

SHARED READING GUIDE FOR FAMILIES



connect

at home

A guide to sharing
selected picture books
with babies, toddlers
and preschoolers to
encourage a love of
reading and build
resilience



A children's literacy initiative across the Blue Mountains brought to you by



connect
Children and Families


Mountains Outreach
Community Service


NSW
GOVERNMENT

Multicultural
NSW

Welcome to your Connect at Home pack!



Here's how it works!

1. Register your name, email address and contact number to receive your pack.
2. Take your pack home. Enjoy sharing the books with your child for 3 weeks.
3. Use the notes in this booklet if you need some tips on ways you can use the books with different age groups.
4. Keep this booklet, the flyers and the Covid story booklet.
5. Return the 4 books in the bag to where you borrowed them from.
6. Use the QR code below to go to our website for more children's literacy activities and information.
7. We value your opinion so please complete the email survey that we will send you.

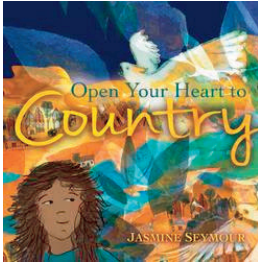
For more online resources, please
visit our website:

www.connectcfs.org.au
and follow the links to
Connect at Home.





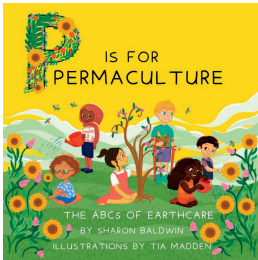
Featured Books



Open Your Heart to Country - Jasmine Seymour

Told in English and Dharug, Open Your Heart to Country is a moving account of reconnection to Country from a First Nations perspective. Sharing the nourishing power of returning home and being immersed in the language of Country, this picture book invites readers to reflect on the importance of place, not only for First Nations' peoples but for everyone.

With exquisite illustrations and soft, lilting text, Open Your Heart to Country appeals to the very young, while sharing a deeper message for older readers.



P is for Permaculture - Sharon Baldwin

A is for Activism,

B is for Baking

C is for Compost...

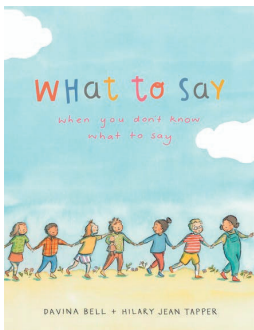
Make your way through the alphabet learning about the tenets of permaculture: earth care, people care and fair share. This beautifully illustrated, full-colour rhyming book is perfect for the eco-conscious baby or tree-hugging child in your life.



The Imagineer - Christopher Cheng

In her minuscule apartment, she draws up plans, then gathers her tools, turning sketches and scribbles into rocket ships and submarines.

But Penny likes to build so much that she's running out of space...and things to build with. Then Penny visits Grandpa and discovers a whole new world of strange things to create with, and one very important problem to solve...



What to Say When You Don't Know What to Say - Davina Bell

I'm not brave enough today. Maybe next time.

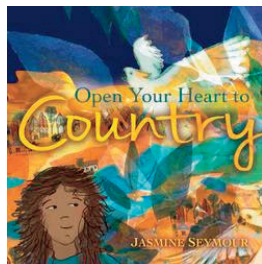
You're hurting my feelings right now.

Want to join in?

A warm and whimsical guide to negotiating life's little moments and big emotions with empathy, kindness and words from the heart.



Open Your Heart to Country



There are more than 250 Indigenous languages on this continent. The area we call the Blue Mountains is on the lands of the Dharug and Gundangurra people. Jasmine Seymour's writing uses both Dharug and English language and offers young readers the chance to discover ideas and language of the Dharug people. Learning a second language supports listening skills, memory and concentration. Second language skills also support problem solving skills and critical thinking. Most importantly though is the opportunity to share stories and understand Dharug culture.

Exploring this book with your baby

Open Your Heart to Country is full of beautiful images and short sentences.

- Point to key objects in the pictures and name them, for example "owl", "baby" and "feet".
- Read expressively with your little one and try to make the sounds of the birds and animals on the pages.
- As you read together you can practice these sounds and then listen for them in your own backyard.

Exploring this book with your toddler

On every page you will find words in both Dharug and English language.

- Point out key objects in the pictures, name them, and describe what they are doing, for example, "owl is flying", "baby is sleeping", and "feet are walking".
- Encourage your child to make the actions of the words, for example, "dance", "sleep"
- Use the guide at the back of the book to help you pronounce Dharug sounds in the words.
- Try to say the Dharug words together with your child. Some of the sounds are different to how we use them in English and may take practice.
- Break up words into their syllables to help you pronounce them: Ngurrawa = Ngu + rra + wa
- Can you use these words in your every day? 'Warami' means 'Hello' and is a great word to get started as you greet your friends.

Exploring this book with your preschooler

The Dharug language teaches us about the world around us.

- Read the page at the end of the book about how the Dharug language translates to English, and how to pronounce the Dharug sounds. Encourage your child to say these aloud.
- Talk about how language helps you every day. Ask your child to imagine what it would be like if their language was lost. How would they communicate?
- Talk together about what being on country means to you and your child. Encourage them to think about what makes a place feel like home, and what they miss when they are away from it.
- Encourage your child to think about ways that they and your family can help to look after country, such as by planting plants that are native to the area to encourage bird life, or recycling and reusing to reduce landfill.

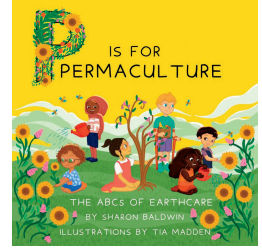




P is for Permaculture



P is for Permaculture opens up our everyday world and invites children to be active in their homes, gardens and neighbourhoods. As you work through the alphabet your child will be introduced to new words and ideas that invite them to explore their world and expand their place in it.



Exploring this book with your baby

Little fingers love to explore and discover. Grasping, holding and manipulating objects helps young children to discover their world.

- Encourage your baby to touch and hold the book, and explore how turning pages works.
- Point out well known objects in the pictures to your baby, for example, "sun" or "ball", even if those aren't the words on the page.
- Use actions and sounds with some words eg. wriggle your fingers when pointing out the worm, make a "buzzzzzz" sound when pointing out the bee.

Exploring this book with your toddler

Toddlers love to play with sounds and each page in this book has rhyming words for them to hear.

- Read each page expressively, emphasizing the rhyming words at the end of each sentence.
- Make the sound of each letter as well as naming it as you look at each page eg. "Bee, b"
- Encourage your child to find known objects on the pages, such as bananas, butterflies and berries, and name the things they might not know.
- Add extra words to describe the pictures, for example, "the plane is flying through the clouds"

Exploring this book with your preschooler

P is for Permaculture introduces children to new words about the environment and about social justice concepts.

- As you read, explain new words in everyday language and relate them to something your child already knows. For example, "D is for diversity - diversity means different". Point out all the different plants in your garden, or the different foods on your dinner plate, and discuss how these are diverse but equally valued.
- Use examples from your home, your community and your child's early learning environment to show how these words are already part of their life.
- Try to do some of the activities suggested on the pages, or visit a place that offers them. For example, have your child help with the recycling or the compost, visit a community garden or a swap meet, have a go at making your own bread.
- When naming the letters, say the sound that the letter makes. Encourage your child to think of other words that start with that sound, for example "Jay is for Jam, J J J jump!"
- Talk together about the benefits of permaculture and caring for the earth and everyone in it.





The Imagineer



The Imagineer invites children into a world with almost no limits. As Penny twists and turns, ties and tapes, she is engaging in "loose parts play". Loose parts play uses everyday objects like boxes, tubes, paper, leaves and stones. These open-ended objects can be used in lots of different ways, over and over again, and could become anything your child wants them to be. As children play with loose parts, they explore, invent, problem solve and use their imaginations.

Exploring this book with your baby

Penny loves to draw and tinker with her hands, and she developed these skills from a very young age just by exploring the objects in her world.

- Create your own "treasure box" or basket of items that your baby can safely explore.
- These items can be objects from around the house, like plastic cups, sponges, balls, cardboard boxes, Try to find items that vary in size and texture to make exploring interesting.
- Enjoy playing together as you stack, roll, balance, bounce and fit things together in many different ways.

Exploring this book with your toddler

Penny imagines things with her mind, draws them, and then creates them.

- Provide thick drawing implements for your child to explore with - thick chalk on concrete paths or thick crayons on paper or boxes can encourage your toddler to express their ideas and develop fine motor skills.
- Create things together with your toddler using loose parts and lots of sticky tape or masking tape.
- At the back of the book is a list of images that can be found somewhere in the pages. Go back through the book and encourage your toddler to find them.

Exploring this book with your preschooler

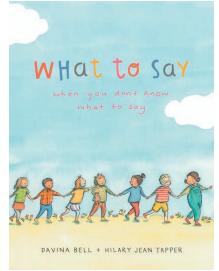
There are lots of interesting words and made up words in this book.

- Encourage your child to wonder about what some of the words mean, such as "flabbergasted".
- Some words are made up of two words put together, such as "Imagineer" which is a combination of "imagination" and "engineer". Can you and your child find others? Can you make up your own?
- Look at some of the old objects that Grandpa has. Talk together about what these were for, and whether we still use these today, or whether we have something different.
- Open up the pages to reveal Penny's big invention. Encourage your child to identify as many purposes as they can for Penny's amazing invention.
- Encourage your child to invent something for themselves or someone else. They could draw or build it and tell you all about it.
- When Penny's creations don't work out the first time, she starts again. Talk together about the importance of trying new things, being flexible to change, and having another go at something if it is hard or doesn't work the first time.



What to Say When You Don't Know What to Say

This book follows a group of children through difficult moments in their lives that are socially and emotionally challenging. Each picture scene is accompanied by suggested words to say that communicate empathy, kindness, strength and individuality. Modelling language is a powerful way to show children ways that they can express themselves when they find it hard to know how to respond to big feelings.



Exploring this book with your baby

Learning about our feelings and the emotions of others starts early.

- Babies often copy what they see to learn to make sense of their world. As you share this book with your baby, copy the characters' facial expressions and model these for your baby.
- When your baby expresses an emotion with their face, copy it back to them and model the words, for example, "You're hungry!".
- Point out familiar objects in the pictures and label with single words, for example, "teddy", or "ball".

Exploring this book with your toddler

Toddlers experience and observe emotions well before they have the words to describe what they are feeling.

- Encourage your toddler to observe how the characters are feeling in each picture, label a simple emotion, and talk together about why they might be feeling that way. For example, "they look worried. They don't want to leave their mum".
- Identify familiar objects in the pictures that tell the story, for example, "look at the bunting, they are having a party". Relate these to your toddler's life and how they may have felt at the time.

Exploring this book with your preschooler

Learning to express your own emotions, and read those of others, is an important social skills.

- Encourage your child to talk about what is happening in each picture, and what the characters may be feeling and why. Talk together about times when they may have been in a similar situation.
- Preschoolers can expand their vocabulary of words to describe emotions. Go beyond "happy" or "sad" and begin to introduce words such as "disappointed", "lonely", "guilty" or "confused" to describe more complex emotions.
- Compare the pictures on the inside of the front cover and the inside of the back cover. Talk about the differences and the way the boy was feeling when he dropped his ice cream, what the other children did, and how this might have changed the way the boy was feeling.
- Look for opportunities to help your preschooler label their emotions, and model the labelling of your own to them. Encourage them to pay attention to someone's body language and facial expression to determine what they might be feeling.
- Talk together about ways to be kind and help someone feel better when they are experiencing a difficult moment.



ABOUT THE CONNECT AT HOME PROJECT



Connect at Home is a local project that was developed in response to reduced early childhood participation throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. It is aimed at building the resilience of families, by enabling parents and carers to better support children's literacy, social and emotional development. Approximately 900 families across the Blue Mountains will share Connect at Home support packs which include four beautiful children's picture books, with themes of resilience, including Aboriginal stories, and this resource guide, developed in consultation with Early Childhood Educators, allied health professionals, and Aboriginal advisors. We are very grateful to Multicultural NSW for providing the funding to enable us to provide such a great initiative for Blue Mountains families.



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and play, the Darug and Gundungurra Peoples.

We acknowledge their ongoing connection and care for Country, Ngurra.

We pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

Always was, always will be
Aboriginal land.