Play is the most powerful way young children learn. Every time you play, sing or read with young children they are learning about language.

The following activities have been designed for early childhood professionals to use as a starting point for developing children’s early literacy skills through play. Please feel free to adapt them for the home and with children of different ages. Don’t forget to record your own ideas, activities that worked really well, relevant songs and rhymes in the Notes section opposite.


Engaging with Language and Literacy

A book is like a garden carried in the pocket. Chinese Proverb

- Read the title and look at the illustration before reading the story with the children. Talk about monsters and allow the children to share their knowledge of monsters.

- You may like to ask some open-ended questions before starting the story like
  
  “I wonder why the monster wrote a letter?”
  “I wonder who the monster is writing a letter to?”

  The back of the book also has some interesting questions to ask the children.

- When reading the story, place the emphasis on the last word of each rhyming couplet. This will help the children to identify the rhyming words. As the children become familiar with the story they will be able to predict which rhyming word is coming next. Rhyming is a great way to improve phonemic awareness.

- When reading the story stop to discuss the boy and the monster’s feelings. How do you think the boy feels? How do you think the monster feels? Why do you think they feel that way?

- While reading the story draw attention to the coloured items in the illustrations. This activity is entertaining for young children and identifying objects, such as a yellow rubber ducky or the monster's brown shoes involves them in the telling of the tale.

- After reading the story discuss with the children the concept of letter writing. Have they ever received a letter or an invitation? How did the letter get to their home?

For more book suggestions, information and activity sheets visit www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au
The children may like to practise writing a letter or post some pictures to shows like

Gigle and Hoot    Playschool
ABC TV           ABC TV
PO Box 9994      PO Box 9994
Sydney           Sydney or you can email through visiting:

http://www.abc.net.au/children/play/

As a follow up discussion you could talk to the children about other forms of communication such an email, telephones, mobile phones and texting.

**Enjoying Dramatic and Musical Play**

The children can make monster masks from paper plates. For young children it is easier to cut the paper plates in half and precut the eyeholes. Consider using materials with a variety of textures such as cotton wool, or faux fur.

Sing songs such as *If You Ever See A Monster* and *We're Going on a Monster Hunt* and *If You Are Happy and You Know It*.

If you are able to find the music to a *Monster Mash* it is a fun song for the children to dance along with.

Using large boxes create a house and door for the children to reenact the story. You may like to include some masks and other props for the monster. The children can take turns being the boy/girl or monster. By reenacting the story and playing acting the different characters children will begin to develop empathy for characters.

**If You Ever See a Monster** (Original Author Unknown)
(Sung to: "Did You Ever See A Lassie")

If you ever see a monster,
A big ugly monster.
If you ever see a monster,
Here's what you do!
Make this face......
And this face......
And this face......
And this face......
If you ever see a monster...
Be sure to shout...BOOOO!!

**We're Going on a Monster Hunt**  (Original Author Unknown)
(Sung to: " We're Going On A Bear Hunt")

We're going on a monster hunt.
A Monster Wrote Me A Letter
Nick Bland

Were going to find a big one!
We're not scared, but....
What if he's under the bed? Better go over it. Squoosh, squoosh, squoosh.
What if he is in the closet. Better close it. Slam, slam, slam.
What if he is behind the curtains? Better open them. Swish, swish, swish.
What if he's in the hallway? Better tiptoe down it. Tiptoe, tiptoe.
What if he's in the garage? Better stomp through it. Stomp, stomp, stomp.
Aahh! It's a monster!
What's that you say?
You're big, but you're friendly, and you want to go to bed?
Now we're not afraid of monsters, so...
Stomp through the garage,
Walk through the hallway,
Close the curtains,
Open the closet,
Jump into bed,
And turn out the lights! Click!

Exploring Our World

- If possible organize an excursion to the local post office. Prior to the visit ask the children what they would like to know about mail or mail delivery?
  An adult can scribe the children’s questions.
- Alternatively you could organize a visit from a postal delivery officer.
- Walk to the local post box to post some letters. Children will enjoy choosing someone special to whom they can write a letter.
- You may like to have a monster party and invite the children’s friends and families. The children can make the invitations and then post them to their families or simply take them home.
  Think about including the children in the planning of the party
  What food will they have at the party?
  What time will the party be?
  Who will they invite?
  Will there be games or dancing at the party?

Being Creative Through Play

Create a post office in the home corner or writing area.

More Books By Nick Bland:

Aussie Jingle Bells
I’ve Lost My Kisses
Donald Loves Drumming
The Very Cranky Bear
When Henry Caught Imaginitis
The Wrong Book

Useful Websites and Links:

For Printable Activities:
www.thelittlebigbookclub.com
- Each child could have their own post box with their photo and a number on it.
- Shoeboxes or tissue boxes make great post boxes.
- When the children are writing letters to their friends encourage them to include an “address” on the envelope with the corresponding number to their friend’s post box.
- You may even like to make keys for the boxes.
- The children can also make a large post box for the centre and help sort the mail each day.
- Don’t forget to include envelopes, stamps and a variety of papers.
- Many shops and cafes have free postcards that can be used in the post office.
- Ask parents to save old stamps for the children to use.
- The children could design their own stamps draw them onto small labels.
- Think about including nametags with all of the children’s names for their friends to copy when they are writing letters to each other.

The children may like to make mobile phones or computers from box construction. Or you may have access to old computers and phones for the children to play with.

As part of a cooking session the children can make monster pancakes. The children can help mix the batter. The more misshaped or irregular looking pancake is, the better. Decorate the cooked pancakes with a variety of toppings.

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