

Preschool Storytime Ideas

I like nonsense; it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living, it's a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope.

Which is what I do, and that enables you to laugh at life's realities.

-Dr. Seuss

Books to inspire imagination:

Beryl's Box, by Lisa Taylor. Two small girls have to play together while their moms chat and enjoy coffee. One child has many store-bought toys; the other shows how to use her imagination and play with a simple box. Together they take a fantastical journey.

Extension: Where would you go or what would you do with a box?

The Big Brown Box, by Marisabina Russo. Imagine turning a cardboard box into a cave, a house, a spaceship, or anything else your imagination decides. But when a younger brother wants to play too, mother has to step in and warmly encourage cooperation.

A Box Can Be Many Things, by Dana Meachen Rau. Great for reading aloud. In this book, two children rescue a box from the garbage and use their imagination to create new things from it.

Not a Box, by Antoinette Portis. A small rabbit shows the excitement of when imagination is so vivid that it becomes real as he plays with his box and anything is possible. Playful but simple, children and parents will enjoy.

Not a Stick, by Antoinette Portis. Similar to *Not a Box*, but this time a creative pig uses his imagination to play with a stick—no, not a stick—it's a magic wand, a horse, a fishing rod and more! But it's definitely "not a stick."

Perfect Square, by Michael Hall. A perfect square is perfectly happy, but then it is torn into pieces, punched with holes, crumpled and changed. But it always finds in each transformation that it can be something new, and just as happy.



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Extension: Set up an origami workshop after reading this book, or simply provide children with several colorful squares, scissors, hole punches and glue, and let their imagination create new things.

Concept to explore: a simple shape is only limited by your imagination.

Dream Something Big: The Story of the Watts Towers, by Dianna Hutts Aston. Using his hands, simple tools and found pieces of glass, tile and steel, a reclusive Italian immigrant assembled the extraordinary Watts Towers in California. His work spanned more than three decades. Step-by-step instructions and photographs for constructing a tower from pipe-cleaners provide an excellent follow-up activity. (Kirkus Reviews)

Lights Out, by Arthur Geisert. A young pig uses his imagination for problem-solving. His parents want the lights out for bedtime, so he creates an elaborate mechanism that allows him to follow the rules but also not be afraid. Mostly wordless, children will want to examine each page carefully but with glee as they see cause and effect and discover pig's ingenious levers, pulleys, ropes and wheels at work all around the house.

Extension: See a Texas librarian's blog for extension ideas for little engineers who love this book: <http://picturebookaday.blogspot.com/2012/11/book-327-lights-out-by-arthur-geisert.html>

Meet the author illustrator and learn about copper plate etching here: http://www.teachingbooks.net/author_collection.cgi?id=20&a=1

Activities:

Imagine a Construction Site: These books above all pair well with creative STEM activities such as straws and connectors, Lincoln Logs, foam shapes, wooden building blocks, or Duplos/Legos. Create a "construction site" at home or at the library by setting out the materials and encouraging children to use their imagination to create new things. The books will set the stage for the activities and give focus to children who are shy to dive in to building right away.

Cardboard: Include Cardboard Challenge activities from Caine's Arcade which literally deconstruct cardboard boxes and create new structures from the imagination. See the [playbook](#) for great photos.

Ideas thanks to Natalie Nation, Meridian Library at Silverstone



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Song: (To the tune of "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush")

This is the way we hammer nails, hammer nails, hammer nails.
This is the way we hammer nails,
So early in the morning.

Continue with:

This is the way we drill a hole... saw the wood... turn the screw... stack the bricks...
paint the walls... stir the paint, etc. (children will be able to add their ideas, too)

--From *Let's Pretend: 50 Start-to-Finish Preschooler Programs for the Busy Librarian that Foster Imagination* by Rebecca C. Bane

Snacks: Set out bowls of plain snack food and small paper plates. Allow children to choose the shapes they want to build an image of their choice. Ask them if you can take a picture of their creation before they eat it. This is an open-ended edible craft to allow imagination to flourish. Set out Wheat Thins, rice cakes, Bugles, graham crackers, Ritz Crackers, bread sticks and pretzel sticks that are all plain-colored and continue the theme of *Not a Box*. Go further: Make Edible Sugar "Glue" by mixing 1 tablespoon of milk or water into 1 cup powdered sugar. Adjust liquid as needed and use to "glue" things together before eating.

It's Not a Box theme display: Collect a variety of plain brown cardboard boxes. Suspend them by fishing line from the ceiling or attach smaller ones to the walls with duct tape or push pins into the bulletin board. Title the display "What Can Your Imagination Do With A Box?" Cover the book return bin with brown paper and label "It's Not a Box" on the outside. If you are doing a cardboard challenge, you can take down the display when families need the boxes for their creations.



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