



Nature and wildlife

Chatterbooks activity pack



Reading and activity ideas for your Chatterbooks group

Nature

About this pack

In this Chatterbooks activity pack you'll find some great suggestions for books for your group to explore, read and enjoy together. Inspired by the arrival of Spring and the celebration of Earth Day on Monday 22 April (<https://www.earthday.org/>), this pack includes books about the natural world, wildlife and our environment. We hope you enjoy them, together with all the discussion and activity ideas, and further reading suggestions.

This pack is brought to you by **The Reading Agency** and their publisher partnership **Children's Reading Partners**.

The Reading Agency has run Chatterbooks, the UK's largest network of children's reading groups, since 2001. Reading for pleasure has more impact on children's success than education or social class; Chatterbooks groups, which are run in libraries and schools, help children develop a lifelong reading habit. Chatterbooks is a flexible model that can be used with children from 4 to 12, for all different abilities and in targeted or mixed groups.

Find out more at: www.readinggroups.org/chatterbooks

You can buy Chatterbooks packs in The Reading Agency shop:

<https://shop.readingagency.org.uk/collections/children>

You can find hundreds of free resources for children on the Chatterbooks resources page:

<https://readingagency.org.uk/resources/?programme=chat>

The Reading Agency is a national charity that tackles life's big challenges through the proven power of reading. We work closely with partners to develop and deliver programmes for people of all ages and backgrounds. The Reading Agency is funded by Arts Council England. www.readingagency.org.uk

The Reading Agency's partnership programme brings publishers and literature prize coordinators into a closer relationship with libraries across the country to support the delivery of author events, promotions and reading resources directly to readers.

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[Tips for your Chatterbooks session](#)

Talking about the books: some book-talk questions

Read the first chapter or a brief extract of a book aloud and get everyone to share their first responses. This could be with the whole group or class – or children could discuss in small groups, and then share feelings and questions with everyone.

Ask lots of open questions to get people talking and encourage discussion about feelings and responses to each story, the characters, and the way the stories are told; some have illustrations linking in with the text while others scatter additional facts and figures throughout the story.

Have a good to-ing and fro-ing discussion – everyone will have their own feelings and opinions about the book, and the things they like, or don't like!

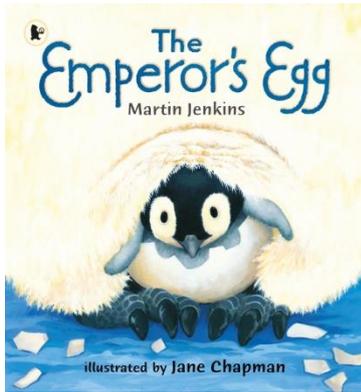
Here are some questions to get you going:

- What did you like about the book/s?
- Was there anything that you didn't like?
- What three words would you use to describe the book?
- Was there anything that puzzled you?
- Was there anything that surprised you?
- Who are your favourite characters? What did you like most about them?
- How would you describe these books to a friend?
- What did you think about the beginning– did the way the book started get you interested?

You'll find some more book suggestions at the end of this pack.

Have sheets of flip chart paper and pens handy for collecting everyone's thoughts and ideas.

The Books



Martin Jenkins & Jane Chapman *The Emperor's Egg*

Walker 978-1406366990

The Emperor penguin is the only large animal to remain on the Antarctic mainland throughout its bitterly inhospitable winter. Once the female has laid her egg, she heads back to the sea, leaving the male to incubate it. He then spends two months standing on the freezing cold ice with the egg on his feet! This is his story.

Martin Jenkins worked full-time for ten years for World Conservation Monitoring Centre, writing about a range of conservation issues. He has written several titles for children, including *Emperor's Egg*, winner of the Times Junior Information Book of the Year Award and *Fly Traps! Plants that Bite Back*, which was shortlisted for the award. He has also retold *Gulliver's Travels*, winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal, and *Don Quixote*.

Jane Chapman has had more than 100 titles published in over 20 countries as both Jane Chapman and under her pseudonym, Jack Tickle. Jane is perhaps best known for her illustrations in Karma Wilson's 'Bear' books, an internationally bestselling series which has garnered a string of awards including the Oppenheim Platinum Book Award for *Bear Snores On*.

Discussion

Read *The Emperor's Egg* aloud to your group, or watch the video from *StoryTime at Awnie's House*: <https://youtu.be/jtrr0s69-9Q>

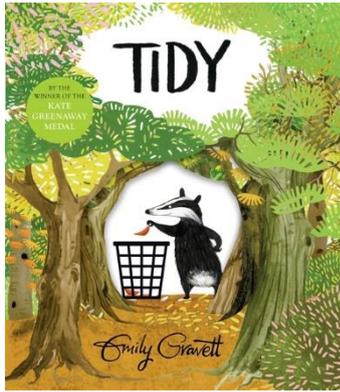
- What does the book tell you about the way emperor penguins live? Look out for words that describe the penguins' habitat and the activities they like to do. Share your favourite penguin fact with the group.
- The father penguin sat on his egg for two whole months! How do you think he was feeling while he was waiting for his egg to hatch? And when his chick finally arrived?
- Antarctica has the coldest climate on Earth and the temperature often drops below -50°C . Your freezer at home is about -15°C . Can you name some of the characteristics that help the penguins survive in the extreme cold? How would you prepare for a trip to the Antarctic?

Activity

Match the baby animals to their parents. Can you name some more animals and their young?

Chick
Kitten
Foal
Fawn
Cygnets
Kit
Calf
Cria

Fox
Deer
Llama
Swan
Cat
Penguin
Camel
Zebra



Emily Gravett *Tidy*

Pan Macmillan 978-0750028271

From the creator of *Meerkat Mail* and *Dogs*, comes a very funny rhyming woodland story about the perils of being too tidy.

Pete the badger likes everything to be neat and tidy at all times, but what starts as the collecting of one fallen leaf escalates and ends with the complete destruction of the forest! Will Pete realise the error of his ways and set things right?

Emily Gravett sprang into the limelight with the ground-breaking *Wolves* in 2005, which won her the Macmillan Prize for Illustration, followed by a book deal and the first of her Kate Greenaway Medals. *Wolves* was followed by *Orange Pear Apple Bear*, *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears*, *Again!* and the exquisite *Tidy*. Each book features endearing, beautifully drawn characters that touch the heart and tickle the funny bone. Emily now lives in Brighton with her family. When not working in her studio, she might be found walking the dog, watering the tomatoes or driving the family's restored 1960s bus.

Discussion

Pete likes to keep things clean and tidy. He gets off to a good start keeping the flowers neat and grooming the fox, but things soon get out of control! What problems do you think Pete's tidying up causes for the other animals living in the forest? What do the illustrations tell you about how the different animals are feeling?

Can you think of some challenges that woodlands and wildlife might face in real life? They could be natural, such as lots of rain washing away the soil, or caused by people, such as animals mistaking litter for a tasty treat.

Can you come up with some ways that people can help to protect local parks, woodlands or wildlife in your area?

You can use your library to research or visit The Wildlife Trusts website for inspiration:

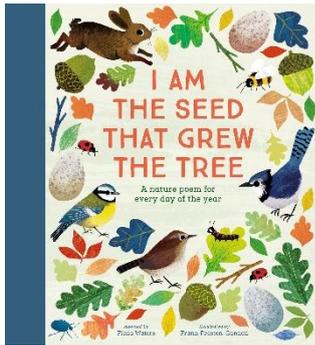
<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions>

Activity

Use the ideas you discussed earlier to create a poster for your library or school to encourage everyone to look after local wildlife. You could make one giant poster, or choose one or two issues each and make lots of posters for a display.

You could even sign up to take part in the 30 Days Wild Challenge:

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/30DaysWild>



Fiona Waters & Fran Preston Gannon

I Am the Seed That Grew the Tree: A Nature Poem for Every Day of the Year Nosy Crow 978-0857637703

I Am the Seed That Grew the Tree, named after the first line of Judith Nicholls' poem 'Windsong', is a lavishly illustrated collection of 366 nature poems - one for every day of the year, including leap years. Filled with familiar favourites and new discoveries, written by a wide variety of poets, including John Agard, William Blake, Carol Ann Duffy, Eleanor Farjeon, Robert Frost, Christina Rossetti, William Shakespeare, John Updike, William Wordsworth and many more. This is the perfect book for children (and grown-ups!) to share at the beginning or the end of the day, or just to dip into.

Fiona Waters has worked with children's books all her life as a bookseller, publisher, author, reviewer and latterly as the Editorial Director of Troubadour, choosing the books for book fairs in schools. Now retired, she has been travelling to all the fairytale places she dreamt of as a child, like Russia and Japan, reading even more books with her two cats and still very much enjoying compiling anthologies.

Fran Preston Gannon is a London based illustrator and designer. In April 2011 she became the first UK recipient of the 'Sendak Fellowship' and spent a month in Autumn living with and learning from the great master of illustration, Maurice Sendak, at his home in Connecticut. Her first picture book, *The Journey Home*, was published in October 2012 and was shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Prize and nominated for the Kate Greenaway Medal in 2014.

Discussion

Choose some poems to read aloud – why not start with the poem for today's date? Each group member could choose a poem based on their birthday or another special date. For poems inspired by springtime, start in March and read your way to May.

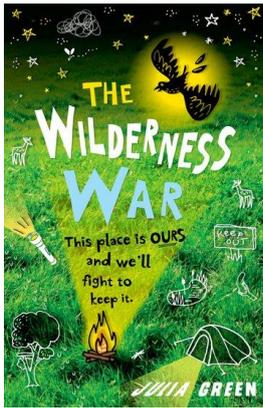
- What are the main themes in your chosen poems?
- How do these poems make you feel? What is it about them that makes you feel that way?
- How do the illustrations relate to the poems? What other images do you think of when you read your poems, or hear them read aloud?

Activity

A haiku is a Japanese poem made up of three short lines. The first line has five syllables; the second has seven; and the third has five. Haiku poems are often inspired by nature, and they do not have to rhyme. Here is an example:

Birds sing in the trees
Baby lambs graze in the field
Springtime has arrived.

Write down some words that come to mind when you think about nature, e.g. birdsong, sunshine, butterfly. You can use the poems you have read to help you. Use your ideas as inspiration to write your own haiku.



Julia Green *The Wilderness War*

Oxford University Press 978-0192743657

A summer spent in the place Noah and his friends call the Wilderness is a summer spent making dens, sleeping under the stars, and toasting marshmallows over an open fire. It's freedom.

Until one day their Wilderness is sold and set for development and their dens torn down to make way for houses. For Noah and his friends this means war and they'll do anything to stop the Wilderness being destroyed...

Julia Green is the Course Director for the MA in Writing for Young People at Bath Spa University. Julia leads creative writing workshops for children and adults in a variety of settings, including festivals and schools and for the Arvon foundation. She has worked as an English teacher in school, as a lecturer in FE, Higher and Adult Education, as a tutor for young people not in mainstream school; she has also been a publicity officer, a sub editor for a publishing company and a library assistant at a medical school in London.

Discussion

Talk about activities the group likes to do outdoors. Perhaps they like to build dens like Noah, collect leaves or wildflowers, or go bird-watching. Do their interests change depending on the seasons?

You could talk about the different natural settings and pastimes that group members might have experienced: finding shells on a beach, hiking along a trail, camping in the countryside or exploring local woodlands. What does the group like most about the great outdoors?

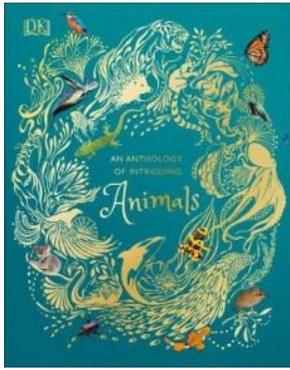
Activity

Here is a fun memory game to play. Everyone sits round in a circle and someone starts off by saying: "I'm going exploring in the forest (or 'in the mountains', 'through the jungle', 'across the desert' – wherever you choose!) and in my backpack I have got a bottle of water."

The next person then repeats the sentence and adds an item for the backpack, e.g. "I'm going exploring in the forest and in my backpack I have got a bottle of water and a pair of binoculars..."

Everyone takes a turn, remembering and repeating all the things that have been said, and then adding another item to the list. If someone forgets something on the list, they are out of the game. The winner is the person who can remember the most items (in the correct order!).

You can find more activity ideas in the Woodland Trust Nature Detectives pack:
<http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/oxed/children/WildernessWarActivityPack.pdf>



Ben Hoare *An Anthology of Intriguing Animals*

DK Books 978-0241334393

This is a children's animal encyclopedia with a twist. Alongside interesting facts are the stories and myths behind children's favourite animals as well as incredible pictures and stunning illustrations. Containing more than 100 species, this beautiful modern bestiary will take children through the animal kingdom from the huge whale to the tiny spider.

Discover how the koala got its name or which animal the Ancient Egyptians thought rolled the Sun across the sky. Each page features fun animal facts and detailed close-up photographs for children to pore over, including firm favourites such as dolphins, tigers and butterflies as well more unusual animals such as walrus, lemur and peacock.

Ben Hoare is an award-winning journalist who has written and edited many natural history books and magazines for DK, the BBC, London's Natural History Museum and many others. Think of a well-known wildlife or nature writer who writes in English, and Ben has probably edited their words at some point. Since 2008 he has been Features Editor of BBC Wildlife Magazine. In 2015 Ben was awarded the Dilys Breese Medal for science communication by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) - he is one of only 15 people to hold the award.

Discussion

Spend some time looking through the anthology as a group. Here are some questions to consider:

- The book starts with the biggest creatures and ends with the smallest; did anyone notice this as you were reading?
- What do you think of the variety of animals included in the book? What other animals would you like to see included?
- What did you think of the illustrations in the book? Did they help you learn anything new about the animals they depict, or were they a distraction?
- Did you discover any creatures you had not heard of before?
- Did you come across any facts or stories that you would like to investigate further?

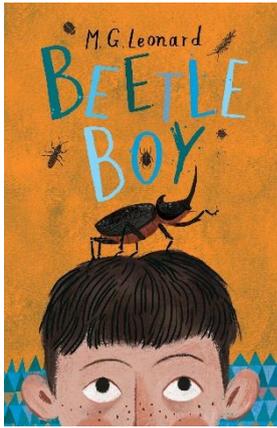
Activity

Choose an intriguing animal from the anthology and write a short 'Day in the Life' style story from its perspective. You could be a raccoon living in a city in Canada and planning to steal a picnic from an unsuspecting tourist, or a tiger prowling through a forest in India before going for a swim in a lake.

Here are some questions to help inspire your story:

- Where do you live?
- What do you look like?
- What do you like to eat?
- What do you do for fun?
- What would people be surprised to learn about you?

If you like, you can also read your story aloud to the group.



M.G. Leonard *Beetle Boy*

Chicken House 978-1910002704

Darkus is miserable. His dad has disappeared, and now he is living next door to the most disgusting neighbours ever.

A giant beetle called Baxter comes to his rescue. But can the two solve the mystery of his dad’s disappearance, especially when links emerge to cruel Lucretia Cutter and her penchant for beetle jewellery? A coffee-mug mountain, home to a million insects, could provide the answer – if Darkus and Baxter are brave enough to find it...

M.G. Leonard is a writer of books, poems and screenplays. She works as a freelance Digital Media Producer for clients such as the National Theatre and Harry Potter West End, and previously worked as a Senior Digital Producer at the National Theatre, the Royal Opera House and Shakespeare’s Globe. She spent her early career in the music industry running Setanta Records, an independent record label, and managing bands, most notably The Divine Comedy. After leaving the music industry, she trained as an actor, dabbling in directing and producing as well as performing, before deciding to write her stories down.

Activity

Can you find these words hidden in the wordsearch below? Words can run forwards, backwards, up, down or diagonally. When you’ve finished, use your library to research any words you don’t already know.

i	n	s	e	c	t	j	s
y	a	w	p	e	e	r	c
o	f	e	e	l	e	r	u
n	l	x	h	l	a	v	t
p	y	j	t	w	e	h	t
g	f	e	l	p	q	u	l
u	e	s	w	a	r	m	e
b	l	s	g	n	i	w	v

- beetle
- feeler
- scuttle
- wings
- crawl
- bug
- insect
- fly
- creep
- swarm

**Here are more suggestions for books inspired by the natural world,
wildlife and the environment**

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	ISBN
Robert Mcfarlane & Jackie Morris	The Lost Words	Hamish Hamilton	978-0241253588
Yuval Zommer	The Big Book of Bugs	Thames and Hudson	978-0500650677
Andy Seed & Sarah Horne	National Trust: Ned the Nature Nut's Nutty Nature Facts and Jokes	Nosy Crow	978-0857639257
Rebecca McRitchie & Celeste Hulme	Edward and the Great Discovery	New Frontier Publishing	978-1912076895
DK Books	My Encyclopedia of Very Important Animals	DK Books	978-0241334393
Patricia Hegarty & Britta Teckentrup	Tree: Seasons Come, Seasons Go	Little Tiger	978-1848691810
Roald Dahl & Quentin Blake	The Enormous Crocodile	Puffin	978-0141365510
Catherine Barr & Hanako Clulow	10 Reasons to Love...a Bear	Lincoln Children's Books	978-1786030153
Candy Gourley & Francesca Chessa	Is it a Mermaid?	Otter-Barry Books	978-1910959121
Katherine Rundell	The Explorer	Bloomsbury	978-1408882191
Jess French	What a Waste: Trash, Recycling, and Protecting Our Planet	DK Books	978-1465481412
Brian Jacques	Redwall	Red Fox	978-1862301382
Michael Rosen & Helen Oxenbury	We're Going on a Bear Hunt	Walker Books	978-0744523232
Mike Unwin & Jenni Desmond	Migration: Incredible Animal Journeys	Bloomsbury	978-1408889916
Candice Lemon Scott	Eco Rangers: Pelican in Peril	New Frontier Publishing	978-1912076390

Adrienne Barman	Plantopedia	Wide Eyed Editions	978-1786031389
Richard Adams & David Parkins	Watership Down	Puffin Classics	978-0141354965
Laurence Anholt & Sheila Moxley	Stone Girl Bone Girl: The Story of Mary Anning of Lyme Regis	Frances Lincoln Children's Books	978-1845077006
The EarthWorks Group	The New 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth	Andrews McMeel Publishing	978-0740777462

Answers

Baby animals

Chick	Penguin
Kitten	Cat
Foal	Zebra
Fawn	Deer
Cygnets	Swan
Kit	Fox
Calf	Camel
Cria	Llama

Wordsearch

i	n	s	e	c	t	j	s
y	a	w	p	e	e	r	c
o	f	e	e	l	e	r	u
n	l	x	h	l	a	v	t
p	y	j	t	w	e	h	t
g	f	e	l	p	q	u	l
u	e	s	w	a	r	m	e
b	l	s	g	n	i	w	v