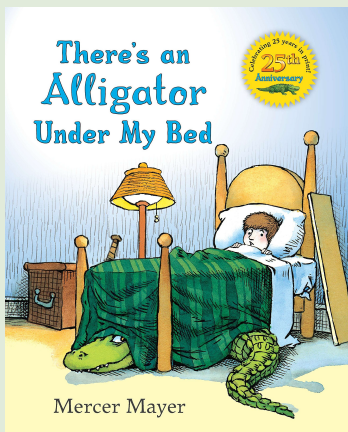


Book Nook

This month's Book Nook topic is...



Incorporating Pretend with *There's an Alligator Under My Bed*

When sharing a book with your preschooler, one of the most important things to do is encourage his story understanding. This means understanding more than the individual words that appear on a page. Children need to be able to fill in the larger meaning of a story, that hasn't been specifically stated. In other words, they need to know how to "read between the lines" to really understand what's happening and why.

One way to deepen your child's understanding of a story is to bring it to life using pretend. Acting out a story gets children thinking about the sequence of events, characters' personalities, and their motivation.

Let's get started!

The Book

There's an Alligator Under My Bed by Mercer Mayer

Why we picked it

Children have wild imaginations, and the main character in this story is no exception! In this amusing book, a boy who believes there is an alligator under his bed takes various precautions to avoid the alligator. He even sets up bait all over his house, until he successfully traps the alligator in his garage.

Like the boy in this story, children go to bed every night, and for many three and four-year-olds, checking under the bed has become part of their bedtime routine. This story lends itself well to pretend because it is fun and relatable. There are also clear, sequential actions that can be re-enacted.

First few readings

The first time you read *There's an Alligator Under My Bed*, focus on helping your child grasp the basics of the story – the **C**haracters, **S**etting, **P**roblem, **A**ctions and **R**esolution (at Hanen, we refer to these basic elements as “CSPAR”, and you can read more about how to encourage your child’s understanding of them in [this Book Nook post](#)). Keep the story moving and have short conversations that help your child remember the characters and their actions, and also identify the problems in the story.

Later readings

After your child has heard the story a few times, acting it out with him is a fun way to increase his understanding. Here are some suggestions to get started:

- **Use props** – collect props that will help bring the story to life, such as a toy alligator (or another stuffed animal), plastic food for bait, etc.
- **Plan your roles** – plan who will take on the role of the boy, the alligator or of other family members in the story. You may also choose to act out the story using stuffed animals, puppets or other toys that can represent the characters.
- **Have the book handy to refer to** – this can be useful if your child forgets a part of the story, or if you’d like to re-read any particular part of the book.

As you act out the story, you can also make comments and ask questions that challenge your child to think beyond the words and pictures in the book. For example, “I wonder what the alligator will do now that he’s trapped in the garage?” or “What would you do if there was a real alligator in our house?” If your child has difficulty answering questions like these, you can simply provide an answer yourself.

Bringing a story to life using pretend encourages your child to think more deeply about the book, its characters and what happens as the story unfolds. The more you talk about the story using questions and comments that encourage deeper thinking, the further your child’s understanding will go.

Happy reading!