

Creative Adventures with Literature

#4: *Just a Little Music* by Mercer Mayer

Introduction

The *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 months* focuses on three components of the **Domain: Creativity and Aesthetics**. The components are: **Music and Movement, Visual Arts, and Drama**. In the book, *Just a Little Music* by Mercer Mayer, a well-known Arkansas author and illustrator, there is a primary focus on **Music and Movement**.

In this delightful book, Little Critter watches a marching band and declares that he wants to play music. After trying out several instruments, he decides he wants to learn to play the drums.

Story Preparation

- Become familiar with the book, *Just a Little Music*.
- Locate the mouse and spider on the cover and on each page where they appear.
- Locate a small drum for the fourth reading of the story.
- Have available the song "Play Your Instruments and Make a Pretty Sound" from the Ella Jenkins CD by the same name.

Story Presentation

Learning Goals:

CD2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory (*short-term and working memory*)

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language) (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences (*engagement in literacy experiences, variety of interests*)

EL3.1 Responds to features of books and print (*book knowledge, print knowledge*)

Book: *Just a Little Music* by Mercer Meyer

First Reading of *Just a Little Music*

- Be familiar with the book.
- Show the cover; give title, author and illustrator. Explain that Mercer Meyer wrote the words and drew the pictures. Therefore he is both the author and illustrator.
- Invite children to look at the cover and describe who and what they see.
- Identify the characters if children are not familiar with them: Little Critter, his dad and mom, and his little sister.
- Ask them to name the musical instruments they see. Name the instruments if children do not know them. (drums, xylophone and bugle)
- Ask them to discuss how they think mom and dad are feeling.
- Show Little Sister covering her ears and ask why they think she is doing this.
- Read the story so all children can see the pictures in the book.
- Allow children to comment on what they see on each page.
- Follow up by showing the pages where Little Critter is trying out all of the instruments. Invite children to name the instruments and to discuss which instrument they would choose to play.

Second Reading of *Just a Little Music*

- Show the cover and give the title and author/illustrator.
 - Invite children to recall what they remember about the story.
 - Read the story, pausing to read the different signs on some of the pages. For example, Buzzard Music Store, Music Lessons, Ye New Fashion Shop, Sale Today, Drum Lesson Saturday, My Room Stay Out, Buzzard's Music School, Wild Critters Band, and Security.
 - Follow up by asking children to describe their favorite part of the story.
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Third Reading of *Just a Little Music*

- Show the cover and ask children to recall the title of the book.
 - Give the author/illustrator and ask children if they remember what each does. Give them prompts if necessary.
 - Read the story so all children can see the pictures in the book.
 - Follow up by showing the pages where Little Critter is trying out the different instruments. Begin to read the sentence, "I like the tuba." But the tuba was just too _____(heavy). Invite children to complete the sentence. This is called the cloze technique.
 - Continue this procedure on the next two pages with the flute, trombone, guitar and drum.
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Fourth Reading of *Just a Little Music*

- Take a small drum to the story reading area, keeping it out of sight of the children until the end of the story.
- Invite a small group of children (3 to 5) to join you for a reading of the story.
- Show cover and give the title.
- Explain that Mercer Meyer, the author and illustrator, does something special in his books; he includes a mouse and a spider on most of the pages.
- Invite children to find the mouse and the spider on the cover.
- Tell children they will be mouse and spider detectives and help find the mouse and the spider on the pages of the book.
- Allow children time to find the mouse and the spider as you read the story.
- Follow up by showing the children the small drum and allow each child a brief time to play it.
- Explain to children that the drum will be placed in the Music Center for them to play when they are in learning centers.

Teacher Note: *Repeat the small group reading for other children who are interested.*

Creative Art Extensions

Learning Goals:

CD1.1 Shows curiosity and a willingness to try new things (*exploration and investigation*)

PH2.2 Adjusts grasp and coordinates movements to use tools (*writing and drawing materials, scissors*)

CA2.1 Explores, manipulates, creates, and responds to a variety of art media (*exploration of art*)

Activity: Making Drums

Materials: empty oatmeal boxes and/or similar containers with lids, construction paper or self-adhesive paper, markers, crayons, glue, scissors, collage materials, such as stick-on circles and stars, yarn, large circles cut from heavy fabric or vinyl in sizes to fit lids, wooden spoons (optional)

Directions:

- Cover empty oatmeal boxes or containers with construction paper or solid colored self-adhesive paper.
- Glue lids onto containers.
- Place covered containers, wooden spoons and large fabric or vinyl circles in a box labeled **Making Drums** and place in the Art Center.
- Allow children to explore and experiment with the items in the box.
- Suggest to children that they make a special drum for themselves by decorating it with some of the materials they find in the Art Center.
- Explain to children that they can play their drums in a parade that will be held later, either in the classroom or outdoors.

Teacher Note: *Observe to see what children do with the large fabric or vinyl circles. If one of them glues a circle to the top of the lid, suggest that they strike their drum with their hand or a wooden spoon, then strike another one that hasn't been covered. Ask if there is a difference in the sound produced when striking the two drums. Why do they think there is a difference? Which sound do they like best?*

Extension: Making Shakers

Materials: large plastic eggs, medium-sized jingle bells, rice, beans, tape, stickers

Directions:

- Place different items in eggs and seal securely with strong tape.
- Invite children to decorate the eggs with stickers.
- Allow children to experiment with the shakers. Encourage them to discuss the different sounds they hear.

Creative Drama and Dramatic Play Extensions

Learning Goal:

CA3.1 Explores feelings, relationships, and concepts through imitation, pretend play, and sociodramatic play (*exploration of drama*)

Activity: Band Prop Box

Contents: band uniform jacket, sheet music or music book, 2 or 3 small drums or home-made drums, baton, storage box with list of contents taped to inside cover of the box, sign with name of band

Directions:

- Collect props and develop a band prop box.
- Involve children in giving the band a name and create a sign with that name.
- Post the sign on the wall in the Dramatic Play Center at child's eye level.
- Place the prop box in the Dramatic Play Center.
- Observe children to see how they play with the props. Do they add other props? Do they pretend to have a parade? Do they pretend to "read" the sheet music?
- Leave the props in the center as long as children remain interested in playing with them.

Teacher Notes:

- *If a jacket is not available, locate a blue shirt and attach large gold buttons and gold braid to it. Attach a name tag with the name of the band written on it. Children's size 10-12 fit young children better than an adult size jacket or shirt.*
- *Consider using the school or center name for the name of the band.*

Creative Music Experiences

Learning Goal:

CA1.1 Explores through listening, singing, creating, and moving to music (*music expression and appreciation*)

Activity: Guest Musician

Materials: instrument brought in by guest musician, picture of the instrument

Directions:

- Invite a guest musician to come in to show an instrument and play it for the children
- Discuss in advance with the musician what the children will be allowed to do with the instrument.
- Let him know the approximate amount of time for the activity.
- Ask him to tell the children the name of the instrument and why he chose this particular instrument to play and to tell them whether or not he had music lessons.
- Discuss with children in advance that a musician will be coming to the classroom and bring an instrument to play for them. Name the instrument and show a picture of it.
- Explain to children what they will be allowed to do, or not do, with the instrument.
- Introduce the children and the musician to each other.
- Stay involved in the activity so that you can guide children's behavior as needed.

Teacher Note: *Involve children in writing a thank you note to the musician.*

Learning Goals:

CD1.1 Shows curiosity and a willingness to try new things (*exploration and investigation*)

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language) (*vocabulary and language comprehension, follows directions*)

SS1.1 Demonstrates positive connection to family and community (*learning community*)

CA1.1 Explores through listening, singing, creating, and moving to music (*exploration of music and movement, music and movement concept*)

Activity: Play Your Instruments

Materials: CD by Ella Jenkins with song: "Play Your Instruments and Make a Pretty Sound", CD player, instruments: cow bells, rhythm sticks, maracas, triangle, castanets and tone block

Directions:

- Have enough instruments for the number of children in the group. Consider having extra instruments such as rhythm sticks.
- Take CD, player and instruments to Music Center.
- Explain to children that they will hear a song about different instruments; that the lady singing the song is Ella Jenkins.
- Allow each child to select an instrument.
- Play the song and guide the children to follow the directions given by Ella Jenkins.
- Ask children to pass their instrument to the child on their right. Guide children as needed.
- Play the song again, allowing children to play a different instrument.

Extension:

- Collect pictures of musical instruments such as drums, piano, guitar, violin, tuba, flute, and trombone.
- Show pictures one at a time, ask children to name the instrument and to pantomime playing it.
- Invite children to discuss which instrument they would like to learn to play and explain why.

Learning Goal:

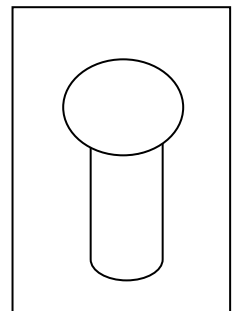
CA1.1 Explores through listening, singing, creating, and moving to music (*exploration of music and movement*)

Activity: Music Center

Materials: musical instruments (purchased and/or homemade), microphone, sheet music or music books, pictures of Instruments, people playing different instruments and marching bands

Directions:

- Review the [Curriculum Tips and Techniques](#) section of [Creative Adventures with Literature](#) that focuses on setting up and managing a Music Center for guidance in this activity.
- Place only a few instruments in the center at one time; instruments that you have previously introduced to children so that they know how to use and take care of them.
- Provide storage for the instruments and review with children how to select and put away the instruments.
- Post music related pictures in the Music Center.
- Allow this area to be a choice for children during the time they are in learning centers.



Teacher Note: Make a microphone using ½ of an empty paper towel cylinder covered in aluminum foil. Add a ball of aluminum foil to the top.

Learning Goals:

SS1.1 Demonstrates positive connection to family and the community (*learning community*)

CA1.1 Explores through listening, singing, creating, and moving to music (*exploration of music and movement*)

Activity: Let's Have a Parade

Materials: musical instruments (purchased or made), lively march tune on CD, player, baton

Directions:

- Invite children to select a musical instrument and become a part of a marching band. Suggest that those who made a drum may want to choose it to play as they march.
- Begin to play the march tune and lead the group with the baton.

Teacher Note: *Consider taking the marching band outdoors where there is more room to move and where noise is not a concern.*

Learning Goals:

MT2.1 Uses classification and patterning skills (*patterning*)

SS1.1 Demonstrates positive connection to family and community (*learning community*)

CA1.1 Explores through listening, singing, creating and moving to music (*exploration of music and movement, music and movement concepts*)

Activity: Drum Echo

Materials: drums

Directions:

- Involve a small group of children in this activity.
- Provide a drum for each child and one for yourself.
- Explain to children that you are going to play your drum and they are to echo, or play the same pattern.
- Play a short pattern on your drum such as tap, tap, pause and invite children to play the same pattern.
- Vary the number, tempo and dynamics (loud vs soft) of the pattern.
- Play another pattern and invite children to echo that pattern.
- Invite children to take turns playing a pattern on their drum and you and the other children echo the pattern.
- Continue this activity as long as children remain interested.

Teacher Note: *Allow other interested children to join in the activity or to form their own groups for drum echo.*

Additional Books

Jazz Baby by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Laura Freeman

Zin! Zin! Zin: A Violin by Lloyd Moss, illustrated by Marjorie Priceman

Additional “Little Critter” Ideas

- Add other Little Critter books by Mercer Meyer to the Library Center. Observe to see if children look at the books and search for the mouse and the spider.
- Add the book, *Jazz Baby*, to the Library Center.
- Read the book, *Jazz Baby*, to the children in large or small group. Practice reading the book aloud so that you have the jump rope jingle rhythm when you read it with the children.
- Look for opportunities for children to see and listen to a marching band. For example, if your program is located on a school campus with a marching band, arrange for children to observe a band practice. Let families know about parades with bands in the community and suggest that they take their children to the event.
- Look for additional CDs with songs about bands. Examples include:
“Old MacDonald Had a Band” from *Singable Songs for the Very Young* by Raffi
“Old MacDonald’s Band” and “Tap Your Sticks” from *Rhythm on Parade (Revised and Expanded Version)* by Hap Palmer.
Play Your Instruments and Make a Pretty Sound by Ella Jenkins
- Invite children to listen for different rhythms in the environment; for example, the dripping of a faucet, the sound of footsteps, the chirping of a bird.