



# Reading Counts



## Book Reviews: Suggestions for Tutoring Poetry & Letter Writing

Laura Amidon

Team Leader - Livonia

If you are looking for an idea on how to get your students interested in poetry, then consider picking up Jamie Lee Curtis' book *Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods That Make My Day*. This is a great book to grab students' attention and to get them to laugh. Each page contains a poem about a feeling, with a little crazy girl narrating. Elaborate pictures of dancing cats, cross-eyed kids, and captured bears fill the pages, adding to the light context of the poem. Students can easily relate to the moods discussed in the book, as well as the daily life events the narrator uses to explore her moods.

*Today my mood's great, it's the absolute best.  
I rode a two-wheeler and passed my math test.  
I played soccer at recess and we won the game.  
I sang in the show and my parents both came.*

It is easy to discuss the rhyming patterns at the end of each line - a place to start with beginning poetry students. The students could choose a mood, list events that happen when they are feeling that emotion, then brainstorm words that rhyme with their previous ideas. Soon enough they are developing their own personal poems!

*Continued on page 2*



Jennifer Joseph with a Kindergarten class at Mt. Morris

## The Power of the Mystery Box

Noelle Rich

Team Leader - Geneseo

One of the things that many of us struggle with in tutoring is how to introduce a topic that may not interest us. We all know that enthusiasm is contagious, and if we're not having fun, then neither are our students. So, what's something that we can use that is incredibly inexpensive (and sometimes free!) that can make *any* topic exciting? A shoebox! But not just any shoebox, a *mystery box*.

A mystery box can be used to introduce literally thousands of activities related to math or reading (as well as any other academic discipline). When working with smaller children, you can put in a magnetic letter, and give the students clues as to what the letter may be. They will love the suspense! When working with older children, you can put in artifacts that describe a character in a novel. The possibilities are endless!

A mystery box does not have to include an object. When working in math, you could tell the students that the secret to rounding is inside the mystery box, but first you want them to guess what they think it may be. Inside the box could be a piece of paper explaining the whole process.

This great tool does not even need to be related to your lesson to be effective. When you first meet with your student(s), you

*Continued on page 4*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

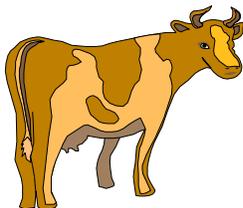
- 1 **Book Reviews**
- 1 **The Power of the Mystery Box**
- 2 **Dear Stacy: Advice for Tutors**
- 3 **Trick or Treat: Halloween Activities**
- 3 **Measurement Fun**
- 4 **Teachers' Corner**

## Book Reviews, *continued from page 1*

A classic book to use when learning letter writing is *Click, Clack, Moo Cows That Type* by Doreen Cronin. This is a story about a bunch of cows that are unhappy with the way things are being run on Farmer Brown's farm. They find an old typewriter and demand that changes are made. As Farmer Brown dismisses the letters, the cows get more and more serious. They type away.

*Click, clack, MOO.*  
*Click, clack, MOO.*  
*Clickety, clack, MOO*

The cows' demands become more serious and Farmer Brown has no choice, but to answer them. Students will become excited about the silly demands of the cows, often repeating the catchy phrase of "Click, clack, **MOO**." More importantly that having fun while reading, the students will see how the cows used letter writing to ask for things that they needed. This understanding can then be developed into why we use letters today. The students can write a letter to someone, asking them for something they want- just like the cows. The letter writing process can be broken down into steps, so students learn the proper and appropriate ways to communicate through this medium. After having practice writing fun letters, the students could write a real letter to an organization asking for information on products or events. *Click, Clack, Moo Cows That Type* is a fun book to use when introducing students to the conventions of letter writing.



## Dear Stacy

Stacy Jusianiec  
Team Leader - Dansville

I am introducing a new column for this newsletter that will be incorporated into each issue. 'Dear Stacy' is an advice column where tutors can write or tell me concerns or questions they have about tutoring and I will try and answer them to the best of my knowledge. I hope all of you can use this information in your tutoring. If you have a question or concern that you would like to ask me, just email me at [sbj1@geneseo.edu](mailto:sbj1@geneseo.edu) and I will gladly try to help. If you do not wish to have your question or concern be published, no worries- just let me know and I will not include it in the newsletter. Don't be afraid to ask questions or share your concerns or ideas- others probably have the same questions as you!

Dear Stacy,

I am working with a student and he has trouble sitting still during our time together. This poses a problem when I am trying to do a math activity with him because he is constantly getting up or moving around in his seat. Do you have any suggestions?

From,  
'Fidgety Student Tutor'

Dear Fidgety Student Tutor,

That is a common issue that tutors seem to be having, as young students do not like to sit still for very long. With consent from the teacher you can try and incorporate an activity that includes movement. If the student likes to move around and be active, you can use a game or an activity that incorporates a physical component. For example, try incorporating the 'around the world' activity where students travel around the room to answer math facts- such as multiplication. You can easily implement this with a whole class- or modify it to just one student.

Here is another idea for a reading/math activity that can get the students up and moving: Math/Spelling Baseball. Set the room up like a baseball field. A pitcher gives a word or a math fact to the batter and the batter then solves the math problem or spells the word. The student advances to the next base if correct answer is given. It is easy to modify the rules of this game to fit the situation.

Hope this helps!  
Stacy 8)

Continued on page 4

## Ideas and Activities

### Trick or Treat - Reading and Math are Neat!

Jennifer Joseph

Team Leader - Mt. Morris

Here are a few fun ways to incorporate Halloween into your tutoring sessions. You and your students will love these activities because they are engaging and the students can actively participate while you both are having fun and getting work done at the same time!

#### Reading/Language Arts:

##### Acrostic Halloween Poem

**Pump up Adjectives with Pumpkins:** Bring in a pumpkin and have students describe the pumpkin using adjectives. You then write those words on the pumpkin with a permanent marker and have your students make up a Halloween story with those adjectives in it or write complete sentences using the adjectives listed on the pumpkin.

**“Batty about Books” theme:** Use any of the following Halloween books to read with your students and have students create a new ending for the books that you/they have read.

The Halloween Play by Felicia Bond

The Three Friends and the Pumpkins by Tomie dePaola

Five Little Pumpkins by Dan Yaccarino

I like Pumpkins by Jerry Smath

The Littlest Pumpkin by R.A. Herman

#### Mathematics:

**Pin the Legs on the Spider:** Have the body of the spider made out of construction paper and taped to the wall. On the body next to where each leg should be attached, write arithmetic/math-related problems that correspond to the topics your students are learning. Have the answers to the problems written on the legs and have the students pin the legs on the spider (attempting to match the math solution to the correct problem).

**Trick-or-Treat Math Mystery:** Fill paper bags with Halloween clues (numbered in chronological order for the students to follow) in which the clues are math problems the students must solve to get the next clue. When a student completes the clue they show you and if correct they receive the letter that corresponds to that clue. The letters from all the clues tell the students where the real treats are hiding! When the mystery is solved it will lead them to their real goody bag with Halloween treats! (Clue example: Tom had 45 pieces of candy in his trick-o-treat bag. Liz had 39. How many more pieces of candy did Tom have than Liz?)

**Candy Graphs:** Math and Halloween go together...you can *count* on it! Have students survey the class and use their *counting* skills to find out everyone's favorite candy at Halloween time and have them create a picture, bar, or pie graph to illustrate their results.

### Making Math and Measurement Marvelously Fun

Emily Tatar

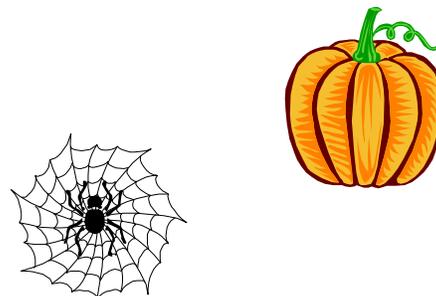
Team Leader - Avon/KidsStart



Children of young ages often find measurement tasks difficult because of the different unit systems that are used around the world. Starting off with simple generic concepts will allow students to get the basic idea of measurement before jumping into detail about metric units versus other forms. This is an especially good idea for tutors to practice with students to see if they really understand how to measure something. Here are some examples of ways that we might implement the idea of starting simple using an apple:

- Place apple in one end of a scale. Ask students what they should do to balance the scale. Have them guess how many teddy bear manipulatives it will take to balance the scale, and again with manipulative blocks. Inquire why “Johnny’s” apple takes more blocks/teddy bears and “Jane’s” apple.
- Ask students how they might measure the distance around an apple. If they do not guess, show them a piece of string and continue to question them. Finally ask them to measure around the outside with a piece of string. Normally, we could then measure the string with a ruler (cm/in), but to make it even more simple, we could measure the string with manipulative blocks. After measuring the string with blocks, do the same with the manipulative teddy bears and ask why there are fewer teddy bear than blocks when measuring the length of the string.

These are just a few fun ways to provide students with a basic knowledge and clear understanding of how things can be measured.



## Dear Stacy, *continued from page 2*

Dear Stacy,

I haven't had a lot of time to talk to my teacher about my tutoring experience or even to ask questions. I don't really have time to speak with her before my tutoring time because she has a class and after my time is up I have to leave to get to another class. What should I do?

From,  
'No time'

Dear No Time,

Finding time to discuss things with the teacher is often difficult as both the tutors and teachers have busy schedules. You can try to communicate through email and simply write your concerns or questions. You can ask Andrea for the teacher's email address or often it is listed on the school's website. You can also write a little note and leave it for your teacher on her desk after you leave- asking for the teacher to respond. They can have a response letter at your area or on their desk for the next tutoring session. Phone calls are also an option and even setting aside specific time to meet and discuss with your teacher can also be of interest to you. Either way, don't let time and being in a rush hinder you from asking questions or discussing things with him or her. It is very important to have that communication with the teacher as it will help make your tutoring experience enjoyable and worth while!

Thanks,  
Stacy

Dear Stacy,

I am tutoring in math and I want to incorporate Halloween into my math activity. Do you have any suggestions?

Thanks,  
'In need of a Halloween activity'

Dear In need of a Halloween activity,

One activity that I really think is excellent during fall and Halloween time is a pumpkin activity. You can bring a pumpkin in and have the student(s) guess the circumference, weight, and even the number of seeds inside. You can tie in various aspects of math, depending on the grade level and even accommodate the activities to the grade level. For example with the weighing activity- with earlier grade levels you can ask the student(s) to guess if the pumpkin weighs more or less than they do. For higher grades you can have the students guess the actual weight and compare the weight to other items in the classroom.

Pumpkins can be a lot of fun for the students and even after the math activity you can have the student(s) decorate the pumpkin.

Enjoy & Happy Halloween!  
Stacy 8)

## Mystery Box, *continued from page 1*

can nonchalantly set out the mystery box. When a student asks what it is and what's inside, you can casually say that if the tutoring session goes well, it will be opened at the end. The box could be holding anything from stickers to small candies (just make sure you check with your supervising teacher first!).

To get the most out of your mystery box, it is best to take a little time to decorate it. It doesn't need to be fancy, pasting giant question marks all over it will just add to its appeal. Remember that curiosity is a very powerful thing and all kids are naturally inquisitive so utilize this characteristic to your advantage! Get creative and have fun!



## Teachers' Corner: How to Get the Most out of Having a Tutor

The America Reads/Counts program can be a very valuable experience for our tutors, the children, and the classroom teachers. The tutors, however, do need some assistance from you in order to make this happen. Here's a few tips to keep in mind when working with a SUNY Geneseo tutor:

- Make your tutor feel welcome in the classroom. Introduce your tutor to the class. Let the tutor know how you would like the children to address the tutor.
- Make your expectations clear to the tutors. Tutors are eager to help and participate, but need some guidance about where to start.
- Try to let the tutor use his or her creativity. For many of our tutors, this is their first chance to plan activities and implement them in the classroom. Our tutors are full of good ideas and should be encouraged to use them whenever possible. Remember that the purpose of the program is to instill a love of reading and/or math in the children, and our tutors are eager to do this.
- If possible, find one or two students for the tutor to work with on a regular basis. From our past assessments, it's clear that these types of tutoring arrangements are the most beneficial for the children and the best type of experience for the tutor.
- Keep in touch with your tutor. Exchange emails or phone calls if personal meeting times aren't possible.

We look forward to continuing to work with you in this program and to continue to make it a positive experience for everyone involved!