Stories are an integral part of the human experience across any culture or era. We tell stories to explain, to teach, to entertain, and to inspire. Our Green Room friends are natural storytellers. We see this in their dramatic play, artwork, and conversations. We help them harness the full power of storytelling to enhance their ability to understand and interact with the world around them.

**Our Favorite Theme Books**

We read plenty of excellent stories during our storytelling unit. Here are just a few of our favorites:

- **Humpty Dumpty** by Daniel Kirk
- **Abiyoyo** by Pete Seeger
- **Chalk** by Bill Thomson
- **The Lion & The Mouse** by Jerry Pinkney
- **Pancakes for Breakfast** by Tomie dePaola

**Mango Monkey Says...**

Our wise puppet friend Mango Monkey is an excellent storyteller who comes up with many exciting play ideas that they bring to their friends. This month, however, Mango Monkey taught us the importance of stepping back from the leader role and collaborating with our friends when we come up with the stories and rules to our games. Sometimes our friends are like Shy Squirrel, who also has amazing ideas but needs help to express them. We can help Shy Squirrel by asking them questions and giving them a chance to decide what happens next in our game.

Other times our friends are like Sal Snake, who is a wonderful player but is quick to feel left out when something does not go their way. We can help Sal Snake by listening to everyone’s ideas, then combining ideas to create a game that everybody can play. Sometimes, even Mango Monkey can feel shy or left out during play. When that happens, Mango Monkey calmly explains their feelings and ideas to their friends. When we collaborate, we learn more and have more fun!
Nursery Rhymes

Rhymes are an important teaching tool for children around the world. Reciting, enacting, and playing with these nursery rhymes allows friends to develop their oral fluency as well as their understanding of the patterns connecting letters and sounds. We started the week with a wide exploration of many different nursery rhymes during circle time. Friends sang *Mary Had a Little Lamb* together and jumped over a candlestick like *Jack Be Nimble*. They enacted *Little Miss Muffet* on a stage and counted along to *Five Little Monkeys*. One activity the friends enjoyed in particular was our *Humpty Dumpty* eggsperiment. We constructed cushions from a variety of material, then knocked an egg off a wall to see if it would crack. All these classic mini-stories were the perfect introduction to our deeper study of a single story next week.

Abiyoyo

*Abiyoyo* is a story based on a Bantu lullaby that was first brought to America by folk singer Pete Seeger. In the story, a boy, who loves to play ukulele, and his magician father, who loves to play tricks on people, save their village from the terrifying monster Abiyoyo! We stretched our imaginations beyond the pages of the book in our activities, first by performing the story using shadows by projecting puppets onto a large screen. Friends created magic wands in the Arts & Writing center, which became popular props in their play all week. We strummed the strings of a real ukulele and discussed the similarities between our language and the language of music. The children also created their own silly magic words that begin with the letter “Z”, just like father in the story. By focusing on one story the entire week, friends learned about the components and structure that make a compelling story.
Week 3

Tell-Your-Own Story

For the final week of the storytelling unit, we used our own words to tell and create new stories. Friends and teachers collaborated to read stories with pictures but no words during circle time. They worked together to add words to the wordless book *The Lion & The Mouse*, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. They also created original stories by forming small groups and taking turns telling the next part of the tale as a teacher scribed. Some friends chose to draw pictures to add to their stories. Our copies of *The Lion & The Mouse* and our original stories are displayed in our classroom library for friends to enjoy even when our storytelling unit is complete. We also ended the year 2019 with activities to celebrate the upcoming holidays. Friends decorated a flower pot and planted a spider plant to give to their families as a gift. We designed winter mittens to display in the stairwell to the Children’s School throughout January. We then said our goodbyes and “see you next year!” as we began our winter break.

December 2019

Music with Mrs. Hraber

This month, Mrs. Hraber came to teach a special music class with friends in line with our storytelling theme. This time, Pete the Metronome was dressed as a gingerbread cookie! Mrs. Hraber lead the class in several musical stories about the fairy tale, *The Gingerbread Man*. The friends played instruments mimicking animal sounds from hungry animals interested in eating Pete the Gingerbread Man. A pig was represented with a woodblock, a cow with a cowbell, and a sneaky fox with an egg shaker. We then ended our music class with the ever-popular parachute! Thank you to Mrs. Hraber for bringing this exciting and engaging way to learn to our classroom.
Center Spotlight: Playground

Our playground is the centerpiece to the learning experience here at The Children’s School. The playground is much more than a space to release energy. It is a place where some of the most important learning of the day occurs. Here, friends are able to engage in rich, child-directed play using a multitude of materials and playground equipment. Without prompting, friends create deep stories and self-enforced rules to drive their play. Blocks become castle walls, logs become rickety bridges, and bicycles become emergency vehicles. As teachers, our role on the playground is to ask friends questions to enrich their play and help them collaborate with each other. We guide the friends to reach new levels of planning, expressing ideas, and cooperation; all with the excitement and fun natural to playing outside! It is unsurprising that we frequently hear the playground was the most enjoyed part of the school day. For these reasons, we prioritize our outside time and make a strong effort to play outside whenever we can.

Birthday Celebrations

Happy December birthdays to Ari, Cornelia, and Luke! Please let Mrs. Bird or Mrs. Yetter know if you would like to come to celebrate your child’s birthday.
Our Month in Photos
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