



SilvaStone

Living the Story Before Retelling It

An inquiry-based lesson planner using We're Going on a Bear Hunt

AGE GROUP Early Years / Ages 4-6	DURATION 2-4 weeks (flexible)	THEME How We Express Ourselves
-------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

CENTRAL IDEA

Children construct and communicate story meaning through sensory experiences, movement, materials, sound and sequence.

1 READ	2 OBSERVE	3 LISTEN	4 TRY	5 REFLECT
--------	-----------	----------	-------	-----------

"Learning is not confined to the boundaries of indoor spaces."

- Jacqueline Da Silva

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINE

This lesson plan can be implemented over 2-4 weeks. When teaching literacy and language, depth is more powerful than breadth: revisiting one rich concept through a variety of sensory, physical, oral, visual and written experiences helps children construct, connect and consolidate understanding.

Remember to have fun!

SilvaStone adaptation aligned to the inquiry-planning structure. This is not an official IB publication.

1. What is our purpose?

Planning the inquiry

INQUIRY FRAME

Transdisciplinary theme

How We Express Ourselves

An inquiry into how stories communicate ideas and feelings, and how children use voice, movement, materials, images and marks to express meaning.

Central idea

Children construct and communicate story meaning through sensory experiences, movement, materials, sound and sequence.

Learning context

We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen, illustrated by Helen Oxenbury, becomes the shared narrative through which children move from receiving a story to living it, reconstructing it and representing it.

SUMMATIVE PERFORMANCE OF UNDERSTANDING

Children collaboratively design and experience a short Bear Hunt story trail for another small group. They then retell the journey through a mode of their choice:

- oral retelling with temporal language
- props, puppets or loose parts
- picture sequencing or a story map
- movement, sound or dramatic play
- drawing, mark-making, emergent words or sentences
- audio or video recording

Evidence of understanding

- events are placed in a meaningful order
- the child connects actions, sounds or materials to story events
- the child uses language, gesture or symbols to communicate meaning
- the child makes choices and explains at least one choice
- the child reflects on what helped them remember and retell

WHY THIS DESIGN?

An inquiry-planning approach positions learning as transdisciplinary, inquiry-based and student-centred, with agency, reflection and authentic assessment embedded in the learning process. Research on embodied learning also suggests that movement is most useful when it is meaningfully connected to the concept being learned. This planner therefore moves deliberately from story, to sensory experience, to representation - rather than beginning with a worksheet.

Research basis: International Baccalaureate Organization (2026); Goldin-Meadow, Cook & Mitchell (2009); Kontra et al. (2015); Mavilidi et al. (2018); Damsgaard et al. (2022).

2. What do we want to learn?

Conceptual inquiry and intended learning

<p>KEY & RELATED CONCEPTS</p> <p>Key concepts: Connection - how experiences connect to later representation; Function - how voice, movement and materials communicate; Perspective - how children may represent the same story differently; Reflection - how learners notice what supported their understanding.</p> <p>Related concepts: sequence, narrative, representation, sensory language, symbolism, imagination, communication</p>	<p>LINES OF INQUIRY</p> <p>1: How stories are structured and sequenced. 2: How sensory and whole-body experiences help us construct meaning. 3: How stories can be represented through voice, movement, loose parts, pictures and print.</p>
<p>LEARNER PROFILE</p> <p>Communicator: shares ideas through words, sound, movement, images and symbols Inquirer: asks questions and explores how materials can represent story events Thinker: makes connections and decides what comes next Risk-taker: participates in imaginative and sensory experiences Reflective: notices what helped them remember and communicate</p>	<p>APPROACHES TO LEARNING</p> <p>Communication: listening, speaking, viewing, presenting and non-verbal expression Thinking: sequencing, remembering, transferring and creating Self-management: body awareness, emotional regulation, organisation and safety Social: cooperating, taking turns, negotiating roles and listening to others Research: observing, collecting, recording and comparing experiences</p>

TEACHER QUESTIONS & PROVOCATIONS

- What makes events belong in an order?
- How can our bodies and senses help us remember a story?
- How can one object become many things in play?
- How do voice, rhythm and sound change the meaning of a story?
- How can we show understanding in different ways?
- How do you know? What happened next? And now?

CHILD-FRIENDLY SUCCESS CRITERIA

- I can join in with and respond to a story.
- I can use my senses and body to explore story events.
- I can tell or show what happened first, next and finally.
- I can use props, pictures, movement or marks to retell.
- I can choose a way to show what I understand.
- I can listen to someone else's version and notice what is similar or different.

3. How best might we learn? - Pathways 1-3

1 READ

2 OBSERVE

3 LISTEN

4 TRY

5 REFLECT

PATHWAY 1 - READ | Build the shared story world

1

Invite, do not test

Read the story for enjoyment. Allow children to join repeated language, predict, gesture and respond emotionally.

2

Model sequence language

Think aloud using first, next, then and finally. Make the structure audible without turning the reading into a quiz.

3

Retell with open-ended props

Offer a scarf, sticks, stones, leaves, a box or a bear puppet. Let children decide what each object can become.

4

Ask guiding questions

Try: "What happened next?", "How do you know?" and "And now?" Notice and extend without taking over.

Optional companion provocations: *Not a Stick and Not a Box* by Antoinette Portis, and *A Stick Is a Wonderful Thing* by Marilyn Singer.

PATHWAY 2 - OBSERVE | Notice intention

Use photographs, the sequencing diagram and the prepared learning environment as provocations. Invite slow looking before interpretation.

- Notice how materials have been arranged and made accessible.
- Notice how ordinary objects are being used symbolically.
- Notice the care, invitation and possibility built into the presentation.
- Notice where the learning takes place - indoors, outdoors and between the two.
- Record objective observations before assumptions or judgements.

Professional observation prompt: "Learning is not confined to the boundaries of indoor spaces." - Jacqueline Da Silva

PATHWAY 3 - LISTEN | Hear the author and the rhythm

Watch Michael Rosen perform the story. Children see that an author is a real person with a voice, personality, imagination and distinctive way of telling.

- Listen for pace, rhythm, expression, repeated language and sound.
- Invite children to echo sounds and meaningful movements.
- Pause to picture the setting, not to interrogate comprehension.
- Compare the printed reading, author performance and audio narration.
- Make room for children who engage more readily through listening than print.

Author performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OI7fe766nk&t=72s>

Optional connected audio narration: *New Recording.m4a* followed by *New Recording 2.m4a*.

4. How best might we learn? - Pathways 4-5

1 READ

2 OBSERVE

3 LISTEN

4 TRY

5 REFLECT

PATHWAY 4 - TRY | From experience to representation

- 1 Model it on the carpet**
Read once and model first, next, then and finally.
- 2 Retell with props**
Use picture cards, puppets or loose parts before going outside.
- 3 Rebuild it outdoors**
Use open-ended natural materials to recreate the story experiences. Improvise - it does not have to look exact. Play, fun and imagination take the lead.
- 4 Notice, extend and name**
Ask "What happened next?", "How do you know?" and "And now?" Then step back.
- 5 Bring it back inside**
Remodel with outdoor props, draw, map, mark-make or use emergent writing rooted in the lived experience.
- 6 Sequence and put pen to paper**
Sequence with picture cards, then freely draw or show what happened first, next and at the end. Add a word or sentence when developmentally ready.

Differentiation is essential, not optional. A diversity of experiences and ways to communicate are required to consolidate understanding.

PATHWAY 5 - REFLECT & REPRESENT | Make learning visible

- Revisit photographs, sounds and materials from the outdoor experience.
- Invite children to recall 1, 2, 3 or more moments without imposing a single correct mode.
- Use picture cards to support order, not to replace the child's own telling.
- Offer props, movement, drawing, story maps, voice recording and emergent writing.
- Invite peer listening: "What was the same? What was different?"
- Ask children what helped them remember and what they would change next time.

Possible action

Children create a short sensory story trail for a younger class, family group or buddy, explain how to move through it safely, and return natural materials responsibly.



5. How might we know what we have learned?

Authentic, integrated assessment through observation, conversation and representation

Assessment moment	Teacher action	Evidence to notice	Documentation
Before - indoor pre-assessment	Invite a retell using words, props, picture cards, movement, drawing or early writing.	What can the child already recall or sequence? How many parts can they communicate independently: 1, 2, 3 or more?	Anecdotal note, short audio/video, photo of sequence or drawing.
During - outdoor inquiry	Observe and listen without directing every move. Use occasional guiding questions.	New sensory/descriptive vocabulary; story language; sequencing; symbolic use of materials; collaboration; joy, curiosity and agency.	Quote the child's exact words; photograph materials and actions; note significant choices.
After - return indoors	Invite recall, sequence and representation through a chosen mode.	Can the child recall 1, 2, 3 or more experiences? Place events in order? Retell with props/pictures/drawing? Add marks, words or sentences when ready?	Collect representation, record retell, annotate with teacher observation and child reflection.

PROGRESSION SNAPSHOT - STORY SEQUENCING & REPRESENTATION

Level	Sequence	Language & meaning	Representation & agency
Emerging	Recalls an isolated event with support.	Uses gesture, sound or a familiar word to communicate.	Participates with adult or peer support; chooses from offered modes.
Developing	Sequences 2-3 events with visual or verbal support.	Uses some story or sensory language.	Retells through props, movement, pictures or marks with growing independence.
Secure	Sequences 4 or more events and uses temporal language.	Connects language, action and materials to story meaning.	Chooses and explains a representation; listens and responds to others.
Extending	Adapts, elaborates or creates an alternative sequence.	Uses descriptive language and explains relationships or choices.	Designs a story journey for others and reflects on how the experience supported memory.

6. Three quick observation notes

Use these before, during and after the experience. Capture brief evidence without interrupting the play.

1. Before going outdoors: What can the child already do?

- Observe how the child responds to the story indoors.
- Can they recall or sequence any part of the story?
- Can they retell it using words, props, picture cards, movement, drawing or early writing?
- Record how many parts they can communicate independently: 1, 2, 3 or more.

Quick note

The child currently shows understanding through:

2. During outdoor play: What new language and understanding are emerging?

- Listen closely to the words, sounds and phrases the child uses while experiencing the story.
- Do they repeat or chant familiar lines? Use new sensory or descriptive language? Connect words and actions to story events?
- Are they engaged, curious, playful and having fun?
- Examples: "Ooh, it is cold!" "My feet are wet!" "The mud is squishy!"

Quick note

A new word, phrase, action or connection I noticed was:

3. After returning indoors: What can the child recall and represent?

- Observe what the child remembers after the outdoor experience.
- Can they recall 1, 2, 3 or more experiences from outdoors?
- Can they place events in order and retell with props, pictures, movement or drawings?
- Can they represent understanding through marks, words or sentences when developmentally ready?

Quick note

After the experience, the child could recall, sequence or represent:

7. What resources need to be gathered?

Loose parts and resources to gather - ideas, not prescriptions

Starting point & front door	Cardboard panel or box, wooden frame or crate, fabric curtain, ring handle, small mat.
Wavy grass & river	Long grass, green ribbons or fabric, reeds and leaves; blue scarf or sheet, shallow water tuff tray, smooth stones, stepping discs, towels and non-slip mat.
Mud & forest	Soil and water or child-safe mud in a tuff tray; scoops and bowls; sticks, branches, logs, bark, stones, pinecones, leaves, acorns and baskets.
Snowstorm	White sheets or scarves, feathers, wool, tissue, soft pom-poms, silver ribbons, bells, shakers, rain stick, white chalk; optional fan with close supervision.
Cave & bear	Stable cardboard box or table with dark breathable fabric, cushions, crates, battery lanterns; stuffed bear, puppet, mask, brown fabric or paw prints.
Return home & representation	Door frame and mat, lightweight covers and cushions, picture cards, clipboards, paper, pencils, crayons, puppets, camera/tablet or audio recorder.

SAFETY & WELLBEING

- Complete a site-specific risk assessment for slips, trips, water, mud, weather and boundaries.
- Use shallow water and mud with active supervision; provide non-slip mats and handwashing.
- Check natural and small materials for sharp edges, allergens and age appropriateness.
- Ensure caves are stable, ventilated, visible to adults and easy to exit.
- Offer waterproof clothing, spare clothes, towels and warm-up options.
- Make all sensory participation invitational; never force touch, wetness, mud or enclosed spaces.

OPEN-ENDED MATERIALS

The aim is not a perfect replica. A stick can become a tree, a signpost or a bridge; a scarf can become a river or snowstorm; a blanket can become a cave or the covers at home.

Invite children to collect and prepare materials wherever possible. Their choices are part of the inquiry and provide evidence of symbolic thinking, agency and collaboration.

Collect responsibly. Use fallen materials where possible and return natural resources when the experience is complete.

8. How will every learner participate?

Differentiation, inclusion, agency and responsible action

<p>LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use visual sequence cards, gesture and modelling. ● Welcome home-language retellings and family recordings. ● Offer AAC, choice boards, partner retell and voice recording. ● Accept sound, movement and symbol as meaningful communication. 	<p>SENSORY ACCESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide wet and dry versions of each experience. ● Offer gloves, tools, footwear and observe-only roles. ● Prepare a calm space and predictable transitions. ● Let children opt in gradually and revisit later. 	<p>PHYSICAL ACCESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create wide, stable routes and seated alternatives. ● Bring loose parts to the child rather than requiring travel. ● Use large lightweight props and adapted grips. ● Pair children strategically without removing agency.
<p>COGNITIVE SCAFFOLDING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce the sequence to 1, 2 or 3 events when needed. ● Use photos from the child's own experience. ● Model one step, then fade support. ● Repeat across days and contexts before expecting paper-based work. 	<p>EXTENSION & CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Retell from the bear's perspective. ● Design an alternative obstacle or ending. ● Create a map, signs or instructions for another group. ● Compare two retellings and justify choices. 	<p>AGENCY & ACTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Choose roles, materials, route and mode of representation. ● Co-construct safety agreements and success criteria. ● Create a story trail for another class or family. ● Care for shared spaces and return natural materials responsibly.

ADULT ROLE: NOTICE, EXTEND, NAME - WITHOUT TAKING OVER

- Observe before intervening.
- Name what the child is doing or communicating rather than prescribing the next action.
- Use one open question, then allow wait time.
- Document exact words, gestures, choices and relationships.
- Step back when the story is moving; join only when invited or when safety requires it.

9. Reflection, next steps and references

Reflection is part of the inquiry, not an activity added at the end.

STUDENT REFLECTION PROMPTS

- Which part of the journey do you remember most? Why?
- What happened first, next and finally?
- Which material became something different in your play?
- How did the sounds or movements help you understand or remember?
- What would you add, remove or change if we built the journey again?

Accept reflection through conversation, pointing, gesture, drawing, movement, photo choice or recorded voice.

TEACHER / TEAM REFLECTION

- What evidence showed conceptual understanding rather than simple recall?
- Whose voice, language, body or sensory preferences were most visible - and whose were less visible?
- Which materials generated the richest symbolic play?
- What new language or social interaction emerged outdoors?
- Did the return indoors deepen representation, or did we move to paper too quickly?
- What should be revisited, extended or redesigned next?

RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

- International Baccalaureate Organization. (2026). Primary years curriculum framework; Learning and teaching; inquiry in practice. <https://ibo.org/programmes/primary-years-programme/>
- Damsgaard, L., et al. (2022). Effects of 8 weeks with embodied learning on 5-6-year-old Danish children's pre-reading skills and word reading skills: The PLAYMORE Project, DK. Educational Psychology Review. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09671-8>
- Goldin-Meadow, S., Cook, S. W., & Mitchell, Z. A. (2009). Gesturing gives children new ideas about math. Psychological Science, 20(3), 267-272. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02297.x>
- Kontra, C., Lyons, D. J., Fischer, S. M., & Beilock, S. L. (2015). Physical experience enhances science learning. Psychological Science, 26(6), 737-749. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615569355>
- Mavilidi, M. F., Ruiter, M., Schmidt, M., Okely, A. D., Loyens, S., Chandler, P., & Paas, F. (2018). A narrative review of school-based physical activity for enhancing cognition and learning: The importance of relevancy and integration. Frontiers in Psychology, 9, 2079. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02079>
- Wellsby, M., & Pexman, P. M. (2014). Developing embodied cognition: Insights from children's concepts and language processing. Frontiers in Psychology, 5, 506. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00506>

Book reference: Rosen, M., & Oxenbury, H. We're Going on a Bear Hunt. Use a legally acquired copy and follow local licensing requirements for performance, reproduction and digital use.



SilvaStone

Learning environments that invite curiosity, agency and belonging