ELEMENTS

- ◆ Accuracy
- ◆ Prediction
- ◆ Reading Practice
- ◆ Summarizing
- ◆ Tracking

Comprehension Strategies

STORY RESPONSE

- ◆ Comprehension Monitoring
- ◆ Story Elements
- ◆ Summarizing
- ◆ Tracking
- ◆ Spelling Sentences

Comprehension Strategies

SUMMARIZING

- ◆ Prediction
- ◆ Reading Practice
- ◆ Story Elements
- ◆ Story Response
- ◆ Tracking

Comprehension Strategies

VOCABULARY

- ◆ Comprehension Monitoring
- ◆ Letter Sound Search
- ◆ Story Response

Vocabulary

VOCABULARY ESL

- ◆ Alphabet Song
- ◆ Animated Alphabet
- ◆ Letter Bingo

Vocabulary



Lesson Plan Template



Lesson Name

Grade	Lesson Duration	Date
Topic	ABRA Activity	
Materials Needed	Teacher Prep	

Objectives

Prior Knowledge Needed

Lesson Objectives

Curriculum Links

Other Learning Areas

Non-Formal Learning

Lesson Activities

Introduction & Warm-up Activity

Time



CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF
LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE





Lesson Plan Template



Main Activity		Time
Extension Activity	Take Home Tasks	

Consolidation

Assessment Questions	Assessment Strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Assignment (Project or Presentation) <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Questions <input type="checkbox"/> Homework <input type="checkbox"/> Observation <input type="checkbox"/> Peer-Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Test/Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Key Vocabulary	

Reflection

Successes

Improvements



Date: [Insert]

School/Schoolboard logo

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Learning to read is an exciting time for both children and parents, but reading doesn't happen on its own. [School name] is dedicated to improving reading skills in young children. This involves teachers collaborating with each other and school ambassadors to improve teaching and learning in our schools. To this end, I, [insert teacher's name], would like to videotape and photograph the lessons your child will be part of.

In order to improve my teaching and support my colleagues, I may decide to share these videos and photographs will be shared with [insert – other teachers at the school/schoolboard, school's ambassador, etc.] for the purpose of [insert – attaining feedback, modeling the process, etc.]. All videos will be available via [insert medium – website? Indicate if access to it is password protected or not. Mention that some sites store data on servers outside of your country and thus might be subject to foreign jurisdictions].

By means of this letter, I am seeking your permission to record your child in video or audio format. We will not use your child's name or any other personal information in any of these photographs or videos. We would ask that you read and sign the attached form.

We very much appreciate your consideration of this request and your support in helping to improve teaching and learning in our schools. Please return page 2 of the signed consent form to your child's teacher by [insert date], indicating if you agree or disagree to allow your child to be part of the videos.

Sincerely yours,

[insert signature]

[insert teacher's name]

[insert signature]

[insert principal's name]

Parental Consent Form

- I have read the above statement and am informed about the intended use of filming and photographing my child's classroom.
- I understand that videos and/or photographs of my child may be taken.
- I understand that my child's name will NOT be released at any time.
- I understand that my child's image and/or voice maybe included in the videos that the [teacher, ambassador?] will create to train other teachers.
- I understand that the videos which my child maybe part of may be stored in and outside of [country].
- I understand that my child's image and/or voice may be made available online, broadcast, performed in public or reproduced for educational purposes.
- I understand that I cannot withdraw my child from the videos and photographs once they are taken.
- I understand that by signing this form, I give the [teacher/school] right to use my child's image and/or voice, both in photographs and videos in electronic format for the purposes of the project. This right is royalty-free, worldwide, perpetual, exclusive and transferrable.

I agree to let my child take part in the videos and/or photographs.

I DO NOT agree to let my child take part in the videos and/or photographs.

Print Your Child's Full Name: _____

Print Your Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

School Name: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

Comprehension Module Glossary

ABRACADABRA (ABRA): a tool in the LTK+ suite that is designed to support children’s acquisition of early literacy.

Alphabetics: the ability to recognize the different sounds in a spoken language and then match those sounds to written letters and words. Alphabetic skills include: letter knowledge, phonological and phonemic awareness, and phonics.

Comprehension: the ability to understand information within a text.

Comprehension Monitoring: periodically checking that a learner understands what they’ve read while they are reading a text.

Decoding: using knowledge of letter-sound relationships and letter patterns to sound out an unfamiliar word.

ePEARL: a web-based portfolio software, offered within the LTK+ suite. It is designed to support children’s acquisition of self-regulated learning (SRL) skills.

Fluency: the ability to quickly recognize words and their meaning. Fluent readers are able to read with accuracy, speed, and expression.

Oral Vocabulary: the words we recognize and use when talking and listening.

Prediction: the ability to anticipate what will happen in the story based on what already occurred.

Prior Knowledge: the knowledge learners already have before learning about a topic.

Reading Vocabulary: words we understand in a written text.

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL): the ability to control your learning environment through an awareness of how people generate the thoughts, actions, and emotions necessary to attain their personal goals.

Sequencing: identifying the components of a story and placing the events in order.

Story Elements: the common components of a story: the setting, characters, plot, problem & solution.

Summarizing: selecting the most important points in a text and then restating those points in your own words.



Tier 1 Words: basic words that your learners will learn from spoken language.

Tier 2 Words: common words that learners might see them more often in print than spoken language. Some of these words have multiple meanings.

Tier 3 Words: low-frequency specialized vocabulary words that appear in a specific domain, such as vocabulary words used for science class.

Vocabulary: the words we use to communicate successfully. An individual's vocabulary can help their ability to comprehend what they hear or read.

