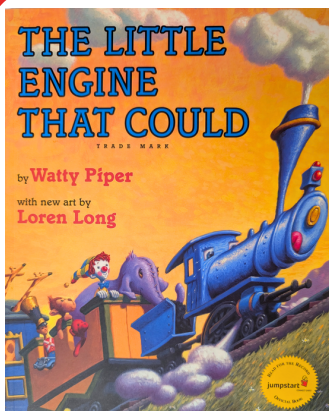




The Little Engine That Could: Activity Guide



Read for the Record 2006: The Little Engine That Could

Twenty years ago, we came together to read aloud the story of a little blue engine that proved that with determination and heart, even the smallest among us can move mountains. That same spirit launched Jumpstart's Read for the Record in 2006 with “The Little Engine That Could”—and what began as an ambitious goal to break a world record has grown into something extraordinary.



Welcome & Warm Up

Welcome & Warm Up (10 Minutes): Get ready for fun! Provide props in the play area that tie to the story—trains, train tracks, and toys like those on board the little blue engine. This should be an open time for children to play and relax during the playdate.

Reading Tips from Jumpstart: Bring the story to life!

You want to move at a good pace and avoid pausing on every page, but here are some suggestions for things you can say and do during reading to make it more engaging. You can use these during one-on-one reading, too!

Pictures Tell Stories:

Use the illustrations to talk about what you see, why characters act the way they do, and how they feel.

What's that Word?

When you come across new words, explain what they mean using simple language that kids can understand. (See “New Words” section).

Make it a conversation!

Listen carefully and let children do the talking.





Story Time

Story Time (10 Minutes): Who doesn't love story time? Gather the children around in a circle to read this week's book. Find a spot where all the children can sit together comfortably.

Prep & Set up:

- **Practice First.** Read the book a few times before reading it to your playgroup. Practice using different voices and intonation to engage children in the story. Review New Words so you can effectively highlight them while you read.
- Can you see me? Invite children to sit in a horseshoe facing you so that they can each see you. Ask parents to sit behind their child. Hold the book so children can see the illustrations as you read.
- Enjoyment is the aim! It is likely the first time children will hear this story. Read at a comfortable pace, read with expression, and pause to comment on illustrations or introduce a new word. Don't worry about getting through the book efficiently; the goal is enjoyment.

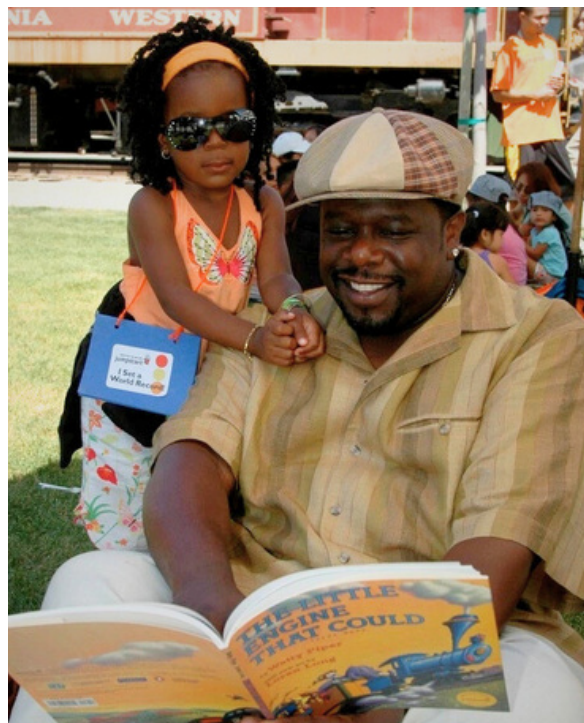
New Words for *The Little Engine That Could* by Watty Piper

(Child-friendly definitions to explain new words to children)

- **Engine** – the first car of a train that works hard to pull the other train cars
- **Rumble** – a deep, heavy sound that sounds a little like thunder
- **Jerk** – a quick, sharp pull or tug that happens all of a sudden
- **Weary** - very, very tired
- **Hitched** - hooked up to; connected to

Act it out! There are also words that can be demonstrated by action or with your voice to help children understand their meaning – jerk, snorted, bellowed, and sigh are just a few.

Chime in! Invite children to say repetitive phrases with you, such as “chug, chug, chug, puff, puff, puff” or “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can.” Children might also be able to make some simple predictions. For example, when the Big Engine stops and all the toys ask for help, you can ask, “Do you think the Big Engine will help the little train?”



To close Story Time and transition to an activity, invite children to act like a train engine and “chug, chug, chug” to where you have set up the activity.



Activity #1: Make Your Own Train Book

Overview: Children make their own train books filled with stories told in words and pictures.

Preparation: Low

Materials

- Plain white paper
- Assorted colors of construction paper
- Markers, crayons, and other writing tools
- Stapler or hole punch
- Yarn
- Adaptation for young children: collage materials, pictures of trains and places to travel to cut out, glue sticks
- Create blank books using a few pieces of white paper folded inside a piece of colored construction paper. Use stapler to secure or punch holes next to fold and use yarn to secure.

Learning Focus: Creating books helps children learn reading skills and how books work.

Activity

1. Begin by talking about the story. Ask children a question or two, such as “What was your favorite part of the story?” “Who was your favorite character?” or “Which picture did you like best?” Remember to wait for children to share before asking another question.
2. Next, ask children, “Have you ever been on a train ride?” Or “If you could go on a train ride, where would you want to go?” Allow children to share their experiences.
3. Tell the children that today they will make their own train books. They can write a story about a train trip you have taken, a trip they would like to take, or something else from their imagination

Adaptation for Young Children: Give children blank books. Encourage them to fill their books with stories told in words and pictures.

- If children are struggling, provide a starter sentence – “I went on a train ride to ____.” OR “I want to go on a train ride to ____.”
- Encourage children to describe their ride and what they saw or wished they’d seen along the way.
- Parents and caregivers can work on books with their child and offer to take dictation – write what their child says on each page.
- Invite children to create a title and write their name as the author on the front of their books.
- Younger child adaptation: If the children in your playgroup are very young, try a train picture or collage on a large sheet of plain paper



Activity #2: Building Train Engines

Overview: Children create and decorate a box train engine. Through this activity, children will discuss different types of train engines from the book.

Preparation: Medium

Materials

- Small cardboard boxes, or shoe boxes (each parent might be able to bring 1-2) so that each child has one.
- Markers and crayons
- Craft supplies – feathers, glitter, popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, buttons (older children only), tissue paper, etc.
- Glue/glue sticks
- Child scissors
- Paint and paint brushes (optional)
- Newspaper/vinyl table cloth for work space
- Smocks (if painting)
- Spread news paper or vinyl table cloth out. Prepare small trays/cups of craft materials. Ensure there is enough room for each child who would like to participate.

Learning Focus: Providing opportunities to make and express choices helps children develop initiative skills and the ability to work well on their own.

Activity

- Begin this activity by talking about the different engines in the book: Shiny New Engine, Big Strong Engine, Old Rusty Engine, and Little Blue Engine. Use the book and open it to pages with pictures of the different engines.
- Ask children, “Can you name some of the engines in the story?”
- Tell the children that today we will be making our own train engines out of cardboard boxes. They can make their engines however they would like, using the supplies available. Once the engines are dry, they can take them for a ride!

Adaptation for Young Children

- Invite children to decorate their train (template below).
- Invite parents to discuss different types of engines with children and ask them what their engine does OR ask them about where they would like to go in their engine.



Train Template (Cut Out)

