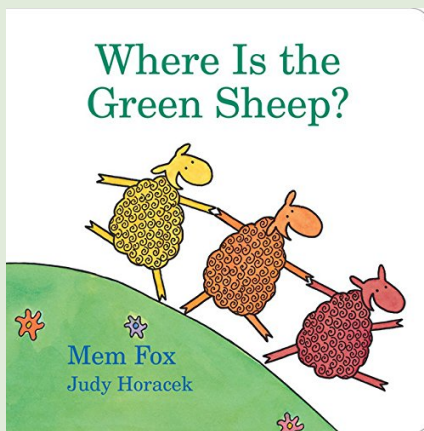


Book Nook

This month's Book Nook topic is...



Building Sound Awareness with *Where is the Green Sheep?*

Sound awareness, also known as “phonological awareness”, means understanding that words can be broken down into syllables and syllables can be broken down into individual sounds. Having an awareness of these sounds prepares children for connecting the letters they see on a page with the sounds they represent, which is critical for making sense of print.

Rhyming books are great tools for promoting sound awareness. In fact, one of the first signs that a child is developing sound awareness is when he starts to recognize rhymes in books or songs. At The Hanen Centre, we use a strategy called “Listen... and Find One Like It” to help children pay attention or “tune in” to words that start (alliteration) or end (rhyme) with the same sound.

Let's look at some ways you can apply this strategy with a fun rhyming book.

Let's get started!

The Book:

Where Is the Green Sheep? by Mem Fox, illustrated by Judy Horacek

Why We Picked It:

In this imaginative book, we search for the green sheep and meet a variety of other sheep along the way. There are many rhyming words in the book, which makes it ideal for building sound awareness.

The Strategy – Listen... and Find One Like It

This strategy works exactly how it sounds.

Step 1 – Listen

When you are reading this book, you can start by putting an emphasis, or stress, on the words that rhyme. This will tune your child to listen not just for the meaning of the words, but also to start to pay attention to how the words sound. Once you've stressed the words that rhyme you could say: "Listen, 'rain' and 'train' rhyme – they sound the same at the end. Listen. 'Rain.' 'Train.'"

Step 2 – Find One Like It

Now it's time to encourage your child to find another rhyming word. You could say: "Let's think of another word that sounds like 'rain' and 'train'. How about 'crane'? 'Crane' sounds like 'rain' and 'train'. 'Crane,' 'rain' and 'train' all rhyme. They all sound the same at the end."

Many young children won't yet be able to produce a rhyme, and that's fine! Exposing them to the idea of rhyming words will build their sound awareness. Offer many of your own examples of rhyming words before expecting them to come up with their own the first time you introduce the "Listen... and find one like it" strategy.

The first time you read the book:

The first time you read the book, you don't want to interrupt the book too much because your child is just getting familiar with the story. But something simple you can do that won't interfere with the flow of the reading is to emphasize the rhyming words as you say them.

For example, in the lines:

Here is the sun sheep.
And here is the **rain** sheep.
Here is the car sheep,
and here is the **train** sheep.

You can say **rain** and **train** a little bit slower and a little bit louder than the other words in the text, to make them stick out.

Later readings

Once you have read the story through with your child, you can start to pause and use the “Listen... and find one like it” strategy throughout the book. You could read a few lines and then say, “Listen ‘wave’ sounds like ‘brave.’ ‘Wave’ and ‘brave’ rhyme. Do you hear how they make the same sound at the end of the word? ‘Wave’. ‘Brave.’”

Then you can get your child thinking about other rhyming words by suggesting a word that rhymes with ‘wave’. You could say, “Now let’s think about another word that rhymes with ‘wave’ and ‘brave’. Hmm. How about ‘save’? ‘Save’ sounds like ‘wave’ and ‘brave’, doesn’t it? ‘Wave,’ ‘save,’ and ‘brave’ all rhyme. They all sound the same at the end of the word.”

If your child enjoys this strategy, and you’ve pointed out many rhyming words, you could ask your child to think of one himself. You could say, “Can you think of another word that rhymes with ‘far’ and ‘star’?” Then wait to see if he attempts to fill in a word. If you wait (for five to ten seconds) and your child doesn’t respond, then you can help him by saying “What about ‘car’?”. “Car,’ ‘far’, and ‘star’ all sound the same at the end – they all rhyme.”

This strategy can be a lot of fun and can get silly quite quickly as children will tend to make up nonsense words when they can’t think of a real word that rhymes. After a while, try to get your child to find rhymes in other books and songs that you enjoy together.

Happy reading and rhyming!