

The Early Years Count Literacy Connection



Otis and the Kittens

Written and illustrated by
Loren Long

Preschool edition

Overview of Book

Otis the tractor lives on the farm with the many animals and people who live and work there. He loves playing with his farm animal friends and helping whenever he can. One day there is smoke coming from the old barn! There's a big fire—and everything is really dry from the hot weather and no rain! Worse, a cat is trapped along with her kittens! Can Otis help? Can all the kittens be rescued? What happens if Otis is the one who needs to be rescued? What will happen next?

Genre: Fiction

Vocabulary

Books are a rich source of words new to children. Here are some words from *Otis and the Kittens* to introduce in your classroom:

sweltering	brittle
emerged	collapsed
cluttered	suspended

Each time you read the book, choose 2 or 3 words to highlight.

Use age-appropriate definitions and/or the illustrations to help children gain an understanding of each word's meaning.

Use these new words throughout the day, reminding the children, "That's a word from our story!"

Connecting with the HighScope Curriculum

COR Advantage 1.5

Approaches to learning
Item B (*Solving problems
with materials*)

Social and Emotional
Development
Item D (*Emotions*)

Mathematics
Item S (*Numbers and
counting*)

Creative Arts
Item AA (*Pretend play*)

Reading Tips

Know ahead of time if any child in your group has experienced anything like a house fire. This information will be very important to help determine how and when to read this story.

Use body language, facial expressions and character voices for the main characters. This is an exciting and involved story that begs to be "acted out" as you read. Look scared and worried during the fire scenes to mirror the mood of the story in these parts. Model and show relief when the kitties are rescued and again when Otis is saved.

Three readings are recommended to familiarize children with the story. Each reading provides an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary words, pose open-ended questions, and engage children in activities that make the story "come alive."

Throughout the Routine

Refer to the book throughout the day and use new vocabulary words in meaningful ways. Active engagement with the story helps the content come alive.

Have children use their own blocks/Legos, people, small fire trucks and other play materials at **Small Group** to practice the sequence and roles of fire fighter play.

Transition children as if they were fire trucks. Encourage siren and bell sounds.

Make a game out of “stop, drop and roll” at **Large Group Time**.

Play a version of “tug-o-war” at **Outside Time**.

Around the Room

Highlight the book's content and build on the children's excitement in a variety of locations.

Add props to the **House Area** and **Block Area** to support firefighter play.

Post pictures of “old fashioned” and modern fire trucks in the **Block Area**.

Have different titles and genres in the **Book Area** for children to further explore fire fighting. Include other stories as well as information books. For example, *Fireman Small* by Wong Herbert Yee and *Firefighter Frank* by Monica Wellington.

Open-ended Questions

Enhance active engagement and early critical thinking skills by asking open-ended questions. These questions encourage children to explain why or how things happen, make predictions, or brainstorm possibilities rather than give one “right” answer.

Here are some questions you might ask for *Otis and the Kittens*:

What game do you like so much that you want to play even if you don't win?

How do you think the fire started?

What took the fire truck so long to get to the barn?

For more information on how to use books and stories with children to enhance your curriculum, contact
The Family Connection:

website—
www.famconn.org

Facebook—
@famconnsjc

phone—
574-237-9740

@ Home

Since many of the children in our county will have this book at home, use it as a way to further the home-school connection. In your daily contact—in person or by text, email or other notes home—encourage families to share *Otis and the Kittens* with their children. Here's a sample message you can send:

We've been reading *Otis and the Kittens* in our classroom. This has given us a good opportunity to review fire safety with our children and it also might open the door for you to discuss, with a reassuring tone, fire safety with your child. If you haven't yet made a plan about what to do and where to go in case of an emergency, now's a good time. Take a walk around the home and locate places to go if there is a fire. Then choose a “safe spot” to meet up outside if anything happens. Review with your child how to dial 911 as well as “stop, drop and roll.”