

Rivers

Adventures in Reading:

Family Literacy Bags from Reading Rockets



PARK
FOUNDATION

Funded in part by
the Park Foundation, Inc.

Contents:

- Two books - one fiction, one nonfiction
- Parent information sheet
- Three activity sheets
- Bookmark
- Parent survey

for teachers and librarians



This Reading Rockets Activity Packet is designed to support reading activities at home. We've chosen a fiction and nonfiction book about rivers, appropriate for a third grade listening level, and developed related activities to encourage some hands-on fun and learning. Just assemble the packet and copies of each book in a two-gallon zip top bag, and send home with your students.

Reading Rockets carefully chose books that are widely available and appealing to young readers. The titles selected should be available in your school library. If the two featured titles are not available, or you prefer another title, feel free to substitute books related to the theme. You'll find a list of suggested alternative titles included in the bookmark.

The featured books are ***Paddle-to-the-Sea*** by Holling Clancy Holling and ***The Big Rivers: the Missouri, the Mississippi, and the Ohio*** by Bruce Hiscock. ***Paddle-to-the-Sea***, which received a Caldecott Honor in 1942, tells the exciting story of the water journey of a wooden carving created and named Paddle-to-the-Sea by a young Indian boy. The wooden figure has many adventures and makes many friends who help him eventually live up to his name. ***The Big Rivers: the Missouri, the Mississippi, and the Ohio*** explores three big U.S. rivers, with a particular focus on the major flooding of these rivers in 1993. The book also covers drainage basins, erosion issues, and the water cycle.

The parent information sheet includes an introductory note that you can personalize, instructions about how to use the packet, and tips for sharing fiction and nonfiction books with children.

The activities are designed to encourage further exploration and learning at home:

- >> Creativity Activity: a hands-on craft project
- >> Imagination Activity: encourages imaginative play, writing, or drawing
- >> Get real Activity: focuses on real-world experiences for parent and child
- >> The bookmark lists both the featured titles and additional titles

Putting it all together

Print out copies of the parent information sheet, the activities, the survey, and a master for making bookmarks. Cut the bookmark page into strips. You may wish to print the activity pages and bookmark on card stock for durability.

Into a two-gallon zip top bag, place:

- >> Two books — one fiction title and one nonfiction title
- >> Parent information sheet
- >> Three themed activity pages
- >> Bookmark
- >> Survey for parents

Send the packet home with your student. Encourage parents to keep the parent information sheet, the activities, and bookmark, and return the books and survey to you.

Let reading rockets know what you think of the family activity packets by e-mailing us through our website: www.readingrockets.org/sitecontact. Click on "Family Literacy Bags"

ADVENTURES IN READING!

Welcome

Dear _____

Exploring new ideas and enjoying books with you sends a powerful message to your child: Reading and learning are fun, and happen everywhere — not just at school. This Reading Rockets Activity Packet about Rivers was created to help you and your child enjoy reading and learning together.

Start your learning adventure by reading some books with your child about this popular topic. Then explore the topic with three activities. Enclosed you'll find what you need:

- >> two books to share with your child
- >> three related activities
- >> bookmark with a list of other books to extend the fun, if you wish
- >> short survey to tell me if you enjoyed using the packet

The simple steps on the back explain how to use the packet.

The bookmark, this parent information sheet, and the activities are yours to keep.

When you've finished with the materials, please return the books and the completed survey to school in your child's backpack. Please return the Reading Rockets Activity Packet by _____ .

I hope you'll enjoy reading and learning together!

Teacher signature

To learn more about children's books, reading with your child, and information about helping kids become confident readers, please visit www.ReadingRockets.org

ADVENTURES IN READING!

Instructions

How to use your Reading Rockets Activity Packet

Getting ready

1. Before you read the books to your child, be sure to read them yourself. One book is fiction — a “make-believe” story. The other book is nonfiction, or informational and true. Reading the books first will give you the “inside scoop” to the twists and turns of the story, the interesting information inside, and the parts of the books that will appeal most to your child.

2. Next, read the three activities to see which of them you think your child will enjoy most, and which one you have the time and materials on-hand to do right away. Chances are, after you read one (or both) of the books with your child, he or she may want to do an activity right away.

Start the fun

3. When you know you'll have at least enough time to read and talk about one of the books, grab your child and a book, and dive right in. Start with the fiction selection. Talk about the cover of the book with your child — can he guess what it is about? Have they ever read a book by the same author or illustrator or about the same topic?

Read the book to your child. If you are using the fiction title, you will be sharing a make-believe story. As you read and explore the pictures, you should note to your child that the author may include real facts in fiction writing. Talk with your child about how to confirm factual information found in works of fiction. Then, try the nonfiction book or one of the activities.

4. When you read the nonfiction book, take a moment to explain to your child the difference between the two types of books. The fiction book told a made-up, make-believe story, and a nonfiction book focuses on real people, places, and things. The information in nonfiction books can answer lots of questions and confirm facts.

5. Feel free to pick and choose from the activities, or change them to suit your child's interests. Read the books again over the next few days and try different activities. Most important: have fun!

When you're done...

6. Keep the bookmark, the activities, and this page. Complete the survey and return it with the books to your child's school.

Make the most of the excitement the books create, and try some hands-on learning or make-believe fun. Exploring new ideas alongside you lets your child see you learning — and reading — too, and gives your child personal experiences to support her growing knowledge.

Tips for reading nonfiction books with kids:

- >> *Wonder out loud. As you are reading, or afterward, talk about facts you find interesting or questions you have.*
- >> *Show your child how to use the table of contents, section headings, index, and word list (glossary) to find the answer to a specific question.*
- >> *Don't be afraid to jump around, reading pages that especially interest your child. You don't have to read a nonfiction book straight through.*

Tips for reading fiction books with kids:

- >> *Take your time and talk about the story with your child. Ask your child questions.*
- >> *Explore the pictures with your child.*
- >> *Read with expression. Change your voice or how fast you read to create excitement. Ham it up!*
- >> *You don't need to read every word. Keeping your child interested is the goal.*

craft a craft



Whittling is a type of carving done by using a small knife to make small cuts in a piece of wood to shape it into something else. In *Paddle-to-the-Sea*, a young Indian boy whittles a piece of pine into a model canoe and figure that travels thousands of miles.

Small, sharp knives are not common toys for young boys or girls in this day and age. But in this activity your child can still have the experience and satisfaction of crafting a sea-worthy craft from wood.

Supplies

- >> lengths of straight, dry (seasoned) sticks (12 to 20 sticks)
- >> yarn or string
- >> cutting tool (for evening the lengths of sticks and cutting string)

Getting Started

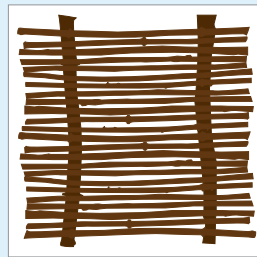
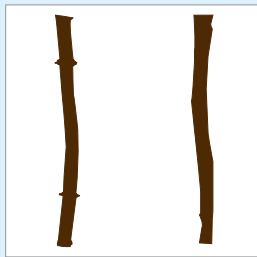
To build a natural boat from wood, head out into nature! Gather straight, dry sticks that can lie together to form a raft. You can even build your craft outside if you bring a cutting tool and string with you. You may even want to plan to do this if where you gather your wood there's also an accessible body of water for boat testing and launching.

As you gather sticks, talk about the fiction title you read. Ask your child what kind of adventure he'd like to have on the water. Think aloud together about things besides travel and recreation that we depend on rivers for, such as drinking water, animal habitats, and even electricity.

Also talk with him about how the size of his raft depends on the size of his sticks. Sticks that are 10 to 12 inches long may be easiest to work with. Help him estimate stick length with a known standard, such as a dollar bill (6.14 inches). Also most of your sticks should have a similar diameter — what determines how big around they are — though choose two that have a diameter at least twice that of all the others.

Lining Things Up

Once you have your sticks, lay them side-by-side. If the sticks are small and quite dry, your child may be able to break off ends to bring them all to a similar length. Otherwise, you should use a cutting tool to even them out for him. Then take your two sticks with the larger diameter and place them parallel to each other, less than one stick length apart. Lay your other sticks perpendicular to the parallel sticks, letting them overlap the larger sticks about an inch. Gather more sticks if needed or trim your parallel sticks down to size.



Help your child knot a long piece of string around one end around the end of the first perpendicular stick. Wind the string under and around the parallel stick so that the sticks are secured together. Continue winding additional sticks until all your sticks are secure. The sticks you've laid out won't stay in place until they are tied; so reassure your child that it is okay if the original layout is not maintained while tying takes place. Repeat tying stick lengths to the other parallel stick. Try to pull the sticks tightly together as you wind the string around.

Time now to test the waters! If your child wants to keep his raft, make sure you are testing in water that allows you to safely and easily retrieve the craft. Otherwise, make note of water currents, see if your child can make a prediction about where his boat will float, and wish it *bon voyage!*

Variation: Indoor rafting. Rafts can also be built from Lincoln Logs or Popsicle sticks and launched in the bathtub or sink.

After you've finished reading the books together and taken your homemade raft out on the water, you might enjoy watching this 30 minute film adaptation of *Paddle to the Sea*: http://www.nfb.ca/film/paddle_to_the_sea/

rolling on the river



Even if you don't live near a river, you can help your child make connections without even leaving home. After you've read together, try these sensory experiments for a closer understanding of the written descriptions of the river.

Supplies

- >> bowls and small buckets
- >> stopper for the drain
- >> an exercise ball or large plastic toy ball and/or a blanket
- >> access to the World Wide Web

River sounds

Water coming out of the tap and going down the drain sounds very different than water that trickles and trips over rocks or rushes downstream. Simulate the sounds of the river at home. First, seal the drain of your bathtub or kitchen sink. Then, fill a variety of containers and buckets with water from the bathtub (or kitchen sink if using smaller containers.) Keep all the containers in the tub. Slowly pour a smaller container of water into a larger one and ask your child to listen. What does he hear? Then pour a larger container of water into a smaller one. Does he hear a difference? Let your child pour water at different rates and ask him to imagine a small stream trickling into a larger river. Or a rush of water filling a narrowing riverbed. If he holds the container far above from where he pours it, could that sound be similar to a waterfall? Talk about and try to create what a flooding river or a river with low water might sound like.

Going with the flow

In water, even heavy objects can move easily, drift and float. Have your child imagine he's a tree branch or log in a river. Have him think about floating on the water, but help him discover other sensations too. Simulate what it feels like to be carried downstream. If you have an exercise or large rubber ball, have your child sit on it and bounce gently — he's bobbing down the river! If there are two strong adults available, have your child lay down in the middle of a blanket. Each adult grabs two corners, with one adult at the child's head, the other at his feet. Lift your child up off the floor and gently swing him back and forth — he's riding the waves. Walk in a circle several times — he's stuck in an eddy! Talk with him about additional river flow movements you've read about and try other simulations. Rapids ahead?

Virtual ride

Use the Internet to take a quick trip out to some western rivers. The kayakers who made these videos used cameras mounted to their helmets, so as you and your child watch, you experience the same feelings of motion that they did as they paddled and filmed.

Payette River: www.youtube.com/watch?v=N82fEPnrgKg

Colorado River: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Cu2qddohBc&feature=channel

After you view the videos, look up more information with your child about these rivers, such as geographical location and river source and mouth.

river music



Rivers make beautiful music. From the trickle of melting snow to the babble of a full-flowing stream to the cascade of water over boulders and stones, the sounds and rhythms of the river can sooth and invite. A river can also make harsh tones, like when it floods and spills over its banks or when it carries a lot of ships and other vessels to a busy harbor.

Just as much as the river seems to want you to hear its music, people throughout time have been compelled to describe their feelings about the river through music of their own making. In this activity, you'll encourage your child to channel his own feelings about rivers into a rap or folk song.

Supplies

- >> paper and pencil
- >> musical instrument (can be a real instrument or homemade, such as a container of rice to shake)
- >> a recording device (optional)
- >> access to the World Wide Web (optional)

Getting Started

Talk with your child about inspiration. Why would a river stimulate creativity and excite someone to write a song? Ask your child what kinds of good and bad characteristics a river has that would be interesting or entertaining to hear about in a song.

Traditional folk songs are related to a particular culture and often to historic or personal events or holidays. Rap music also expresses personal, as well as emotional, feelings in spoken rhyme. If your child has visited a river, encourage him to write down thoughts about his experience. If he hasn't made his own visit, he can base his song on the books you read together. Have him go back to the books you read and search for a simple story to tell.

The story he wants to tell about the river becomes his song lyrics. To generate a melody, he may want to just try to sing his words and see what comes out! If he needs more help framing his tune or finding a beat, suggest he borrow or modify another folk song, such as "Over the River and Through the Woods" or "I've Been Working On the Railroad." He might also generate ideas by listening to other songs or raps:

American Rivers has compiled a playlist of Best River Songs: www.youtube.com/view_playlist?p=AAC05D7C64C61568

Meet artists and listen to their music in this Smithsonian series on contemporary music along the Mississippi River: www.pbs.org/riverofsong

Rhythm, Rhyme, Results had educational rap songs on a variety of topics. This sample includes rivers: www.educationalrap.com/song/geography-in-the-usa.html

Once he's ready to perform, where better to gather an audience than down by the river! If possible, record his song so he can hear it. Show your enthusiasm by singing along or offering musical accompaniment.

RIVERS



Featured titles

Fiction

Paddle-to-the-Sea
by Holling Clancy Holling

Nonfiction

The Big Rivers: the Missouri, the Mississippi, and the Ohio
by Bruce Hiscock

Additional fiction titles

The Raft by Jim LaMarche

Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe
by Vera B. Williams

Where the River Begins
by Thomas Locker

The Wind in the Willows
by Kenneth Grahame

Additional nonfiction titles

Follow the Water from Brook to Ocean
by Arthur Dorros

Pond and River by Steve Parker

River and Stream by April Pulley Sayre

Rivers by Terry Jennings

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