

Famous threesomes

By Jo Ann Lohl Spears

Uncommon uses for common stories

Are these some of the intellectual skills you want for the children in your care?

- takes initiative in learning
- pays attention
- concentrates on tasks
- recalls information
- orders the sequence of events
- shows interest in written words
- counts, sorts, and compares sizes of objects

And are these some of the social and emotional ones?

- identifies feelings
- feels safe, understands and uses safety rules
- shows creativity
- demonstrates self-help and health skills
- cooperates with others
- shows compassion and empathy
- enjoys and responds to music
- shows pleasure in success
- works to solve problems peacefully

Are you committed to providing developmentally appropriate activities?

Do you want the children to have fun as they learn?

If these are your goals, this unit may be just what you need to plan fun-filled, developmentally satisfying activities, using familiar folk stories, in all areas of the classroom.





Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Gather these versions of the traditional folk tale:

Brett, Jan. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*

Fearnley, Jan. *Mr. Wolf and the Three Bears*

Galdone, Paul. *The Three Bears*

Gill, Shelley. *Alaska's Three Bears*

Guarnaccia, Steven. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears: A Tale Moderne*

Mahan, Ben. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*

Marshall, James. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*

Oblogado, Lillian. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*

Percy, Graham. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, book and cassette

Story time. Read the traditional story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* retold and illustrated by Paul Galdone. Help the children learn the story by encouraging them to recite familiar lines, tell the story with flannel board characters, or act it out.

Explore other versions of the story including those illustrated by Jan Brett and James Marshall. Discuss and chart similarities and differences in the versions.

Read *Deep in the Forest*, by Brinton Turkle. Discuss and compare it to Goldilocks adventures.

Block center. Use unit blocks to build a house for the bears. Add pictures and signs to help children dramatize the story.

Art center. Provide sticks, leaves, and paint to paint a forest. Use a stick about 1 inch in diameter and cut at an angle. Show how to dip the stick in brown paint to make vertical lines for tree trunks. Dip smaller sticks or twigs into another shade of brown for the branches. Dip twigs with leaves into a shade of green paint and apply over the painted branches. After you demonstrate the steps, let the children explore these unusual art materials.

Offer brown sawdust or salt clay and encourage children to make bear sculptures.

Dramatic play. Place three different sized bowls, chairs, bed pillows (for beds), a bib (for Baby), an apron (for Mama), a man's jacket (for Papa) and a basket (for Goldilocks) in the dramatic play center. Encourage the children to act out the story or make up their own version.

Put out puppets and a puppet theater so children can retell the story.

Listening area. Make available the Graham Percy book and cassette to the children. Or ask a parent to make a cassette of one (or more) versions of the folk tale.

Math and manipulatives center. Introduce activities using Teddy Bear counters, including weighing, counting, and color matching. Share bear puzzles and the Three Bears folder game.

Provide a collection of objects that come in three sizes: small, medium, and large. Encourage children to sort the objects according to size.

Three Bears folder game

Objective: The children will sort the bears and bedding by size and place them in the appropriate beds.

Here's what you need:

- file folder
- glue
- heavy-duty envelope or small zipper-top plastic bag
- package sealing tape
- clear, adhesive-backed plastic or laminator
- scissors
- construction paper
- patterned paper
- patterns
- copy machine

1. Trace the bed pattern on page 10. Use a copy machine to make two enlargements of the pattern, making three beds in graduated sizes. Do the same with the patterns of the bear and the blanket.
2. Use the patterns to cut out three bears and three beds from construction paper. Cut the blankets from patterned paper.
3. Glue the three beds to the inside of the file folder.
4. Write "Tuck each bear into bed" on the front of the folder.
5. Cover or laminate the file folder, the bear cut-outs, and the blankets.
6. Store bears and blankets in a plastic bag taped to the back of the folder.



Group times. Discuss safety rules. Ask “What did the bears forget?” (leaving their house unlocked; entering a house when they knew a stranger was inside) and “What did Goldilocks forget?” (doing what Mother told her; going into a stranger’s house).

Explore forests and trees with pictures and nature samples.

Talk about the different endings in the various versions of the story.

Cooking. Serve porridge (oatmeal or Cream of Wheat) for breakfast or snack. Offer honey, sliced almonds, raisins, and milk with the porridge.

Writing center. Offer paper, crayons, pencils, and markers for free drawing and writing. Provide word cards with the words *three, bears, Mama, Papa, Baby, girl, chair, and bed* printed in large, clear letters.

Discovery center. Collect pictures of hot and cold items. Encourage children to identify the object and sort the pictures.

Music and movement center. Sing *The Three Bears Song*
First verse:

There was a great big (bear),
and a middle sized (bear) and
a teency, weency (bear).

Verses 2-4:

Repeat replacing (bear) with *bowl, chair, and bed*.

Using the story patterns

Use the patterns provided in this article to build a collection of storytelling props.

Flannel board figures: Use a copy machine to make a copy of each figure. Set the machine to enlarge the figures to 6 to 8 inches, keeping them in proportion. Decorate the cut-outs with crayons, colored markers, or pencils. Laminate or cover with clear, adhesive-backed plastic, and trim neatly. Glue a small strip of sandpaper to the back of each figure so that it adheres to the flannel board.

Magnet board figures: Follow the instructions above but attach a small magnet to the back of the figure. Use a cookie sheet in place of a flannel board; the magnet will hold the figures in place.

Hand puppets: Copy and enlarge the figures to about 8 inches. Trim the bottom of the figure to make a straight line—ignoring Goldilock’s legs, for example. Use the pattern to cut two pieces of colored felt, adding a ¼-inch seam allowance around the outer edge. Use permanent markers or felt scraps to add features like eyes or clothes to the puppet. Sew the two felt pieces together along the outer edge, leaving the bottom open for a hand.

Finger puppets: Copy and enlarge the figures to about 4 inches. Decorate the cut-outs with crayons, colored markers, or pencils. Laminate or cover with clear, adhesive-backed plastic, and trim neatly. Cut two finger-sized holes near the bottom of the figure.

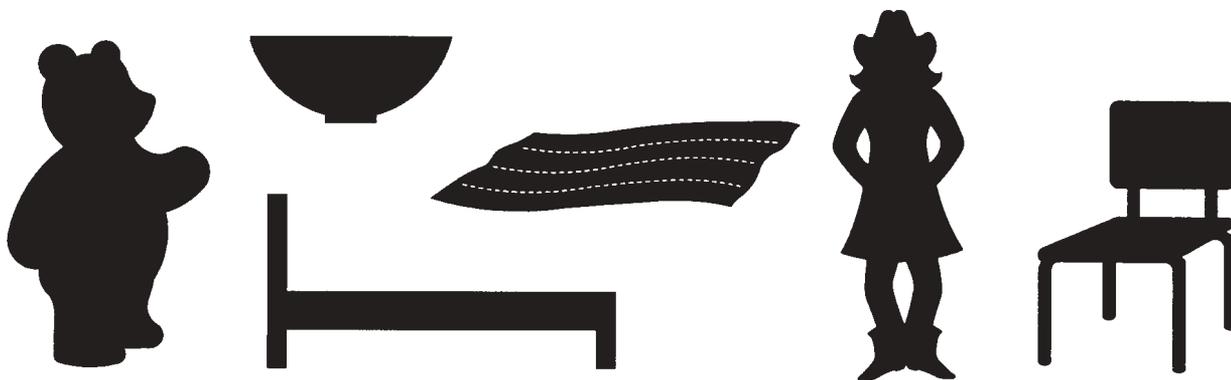
Stick puppets: Follow the directions for finger puppets. Instead of cutting finger holes, glue a craft stick to the back of the figure.

Be sure to develop a storage system for each set of figures—file folders, plastic bags attached to hangers, or small flat boxes. Label carefully and use often.

Fifth verse:

There was a sweet little girl with
the golden curls,
asleep in the teency, weency bed.
The bears came home and they
growled and growled and
the scared little girl ran away.

Sing *We’re Going on a Bear Hunt*
and *The Bear Went Over the Mountain* adding movement to each.



The Three Little Pigs

Gather these versions of the traditional folk tale:

- Ainsworth, Ruth. *The Three Pigs*
Bishop, Gavin. *The Three Little Pigs*
David, Judy. *Pigmania: A New Spin on the Three Little Pigs*, book and cassette
Kellogg, Steven. *The Three Little Pigs*
Lowell, Susan. *The Three Little Javelinas*
Moser, Barry. *The Three Little Pigs*
Neway, Robert. *Three Little Pigs*
Percy, Graham. *The Three Little Pigs*, book and cassette
Ross, Elizabeth. *Three Little Pigs*
Scieszka, Jon. *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*
Trivigas, Eugene. *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*
Zemach, Margot. *The Three Little Pigs*

Story time. Read the traditional story of the *Three Little Pigs* retold and illustrated by Margot Zemach. Help children learn the sequence of the story, and the familiar refrain “Then I’ll huff, and I’ll puff, and I’ll blow your house down.” Retell the story with flannel board figures; let the children use the figures to share the story with each other.

Explore other versions of the story, including those known as fractured or twisted tales, in which the wolf becomes the sympathetic victim of the pigs’ mischief.



Art center Instead of painting with a brush, blow the paint.

Here’s what you need:

- sheets of slick-surfaced paper
- drinking straws
- liquid tempera
- liquid dish detergent
- water
- measuring cup and spoons
- mixing bowl and spoon
- squeeze bottle

1. Pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup tempera, 2 table-
spoons detergent, and 2 table-
spoons of water into bowl. Mix
gently.
2. Pour the paint mixture into a
squeeze bottle.
3. Show the children how to
squeeze a puddle of paint onto
paper and use a straw to huff
and puff and blow the paint
around.

Introduce mud painting by talking about how pigs keep cool in mud, and how bricks are made from clay. Provide lumps of clay and water. Invite children to make bricks with the clay. As an outdoor art activity, mix water into the clay. Encourage children to finger paint with mud on a sidewalk.

Block center. Gather pictures of bricks laid in patterns—herring-bone, basket weave, and banding. (See www.cmhpf.org/kids/Guidebook/brick.html for more information.) Use unit blocks to make a wall like those in a brick house. Start the pattern and challenge children to continue it. Experiment with different patterns and try to determine which provides the most strength.

Bring cardboard brick blocks or hollow blocks outside. Build a house on the playground.

Dramatic play. Make pig snouts to add to the dramatic play prop box.

Here’s what you need:

- pink plastic eggs
- black permanent marker
- ice pick or awl
- stove flame
- lengths of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch elastic

1. Separate the plastic egg sections.
One egg makes two snouts.
2. Use the permanent marker to
draw two ovals on the rounded
ends of the egg sections.
3. Heat the tip of the awl in a
flame. Use the hot point to melt
small holes in the plastic, one
on each side of the snout.
4. Tie elastic through the holes to
fit the children’s heads.
5. Label each snout with its user’s
name.



Listening center. Make available other versions of the Three Little Pigs books and cassettes to the children.

Math and manipulatives center. Invite the children to build a brick house using Lego® type blocks. Additionally, provide puzzles, folder games about three pigs, and other assorted manipulatives. Older children will enjoy the commercially produced games Pass the Pigs and Pig Pile.

Three Pigs folder game

Objective: The children will match shirts to the hats of each of the three pigs.

Here's what you need:

- file folder
- glue
- heavy-duty envelope or small zipper-top plastic bag
- package sealing tape
- clear, adhesive-backed plastic or laminator
- scissors
- construction paper
- paper in three patterns
- patterns
- copy machine
- small hook-and-loop dots



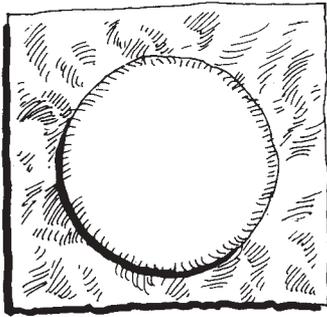
1. Copy and enlarge the pig, hat, and shirt patterns below.
2. Use the pattern to cut out three pigs from construction paper.
3. Use the pattern to cut a hat and matching shirt from each piece of patterned paper.
4. Glue the three pigs to the inside of the file folder. Glue a hat on each pig's head.
5. Write "Match the shirt to the hat" on the front of the folder.
6. Cover the entire folder with contact paper or laminate it.
7. Cover or laminate each shirt and trim carefully.
8. Glue a hook-and-loop dot to the back of each shirt.
9. Glue the matching dot to the pig's body.
10. Tape the plastic bag to the back of the folder to hold the pieces.

Group times. Collect pictures of different types of home construction including brick, wood siding, metal siding, apartment buildings, and factory-built homes. Consider putting together a home design prop box with blueprints, paint color chips, tape measures, pencils, paper, and pictures of home interiors and exteriors. Include photographs of familiar buildings in your neighborhood or city.

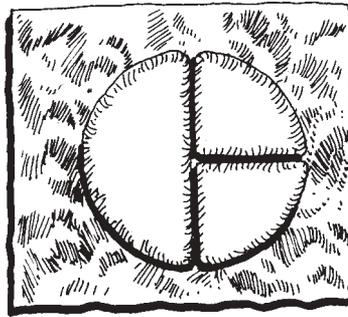
Gather three large cardboard boxes, glue, straw or dried grass, twigs, and markers. Invite children to cover one with straw, cover one with twigs, and draw bricks on the third. Use the box houses with dolls, stuffed animals, or puppets to act out the story.

Cooking. Try either of these easy classroom cooking activities. (See *Texas Child Care*, Fall 2000, page 28, for general guidelines on classroom cooking.) Both activities require an oven. Always review safety rules before cooking—including starting with clean hands.

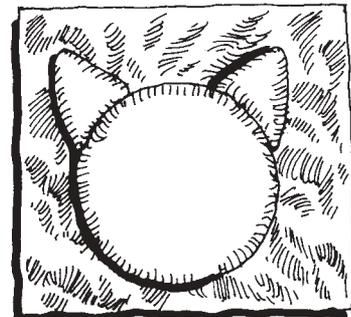




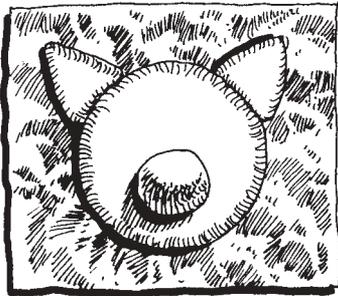
1. Place 1 biscuit on foil



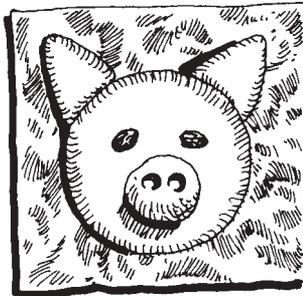
2. Separate second biscuit into 3 pieces



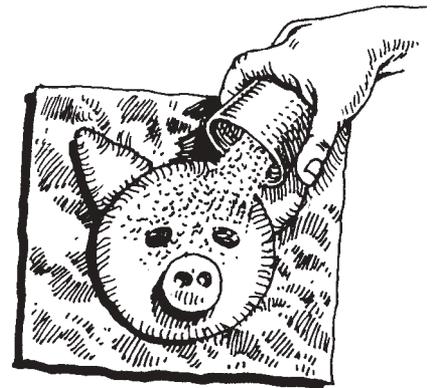
3. Form the 2 small pieces into triangles, place on first biscuit



4. Roll big piece of second biscuit into a ball, place in center of first biscuit



5. Add 2 raisins for eyes, poke 2 holes for nose



6. Sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar and bake

Make pig biscuits (see Rebus above). Provide squares of aluminum foil labeled with children's names, two canned biscuits for each child, plastic serrated knives, raisins, and cinnamon-sugar mix.

Make Pigs in a Blanket for snack. Show children how to flatten a canned biscuit on foil, wrap it around a piece of precooked sausage, and bake.

Discovery center. Place small sticks, pieces of straw, and a few bricks in the sand and water table or in a large plastic tub. Use fireplace bellows or a foot pump to huff and puff. Let the children huff and puff to try to move the objects.

Writing center. Offer paper, crayons, markers, and pencils for free-play drawing and writing. Provide word cards with the words *huff*, *puff*, *pig*, *wolf*, *straw*, *stick*, and *brick* printed in large, clear letters.

Music and movement center. Sing the *Three Pigs Song*
Part 1—to the tune of *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*
Pig, Pig, build your house,
Quickly as you may. Hurry up,
hurry up, hurry up!
Wolf is on his way!

Part 2—to the tune of *The Farmer in the Dell*

The Wolf is in the pot!
The Wolf is in the pot!
We will all be safe tonight,
The Wolf is in the pot!

—Joan E. Haines

Play *Squeal, Pig, Squeal*. Blindfold one child. Ask the other children to sit on the floor in a circle. Walk around the circle with the blindfolded child who eventually sits on another child's lap. That child squeals. The blindfolded child tries to guess who the squealer is. Let all the children take turns being blindfolded.

The Three Billy Goats Gruff

Gather these versions of this traditional Norwegian folk tale:

Appleby, Ellen. *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*

Brown, Maria. *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*

Carpenter, Stephen. *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*

Chardict, Bernice. *Rap, Rough, Gruff Goat Brothers*

Emberley, Rebecca. *Three Cool Kids*

Galdone, Paul. *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*

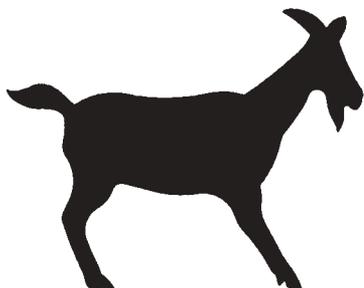
Granowsky, Alvin. *The Three Billy Goats Gruff/Just a Friendly Troll*

Percy, Graham. *Los Tres Cabritillos Traviesos/The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, book and cassette

Otfinoski, Steven. *The Truth about the Three Billy Goats Gruff*

McMullen, Kate. *Hey Pipsqueak!*

Story time. Read the traditional story of the *Three Billy Goats Gruff* retold and illustrated by Paul Galdone. Help children learn the sequence of the story by using flannel board figures or puppets, or by acting it out.



Art center. Introduce water colors by talking about how fluid and water-like a finished painting looks. Relate the water colors to the water under the bridge the Billy Goats Gruff must cross.

Block center. Build bridges using unit blocks, hollow blocks with beams, or cardboard brick blocks. On a warm, sunny day, build a bridge outdoors. Run a stream of water underneath the bridge.

Dramatic play. Make goat horn hats (see examples below) and a pointed troll hat (paper rolled and taped into a cone shape) from colored posterboard. Place in the dramatic play area.



Manipulatives and math center.

Encourage children to practice counting with this activity.

Here's what you need:

- egg carton
- 3 each of several small objects like buttons, marbles, or pebbles, for example
- marker
- plastic, zipper-top bag

1. On the top of the carton, write "Focus on Three (3)."
2. Instruct children to place three matching objects into each egg cup.
3. Store the objects in the plastic bag when the children are finished counting.

Group times. Introduce *herbivores*, animals that eat plants. Goats are herbivores. They are good climbers, have flat teeth (for grinding their food), and frequently live in grassy and hilly or mountainous areas. Show pictures of goats in their natural *habitat*—where they live in the wild.

Compare a few herbivores and *carnivores*, animals that eat meat. Ask children for examples of each.

Cooking. Make a salad using field greens and goat cheese.

Discovery center. Put sand, small stones, tongue depressors, plastic goats, and a troll doll in the sand and water table. Encourage the children to make mountains and bridges.

Plant some rye grass seeds in a low, wide clay pot. Watch the grass seeds grow.



Listening area. Show children how to use a cassette recorder. Invite them to make their own recordings of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. Older children might enjoy telling the story from the troll's point of view.

Writing center. Offer paper, crayons, pencils, and markers for free-play drawing and writing. Provide word cards with the words *goat, troll, trip, trap, horn, hill, and grass* printed in large, clear letters.

Music center. Sing *The Mean Little Troll*—to the tune of *The Mulberry Bush*

First verse:

The mean little troll let the first
goat pass, first goat pass, first
goat pass.
He's over the bridge in the nice
green grass,
But the ugly, mean troll is still
hungry!

Second verse: Repeat first verse using "second goat."

Third verse:

The third billy goat pushed the
mean troll over!
The third billy goat pushed the
mean troll over!
The three billy goats are in fields
of clover—

Hurray for the Billy Goats Gruff.

—Joan E. Haines



The Three Little Kittens

Gather these versions of this familiar nursery rhyme.

Alter, Anna. *The Three Little Kittens*

Gladone, Paul. *The Three Little Kittens*

Kelly, Martin. *The Three Little Kittens*, photographs

Linch, Tanya. *The Three Little Kittens*

Marzollo, Jean. *The Three Little Kittens*

Obligado, Lilian. *The Three Little Kittens*

Scott, Dorothy. *The Three Little Kittens*

Art center. Encourage children to use yarn in an art activity.

Here's what you need:

- lengths of colored yarn
- glue
- construction paper

1. Dip a piece of yarn in glue.
2. Squeeze out the excess glue.
3. Arrange the yarn on a sheet of paper to make a design.

Variation: After the yarn dries, invite children to use markers or crayons to add to the yarn art.

Invite children to make prints from sponges cut into cat, mitten, or paw shapes.

Cut large mittens from easel paper. Invite children to create unique designs with markers, paint, and collage materials.

Dramatic play. Place three pairs of mittens, an apron, washboard, clothesline and pins, and pie plate in the dramatic play center. Invite children to use the washboard in the sand and water table to wash the mittens and hang them out to dry.

Why revisit stories?

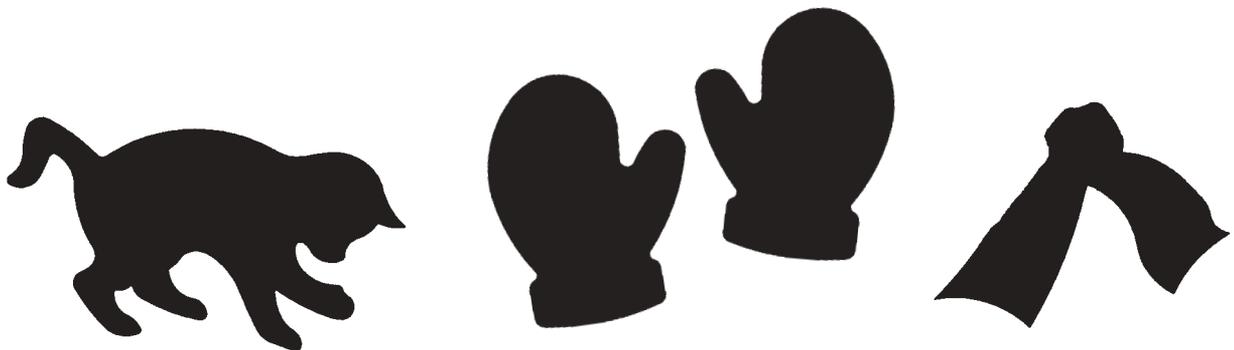
Objectives

- The children will learn to analyze the contents of stories.
- The children will improve self-confidence and language skills.
- The children will improve math skills through literature-based activities.
- The children will improve motor skills and vocabulary.

Listening area. Provide a cassette of familiar household sounds, including a cat meowing. Encourage the children to identify each sound.

Math and manipulatives center. Provide matching games, puzzles, cat counters, and other manipulatives.

Reinforce the concept of *pair* or two of an object. Use fabric squares, stringing beads, sea shells, or Concentration cards to encourage children to form pairs.



Three Little Kittens folder game

Objective: The children will make three sets of three similar objects.

Here's what you need:

- paper or fabric in three patterns
- scissors
- 3 lengths of yarn, each 16-inches long
- glue
- mitten and scarf patterns
- 9 pairs of small hook-and-loop dots
- clear, adhesive-backed plastic or laminator
- small, zipper-top storage bag
- tape

1. Copy and enlarge the mitten and scarf patterns on Page 16. Use the patterns to cut out one pair of mittens and one scarf from each different piece of fabric or paper.
2. Glue the lengths of yarn across the inside of the folder like three clotheslines.
3. Write "Match the scarf and mittens" across the top of the folder.
4. Cover the folder with clear, adhesive-backed plastic or laminate.
5. Glue three hook-and-loop dots across each length of yarn.
6. Glue the other half of the hook-and-loop dot to the back of each scarf and mitten.
7. Tape the storage bag to the back of the folder.
8. Instruct children to hang the matching sets of mittens and scarves on each clothesline.

Group time. Discuss feelings.

Ask: Why did the kittens cry when they disappointed their mother? What did the mother cat feel? What would be a good reward for a real cat?

Share the story in poetry and storybook forms. Talk about the differences and vote on the one the children like best.

Cooking. Make pie for snack. Children crush graham crackers with butter to make a crust. They can also mix instant pudding for pie filling. Remember to insist on clean hands before cooking and eating.

Math and manipulatives center. Use a paper pie to demonstrate size. Cut the pie in half. Ask if there are enough pieces for the three kittens and their mother to each get a slice. Cut the pie in fourths or quarters and repeat the question. Let the children cut a paper pie in half and fourths.

Writing center. Offer paper, crayons, markers, and pencils for free-play drawing and writing. Provide word cards with the words *kitten*, *mitten*, *cat*, *cry*, *mother*, and *pie* printed in large, clear letters.

Discovery center. Invite a parent, Humane Society volunteer, or veterinarian to bring a pet cat to visit the classroom. Ask the visitor to tell the children about pet care, including handling and feeding.

Ask children to bring pictures of their own pets to share with the group. Sort the photos into categories like cats, dogs, reptiles, caged pet, and outside pet. Help children recognize that a pet could be appropriately placed in more than one category.



Music and movement center.

Play *Follow the Leader*, moving as cats do. Later expand the activity to include all pets. Let the children hop, crawl, leap, slither, run, gallop, walk, pounce, and climb, for example.

Want more?

If you want more famous threesomes, consider: *The Three Sillies* retold by Steven Kellogg, Anne Rockwell, Margot Zemach, and others; *The Three Robbers* by Tomi Ungerer; *The Three Wishes* retold by Harriet Ziefert and Margot Zemach; the *Tale of Three Trees* by Angela Hunt; and *Friends* by Helme Heine.

About the author

Jo Ann Lohl Spears retired from teaching in 1999 after 18 years of experience as a preschool teacher and director. She currently writes and works as the periodicals manager at the University of Houston-Victoria library.