

Read-Aloud Family Event (Kindergarten through 4th grade)

Welcome

- You may want to ask parents to sign in for a record of who attended.
- Introduce yourself and extend an invitation to parents to look at displays, books, etc.
- Talk to families about the purpose of the workshop. Let parents and children know that they are there to have fun—and to learn something about reading together, as well.
- Talk about the fun families can have reading together and how everyone learns from the experience.

The Woman Who Named Things

By Cynthia Rylant

Reader Notes

- This book is about an old lady who has “outlived every single one of her friends.” Because of this she doesn’t want to get attached to anything else she might lose. She only names those things she thinks will have a longer life span than she does. One day, a puppy finds its way into the old woman’s yard. She knows it is hungry and feeds it. The puppy keeps coming back until it is no longer a puppy, and the old lady keeps feeding it. In all that time, however, she does not give the dog a name because she is afraid she will outlive it—and she doesn’t want to risk losing another friend. But when the dog stops coming to her gate, she gets worried. The old woman finds the dog at the dogcatcher’s. Because she finally realizes how lucky she has been to have had such wonderful friends with such lovely names, she names the dog Lucky.
- The watercolor illustrations in this book are fun and there are many things to point out to families. Point out that Franklin (the house) looks like it has a face, that Betsy (the car) has a big grin and even Fred (the chair) has eyes and a nose and what looks like a hair-do as tall as the old woman’s.
- This book offers an opportunity to talk about loss—of pets, friends, family. In a simple but effective way, *The Old Woman Who Named Things* shows the importance of continuing to live and love despite loss.

- Create a simple, fun take-home activity around *The Old Woman Who Names Things* to give families.

Set Read-Aloud Stage

- Show families the book cover, read the title and point out that the old woman in cowboy boots must be the old woman mentioned in the title. Tell families the book is about exactly what its title says—an old woman who names things. To help them keep track, make a list of the names on the board or chart paper: car—Betsy, chair—Fred, etc.
- Ask about the dog pictured on the cover. He isn't a thing. Ask families if they think the old woman named him. Ask them what some possible names for the dog might be. Write suggestions on the board or chart paper as well.
- Ask if anyone has ever been lonely. What does it feel like to be lonely? What do you do when you are lonely? Do you know people who are lonely? What can you do to help keep them from being lonely?

Making connections to their own experiences increases readers' comprehension.

- Tell families this book is about an old woman who is lonely. Ask them to listen as you read for clues that tell the old woman is lonely and what she does about it.
Having a purpose for reading helps readers focus on main ideas and gives direction to reading.

During Read-Aloud

- When reading, point out some of the fun details in the illustrations.
- Point out why the old woman does not name the gate.
- Ask why the old woman thinks she is so clever not to name the dog. Ask families why they think the old woman keeps on feeding the dog if she is trying not to let herself get attached to it.

Read-Aloud Discussion

- After reading the story, go back to the questions you asked before reading. Ask what clues families heard that indicated the old woman was lonely—"She always hoped for a letter from someone, but all she ever got was bills." "She had outlived every single one of her friends." "She didn't like being a lonely old woman without any friends, without anyone whom she could call by name."

- Ask what the old woman did about being lonely. At first she named things that she knew she couldn't outlive, but then she named the dog, because she knows that you can't stop loving things just because you might outlive them.

Review

- Review the strategies that you modeled for parents as you read. Remind parents these are things they can do when they read with their children.
 - Preview the book—look at the book cover, read the book title, talk about what the book might be about.
 - Make some predictions about the story from the cover, title and the illustrations.
 - Make connections to children's own experiences to help increase their comprehension.
 - Set a purpose for reading to help children focus on main ideas and give direction to reading.
 - Ask questions while reading aloud to keep children interested and focused on the story.
- Answer any questions parents may have.
- Close the session with an activity you have prepared. For example, using the names the Old Woman gave things in the story, scramble the letters in the words and ask families to unscramble them; clap the syllables in some of the longer words from the story (*refrigerator, everlasting, dogcatcher*); or ask families to create a personalized car license plate for a family member or friend and say why they would choose that name for the plate.

Closure

- Explain the take-home activity you have prepared and give each family a copy.
 - You might prepare a reading question chart using the "wh" questions for families to take home and use with books they read together. Asking and answering who, what, where, when and why questions about a story or a reading passage helps readers concentrate on their reading and understand more of what they read.
 - Create a word search using words from *The Old Lady Who Named Things*. Be sure to send home an answer sheet.

- If you are able, provide each family with a copy of the book you read to take home and read together. Or, point out that the book is available at the school or public library, as are many other books by the same author.
- Ask children to help you distribute give-away items, if you have them.
- Thank families for attending and invite them to join you in having some refreshments.

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