Hanna, Homeschooler

Themed Activities

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CHATOYANT

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Introduction

The family in *Hanna, Homeschooler* doesn't use curriculum. In fiction, life conveniently provides all the curriculum you need! But in real life, sometimes it's nice to have a little guidance on a day when you're feeling uninspired or your child is demanding more, more, more!

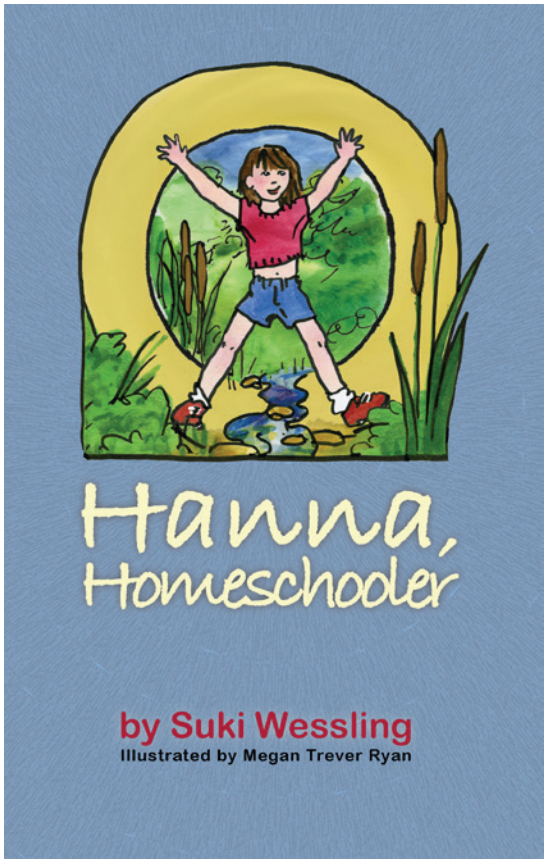
The activity ideas in this booklet are all based on the content of *Hanna*, and also based on my experiences as a homeschooler of two very different children. One of my children was active, tactile, energetic, and always demanding more, more, *more*! My other child was quiet, cerebral, verbal, and needed to be drawn into activities. I hope that the curriculum in this booklet appeals to children anywhere on the range between my two opposites.

I have enhanced this document with clickable links, which are marked with purple boxes.

If you have any ideas to extend *Hanna* curriculum, please email them to me at suki@suki-wessling.com or post them on my Parenting and Education Facebook Page.

Thanks!

Suki



8 Important Ingredients for Tasty Homeschooling

Writing *Hanna* and thinking about our early homeschooling years has got me thinking about what made our homeschooling work. Here in no particular order are the ingredients that made our homeschooling recipe sweet, spicy, comforting, complex, and zesty!

#1: LARGE Paper

For younger children, very LARGE sheets of paper are great! I recommend buying a roll of white butcher paper like Hanna has. It can be cut in shorter lengths to serve as a large canvas, or longer pieces to create timelines, maps, full body outlines, and anything else you might think of.

#2: A Digital Camera

Digital cameras saved my homeschooling life! My son was born at the end of the film camera era; my daughter is fully of the digital world. I definitely saw the difference once we didn't have to pay to take photos. As a homeschooling friend said to me when I started, "the digital camera is your friend." Take pictures of everything you do and notice during the day. It costs nothing, and in a pinch you can use the pictures for projects.

#3: Marker Set

An enormous set of every color of marker. You can buy such things online for quite cheap, and the array of colors can be very inspiring to children. By the way: don't leave this out where your kids can access it anytime. Save it somewhere not visible so that when it comes out, it's special.

I bought this marker set for when we were doing "special" projects. My kids are 13 and 17 and they are still reserved for special projects!

#4: Notebooks

I made my Sierra notebook when the kids were small but still haven't filled it all.

Our favorites were homemade using a friend's spiral binder. We made them for specific purposes, such as "Science Notebook," "Japanese Notebook," and even "Sierras Notebook" for when we went to the mountains. Unless your child really needs lines, these should have blank paper and should be bound so they can easily be drawn in under any conditions. (A hardcover book-style binding is rather inconvenient in the woods!)

#5: The Internet

Even if you don't want your kids to play on computers, start them early learning that it's a valuable tool. (Our family had a no-screen policy in our house when our kids were little and continued with a limited-screen policy for a few more years.) "I don't know–let's look it up" is the most empowering thing a parent can say to a child. These days it doesn't take a trip to the library (unless that's where you get your Internet access). Starting very early, make sure to talk to them about how to decide whether to trust Internet sources.

#6: A Library Card

A great as electronic sources are, kids live in the tactile world. A real book that they can pick up anytime is much more important to have in your house than ten e-books on your tablet. Check out lots of books, even ones they didn't choose. Unschoolers talk about "strewing"—leaving things around for your kids to discover. If you can go to the library without them, get books on subjects you think they'll be interested in and "strew" them around the house.

#7: Craft Supplies

These should be separated into two categories. You should always have craft supplies within reach that your children can access at will. If this means a messier house than you'd like, well, just remember that one day your kids will be teens and you will wish they'd be making messes at home more often! The other batch of supplies should be kept out of reach. These are things you should save for those "I'm bored" moments, or times when you are feeling tired, sad, cranky, or any other emotion that makes you a less-than-stellar homeschooler that day.

#8: Friends

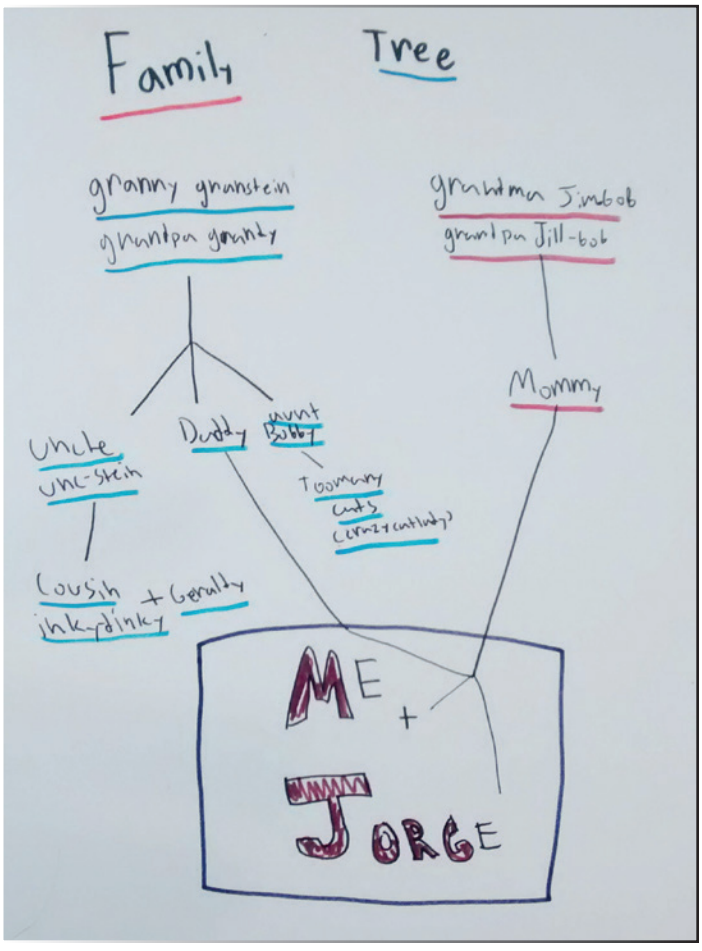
When I started homeschooling my daughter, we were in a crisis. We had invested so much in trying to get school to work for her. We didn't know a single homeschooler. And because of our daughter's special needs, we didn't really have school friends with kids her age, either. Our first few months of homeschooling were pretty darn awful. We sat around being angry at each other and lonely for friends. Finally, we joined a homeschool program to meet people. If you're more outgoing, you might not need a formal group, but introverted me and my unusual daughter needed this. It changed our lives to be part of a group that offered both structured and unstructured time, and through this group we finally made friends.

Activities

Family Tree

This activity should be completed on a LARGE sheet of paper.

- Start with your child and siblings down at the bottom of the paper. You can take silly photos and print them, or have each child draw a self-portrait.
- Write each child's birth date next to their names.
- Above, have them draw portraits of their parents and aunts and uncles, or paste on photos. If they have cousins, draw lines from the aunts and uncles and insert cousins' names and birth dates. They may see you having to do some research at this point—this is good! "I don't know—let's look it up" is one of the most empowering things a child can hear from their parents.
- If they can write, teach them their relatives' full names and how to spell them. If they can't write, ask them to predict the spelling for you as you write.
- For some math practice, have them calculate how old each person is using their birth year. They can write the age next to the person.
- Each successive generation will probably have less and less information. At this point you could consider branching out into other research, such as learning about the ancestors' countries of origin. One of my children loved to draw flags of different countries—you could incorporate world flags into your family tree.



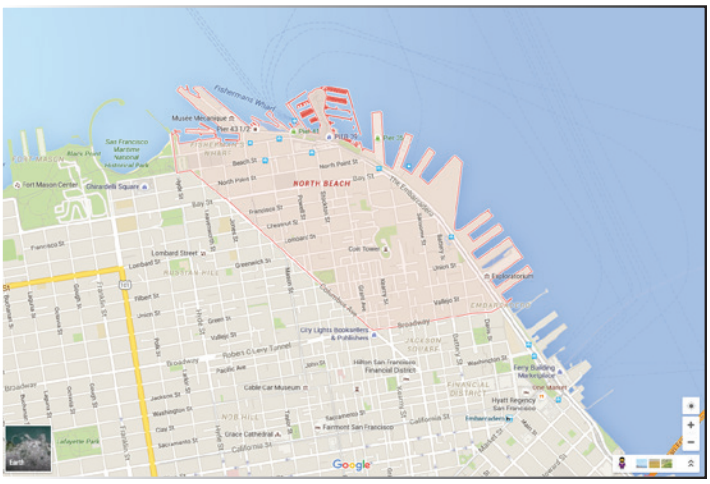
As with all activities, the result of this, no matter how messy or incomplete, should be proudly displayed for all to see when they visit your home!

Mapping

Hanna and her mom talk a lot about the location of things, especially when they are out walking. For this exercise, you will need a notebook and maybe a camera. Then you'll need a large sheet of paper and markers.

- Go for a walk, taking notes along the way. Perhaps sketch a rough map with landmarks such as "best climbing tree" or "favorite ice cream store."
- Take photos if you are going to use photos on your map.
- Once home, sketch a rough map if you haven't already.
- Using http://maps.google.com, type in an address contained in your mapping area. Compare the Google map to your own map and note differences. Homemade maps don't have to be precise!
- For a history lesson, go to Google Images and view old maps of the world made by explorers by hand—they are beautiful in their imperfection.
- Google Maps allows you to switch to satellite mode, so you can see an overhead photo, or Street View, so you can "walk" around the street digitally.
- Print out your pictures if you took them.
- On a large sheet of paper, rough out your map again, making changes you want to make now that you've compared your map to Google's. This should probably be done in pencil first and then inked in.
- Note landmarks on your map. If you want to put arrows to show the progress of your walk, do that.
- Paste photos or draw pictures of landmarks.
- An extension of this for a child who likes narrative is to ask your child to dictate a narrative that happens while pointing out the progress on the map. You can type, audio record, or video record your child's story.

As with all activities, the result of this, no matter how messy or incomplete, should be proudly displayed for all to see when they visit your home! Also, you can post videos to Youtube that are "unlisted"—only people with the direct link will find them.



Life Cycle Poster

Hanna made a poster of the cycle of life using a lemon. What is a food or animal that your child is fascinated with? Discuss the cycle of life backwards, taking notes and doing research as necessary.

- How does your food or animal come into being? (e.g. from an egg, from a seed)
- Where does the seed or egg's plant or animal come from?
- Does the plant or animal go through any stages (metamorphosis)?
- Does anything else have to die in order for your plant or animal to live?
- Does anything live off of your plant or animal after it dies?
- Do we use any product that comes from your plant or animal in our lives?

Your Child's Artwork Here

If your child does this project, please share the result with me! I will put it into my curriculum and also share it on my Facebook page!

Folk Songs

Singing is a dying tradition in the United States. But kids love it! Singing is best done in groups—we are all less self-conscious when our voice is part of a whole. Also, it's actually been proven that singing with others is good for your health. So I recommend that you do this activity with a group: Your family if they are willing, friends and neighbors, or your homeschool group. I once led folksongs for an hour a day for a week at our homeschool co-op, and the kids really loved it. (So did I. I should do it again.)

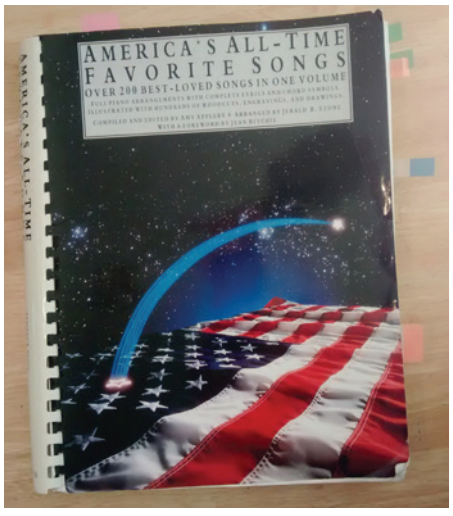
What if I'm not a musician?

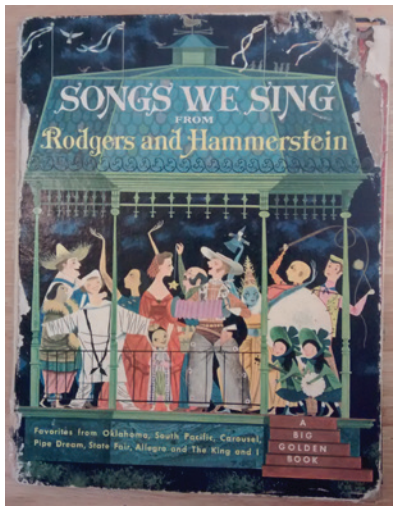
Folk songs are written for the people. (Do a little word derivation with your kids: "folk" comes from the German word *Volk*, which means "people," as in *Volkswagen*, "the people's car.") That means they're not so hard to learn.

If you play an instrument, any instrument, invest in a good book of songs. I like *America's All-Time Favorite Songs* (Amy Appleby), which has piano and guitar chords. It has a huge variety and the keys are good for kids' voices.

If you don't play an instrument, don't worry! The Internet is here for you. Even if you do play instruments, the best resource I've found is on Songs for Teaching. Each page has lyrics, an instrumental recording you can sing along to, and a recording with voice as well. Plug your computer into a speaker so you can get enough volume to create a party atmosphere, and sing along.

You can also learn a lot of culture and history from folk songs. I love the series of music books and CDs on American history by Rusty McNeil. There isn't a better way to get a real understanding of what the Gold Rush was like than learning the song "Clementine" and discussing the lyrics!





My songbook with tabs on my favorite songs, and an incredibly beat-up Rodgers & Hammerstein book I've had since I was a child.

Bread Maker Cheathy Challah

Challah is a traditional bread from the Ashkenazi (European) Jewish tradition. It's meant to be delicious, not healthy! However, I adapted a bread maker recipe to use some whole wheat and wheat germ, which is the most nutritious part of wheat. Why not completely whole wheat? Because, let's face it, a little white flour makes bread better. Sorry, there's no gluten-free alternative—challah is all about gluten.

Of course, just like Hanna's mom J.J., you need to let your kids do the measuring. If you're unsure of their measuring abilities, have them measure into a separate bowl, then pour each ingredient in once it's measured. Talk about fractions while you do it, going from the simplest (halves, quarters), to more complex (thirds, sixths) as they come to understand the relationships.

If you are a super bread-maker and don't kill yeast like I do, you can find numerous good videos on Youtube about how to make challah without a bread maker. I find that you can take any white bread recipe and substitute about 1/3 to 1/2 of the white flour with whole wheat flour plus a couple of tablespoons each of gluten and wheat germ.

Note that there's no reason to do the fancy multiple braid style if you are lazy like me. One simple braid will do just fine.

Ingredients:

3/4 c. water
2 tbsp. vegetable oil
2 eggs
1 tsp. salt
1/4 c. sugar
2 tbsp. wheat gluten flour
2 tbsp. wheat germ
2 c. bread flour
3/4 c. whole wheat flour
2 tsp. yeast
egg to glaze the top if you like that sort of thing

Instructions

Make your bread with the wet and dry ingredients as your bread maker instructs. Set the bread maker on the dough cycle. Remove the dough after the first rise (in my bread maker, that's about a half an hour before the timer goes off).

Place the dough on a lightly floured cutting board. Cut the dough into three equal(ish) parts. Join the parts at one end by pinching, then braid and pinch off the other end. Put the bread on a cookie sheet (I use a silicon sheet underneath to keep it from sticking; you can also use corn-meal), cover it with a towel and rise in a warm oven for 30 minutes. Remove the towel, glaze with egg white and seeds if you like that sort of thing, then turn on the oven to 375 degrees with the dough in there. Bake for 25-30 minutes. Let cool on a bread board ten minutes. To serve, no knife needed. Just rip off chunks and devour it.

Your Child's Artwork Here

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Yeast Science

Yeast bread is fascinating stuff! My daughter and I did countless yeast experiments. (One of them was a weekly test of how much yeast one small child could ingest raw before she got a stomachache!) This is an easy science experiment you can do while the bread is rising.

Experiment #1

Put 1/2 teaspoon yeast and 1/2 teaspoon sugar each in three identical glasses. (Clear ones are best.) To glass #1, add 1/2 cup cold water. To glass #2, add 1/2 cup water at 120° F–130° F (49° C–55° C). To glass #3, add 1/2 cup boiling water. Wait about ten minutes for the full effect.

Younger children will just want to wait and watch and talk about what happens (and what doesn't happen). With older children, create a chart with three columns. Fill in the variables "yeast amount," "sugar amount," and "water temperature." Create a "results" row and describe what happens with the three glasses.

When you're done, it's fun to play with the yeast bubbles. You can even taste them!

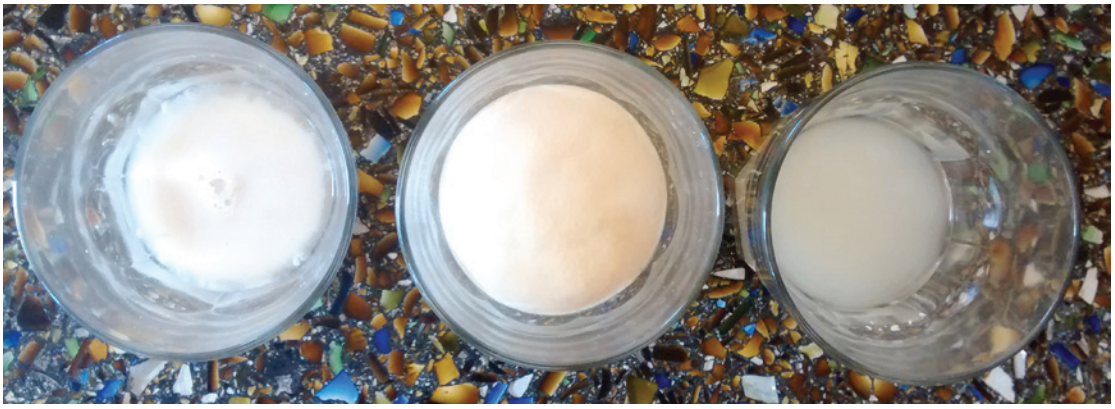
Experiment #2

A variation can be done for children who would like to test a different variable. Now that you know the optimal temperature for growing yeast—120° F–130° F (49° C–55° C)—start three new glasses. In each glass, put 1/2 teaspoon of yeast. In glass #1, do not add any sugar. In glass #2, add a sprinkle of sugar. In glass #3, add a teaspoon of sugar. Pour in water at the correct temperature and wait about ten minutes.

Again, create a chart with your variables and results. Discuss what's happening here: Yeast is a living organism, a fungus. All living organisms need two things in order to live, oxygen and food/water. Plants make their own food through photosynthesis, but the rest of us need to find our food somewhere. In making bread, we give the yeast food in the form of sugar.

Why did the yeast expand when the water temperature was correct? The yeast started to eat. What happens when children eat? First of all, they grow. Also, they pee, poop, and burp! Ick, is that what yeast is doing? Yep, and breathing as well. Just like humans, yeast takes in oxygen and gives off carbon dioxide. The carbon dioxide is what makes bread rise.

Yeast that gets no food can't grow and breathe, so the yeast with no sugar doesn't rise. A little sugar makes yeast grow a little bit, and a lot of sugar makes it grow even more. Experiment again with different amounts of sugar.



Our yeast experiment with three different temperatures of water yielded a fluffy yeast colony in the warm water, a bit of growth in the cold, and poor dead yeasties in the boiling water

Chanukah Decorations

Making Chanukah decorations can be fun whether you are Jewish or not. You can also include a geometry lesson by showing how six-sided stars are created with two equilateral triangles!

There are more great ideas on the Internet than I could possibly create myself, so I will just list the sorts of things that we did. Youtube and Google should be able to help you find more ideas.

1. Mobile: We made different Chanukah-themed shapes (stars, dreidels, candles) out of cardboard. Then we painted them blue and silver and covered them with glitter. Finally, we punched holes and attached them with fishing line to dowels. This is also a physics lesson, and a lesson in parental patience. But in the end, having a shiny, moving thing hanging over your table is quite festive!
2. Clay dreidels: Another physics lesson: When you make your own dreidels, why don't they spin as well as factory-made ones? They're still fun to have, but they don't usually work so well. We like Sculpey because it gets really hard when you bake it and doesn't crumble.
3. Window decorations: Color Chanukah shapes on tracing paper and cut them out. Tape them to windows so the light comes through.

What Makes a Friend?

Hanna is worried about making friends. She finds it difficult to become friends with her neighbors because they go to school and their lives are so different from hers. She takes a long time making friends with homeschoolers because she doesn't see them as often as she saw her friend Henry.

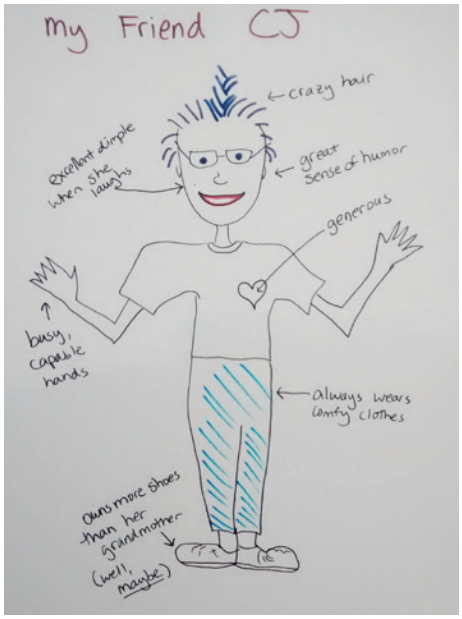
In this project, parent(s) and child(ren) should work together. It's important that children see the continuity of friendship—adults not only need friends, but sometimes have trouble making and keeping friends, too.

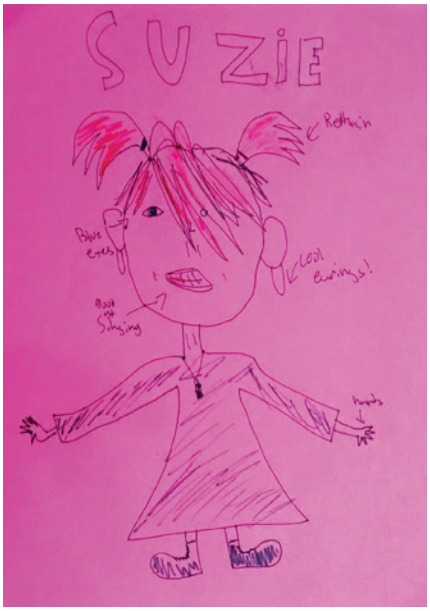
First, everyone should choose a friend to diagram. That friend can be real or imaginary—a friend you have or a friend you wish you had. Using a large sheet of paper, draw a picture of your friend with important things like "my friend always wears a ponytail" or "this is my friend's favorite t-shirt." (Details can be added later as you remember them.)

Once you have your drawing, draw arrows to different parts of your friend and write a description of that aspect of him or her. Remember that you can describe things that aren't physical, so your arrow to her mouth might say "likes to sing loud songs," while an arrow to his heart might say "is very generous and kind."

Try to stick with only nice descriptions, because pointing out our friends' problems won't make them want to be our friends! You can also take something that can be a problem and look at it from the positive side: "loud and bossy" could actually be "exuberant and a good leader."

If you did friend diagrams of someone real, give them to the real friend. If the diagram is of someone imaginary, discuss how your child might meet a real person who has one or more of the imagined qualities.





Limericks

Research famous limericks (making sure to avoid the ones with inappropriate content!). The Kidzone website has some good kid-friendly examples.

- Limericks have an AABBA rhyme scheme—what does that mean? It means that all the "A" lines rhyme at all the ends and all the "B" lines rhyme in a different way at their ends.
- Beat out the meter of some limericks and notice that they all have the same structure: 3 beats, 3 beats, 2 beats, 2 beats, 3 beats. Notice you can have multiple words in a beat.

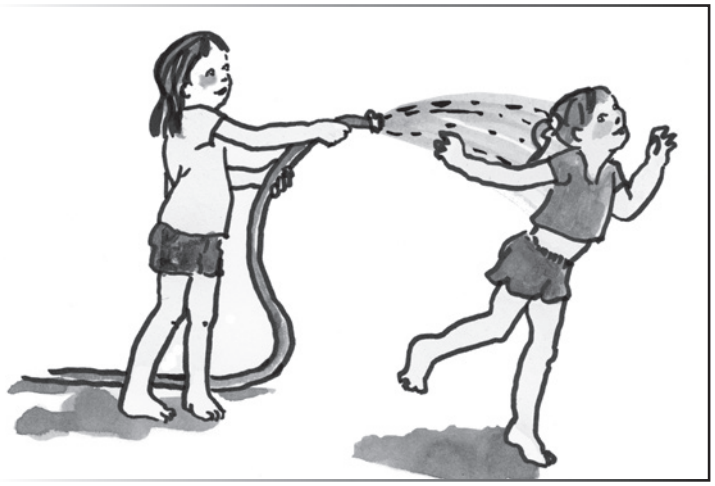
Notice that the meter follows the same pattern as the rhyme! The 2-beat lines are the B rhyme lines. In case you don't know how to find out how many beats a line has, say the line out loud with exaggerated stress on how you would sing it, and you'll hear it!

- Think of a bunch of easy words that rhyme and write them down.
- See if you can find a theme or story with those words, and try to fit them into a limerick. You can use the chart below if it helps.
- If you get a good one, reprint it nicely on a nice sheet of paper, illustrate it, and hang it up for everyone to see!

Limerick Schematic

Beat 1	Beat 2	Beat 3 Rhyme A
Beat 1	Beat 2	Beat 3 Rhyme A
Beat 1	Beat 2 Rhyme B	
Beat 1	Beat 2 Rhyme B	
Beat 1	Beat 2	Beat 3 Rhyme A

Sidewalk Chalk Painting



Those enormous sticks of sidewalk chalk are great for painting. Get a container you don't care about that has a rough edge. Some plastic containers work, as do terra cotta pots. Grind the chalk against the side, letting the ground chalk fall to the bottom. Best to do different colors in different containers or you're likely to get a yucky brown.

(Science lesson: why do colors turn all murky when you mix more than two? Make a color wheel and talk about it! We liked to use the simple but very usable downloads from Enchanted Learning.)

Add a small amount of water to each container of ground chalk. Alternatively, dip a large brush in clean water and then into the chalk. Paint on the sidewalk or anywhere else that Gram doesn't mind getting messed up!

Your Child's Artwork Here

If your child does this project, please share the result with me! I will put it into my curriculum and also share it on my Facebook page!

Graduation Ceremony

Create your own graduation ceremony for the whole family, including small gifts that celebrate the graduations. Remember, you're always graduating *to* something. It's a beginning, not an ending!