

Word Wonders Activity 5: Red Hen First and Then

CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO...

- Answer a simple question about the story through actions, words, and simple sentences (18 to 48 months)
- Use language to explain, ask and answer questions, and express feelings (24 to 48 months)
- Understand and use sequencing words like: first, next, then, last (36 to 48 months)
- Re-tell a story with 3 to 5 events, using words, actions, or props such as puppets and pictures (36 to 48 months)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

Children will have an opportunity to answer questions about the story and then sequence the events of the narrative using images from the book. They will then re-tell this folk tale using puppets. These activities give children the opportunity to deeply understand the stories they hear and use their expressive/spoken language skills to share events from the book.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Book: *The Little Red Hen* by Paul Galdone

For Activity 1 (Engage):

- Optional: manila folders, glue/stapler (if you want to make images sturdier for reuse)

For Activity 2 (Expand):

Handout 1: Characters and Props

- 4 craft sticks
- Cardboard or manila folders—4 pieces cut to fit character images in **Handout 1**
- Craft glue or sturdy tape (duct tape or similar)

For children 30 to 48 months old:

Handout 1: Characters and Props

- Fabric bag (to represent a bag of wheat flour)
- Baking pan (child-size), such as from the housekeeping area
- Spoon
- Dish towel
- Small broom and dustpan
- Bin or basket to hold props

PREPARATION:

For Activity 1 (Engage):

- **For children 18 to 30 months old:** Photocopy 4 key images from the book that “tell the story.” Suggested images include: (1) the Little Red Hen asking, “Who will plant this wheat?”, (2) Little Red Hen with the flour bag, (3) Little Red Hen putting the cake in the oven, and (4) Little Red Hen eating the cake.
- **For children 30 to 48 months old:** Photocopy 7 key images from the book that “tell the story.” Suggested images include: (1) the Little Red Hen asking, “Who will plant this wheat?”; (2) Little Red Hen watering the wheat, (3) Little Red Hen with the flour bag, (4) the Cat, Dog and Mouse asleep saying, “Not I” (5) Little Red Hen putting the cake in the oven, (6) Little Red Hen eating the cake, and (7) the Cat, Dog, and Mouse helping out.

Since these images will be handled a lot, you may want to laminate them (if available) or glue/staple them to a manila folder.

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- Photocopy the stick puppet images. Cut each out, glue to cardboard or a manila folder, and affix a craft stick to the back with duct tape or glue. (*Note: Children aged 30-48 months may either act out the story themselves or use the puppets. If you are going to have the children acting as the characters, the puppets are not necessary but could make a fun addition to your pretend play center.*)
- If you are working with children aged 30-48 months, cut out the two wheat images (seeds and stalks) and affix each to cardboard.
- Choose a space for this activity where there is room for children to sit in a semi-circle on the floor, looking at a “stage” area, you will create using the masking tape (tape off a large square on the floor) or by laying down a blanket (large enough for 3 people to stand on).
- **For children 30 to 48 months old:** Gather other props: a small fabric bag, a baking tin/spoon, a dustpan/broom, and a dish towel. Set aside until needed in the script. For ease of use, place props in a basket and keep them handy until needed.

Activity Instructions

EXPLORE

Share the following book and extension activity with children as an opportunity to help children understand the story, respond to the events, and sequence the events in the story.

Book: *The Little Red Hen* by Paul Galdone

Because the learning objective of this unit focuses on understanding and responding to questions about the story, it is important to prepare by selecting 4-5 questions ahead of time to ask. Plan to share this story multiple times across the week so children become familiar with it. Read it with children at least twice with no interruptions for questions. On the next read-through, make the story a discussion—pause to ask questions on almost every page and encourage children’s participation with repeating refrains from the characters. (“Not I!” “Then I will!”)

As You Read:

- **Introduce the book and its key ideas.** Point out the Little Red Hen and explain that a hen is a chicken. Ask what else they see on the cover and what they think the book is about.

- **Define new words and phrases.** For example, *snooze* means to *sleep*; ask children if they like to sleep, nap, or snooze. Wheat is *the grains of a cereal plant*. A *mill* is a place where there is a big machine that grinds (or smashes into tiny pieces) the wheat and makes flour. Place your right fist on your left palm and swivel your fist left and right to demonstrate what “grinding the wheat” looks like. Have the children pretend to grind the wheat too.
- **Encourage prediction.** Ask what they think will happen when the Little Red Hen asks for help. *Will the animals help her? Do you think the Little Red Hen will give them any cake?*
- **Use pictures and text to support observation and reasoning.** You might ask: *What happens when we plant seeds?* (The seeds/wheat, will grow. Point out the wheat growing tall or the flour bag looking heavy. Wonder together: Did the wheat grow a *little* or did the wheat grow a *lot*? How can they tell from the picture? What did the Little Red Hen do to help the wheat grow? (Watered it and pulled out the weeds.) You can also ask questions about character motivations, like: *Why doesn't she share the cake?* (Because the other animals didn't help.)
- **Identify and explore emotions.** Take opportunities to highlight emotions shown through the illustrations and text. *When the other animals did not help, what does the Little Red Hen feel?* (Sad, mad, upset, frustrated, annoyed.) *Have you every felt (sad, mad, frustrated)?* What do the children think the other animals are feeling as they watch the Little Red Hen eat the cake all by herself?
- **Make connections to children's lives.** The story says that “soon a delicious smell filled the cozy house.” What was the smell? (The cake.) Have children ever smelled cookies or cake in the oven? Do they like the smell of cake baking? Have they baked a cake? The hen plants seeds to grow wheat; have the children ever helped their grown-ups plant seeds or take care of a garden? What happened? What did they do?

ASKING QUESTIONS THAT ARE RIGHT FOR YOUR GROUP

“Show me” or “where” questions are great for children who aren't yet using a lot of language: *Where is the cat on this page?* Encourage them to respond with gestures or pointing. You can label their gestures with words.

Simple Yes/No questions also work well with children who have emerging language skills.

Simple “what” questions work well for children using one or two word responses: *What is the hen doing?*

Questions that invite children to take a **character's perspective** are best for 3 to 4 year olds: *What do you think the Little Red will do now?*

Questions that invite children to **make a connection** between the story and their own lives are great for 3 to 4 year olds: *What is your favorite cake?*

Why and How questions work best for preschoolers who are using 4 to 5 word sentences: *Why would you make a cake?*

ENGAGE – ACTIVITY 1

Explain the game: *Next we're going to look at pictures from the book and put them in order of what happened first, next, and last. I'll need your help to figure it out! .*

Play the game:

For children 18 to 30 months old:

Place two illustrations on the floor—one from the beginning of the book and one from the end. Look at the pictures with children and talk about what is happening in each picture.

Ask children: *What happened first—did the Little Red Hen find the wheat seeds or did she bake the cake first?* Children may respond by pointing or with language. Give them time to respond. If needed, select the first picture for them and put the other aside.

Say: *First, the Little Red Hen found the seeds!*

Continue by presenting pairs of pictures, one correct and the other from a very different part of the book. Each time, prompt children: *So far, the Little Red Hen found the seeds. Let's look at our next choices. Here is a picture of her growing the wheat. Here is a picture of her making a cake. What happened next after she planted the seeds?*

When you have placed the 4 pictures in order from beginning to end (found the seeds, grew the wheat, made the cake, ate the cake), re-tell the story with a picture walk. A picture walk is when you and the children walk along the line of pictures as you tell the story.

Prompt the children to participate as you re-tell the story by chiming in with refrains of "Not I" and "Then I will!" You can also try fill-in-the-blank questions as you walk, for example, asking: *The Little Red used the flour to make a...(pause...cake).* When you're done re-telling the story, say: *The End.* Prompt children to repeat after you. If children are interested, re-tell it again. Often, children will be interested in repeating this routine several times.

When you're done, post the pictures at children's height so they can revisit the story throughout the week.

For children 30 to 48 months old:

Place three illustrations on the floor—one from the beginning of the book and the other two from other parts of the story. Look at the pictures with children and talk about what is happening in each picture.

Ask children: *What happened **first**—did the Little Red Hen find the wheat seeds, bake the cake or eat the cake?*

Let a child put the first picture at the beginning of what will be your picture walk.

Say: ***First**, the Little Red Hen found the seeds! I wonder what will happen **next**?*

Continue by adding a picture to the group on the floor. Prompt children to describe: *What is happening in this picture?*

Ask children: *First the Little Red Hen found the seeds. Now, let's look at our pictures. [Summarize what is happening in each picture.] What happens **next** in the story?*

Let a child put the next picture in line for the picture walk.

Continue adding images and placing them in order of the story, until all pictures have been used.

With the children's help, place the 7 pictures in order from beginning to end. Then, as a group, re-tell the story with a picture walk.

Do a picture walk with the children. Standing at the first picture with the group, ask a child to tell you the beginning of the story, what happened *first*. Continue to the next picture and ask a child to tell you what happened *next*. Continue until the final picture and ask a child to tell you what happened *last*.

Prompt all children to participate to chime in with refrains of "Not I!" and "Then I will!" When you get to the end, have all children join in to say, "The End!"

MAKING MATH CONNECTIONS

Explore counting, quantity, and comparisons through a voting activity. Select the images of the jobs the Red Hen needed help with (planting seeds, cutting wheat, baking). Place these on the floor in front of children. Give each child a block and ask them to put their block in front of the job they would like to help the Hen complete. Count how many blocks are in front of each task. Encourage children to join in as you count out loud. Line up the blocks and compare the three lines. Notice which line is the *longest* and which is the *shortest*. The longest line has the *most* votes and the shortest line has the *fewest* votes. Notice if any of the lines are the same length, or *equal* (meaning they have the same quantity of blocks). You can restate the result: *"Most children chose to help with ____!"* Voting helps children organize information into groups and compare quantities.

Summarize: *Today's story was all about a hen who asked for some help growing her wheat and making a cake, but nobody wanted to help her. In the end, her friends learned that helping out is important! What are some ways that you help out in our classroom (or at home)?* Take responses from children. If children are not yet using language, you can tell each child how they help: *Deanna, you help me when you put your blanket on your cot at naptime.*

EXPAND – ACTIVITY 2

This next activity gives children an opportunity to re-tell the story through props or using stick puppets—taking the perspective of the characters and using simple language to share the narrative. Since this activity is based on the *Little Red Hen* story, it's important for children to be very familiar with the story. Be sure to read it to them regularly over the week you do this activity.

For children 18 to 30 months old:

Introduce: *Guess what? We are going to do a class puppet show! We are going to tell the story of the Little Red Hen using puppets! I'm going to need a lot of helpers, so let's get ready!*

Share: Share the different puppets with children. Each time you take out a puppet, ask: *Who's this from our story?* Name each character: Little Red Hen, Cat, Dog, and Mouse.

Show children the picture walk. Refer back to the pictures as you re-tell the story. Use simple language (as suggested below) to tell the story using the puppets.

Choose 3 children to hold the puppets for the Cat, Dog, and Mouse. They should join you "on stage" as you take the puppet/role of the Little Red Hen.

Following is a simplified script to use:

Once upon a time, there was a Little Red Hen who lived with a Cat, a Dog, and a Mouse. (Point to each puppet.)

*One day, the Little Red Hen found some wheat. She asked, "Who will help me plant the wheat?"
Not I, said the Cat. Not I, said the Dog. Not I, said the Mouse. (Prompt children to repeat after you.)
Then I will do it myself, she said.*

*When the wheat was grown, the Little Red Hen asked, "Who will help me cut this wheat?"
Not I, said the Cat. Not I, said the Dog. Not I, said the Mouse. (Prompt children to repeat after you.)
Then I will do it myself, she said.*

*"Who will take this wheat to the mill to grind it into flour?" asked the Little Red Hen.
Not I, said the Cat. Not I, said the Dog. Not I, said the Mouse. (Prompt children to repeat after you.)
Then I will do it myself, she said.*

*"Who will help me make a cake with this flour?" asked the Little Red Hen.
Not I, said the Cat. Not I, said the Dog. Not I, said the Mouse. (Prompt children to repeat after you.)
Then I will do it myself, she said.*

Oh, what a delicious smell there was in the kitchen as the cake was baking. (Prompt children to sniff the air.)

*"Who will eat this cake?" asked the Little Red Hen.
I will! said the Cat. I will! said the Dog. I will! said the Mouse. (Prompt children to repeat after you.)*

"I am going to eat it...all by myself!" said the Little Red Hen. And she did. After that, when there was work to be done, she had three very eager helpers.

Invite children to "take a bow" at the end and for peers to clap. Say: *The End.*

Repeat the puppet show, with different children performing the characters, until all children have had a turn.

For children 30 to 48 months old:

Introduce: *Guess what? We are going to do a class show! We are going to act out the story of the Little Red Hen! I'm going to need a lot of helpers, so let's get ready!*

Ask: *Who remembers the characters in our story The Little Red Hen? There was the Little Red Hen, of course, and...(pause, see if children fill in the other animals). And the Cat, the Dog, and the Mouse. We will need one of you to pretend to be each of our characters.*

Show children the picture walk. Refer back to the pictures as you re-tell the story. Use simple language (as suggested below) to tell the story. Have your props (images of wheat seeds, wheat stalks, fabric bag, baking tin/spoon, broom/dustpan and dish towel) handy.

Choose 4 children to serve as the Cat, Dog, and Mouse, and Little Red Hen. If desired, they can hold the puppets that represent their characters. They should join you "on stage." Distribute the appropriate props to each character as they are mentioned in the script.

Prompt children to say their lines as you re-tell the story. You should serve as the "narrator." Children can move or gesture as they act out their part. For example, the three animals can pretend to be sleepy or napping. The Little Red Hen can pretend to plant, rake, or prepare her cake.

Following is a simplified script to use:

Once upon a time, there was a Little Red Hen who lived with a Cat, a Dog, and a Mouse.

One day, the Little Red Hen found some wheat. (Place the image of wheat seeds on the floor for the Hen to "find.")

She asked, "Who will help me plant the wheat?"

Not I, said the Cat. Not I, said the Dog. Not I, said the Mouse. Then I will do it myself, she said.

When the wheat was grown, the Little Red Hen asked, "Who will help me cut this wheat?" (Give the Hen character the stalks of wheat image to hold up and show the audience.)

Not I, said the Cat. Not I, said the Dog. Not I, said the Mouse. Then I will do it myself, she said.

"Who will take this wheat to the mill to grind it into flour?" asked the Little Red Hen. (Continue to use the stalks of wheat.)

Not I, said the Cat. Not I, said the Dog. Not I, said the Mouse. Then I will do it myself, she said.

"Who will help me make a cake with this flour?" asked the Little Red Hen. (Give the Hen character the fabric bag to hold up.)

Not I, said the Cat. Not I, said the Dog. Not I, said the Mouse. Then I will do it myself, she said. (Give the Hen character a small baking tin/spoon from the housekeeping area. Encourage them to stir and pretend to make a cake.)

Oh, what a delicious smell there was in the kitchen as the cake was baking. (Prompt actors to sniff the air.)

"Who will eat this cake?" asked the Little Red Hen

I will! said the Cat. I will! said the Dog. I will! said the Mouse.

"I am going to eat it...all by myself!" said the Little Red Hen. And she did. (The Hen can pretend to eat the cake.)

After that, when there was work to be done, she had three very eager helpers. (Give the three helpers a small broom, dustpan, and dish towel and encourage them to roleplay cleaning.)

Invite children to "take a bow" at the end and for peers to clap. Say: *The End.*

Repeat the show, with different children performing the characters, until all children have had a turn. This type of repetition is pleasurable for children because they can predict the narrative and enjoy the familiar arc of the story as they both watch and take part in acting it out.

Wrap-up by asking children what they liked about performing in the show. What will they tell their grown-ups about the Little Red Hen story?

REFLECT

Return to a gathering area with the children.

Say:

- *Today we explored our story, The Little Red Hen.*
- *We talked about what happened first, next, and last in the story. First, the Little Red Hen found some seeds. Next, she grew the seeds into wheat and ground the wheat into flour. Then she made a cake. But nobody helped her! Last, she ate the cake all by herself! Her friends learned that it's important to help out.*
- *We also told the story of the Little Red Hen by doing a show. We used puppets to tell (or acted out) what happened first, next, and last in the story.*

Ask children what their favorite part of *The Little Red Hen* story was. Have the picture walk displayed for children if it would help them to have this reminder close by. If they respond by pointing, be sure to use language to describe their choice: *You like the part when the Little Red Hen ate the cake all by herself!*

SUMMARIZE: *Today we learned that stories tell us what happened first, next, and last. We learned how to tell a story using pictures and our voices/puppets.*

INDIVIDUALIZING THE ACTIVITY

Make it more challenging:

- In Activity 1, you can add images to the group for sequencing. Rather than 7 images, you could photocopy each picture from the book, which would make the activity significantly more challenging.
- In Activity 2, rather than prompting children for what to say at different points in the story, you can ask: "What should the Cat say now?" or "What should happen now?" You can also choose 1-2 children to tell the story (serve as narrator) rather than you taking on this role, using the picture walk as a visual guide.
- In Activity 2, you can perform the story as written. Then have a group discussion with children about alternate endings for the story. Might the other animals help the Hen with her cake? Might the Hen throw a party at the end? What ideas do children have? Write these down and act them out.
- Consider preparing a simple cake or muffin recipe with children as an extension to the story of the "little red hen." Include visuals, if possible, to go along with text of the recipe. Be sure to ask, "Who will help me make this cake?" and "Who will help me eat this cake?"

Make it less challenging:

- In Activity 1, rather than asking children to identify which pictures go first, next, and last, the teacher can place the pictures in order and then describe the action in each using sequencing words: *First, Next, Then, Last*. Choose one key word for each image and prompt children to say this word with you (hen, cake, etc.).
- In Activity 1, if children are ready for simple sequencing, try this activity from 2 choices of pictures, using images from very different parts of the book (beginning and end) to reduce the difficulty.
- In Activity 2, children can hold the puppets while the teacher says the lines. As children become more familiar with the story/refrains, they may repeat a word or part of a phrase from the story.

MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE DAY:

- **For children aged 30 to 48 months**, offer the book and pictures (Activity 1 materials) as a game that children can choose during free play. You can also offer the Activity 2 puppets/props as a free play activity for children who may want to try doing a show on their own, using the book or picture walk as a guide.
- Turn every story-sharing experience into a dialogue by asking children questions about the story and illustrations. Prepare those questions ahead of time and put them on sticky notes on each page as a reminder to yourself.
- As you talk about the day's activities with children, use sequencing words like *First*, *Next*, *Then*, and *Last*.
- In a closing circle or at lunch, tell children the "story of their day" using sequencing words. Re-telling the day's events helps children consolidate their memories, put events in order, express their thoughts and feelings, and be able to describe key details and events. Ask them questions and encourage them to add details to the story of their day. The sequencing of time is particularly challenging for children, so this repetition helps them learn.
- When children are telling you about something that happened to them, listen carefully and then restate what you hear: *I heard you say that first, you were playing with the toy vacuum. Then Marco snatched it, and next you grabbed it back. Then, you came to me for help. I'm so glad you did. Let's figure it out together.*
- Be intentional about re-sharing the same book with children. Adults are often worried children will become "bored" with the same story, but often, hearing the same story several times helps them with comprehension (understanding) which then frees them to focus on higher-order (more challenging) activities—like imagining how the characters might feel, making predictions, developing their opinions about the story, and finding connections between the story and their own lives.
- Consider sharing the different versions of the same story. For example, there are many versions of *The Little Red Hen*, including a version titled *The Little Red Hen Makes a Pizza!* This is the case with many folk tales. By sharing different versions of the same story, children can develop a broader view of the narrative, learn new vocabulary words, and see how the same sequence of events can unfold in different ways. Perhaps children might even like to come up with their own version of *The Little Red Hen*!

Song: *Little Red Hen Song*

- Share this song with children: <https://bit.ly/4719MKB>
- Once children are familiar with the lyrics, prompt them to fill in the refrain: "Not me! Not me! Not me!"
- Encourage children to dance/move their bodies during the instrumental portions (note how the tempo of the music increases—increase the speed of your dancing to model for children).

Handout 1: Characters and Props

Use the following character images to prepare the stick puppets. If you are doing the show without puppets, the final two images (wheat seeds and wheat stalks) are the two props you will need.

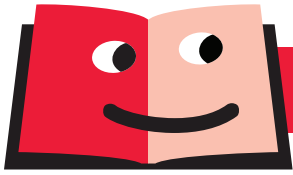












Telling Stories Together

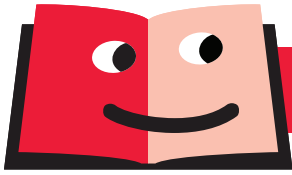
This week, children practiced re-telling familiar stories and acting them out for their peers. Re-telling stories helps children learn new vocabulary, remember the order of events in the book, and identify the characters and details of a story. There are many ways at home to help children learn about stories and become storytellers!

Choose Your Own Adventure: While you're waiting for the bus or at the dinner table, tell your child a story. Let your child make some choices in the story: Should it be about a lion or a kangaroo? Should they eat pizza or cereal? Together, come up with a story where there is a beginning, middle, and end. Experiences like these give children the chance to hear lots of new words and use their language skills to tell, share, and perform.

Tell the Story of Your Child's Day: At bedtime, take a few minutes each day to "tell the story of your day." Use words like *first*, *next*, *then*, and *last* to help your child put events in order. Reviewing experiences like this help children build their memory of events and remember important details. Plus, they love the chance to sit close to you and have your attention as you talk about your time together.

When you tell and share stories with your child, you're not *just* helping them build language and thinking skills. You're making them feel loved and important, too!





Solo para familias

Contar cuentos juntos

Esta semana, los niños practicaron volver a contar historias conocidas y representarlas para sus compañeros. Volver a contar historias ayuda a los niños a aprender vocabulario nuevo, recordar el orden de los acontecimientos del libro e identificar a los personajes y los detalles de una historia. ¡Hay muchas formas de ayudar a los niños a aprender sobre las historias y a convertirse en cuentacuentos en casa!

Elija su propia aventura: Mientras esperan el autobús o durante la cena, cuénteles un cuento a su hijo. Deje que su hijo tome algunas decisiones acerca de la historia: ¿debería ser sobre un león o un canguro? ¿Deberían comer pizza o cereales? Juntos, inventen una historia con un principio, un desarrollo y un final. Experiencias como estas les dan a los niños la oportunidad de escuchar muchas palabras nuevas y usar sus habilidades lingüísticas para contar, compartir y representar.

Cuente la historia del día de su hijo: A la hora de acostarse, dedique unos minutos cada día a “contar la historia de su día”. Utilice palabras como *primero*, *después*, *luego* y *por último* para ayudar a su hijo a ordenar los acontecimientos. Repasar experiencias de esta manera ayuda a los niños a construir su memoria de los acontecimientos y a recordar detalles importantes. Además, les encanta tener la oportunidad de sentarse cerca de usted y tener toda su atención mientras habla de los momentos que han pasado juntos.



Cuando le cuenta y comparte historias con su hijo, no *solo* le está ayudando a mejorar sus habilidades lingüísticas y de pensamiento. ¡También le está haciendo sentir querido e importante!