

# FAMILY LITERACY GUIDE

## THE PAPERBAG PRINCESS

### ABOUT THE BOOK

*Paper Bag Princess/*

*La princesa vestida con una bolsa de papel*

Robert Munsch, author and Michael Martchenko, illustrator

Just as Princess Elizabeth is about to marry Prince Ronald, a dragon smashes her castle, burns her clothes with his fiery breath, and kidnaps the Prince.

Undaunted, the resourceful Elizabeth clothes herself in a paper bag and tracks down the dragon. She uses her wits to outsmart the dragon and rescue Ronald. The less-than-princely Ronald, however, admonishes Elizabeth, telling her "You smell like ashes, your hair is all tangled and you are wearing a dirty old paper bag."

*Come back when you are dressed like a real princess.*" Elizabeth tells Ronald that, although he looks like a prince, he acts like a bum; and then she dances off to a happy life that does not include the Prince. The story presents a strong, brave, smart, and ultimately, independent role model for girls. The role reversal in the story and the message about relationships makes the book enjoyable and thought provoking for girls and women of all ages.

### Bibliotherapy - Using Literature to Teach Lessons for Living

The potential of books, such as *The Paper Bag Princess*, to gently instruct readers in lessons regarding behavior, attitudes and ways to solve problems has been understood for centuries. It was not until the twentieth century, however, that psychologists, parents and educators began using the term bibliotherapy to describe the use of literature as a tool to guide children's thinking and influence their behavior. Although not a cure-all, reading and activities related to reading are vehicles through which children and adults can gain insights to personal dilemmas and problems. As they identify with the protagonist and bring their own associations to the story, they are able to clarify their thoughts and discover new ways to cope with personal situations. Stories that address issues of personal concern motivate readers to comprehend the story line and its relevance to them.

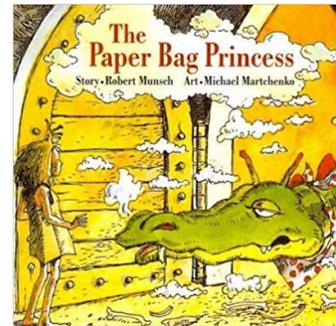
Such comprehension encourages self-growth, suggests alternative ways of behaving in future situations, and helps readers better understand other points of view.

Interesting tie-ins that extend stories offer the additional benefit of enhancing the student's reading and writing skills. Tailored to the individual learner, literacy activities can be as diverse as developing a Venn diagram to illustrate how the reader and the protagonist are alike and different, authoring a poem that describes oneself, rewriting the end of the story, or producing a play or puppet show.



### Learning Objectives

As listeners and readers students will analyze experiences, ideas, information and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. They will present in oral and written language their opinions and judgments.



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## Early Childhood Education – Infant/Toddler Level

### Auditory Comprehension

Looks at objects or people the caregiver brings attention to.

### Expressive Communication

Uses vocalizations and gestures to request toys or food.

#### DURING YOUR VISIT:

With the infant sitting on the parent's lap, read the story of *The Paper Bag Princess*. Say: The story line in this book is beyond the level of understanding for most children of (child's name's) age, but it is never too early to begin reading to children. There are many wonderful books for very young children, but reading almost any text aloud to babies introduces them to the rhythmic sounds of reading and helps them learn that reading is a pleasurable experience. Storybooks, magazines, newspapers, recipes and even junk mail can be shared. Although (child's name) might not understand the words, you will be connecting with him/her around a skill that he/she will use all of his/her life.

### *Choosing Between Two Options*

•Sit the infant in a high chair or other safe location. Show him/her two pieces of construction paper and say: Look at these two nice pieces of paper. Which one would you like to draw on, the yellow or orange? After a moment say: I bet you like this yellow paper. Tape the paper to the tray of the high chair to keep it in one place while the infant scribbles. Hold up two crayons and say: Here is a red crayon and a blue crayon. Which would you like use?

•Say to the parent: What other choices can you offer for (child's name) to make? Everyday experiences such as which socks to wear or which spoon to use leads to the ability to make increasingly difficult choices. Remember, this is a life long process that starts with tiny steps right now when (child's name) is just an infant. The goal is to develop the ability to make important choices later on

## *Making Choices*

Say to the parent: In the story Elizabeth makes several choices that affect both her and the Prince. What were some of those choices?

She decided to:

- (1) chase the dragon
- (2) wear a paper bag for a dress after her clothes were destroyed
- (3) keep knocking on the dragon's door even when he told her to go away
- (4) use several ways to trick the dragon
- (5) not marry the prince

Accept any answer that the parent gives as long as it involves making a choice.

Say to the parent: Learning to make choices begins very early in life. It is a skill that helps children develop confidence. As (child's name)'s parent, you can provide him/her with opportunities to develop this skill by asking him/her to choose between two things as you go through your daily routines – even if he/she is too young to really make a decision. For example, at bath time ask, "Which would you like in the tub with you, the yellow rubber duck or the squeaky green frog?" At mealtime ask, "Would you like these tasty peas or these yummy carrots?" At bedtime ask, "Which pajamas do you want to wear, red or blue?" At first you may have to offer the choice and then model making the decision, but as (child's name) grows he/she will be able to make his/her own decisions. Be sure to offer choices that are acceptable to you.

## Early Childhood Education – Preschool/School Age Levels

# Grocery Bag Dress

**DURING THE VISIT:** With parent and child sitting together, read or tell the story of *The Paperbag Princess/La Princesa Vestida*. While this story can be appreciated on many levels, some concepts may be difficult for preschoolers to fully grasp.

• Look at several pages in the book that show the princess wearing a paper bag dress. Ask questions that focus the child's attention on Elizabeth's decision to wear a paper bag dress. "What is Elizabeth's dress made from?" "Why do you think the author chose *The Paperbag Princess* for the book's title?" "Why does Elizabeth decide to wear a paper bag dress?" Show the picture on the last page of the book. Ask: "How can we tell that Elizabeth feels happy? Why do you think she feels happy?"

Accept whatever answer the child gives. Ask the parent if he/she can think of another reason the Princess feels happy. A 3-year-old may think that the defeat of the dragon is the reason the Princess is happy. What does the parent think?

## Paperbag Clothes

Say: I brought paper bags to make paper bag clothes, and swatches of cloth that you can use to personalize your dress or shirt in whatever way you wish.

Turn the bag upside-down. With the parent's help, cut a circle in the bottom of the bag and a slit from the circle part way down one broadside of the bag to make an opening large enough to slip over the child's head. Cut circular openings on both sides of the bag for armholes. Adjust the length of the garment by cutting the bottom of the garment for shorter children or taping a row of paper from another bag to the bottom for taller children. For bigger children, construct a dress or shirt from two grocery bags using packing tape to fasten them together.

Ask the parent to cut two or more squares, circles, heart shapes, stars, and triangles from the cloth swatches. Give the shapes to the child to glue onto the paper bag garment in a pattern of his/her choice. Talk about the shapes the child uses in his/her design. How many squares did you use? Find all the circles you glued onto your dress/shirt, etc. Put on the garment and dance like the Princess on the last page of the book.

## Make a Dance Partner

*Make a dance partner from a broom, two grocery bags, and a piece of rug yarn about 3 feet long.*

• Cut the bottom out of one bag, decorate it to look like a skirt, slide it down the broom handle and tie it just above the broom bristles. • Draw a face on the second bag, add strips of paper for hair, stuff the bag with newspaper and tie it to the top of the broom handle. • Trace your hands on a piece of paper bag, cut them out, punch a hole at the "wrist" of each, tie the hands onto the ends of the rug yarn. Tie the rug yarn around the "neck" of the paper bag head so that the ends hang down and look like arms. • Dance away with your broom!

### Auditory

### Comprehension

Understand qualitative concepts.

### Expressive

### Communication

Uses words to describe a physical state.

### Before the Visit

#### 1. Gather needed materials:

- Paper grocery bag
- Scissors
- Several swatches cut from different textured and different colored material
- Glue

#### 2. Prepare Lesson Props:

Cut swatches from several different materials.

## Parenting Education Activity

### Talking and Dreaming - Good for Language, Good for Life

Guided reading, reflection and discussion can help a reader gain insight into his or her own situation. There are two foci in this parent education lesson. The first is to help parents understand the role that likes, interests and “dreams” play in determining a child’s future, and the role parents play in keeping those dreams alive. The second is to emphasize the importance of talking in a conversational manner with children for language development.

### MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE

Say to the parent: As adults we sometimes fail to make our dreams come true because other things get in the way. It might be something we want like marriage or children, but often it is not believing in ourselves. This can be especially true for girls and women. As parents, we can help children achieve their goals – the things they are dreaming about - by supporting our children, believing in them, and expecting them to always do the best that they can. A starting point is helping children discover activities they enjoy and encouraging them to participate in those activities.

**Explore this idea with the parent. Ask probing questions like the following:**

- What dreams did you have for your future when you were a child?

**Prompt the parent by naming some of the things that you dreamed about. Ask:**

- Did you think you would be a teacher, hairdresser, truck driver or doctor?
- Are there things you dreamed about that came true? What were they?
- Are there things you dreamed about that haven’t happened yet? What? Why haven’t those things happened? What got in the way? What is in the way now?
- Can you imagine what your life will be like in 10 years? What is one thing you hope you will be doing then? What do you need to do to make that one thing happen?

### ACTIVITY

*Write the parent’s one dream for the future on the outside of a sandwich-size paper bag. Brainstorm concrete steps that he/she must take to make that dream become a reality. For example, if the dream is to further his or her education, activities might be: take the TABE test, enroll in an adult education class, find a babysitter or other childcare for children while the parent is in the class. Write each step on an index card. As each step is completed, slip the index card inside the paper bag.*

### HELP YOUR CHILD EXPLORE THEIR DREAMS

*Say to the parent: Use these steps to help your children explore their dreams.*

- *Observe their play activities to get an idea about things that are of interest to them. For example, if your three-year-old’s favorite toy is a miniature John Deere tractor, you might conclude that tractors are a current interest. If your eight-year-old loves to play with the family’s kitten, you might conclude that cats are an interest.*
- *Ask questions based on your observations. Are you building something special with your tractor? What else can tractors do? Who do you know that drives a big tractor? Or, How often does the kitten sleep? What does it eat? Do you think its habits are similar to the habits of other cats?*
- *Add your own insights about the things of interest to your child. Do you drive a tractor on the farm? Talk about what jobs you do and how it feels to work with a tractor. Did you have a kitten when you were eight? What was its name, its breed, and its color? How was it like your child’s kitten?*
- *Read fictional and factual books with your child to expand his/her knowledge.*

## Interactive Literacy Between Parents and their Children

# Help from Books

Bibliotherapy is a big word that can be defined simply as ‘help from books’. Discovering new ways to behave or to deal with a problem are examples of how books can be helpful. Reading about how Princess Elizabeth in the story of *The Paper Bag Princess* used her wit and skill to defeat the dragon and save the Prince can encourage girls and boys to view their own strengths, interests, and goals differently.

## Make Dream Bags

Materials: A paper bag for each family member, art supplies - crayons, markers, glue, colored paper, scraps of cloth, feathers, lace, yarn, etc.

1. Have family members use art supplies to decorate the outside of their Dream Bags in a way that is appealing to them. Remember, only the individual can make a Dream Bag for him or herself because dreams are so very personal.
2. Throughout the week look around the house for items to put inside the bags. Items should be symbols of things that the owner of the bag enjoy like a crayon if you like to draw; book - of you like to read; toy car if you like cars; picture of a cat if you like cats.
3. At the end of each day talk about the items placed in the bags and what they symbolize to the bag's owner.

## All-About-Me Puppet Show

Make "all-about-me" puppets – one for each member of the family.

Materials: Two paper plates for each family member, glue, scissors, art supplies, scraps from paper bags, photographs of individual family members and fabric pieces.

- Glue the plates together – front to front – creating a hollow in the middle where the puppet's chin would be, cut a hole big enough for the puppeteer's hand to fit through.
- Use strips of paper bag glued along the top edge of the plate to create interesting hair. Make long strips for family members who have long hair, short strips for those who have short hair, and curly strips for people with curly hair.
- On the face of each puppet, glue a photograph of the person that the puppet represents - a picture of Dad for Dad's puppet, Mom for Mom's puppet, etc.

• Attach an old piece of fabric to the bottom of the plate – near the opening where the hand fits into the puppets head. This will serve as clothing for the puppet and to hide the puppeteer's arm.

## Write a Narrative for the Puppet Show

Plan the puppet show. What will the puppets say? Which puppet will begin? Will all the puppets be “on stage” at the same time or only one at a time? Do you need any additional props? Will there be one big show or will it be an ongoing show with puppets sharing a little about themselves every day? The puppet show can be very detailed or quite simple. Use the contents of the Dream Bags for inspiration!