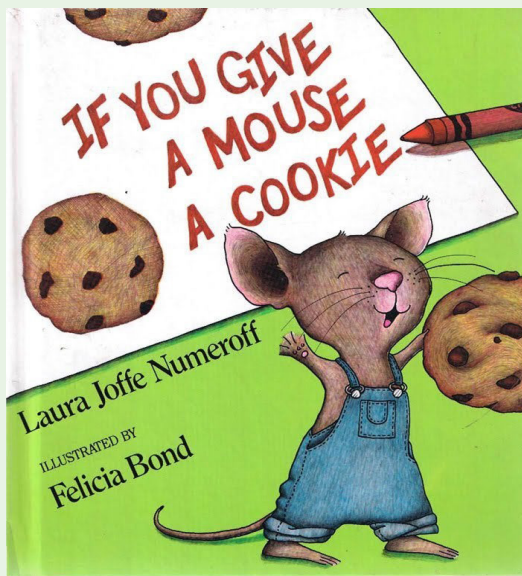


Book Nook

This month's Book Nook topic is...



Explaining Why Things Happen with *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*

In order to truly understand a story, children need to do more than just recognize the words written in the text. Reading comprehension is about understanding the overall meaning of a story, including reading between the lines to understand a story's overall message.

Discussing why things happen in a book is a great way to encourage your child to think about the story and deepen her understanding. This could mean talking about characters' emotions or motivations, and talking about cause and effect – how one event leads to another. The better your child understands the stories she hears, the easier it will be for her to read and write stories on her own later.

Let's get started!

The Book

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie by Laura Joffe Numeroff, Illustrated by Felicia Bond

Why we picked it

This story is about a boy who offers a mouse a cookie, which leads the mouse to make many more requests from the boy. The story provides many opportunities to talk about why the characters do the things they do and the thoughts and emotions that might be motivating their actions.

Building understanding in the first reading

When you read this story for the first time, it's best to keep the story moving and have very short conversations that help your child remember the main characters, their actions, and what the main problem is. For example, you could make comments like:

- "I don't think the boy expected the mouse to want to do so much when he gave him the cookie."
- "Oh wow – the mouse didn't want to nap at all!"

Incorporating explanations in later readings

Once your child has grasped the basic story, she'll be able to think about it in different ways and have longer conversations that deepen her understanding. Being encouraged to explain something also prepares preschool children for the demands of school, where they are often asked "Why?".

You can encourage your child to think about why things happen by using these two strategies:

1. Making "thinking-out-loud" comments
2. Asking questions that encourage explanations

Making "thinking-out-loud comments"

"Thinking-out-loud" comments show your child how you are thinking about the story and trying to figure out things that are not actually stated in the book. By making these types of comments, you're modelling a way for your child to express her own thoughts and ideas.

For example, you could say:

- “I’m wondering why the boy wanted to give the mouse a cookie.”
- “I’m thinking that mouse has a lot of energy because he did not take a nap.”
- “I think the boy is feeling exhausted because the mouse keeps him very busy.”

Asking questions that encourage explanations

Another way to deepen your child’s understanding of why things happen is to ask questions that go beyond what is written on the page and shown in the illustrations. These questions encourage your child to use her knowledge and reasoning skills. For example:

- “Why do you think the boy gave the mouse a cookie?”
- “Why do you think the mouse wants to put his picture on the fridge?”
- “Why do you think the boy is so tired at the end of the book?”

If your child has difficulty answering questions like these, you could provide the answer yourself and continue with the book. For example, if you asked why the boy gave the mouse a cookie, you could say, “Maybe he thought the mouse would really enjoy the cookie.”

The more times you read the story, the more you’ll be able to make “thinking-out-loud” comments and ask questions that deepen your child’s understanding of the story. As you engage your child in conversations that encourage her to think more deeply about a book, you’re helping to develop the comprehension skills she’ll need to read successfully on her own.

Happy reading!

About The Hanen Centre

Founded in 1975, The Hanen Centre is a Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization with a global reach. Its mission is to provide parents, caregivers, early childhood educators and speech-language pathologists with the knowledge and training they need to help young children develop the best possible language, social and literacy skills. This includes children who have or are at risk for language delays, those with developmental challenges such as autism, and those who are developing typically.

For more information, visit www.hanen.org.