As December began, we met author and illustrator Jan Brett. Along with Jan, we met her lovable animal characters including Hedgie, Berlioz the Bear, Daisy the Hen, Badger and the Gingerbread baby and friends. Our new unit provided the opportunity to explore the components of a story, beginning with what an “Author” and “Illustrator” are, then digging deeper into the key elements of a story. Taking inspiration from Brett’s stories and her many lovable characters, we embarked on our own journey of becoming authors and illustrators, by creating our very own stories inspired by cherished stuffed animals from home.
STORY MAP

We began our unit by learning about the job of an author and illustrator. The children learned how the **Author** is a person who writes a story and the **Illustrator** is a person who creates the pictures for the story. We discovered that Jan Brett is often the author and illustrator of her books. While listening to a story, the friends practiced looking for the parts of a story to help complete a story map. First, the children identified the **Title** of the story and the **Characters** we met while reading. They then worked together to identify where the story took place, the **Setting**. The friends furthered their knowledge of the elements of a story by discussing what is a beginning, middle, and end. They learned that at the **Beginning** you meet the characters and setting, moving onto the **Middle** where a problem often occurs and how it is solved in the **End**.

**FORESHADOWING AND STORY BORDER**

The children were introduced to Jan Brett’s unique style of creating foreshadowing and story borders in her illustrations. Jan believes, “the best part about telling a story is drawing the pictures”. Her foreshadowing illustrations gives the reader a clue as to what is going to happen or what character will be appearing on the next page. She uses story borders to capture her “overflow thoughts” and to tell an additional story about what else is happening in addition to the main story or plot.

**AROUND THE WORLD WITH JAN BRETT**

We learned that Jan Brett gets ideas and inspiration for her stories through her travel experiences. She explained, “I try to get a feel for the country and times my characters live in, and I get many ideas from traveling to different countries, where I research the architecture and costumes that appear in my work”. As we discovered the region in which a story took place, we added a picture of Jan Brett to that region on our classroom world map. Some of the places we represented on our map were, China (Daisy Comes Home), Germany (Berlioz the Bear), Ukraine (The Mitten), And Russia (The Turnip).
Feeling inspired from Jan Brett’s stories and the makings of what goes into a story, the Kindergartners were ready to begin the book writing process. The children were invited to bring in a favorite stuffed animal from home. That stuffed animal became the main character in the child’s story. After dictating a story to a teacher, the friends then drew illustrations representing the beginning, middle and end of their story. After the stories were completed and then assembled into books, the kindergartners shared their stories, taking us all on an imaginative journey.

STORYBOOKS

Cam, Aras and Mary share their stuffed animals.

Emma and Jun dictate their stories to the teachers.

Evelyn illustrates her book.

Kipton draws his cover page.

Felix

John

Finished Product

First

Second

Third

Fourth

PAGE 3
GINGERBREAD FUN
We finished our Jan Brett author study by reading her fun and colorful, Gingerbread Baby and Gingerbread Friends. Creating with gingerbread scented play dough, using loose parts to build a gingerbread house for the gingerbread baby, racing the gingerbread baby down a zip line, making and tasting gingerbread cake, and searching for gingerbread alphabet letters added to our gingerbread fun. The children used their creativity and imaginations when they decorated their own cardboard gingerbread house.

JAN BRETT MATH
Many of the stories we read this month inspired us to practice our mathematical skills. The Mitten offered us opportunities to practice symmetry when designing matching mittens and estimating and counting when predicting how many animals can fit inside a mitten. Playing Grab a Handful with miniature hedgehogs reinforced our counting and numeral writing. Hanging numbered socks on a clothesline, similar to The Hat, was a fun way to practice number ordering and counting from 1-20.
After reading Gingerbread Baby, we created our own gingerbread baby by rolling a dice and adding features to the gingerbread baby according to the number rolled. In just about every story we read, there was an opportunity to practice ordinal numbers as most of Jan Brett’s stories demonstrate sequencing and encourage the reader to recognize the order in which the characters appear in the story.
DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE KINDERGARTEN READING

Learning to read is a developmental process; all children do not begin to read at the same age. Literacy milestones appear along the way as children develop a basic oral vocabulary and understanding of the alphabetic principles before beginning to read. Learning how to read is a complex cognitive process that requires enriching and enjoyable experiences with books. As educators, we strive to create a comfortable and stress-free learning environment that promotes an understanding of the function of reading, while developing a positive attitude towards it. In kindergarten, we focus on emergent literacy and gradually progress to what is developmentally appropriate for each child at that time. Research has proven that reading and writing develop in parallel for young children and are interrelated. As students begin to explore “kindergarten spelling” (invented spelling), they reconstruct their knowledge of reading and books as well. Below are just a few milestones experienced within the kindergarten classroom and examples of how they are integrated into our curriculum.

**Telling a Story Through Pictures**

- Taking a “Picture Walk” through a story, uses the illustrations to anticipate what might happen in the story. *Reading books aloud during our daily group times.*

- Using pictures to create meaning. **“Reading” picture books with friends, Reading with the teacher, Journals, Writing Center.**

- Their drawings and artwork tell their story. *Journals, Birthday Pages, Writing Center.*

- Explores books independently. **Free Choice, Activity Time.**

- Able to retell a familiar story. *Group Time discussions, Story Map, Sharing at Group Time*

- Listening to and comprehending books that are read aloud. **Group time discussions, Story map, Sharing at circle**

**Letter Recognition and Recall**

- Able to recite the alphabet in alphabetical order. **Challenges, Daily Work**

- Recognize upper and lower case letters. **Challenges, Daily work, Identifying name**

- Form letters of alphabet. **Challenges, Daily work, Writing name, Forming sight words**

**Relationship between Letter Sounds and Printed Words**

- Recognizes known sight words and uses picture clues and print to recognize new words. **Reading books with the teacher**

- Understands difference between letters and words. **Letter identification, Reading with a teacher, Journals**

- Has control of most consonant sounds. **Sounding out words when reading, Journals**

- Uses language, memory, picture and print as major cues to read and understand text. **Reading with teacher, Read aloud**

---

*Evelyn and Cam read a book.*

*Sylas writing in his Photo Journal.*

*Jun working on a birthday page.*

*Friends read a book with Miss Dzina.*