

Music and Stories



creative, stimulating, fun

Related strands of the LEYF Social Justice Pedagogy:

- leading for a culture of excellence
- spiral curriculum
- enabling environments



Music and Stories

Incorporating music into book-sharing and storytelling is engaging, supports language development, and offers new ways for children to participate.

Music slows language down, breaks words into chunks, and makes sounds easier to recognise and repeat.

Repetitive rhythms and patterns support memory, while moving and making music together encourages emotional regulation, turn-taking, and social connection.



Starting point:

Chanting or singing a book

Books built on repetition and rhythm work especially well.

There Was an *Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly*, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*, *Dear Zoo*, and nursery rhyme books are good places to start.



Starting point:

Instruments and sound makers

Instruments and sound-makers bring stories to life.

We're Going on a Bear Hunt is a rich example: streamers for swishy grass, a water tray for the river, a wooden xylophone for the forest, cymbals for the slamming door, whispered voices for the cave.

Other ways in:



Characters (*could each have a different voice or instrument?*)



Environments (*what sounds belong in a quiet field or noisy town?*)



Movement (*how do characters move?*)



Emotion (*what music matches how they feel?*).

Example: Dear Zoo

By page four of *Dear Zoo*, the children were no longer interested in what was inside the box, they just wanted to open the flap.

Penny introduced a simple repeating song to *The Addams Family* tune, sung at each page turn.

Suddenly the group re-engaged: joining in with repeated lines and recalling why each animal had to go back. Even children who had not followed the story at first had absorbed it by the fourth repetition.



Example: The Colours of Us

While sharing *The Colours of Us*, a book describing skin tones through food, teacher Kajal improvised a simple song naming each shade as the pages turned: cinnamon, caramel, coffee. By the end, children were comparing hands and celebrating their different skin tones. The book was moved into the role play area rather than the book corner, and children kept returning to it throughout the week, singing the song and talking about their skin.

“I don’t think that would have happened without the song... it really hooked them in.”

Example: Bear Hunt

Teacher Siobhan created a tuff tray *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* story landscape: blue fabric for the river, cotton wool snow, and a cave with the bear in the middle. Musical instruments were placed throughout.

Children moved toy characters through the worlds, choosing instruments for different environments. Sometimes they followed the story sequence; sometimes they played together as an ensemble. One child decided the bear never left the cave — and that became his version of the story.



“It doesn’t always have to match exactly. And the children knew that.”

Example: That's Not My...

Penny was sitting in the reading den with a child who had brought a *That's Not My...* book. As they turned the pages, the child said, "There's no song for this one." Penny replied, "**Shall we make one?**" So they did: one note, the same melody, every page. It didn't matter that it was only one note. The child had made her song.



Next time you share a book,
try adding just one musical
element — a sound, a
rhythm, a voice — and see
where the children take it!



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