

LEARNING TIME

Amira's Suitcase

Written by Vikki Conley

Illustrated by Nicky Johnston

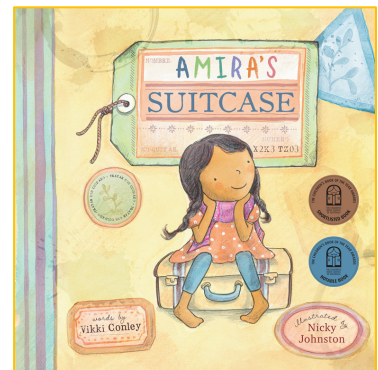
Shortlisted for the 2022 CBCA Book Awards: Early childhood

Themes: Friendship, Kindness, Inclusion

Rare and interesting words: suitcase, hurt, 'fresh air', blossom, sunlight, trickle, bud, flicker, uncurl, quiver, tingle, lungs, treasure, flourishing.

Action words(verbs): grow, look, blossom, reach, share, trickle, glow, climb, point, uncurl, quiver, tingle, grow,

Amira's Suitcase is a gentle, thoughtful story which encourages children to think about the process of nurturing something and helping it to grow. It explores the key themes of friendship and inclusivity and demonstrates that kindness can flourish even in difficult circumstances.



Key Message for Parents | The best learning happens in nurturing relationships

Research shows that social and emotional development is as important as intellectual development

The quality of a child's relationships in the early years lay the foundation for range of developmental outcomes such as self-confidence, motivation, self-regulation and learning.

Play is critical to young children's social, emotional, and intellectual development.

Australian Early Years Learning Framework | Outcome 3 Children Have a Strong Sense Of Wellbeing

Educators can support children's learning by

- Create a safe, welcoming, environment and staff
- Be child focused and follow their lead, adapting activities to their skills and interests
- Scaffolding concepts by explaining new words and providing context to vocabulary
- Provide culturally rich experiences for inclusion
- Explain new vocabulary and reinforce learning with hands on experiences

Welcome

Ask carers to write nametags for themselves and their children.

Welcome everyone, introduce yourself, remind adults to turn their mobile phones off and that there will be time for adults to chat after the story and songs.

Welcome Song (or your preferred song)

Have the words available as a handout or written on a board or butcher's paper for the adults to read and join in.

Good Morning

Good morning to you

Good morning to you

Good morning everybody

and welcome to you!



You may like to introduce the book at this stage, or use a song to help prepare your group and introduce the upcoming story and activities.

Finger Rhyme

Where is Thumbkin (full lyrics available at source)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFIPilBKgDs>

Where is thumbkin, where is thumbkin?

Here I am, here I am.

How are you this morning? Very well, I thank you.

Run away, run away.

Where is pointer, where is pointer?

Here I am, here I am.

How are you this morning? Very well, I thank you.

Run away, run away.

Source: www.lyricsondemand.com/miscellaneouslyrics/childsongslyrics/whereisthumbkinlyrics.html

Before Reading

- Greet families and children warmly, ask them how they are, awaiting their responses and acknowledging them.
- Explain the format of the session, including the book you are reading, songs and activities. You may want to use a visual board to support diverse language and learning needs.
- Ask the children to sit where they can see the pictures, ask them to 'read' the pictures as you read the words.
- Discuss any words or concepts in the story that may need to be explained.
- Provide families with words to supporting songs, rhymes etc.

During Reading

- Introduce the name of the book, author and illustrator. Point to their names on the cover.
- Talk about the cover, asking the audience to let you know what they see, what they think the book is about, why does Amira have a suitcase? They might have travel stories to share too.

- Ask questions to facilitate engagement with the text, eg:
 - *Can you see what's growing?*
 - *Why do they think Amira is looking for somewhere to hide?*
 - *What animals can you see in the yard?*
 - *Can you see someone hiding (clue: behind the washing).*
 - *Have you seen a coconut shell?*
 - *Shall we count the pears on the tree?*
 - *What do you think about Amira?*

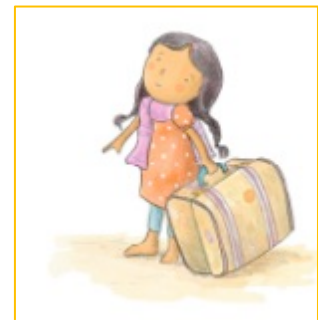


Image: New Frontier Press

- Be intrigued and model engagement with the text, by looking interested in what they discover and check the children are following along. Watch for communication clues like are they restless, do they need a movement break, do you need to explain more, do you need to slow down?

After Reading

- Reflect on the outcome of the story, did they enjoy the book, do they think the girl – Amira was good at sharing, making friends, looking after the plant?
- Can the participants remember anything they saw in the book?
- Discuss the concept of making friends, kindness and sharing
- Talk about how growing something takes time, and discuss other things needed to grow a plant. Participants might list sun, water, soil, compost, shade, worms, bees. Encourage their ideas, if it is incorrect you can say 'that's interesting, or thank you for sharing', participation and talking is the aim. It doesn't matter so much what is correct or not. You can model how to respond positively to a child's ideas saying things like;
- 'let's research that!' or 'I am not sure', 'let's find out together' or 'what a great idea/questions'.
- Provide time for children to express their experiences and thoughts. Communication skills include turn taking, eye contact, voice and expression, respectful responses, timing, explaining, and listening. These all need time to be practiced.

Song

Making the Garden Grow **Justine Clarke**

*There's a bumble bee
A honey bee
Gett'n the honey for you and me
Doin' it doin' it (repeat)
Buzzing around helping the garden grow*



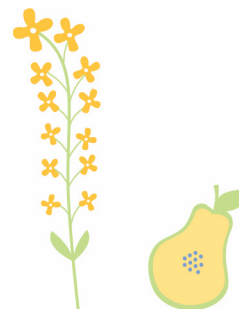
*There's a litt'l worm digg'n around
Eating the dirt
From out of the ground
Doin' it doin' it (repeat)
Little worm helping the garden grow*



*Up in the sky there's a yellow sun
Shining down on every one
Doin' it doin' it (repeat)
Shine shine making the garden grow*

*There's a big fat cloud
And a drop of rain
Falling down on the window pain
Doin' it doin' it (repeat)*

*Splish splosh
Making the garden grow
Fly fly through the sky
Little bird drops a seed
The seed grows up into a tree
A green umbrella for you and me
Croaky frogs
Cats and dogs
Creepy crawlies under a log*



*Doin' it doin' it (repeat)
Every body making the garden grow
(Doin' it doin' it)
All over the world making the garden grow
(Doin' it doin' it)
You and me making the garden grow*

Extension Ideas

Read

- Borrow from the library: picture books about friendships, or non-fiction books for facts about how plants grow. Many books are also freely available via Library subscriptions such as Libby and StoryBox Library for read aloud – making books accessible from home or when you are out and about. Ask your local library.
- Make books a part of everyday moments, not something only to be shared for learning time, or bed time.
- Model an interest in reading by talking about books you enjoy and showing yourself to be a reader.

Sing

- Singing slows down language so enables sounds to be heard more easily. Phonemic Awareness knowledge (sounds) is a foundation to literacy competency.
- Spotify and YouTube have a huge variety of songs. We have a Spotify Playlist 'Raising Literacy Australia' – Featured Stories
- Here are some song names you could try: Mary, Mary Quite Contrary • Round and Round the Garden • Here is the Bee Hive • Incy Wincy Spider • Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush • Jack and Jill went up the Hill • English Country Garden • If your happy and you know it.
- Adapt your own from well-known tunes and your own made-up words.

Talk

- Discuss sharing, what is sharing, how do we feel when we share, does sharing help friendships?
- Talk about food. Ask open ended questions like; '*What kinds of plants make food?*', '*What do plants need to grow?*' '*Where does our food come from?*' Compare what plants need to grow with what people (and/or animals) need to grow/ flourish. Discuss why it is important to care for living things, including people!
- When you buy or see fruit and vegetables talk about where they come from, plants that grow underground (potatoes, carrots, onions) and fruit trees (apples, oranges, pears) or bushes (strawberries), vines (kiwi) or ground runners (pumpkin, watermelon).
- Talk about the concept of community, what it means to work together on creating something. What are the benefits of this, what are the challenges?
- Talk about other community initiatives and things you could do to help others.

Play

'Pass the smile'

- It's great for understanding emotions, eye-contact, and sharing. Everyone sits in a circle, and the adult starts by smiling at the first child in the circle. This child then 'passes' the smile, by smiling at the person sitting next to them. The smile is passed all the way around the circle.
- Have a shared picnic, include lots of fruit and vegetables.
- Play a game of eye spy in the garden, or park.

STEM Focus. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Grow a seed – Seed Germination

Vocabulary: seeds, seedling, growth, change, sunlight, plant, water, stem, leaves, flower, roots, oxygen, nutrients, soil, environment.

1. Wet some cotton wool or kitchen paper and put it inside the plastic container leaving a gap of about 1 cm from the top.
2. Spread the cotton slightly to break up the fibres a little.
3. Sprinkle the seeds over the cotton wool and push each seed down lightly. Leave the container in a warm, dry, indirect sunlit place and watch for signs of growth.
4. Check the cotton wool daily. If it starts to feel dry sprinkle or spray it with a little water. The cotton wool needs to stay moist but not overly wet as the seeds can start to rot.

The seeds should start to grow in a couple of days.

Once you see roots, transfer them into a pot or the garden, they cannot continue to grow without soil.

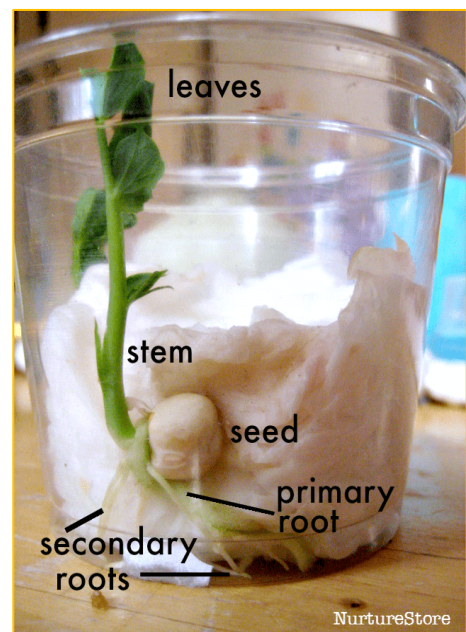
Seeds that germinate well in cotton well:

- Cress
- White mustard seeds
- Butter beans
- Mung beans
- Lima beans
- Broad beans
- Peas
- Alfalfa
- Avocados
- Lentils
- Sunflower seeds

Science: Predict what will occur, drawing or conversation. Observe the plant parts, seed, roots, stem, etc.

Maths: Measure the plants growth each day. Count the days until growth. Measure water used.

Technology: document with photos, create a video.



Goodbye

Conclude the session with some suggestions of books that parents might want to share with their children. Raising Literacy Australia recommend the following books to support learning in this area. If your library has copies, make them available for families to borrow or include them in your story time session.

For more stories to share, we recommend the following titles:

- **The Garden on Red Gum Road** by *Phil Cummings and Danny Snell*
- **Crumbs** by *Phil Cummings and Shane DeVries*
- **All Are Welcome** by *Alexandra Penfold, illustrated by Suzanne Kaufman*
- **Emily Green's Garden** by *Penny Harrison and Megan Forward*

An Activity Time for this book is available to download for FREE from our website. This is a great resource to share with families, you are welcome to print and distribute as necessary.

Goodbye Song

Depending on the size of your group, you may wish to insert each child's name in the place of 'you' as it develops a more personal relationship between yourself, the child and the family.

Sung to the tune of (*Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush*) or your choice.

Goodbye

This is the way we say goodbye (wave) say goodbye, say goodbye

This is the way we say goodbye to all our library friends (or) (to our friend.....)!



The Garden on Red Gum Road by *Phil Cummings and Danny Snell*