

Growing readers!

Brought to you by Reading Rockets, Colorín Colorado and LD OnLine

Literacy in the Sciences: Activity No. 10

Cause and Effect

“If you drink your milk, you will grow big and strong!” “If you clean up your toys, you can go play outside.” Most parents and caregivers talk to their child about cause and effect long before we expect our children to understand those terms. We teach cause and effect every time we help a young child recognize a relationship between two things, or when we demonstrate that one event is the result of another.

Science seeks to explain and understand the natural world. Things happen for a reason: there is a cause for every effect. In science, the **cause** explains why something happens. The **effect** is the description of what happened. Many simple activities can be done at home and in the backyard that will help develop your child’s understanding of cause and effect. Consider these ideas:

- Ask your child, “What do you think will happen if we leave this Popsicle out in the sun?” Allowing the Popsicle to melt provides an opportunity to talk about the sun’s heat and its effect on the icy popsicle. During the winter, do the same thing with small cups of water. “What caused our water to turn into ice?”
- Play a simple game in which you orally provide a situation (or a cause). Ask your child to fill in an action (or an effect). For example, you could say, “It was snowing outside.” Your child could fill in, “All the kids got their sleds.” “Someone rang the doorbell,” could be answered with “Our dog began to bark.” This game is perfect for helping your child realize that there is not one single right answer – as scientists they will learn that there can be several causes and several effects.
- Keep track of the plants in your yard. As you observe a plant thriving and growing, ask your child why. Is the plant receiving good light and water? If the leaves on a plant are drooping, ask your child what could be causing the droopy leaves. Does the plant need more sun? More water? What effect could a new location and some water have on the plant?
- Share the children’s book *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* with your child. Point out the use of specific cause/effect words used in the book, including if...then. Keep a running tally of all the causes and effects that happen in the story. For example, if you give a mouse a cookie, he’ll want a glass of milk to go with it. If you give him a glass of milk, he will ask for a straw, etc.

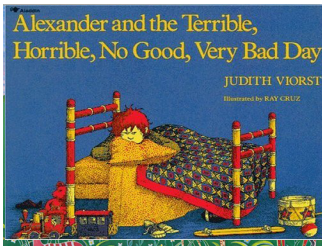
Young children learn by engaging in activities that are real and meaningful to them – activities that encourage the development of skills, knowledge, and ways of thinking and learning. Parents can help teach children the early skills for literacy as well as science and mathematics development by creating simple settings that encourage learning.

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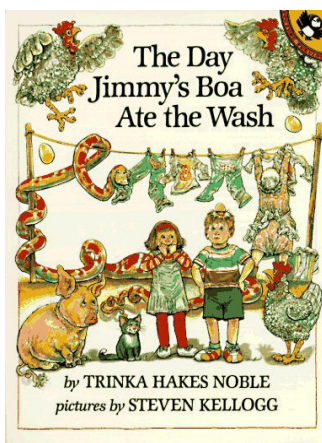
Recommended children's books



Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

By Judith Viorst

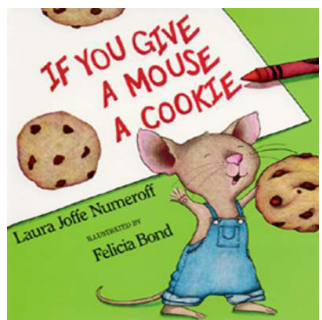
"I went to sleep with gum in my mouth and now there's gum in my hair and when I got out of bed this morning I tripped on the skateboard and by mistake I dropped my sweater in the sink while the water was running and I could tell it was going to be a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day." And so begin the trials and tribulations of Alexander, where one bad thing leads to another... (Age level: 6-9)



The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash

By Trinka Hakes Noble

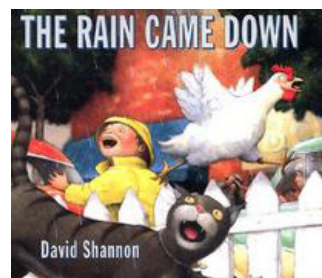
When Jimmy's class goes on a trip to a farm, he takes along his pet boa constrictor. The ensuing chaos in this cumulative tale is told in reverse, revealed by a girl to her mom once the field trip is over. Humor is heightened by highly detailed, understated illustrations in illustrator Steven Kellogg's signature style. (Age level: 6-9)



If You Give a Mouse a Cookie

By Laura Numeroff

...then he'll need a glass of milk to wash it down, right? One request leads to another and another in this popular picture book. The circular story encourages kids to make predictions and teaches cause and effect in a fun way. (Age level: 3-6)



The Rain Came Down

By David Shannon

On Saturday morning, the rain came down. It made the chickens squawk." But that's only the beginning. Before the sun comes out again, an entire neighborhood is in a crabby uproar. There's no end in sight... until the rain stops and the sun comes out. Before they know it, the bickerers are helping each other clean up the mess caused by the ruckus, and everyone's smiling again. (Age level: 3-6)