



OLD BEAR AND THE SEASONS

ABOUT THE THEME

Children experience the seasons as vividly as Old Bear does as he dreams about them. Studying the seasons can involve scientific thinking, language, social studies, and art, all based on real experiences and involving the senses.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Based on where you live, how are the seasons you experience the same as the seasons Old Bear dreams about? How are they different?
- At any given time, how do you know which season it is? What do people do to get ready for each of the different seasons?
- Which parts of Old Bear's dreams of the seasons are real, and which parts are pretend?
- Old Bear dreams about things that he did as a cub during the different seasons. What are some things that you do only in winter? Spring? Summer? Autumn?
- What is your favorite season? Why? Which season do you like the least? Why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Picture the season. Organize the class into pairs or small groups to create murals of the different seasons. First discuss what a mural is, perhaps visiting one near your school. Then facilitate a conversation about how several students can work together on a shared illustration. What are the ground rules? Assign each group a season, and have students brainstorm a list of things that they associate with their seasons. Supply large pieces of paper and art materials—such as paints, collage paper, or oil crayons—for students to use in creating their murals. Display the finished products in the classroom or hallway.

Signs of the season. When seasons change during the school year, engage your class in an exploration walk near your school, whether urban, suburban, or rural. Charge children with being careful observers—a talent of scientists—to gather clues that indicate which season it is. Prepare for the walk by brainstorming with your students about what they might expect to see, hear, smell, or touch. Natural and man-made clues are both valid; man-made clues might include clothing or holiday decorations. Depending on the age of your class, keep a group record or individual records of clues. Over successive seasonal walks during the course of the school year, children will hone their observational skills and gain a deeper understanding of seasonal shifts.

Musical seasons. Obtain a recording of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*. Play "Spring" for your students without telling them the name of the piece. Ask them to listen and decide which season they think the music is about, and then lead the class in a discussion. What elements of the music make them think the way they do? Continue by playing Vivaldi's other seasonal pieces, allowing children to discover what makes each piece of music define its season. To further this thinking, children can choose simple instruments, such as tambourines, bells, rhythm sticks, or hand drums, to play as accompaniments to the appropriate pages for each season as you read *Old Bear* to them.



OLD BEAR AND ANIMALS

ABOUT THE THEME

It's no secret that young children have an insatiable curiosity about animals. Reading *Old Bear* can serve as a springboard to more careful consideration of bears and, by extension, of animals in general.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you know about bears? What familiar things does Old Bear do in the story? Would you like to be a bear? Why or why not?
- Old Bear hibernates in the story. What does hibernation involve? Do you know of any other animals that hibernate?
- Do you think animals dream? Why or why not?
- All animals live in a habitat. What is a habitat? What is Old Bear's habitat? What other animal habitats appear in the story?
- Are animals important to people? Why or why not? Are people important to animals? Explain.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Become Old Bear. Engage children in more than just listening to and looking at *Old Bear*. Ask your students to find an open space where they can move without bumping anyone else. Then invite them to get inside the story by moving and acting like Old Bear as you reread the book. If you have a large class or a small space, consider dividing the group in half; one group acts as Old Bear while the other is the audience, and then students switch roles.

Animal puppets. By constructing animal puppets out of cardboard pieces, children can explore the relationship between parts and the whole. Prepare the following cardboard cutouts: 2" squares for heads; 4" squares and 3" x 4" rectangles for bodies; and thin and thick rectangular strips for legs, necks, and tails. Also collect glue, scissors, construction paper, fabric, and Popsicle sticks. As a demonstration, construct a bear puppet for your students by calling on one student to say which part of the animal you should start with. Call on additional students to name other body parts to add to your animal. Show students how to glue the cardboard pieces so that they overlap, rather than attaching just edge to edge. (The puppets will be flat; they do not need to be three-dimensional.) Then show your students how to add paper and fabric to create details such as facial features, fur, scales, and so forth. Glue a Popsicle stick to the puppet as a handle. After completing your sample puppet, have your students construct their own animals. Children may also enjoy creating puppet shows featuring their animals having dreams or experiencing different seasons.

More about bears. Brainstorm with your group a list of questions about bears, and write the questions on the chalkboard. Then provide partners with basic nonfiction library books about bears. Encourage each pair to find three bear facts from the pictures and/or the text of the books. After an appropriate amount of time for your class, call students together to share what they learned. As partners report to the group, write on the chalkboard any information that provides answers to your list of bear questions. Challenge the group to find information on their own about any questions still unanswered.



OLD BEAR AND NATURE

ABOUT THE THEME

Let Old Bear's celebration of the natural world lead your class into the great outdoors. Interaction with nature enriches children's imaginations and physical development while also cultivating a sense of stewardship of the Earth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is nature? How does Old Bear feel about nature?
- What natural places have you been to? For example, who has been to a beach? A forest? A desert? A mountain? A cave? Where else? Is a community or city park part of nature?
- Is nature important to people? Why or why not? Is nature important to you? Explain.
- What kinds of jobs do people have that involve taking care of the Earth?
- What can people do to help protect and save the natural world? What can you do?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Take a hike. Guide your class on a hike through a park or other natural space near your school. As the experience begins, ask children to use all their senses to observe nature. (Be sure to caution them against touching unknown plants or putting things that they find in their mouths.) Encourage your students to think about the sense of touch in terms of what they feel against their exposed skin—for example, the feeling of wind, sunlight, mist, or cold or warm temperatures. Back in the classroom, solicit children's sensory impressions. What did they see, hear, smell, or feel while outside? Schedule additional hikes periodically during the year, asking your students to focus on how their experiences with nature change with the seasons.

Beautify your school. Consider ways your class can make a positive contribution by bringing Old Bear's appreciation of nature to your school community. Is there an outdoor area that needs to be cleaned up? Is there a space that could use some gardening or planting? If you elect to garden with your students, consider working with the spring flowers that appear in *Old Bear*—crocuses, tulips, and daffodils. Collaborate with your school's administration and parents' association, as well as local businesses, to get support, financing, and in-kind donations to make your beautification project successful.

Jobs in nature. Arrange an encounter for your students with a naturalist or park ranger at a nearby park, wildlife refuge, botanical garden, or nature center. Such a field trip expert or class visitor encourages children's appreciation of nature and teaches them about the opportunities available for people who want to work with the environment and the natural world.



OLD BEAR AND COLORS

ABOUT THE THEME

Old Bear offers seasonal and natural contexts for colors. From this starting point, broaden your students' experiences with color through discussion and exploration.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think Kevin Henkes decided to use so many different colors to illustrate the seasons in *Old Bear*?
- Are all pink things the same pink? Look carefully at the illustrations showing Old Bear's dreams. See if you can find different shades of pink in the spring scene, different greens in the summer scene, oranges in the fall scene, and blues in the winter scene.
- What do you know about mixing colors? What happens when colors mix?
- The rain appears as a shower of blueberries in Old Bear's dream of summer. What color do you think rain is? How could you find out for sure?
- Compare the illustration of Old Bear's dream of spring with the illustration of Old Bear's real walk into a spring day. How are the scenes similar? How are they different?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Mixed-up colors. Provide students with white ice-cube trays and plastic pipettes or eye droppers. Fill the first three ice-cube compartments with water, and put yellow food coloring in the first, blue in the second, and red in the third. Have children use pipettes to mix the colored waters in the other ice-cube compartments, exploring color mixing and shades of color. Which two colors can be mixed together to create green? How about purple? Or orange? Use this activity to teach students about primary and secondary colors and then ask them to identify these color types in *Old Bear*.

Color collections. Divide your class into small groups and assign each group a common color. Challenge the groups to find as many shades of their color in the classroom as they can by collecting items and storing them on a tray or in a bin. Display the collections in different areas of the room, and allow children time to walk around to view all the colors and their many shades. To enrich the activity, plan for an outside time during which the groups can search a natural place for items to add to their color collection. Remember to return the natural items when the activity is complete.

Name that color. Post a large piece of painting paper near the area where students paint. When children create a new color or a color that excites them, have them paint a sample spot on the posted paper and then create an original name for the color. Keeping this color chart visible to painters can inspire further color-mixing creativity and exploration.