Folktales

Adventures in Reading:
Family Literacy Bags from Reading Rockets

Contents:
• Two books – one fiction, one nonfiction
• Parent information sheet
• Three activity Sheets
• Bookmark
• Parent survey
This Reading Rockets Activity Packet is designed to support reading activities at home. We’ve chosen a folktale and nonfiction appropriate for a first grade listening level, and included related activities to encourage some hands-on fun and learning. Just assemble the packet 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 alternative titles included in the bookmark.

The Folktale Activity Packet pairs a folktale that explains a something about nature with a nonfiction book. The featured books for the Folktale Activity Packet are Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti by Gerald McDermott and The Moon Book by Gail Gibbons. The Anansi story tells how the spider’s sons rescue him from danger, and how his reward for them ends up becoming the moon. The Moon Book describes the moon’s movement and phases, eclipses, exploration, and beliefs about it.

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 non-fiction books with children.

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

- the Creativity Activity is a hands-on craft project
- the Imagination Activity encourages imaginative play, writing, or drawing
- the 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 and one nonfiction
- 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 by the date you specify.

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.”
Get a feel for the phases of the moon by making them out of playdough or cookie dough

Supplies
- playdough (store bought or home made) or sugar cookie dough (store-bought or home-made)
- rolling pin or wine or soda bottle
- round cookie cutter or glass
- knife

Instructions
1. Using the rolling pin or bottle, roll out the dough to about 1/4-inch thick
2. Cut four circles with the cookie cutter or glass
3. Leave one circle whole – that is your full moon
4. Using the knife, cut one circle in half – that is your half moon
5. Using the cookie cutter or glass, cut a crescent out of the side of each of the last two circles – they will be your two crescent and gibbous moons
6. Repeat the process as many times as you like
7. If you are using cookie dough, decorate your moons however you like and bake according to the recipe or package

When your moon shapes are ready, work with your child to line your moons up in order of the phases of the moon. Start with an empty space for your new moon, then crescent, half, gibbous, full, gibbous, half, crescent.

Talk with your child about how the earth's shadow makes the shape of the moon that we can see and how the phases of the moon are just parts of a circle.

Variation If you don't have a rolling pin or bottle, you can use store bought pie crust or cheese slices. You can also use paper and scissors – just trace around a glass to make the circles.

Homemade playdough recipe
1/4 cup salt
1 cup flour
1/4 cup water

Mix flour and salt together in a bowl. Add water and knead until it is the consistency of dough. Add more water if necessary. Store in a closed plastic bag or container in the refrigerator.
See for yourself what is fact and fiction. Become a junior astronomer and study the moon!

Follow the phases of the moon

Look in your newspaper or on the Internet for the current phase of the moon. Watch the night sky every few nights and watch the moon “wax and wane.”

The Stardate website shows the phases of the moon: http://stardate.org/nightsky/moon/

Talk about how the moon changes shape and why – shadows, rotation of the earth, and position of the sun. (Your nonfiction book will explain these concepts.)

Talk about how much light is shed by the moon – how much can you see at night when the moon is full? How much when it is a crescent? And what about when there’s a “new moon?”

Look for the moon in the daytime!

Did you ever notice the moon in the daytime sky? It’s visible several days a month, especially in the third quarter of the phase. Look for it in the morning in the western sky.

This physics website from the University of California at Los Angeles explains when and how to find the moon in the daytime sky:
www.physics.ucla.edu/~huffman/daymn.html

The moon is just the beginning...

Explore earth and space with these NASA websites:

NASA’s website for K-4 students: www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/k-4/index.html

NASA’s Kid’s Club: http://www.nasa.gov/audience/forkids/kidsclub/flash/index.html

NASA’s Space Place: http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/
Folktales from all over the world often explain something about nature – like why the moon is in the sky. Raven by Gerald McDermott explains where the sun comes from. The Legend of the Blue Bonnet by Tomie dePaola explains where the blue bonnet flower comes from.

Encourage your child to create their own story to explain something about nature

Get him started by asking what part of nature interests him.

- What makes a rainbow?
- Why do volcanoes erupt?
- Who do flowers lean toward the sun?
- Why does a tiger (or your cat) have stripes?
- ...or anything else that interests your child

Your child can tell the story, write the story, or draw the story. Ask your child to tell you about the story he created and the choices he made about the characters, the place it happens, and any details, twists, or surprises he included.

Encourage your child to make a picture in the style of the illustration of the folktale you read

A picture is worth a thousand words! The folktales featured in the Reading Rockets Family Activity Packet have beautiful illustrations.

Take some time to look at and talk about the illustrations in the folktale. Look for notes about the illustrations at the beginning or end of the book. Ask your child what materials does he think the illustrator used? How would he make a picture in that same style?

When he has finished his artwork, ask how he liked working in the artist’s style and about the details of his picture.

Or encourage your child to retell the folktale with their own illustrations

Re-read the folktale to your child while she listens with her eyes closed. Ask her to imagine the pictures in her head as you read the story to her. Then encourage her make her own illustrations with her favorite materials.

When she is finished, have her tell you about her creation. What choices did she make? How is the story different with her illustrations?
### Featured titles

- **Folktale**
  - Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti by Gerald McDermott

- **Nonfiction**
  - The Moon Book by Gail Gibbons

### Additional titles

- **Additional folktales**
  - Grandfather Twilight by Barbara Berger
  - Moon Rope by Lois Ehlert
  - Why The Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky by Elphinstone Dayrell, illustrations by Blair Lent

- **Additional nonfiction titles**
  - Me and My Place In Space by Joan Sweeney, illustrated by Annette Cole
  - The Moon by Carmen Bredeson (Rookie Read-About-Science series)
  - The Moon by Jenny Tesar (Space Observer series)
  - What the Moon is Like by Franklyn M. Branley, illustrated by True Kelley (Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science series)