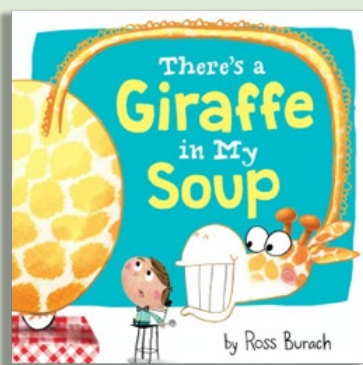


Book Nook

This month's Book Nook topic is...

Building Your Child's Print Knowledge with *There's a Giraffe in My Soup*



In order to learn to read and write independently, children need to understand how print works. Once they understand that print has meaning – that the squiggly lines they see on a page send a message in the same way that talking does – they can start to pay attention to how print works. They need to learn that print is organized in a certain direction (left to right in English and top to bottom of the page), that words are made up of letters and that sentences are made up of words. They also need to learn the purpose of periods, capital letters, and question and exclamation marks, to name a few. When children figure out these “rules” of print, they’ll be on their way to reading and writing.

You can help your child learn how print works by drawing many different aspects of print to your child’s attention. This strategy is called **POP**, and it stands for **Point Out Print**. While you can point out print whenever you see it, such as on the back of a cereal box or when you are on a walk and see street signs, a great time to do this is when you’re reading your child’s favourite books.

Most children’s books are made up of print and pictures, and helping your child understand that the words describe the pictures gives her a context for starting to understand the purpose of print. Books can be extremely motivating for children, making it likely that they will stay involved in the interaction for a longer amount of time – giving you many opportunities to introduce print concepts.

My chosen book:

There's a Giraffe in My Soup by Ross Burach

Why I picked it:

I am always on the lookout for new books to add to my collection. Parents Magazine put out a list of the [top ten books of the year](#), and I was struck by their description of *There's a Giraffe in My Soup*. It's a very silly story about a restaurant that keeps getting a little boy's order wrong – the chefs keep putting different animals in his soup. It's a great book to read and reread because of the fun plot and wonderful illustrations.

It's an ideal book to use to point out how words are made up of letters since the author uses different kinds of letters and colours to emphasize specific words in the text. Words also occur in different locations on the page.

How to POP (Point Out Print)

You can POP in two ways, with what you do and what you say:

- You can POP non-verbally by tracking the words on the page with your finger (moving your finger along the line as you read it), showing that the words you read match the words on the page, with spaces in between.
- You can POP by making comments and asking questions about the print you see on the page.

The first time you read the book

The first time you read *There's a Giraffe in My Soup*, focus more on your child's enjoyment and understanding of the story than on Pointing Out Print. If you focus too much on POP, it might interrupt the flow of the story and your child may lose interest.

You can POP non-verbally by tracking the words with your finger as you read them, as that won't disrupt the flow of the story.

The second time you read the book

Now that your child is familiar with the story, you can POP by continuing to track the words with your finger. However, now you can specifically focus on the idea that words are made up of letters by making comments about the words that stick out on the page.

For example, you might say "The author wrote the word 'giraffe' in orange, because the giraffe in the boy's soup is orange." Or, you could point to the word giraffe and say "This word says 'giraffe'. Let's count how many letters are in this word." That way, you'll be helping your child understand that each word is made up of letters.

The third time you read the book

Since you've already pointed out the words that stand out on the page, you can now ask a question to see if your child remembers what you pointed out. You could say, "Can you show me where it says 'giraffe'?" and wait to see if your child points to the right word. If he does, you could say, "That's right. That word says 'giraffe.' Let's count how many letters are in the word 'giraffe,'" and count out the letters before continuing with the story. If your child doesn't seem aware of the separate words, you could say "This word is 'giraffe'. It sticks out from all the other words in the sentence."

As you keep reading the story, you can point out other words, and you can start to focus on other print concepts such as sentences being made up of words and every sentence starting with a big, capital letter. This book also has some interesting vocabulary that you can help your child understand by using the [Shoot for the SSTaRS strategy](#).

I hope you enjoyed this Book Nook topic. If you have a favorite book that you use to promote story comprehension, I'd love to hear about it! Please send me your feedback.



A little more about me

I'm a Speech-Language Pathologist working at The Hanen Centre as a Program Specialist. I combine my background in language and literacy development with my knowledge of adult learning to offer evidence-based face to face and online trainings to early childhood educators, SLPs and parents.

The Book Nook combines my passion for children's literature with my knowledge of language and literacy development. I hope you enjoy it!

Tamara