KINDERNEWS

Beatrix Potter

As December began, we dove into the imaginative world of Beatrix Potter. Our new unit provided the opportunity to explore the components of a story, beginning with what an “Author” and “Illustrator” are, discovering that Beatrix Potter takes the role of both. We dug deeper into the key parts of a story. As we continued to study Beatrix Potter, our discussion focused on what each story has in common: a title, character, setting, beginning, middle, and end. Our December unit set a foundation for exploring open ended projects and allowing for friends to let their imaginations take flight.

Reminders

- For 2016, school begins Tuesday, January 5th.
- The winter season is here; please send hats, gloves, scarves and boots.
- We do go outside in the snow; please send an extra pair of snow pants.
- Please remember to label all winter items.

Beatrix Potter and illustrations of her characters.

Mason and Evy pretending to mail a letter like Beatrix Potter mailed her stories.

Maeve and Owen hanging laundry to dry like Mrs. Tiggy Winkle.
To begin our unit, we took a trip back in time, exploring England and Scotland, where Beatrix Potter grew up and spent her summers. We learned that she had a love for animals and the she had many pets ranging from mice to rabbits. They inspired her to pursue her passion for drawing, and provided subjects to observe. Miss Potter’s childhood interests would later set the foundation for her numerous books. While reading “My Dear Noel”, we discovered that Beatrix Potter wrote many of her stories in the form of a letter to friends and only later turned them into books.

From reading Miss Potter’s many stories, the children learned how the Author is a person who writes a story and the Illustrator is a person who creates the pictures for the story. While listening to a story, the friends would become “Book Detectives” looking for the parts of a story to help complete a story map as a class. First, the children identified the Title of the story and the Characters we met while reading. They then worked together to identify where the story took place, the Setting, as well as the Problems the characters faced. We would finish by discussing how the characters resolved the problem with a Solution.

MAKING A STORY

After learning the components that go into a story map, the friends furthered their knowledge of the elements of a story by discussing what is a beginning, middle, and end. They learned that at the Beginning you meet the characters and where the story is set, moving onto the Middle where a problem often occurs and how it is solved in the End. The friends explored pictures that were placed together to represent the beginning and middle of a story. They then worked to draw ending pictures to make a complete story. After that, they dictated the story to a teacher, who recorded and typed it.
THE MANY CHARACTERS OF BEATRIX POTTER

While reading “Beatrix Potter and Her Paint Box”, we learned that Beatrix would spend many hours observing different animals and plants. She kept a journal where she would first sketch objects using a pencil and would later add watercolor to bring her pictures to life. The Kindergartners took part in the same process, keeping their own observational journal that they would add to throughout the month. The friends used their eyes to look for details on different objects like our pet bird, Posie, different stuffed animals displayed in the classroom, and plants found around the room as well.

Inspired by the characters found in Beatrix Potter’s books, each student selected a character to illustrate on large paper. The friends first examined small drawings of Beatrix Potter’s characters then put pencil to paper to create our own larger versions. Then, using watercolor paint and watercolor crayons, the friends added details to help bring the characters to life.
SEWING BUNNIES

From drawing characters created by Beatrix Potter, the friends were inspired to create their own characters. The Kindergartners created a tangible character by taking part in a sewing project that ended with a stuffed animal bunny. First, the friends chose a fabric that they then stitched together using the sewing machine to create a body. After stuffing the bunny with batting, they were able to sew the bunny closed. The finishing details were added with button eyes, felt ears, and pom pom tails.

STOP MOTION ANIMATION

After creating sewn bunnies, the friends jumped into the world of Stop Motion Animation, turning their bunnies into movie stars. Stop Motion Animation is a form of a story told through a series of still photographs. The friends first watched a stop motion story so that they could best understand how one is put together. They then went to the production table to pick the setting and props they would like to use in their story. Working with a partner, the friends pieced together their story. One friend was the “Mover”, the person moving the characters and setting little by little, for the “Picture Taker”, the friend who would take a series of pictures. The friends were excited to see their story come to life when it was complete.
Learning to read is a developmental process; all children do not begin to read at the same age. Literacy milestones appear along the way as children develop a basic oral vocabulary and understanding of the alphabetic principles before beginning to read. Learning how to read is a complex cognitive process that requires enriching and enjoyable experiences with books. As educators, we strive to create a comfortable and stress-free learning environment that promotes an understanding of the function of reading, while developing a positive attitude towards it. In kindergarten, we focus on emergent literacy and gradually progress to what is developmentally appropriate for each child at that time. Research has proven that reading and writing develop at the same time in young children and are interrelated. As students begin to explore “kindergarten spelling” (invented spelling), they reconstruct their knowledge of reading and books as well. Below are just a few milestones experienced within the kindergarten classroom and examples of how they are integrated into our curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telling a Story Through Pictures</th>
<th>Letter Recognition and Recall</th>
<th>Relationship between Letter Sounds and Printed Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Taking a “Picture Walk” through a story, uses the illustrations to anticipate what might happen in the story. <strong>Reading books aloud during our daily group times.</strong></td>
<td>-Able to recite the alphabet in alphabetical order. <strong>Challenges, Daily Work</strong></td>
<td>-Recognizes known sight words and uses picture clues and print to recognize new words. <strong>Reading books with the teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Using pictures to create meaning. <strong>Reading</strong> picture books with friends, Reading with the teacher, Journals, Writing Center.</td>
<td>-Recognize upper and lower case letters. <strong>Challenges, Daily work, Identifying name</strong></td>
<td>-Understands difference between letters and words. <strong>Letter identification, Reading with a teacher, Journals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Their drawings and artwork tell their story. <strong>Journals, Birthday Pages, Writing Center.</strong></td>
<td>-Form letters of alphabet. <strong>Challenges, Daily work, Writing name, Forming Sight words</strong></td>
<td>-Has control of most consonant sounds. <strong>Sounding out words when reading, Journals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Explores books independently. <strong>Free Choice, Activity Time.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Uses language, memory, picture and print as major cues to read and understand text. <strong>Reading with teacher, Read aloud</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Able to retell a familiar story. <strong>Group Time discussions, Story Map, Sharing a Group Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Listening to and comprehending books that are real aloud. <strong>Group time discussions, Story map, Sharing at circle</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rhys working on a number challenge.

Sara and Jemma reading Beatrix Potter books.

August, Owen, and Roxie working at the writing center.
SELF PORTRAIT HOLIDAY GIFT

Throughout the month, the friends practiced adding details to drawings after observing and reading how Beatrix Potter would work endless hours on her drawings until they were just right. The Kindergartners used this same form of dedication while creating a family holiday gift. They focused on drawing a self portrait that best resembled themselves using sharpies on paper. They then adhered the self portraits to white tiles using Mod Podge. We hope you enjoy this special holiday gift, and that it adds a little brightness to your home.

SORTING

The kindergarten friends focused this month on sorting. This beginning math skill allows the friends to gain practice in understanding what is alike and what is different, by comparing and contrasting objects. We explored many activities by organizing items into different groups, focusing for example on shape, size, or color, as well as sorting characters vs. settings from a story. After separating items into simple groupings, the friends then went on to sort items using a Venn diagram. This type of sorting allows for students to look for overlapping characteristics. For example, looking at how flower gems and green gems are different, but that green flower gems possess an overlapping characteristic.
THE ELLIS SCHOOL PLAY

We were invited by The Ellis School to attend their production of “The Lion King”. The children excitedly rode on the large school bus to The Ellis School, where they enjoyed a brown bag lunch together in the cafeteria. They took part in a craft project, turning a paper plate into a lion by coloring and cutting the edges to become a mane. The friends were a wonderful audience, engaged in the thrilling story of friendship and the circle of life.

Mattias and Ryan excited to be riding the bus.

August and Evy sharing a seat together on the bus ride.

Mason and Campbell working on a lion craft.

A TIME FOR GOODBYES

The month of December brought a time to say goodbye to our student teacher, Miss Kelly. We have enjoyed our time listening to stories, learning new playground games, and writing stories with Miss Kelly. We wish her the best of luck on her next student teaching adventure.

Miss Kelly reading to the class.

Miss Kelly sharing a story with Brylie.
TEA PARTY

We closed our unit with a Tea Party right from the stories of Beatrix Potter. The friends donned hats created from paper bowls, jewels and fancy paper. They dined on clementines, crackers, grapes, and fruit parfaits, using decorated placemats that they created. While sipping chamomile tea, they discussed the many books and favorite characters from Beatrix Potter’s stories.

Jemma, Campbell, Rhys, Adella, and Ryan sharing in tea party fun.

Mason, Maeve, Sammy, Owen, Amanda, and Evy enjoying the delicious food.

August and Brylie ready for the tea party.