

Dear parents,

Hello and happy spring - it's been a long time coming! Even though the weather didn't totally cooperate, we were thrilled to celebrate spring's imminent arrival throughout this short week. And wow, did we ever pack a lot in during our four days together: fairy tales, spring planting, St. Patrick's Day, letter O, and more.

While we continued to fill our pockets with poems this week, we also turned our attention to fairy tales - always a fun unit for the class. Among the stories we read were *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *The Princess and the Pea*, and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. We learned that fairy tales share several important elements. Everyone knew that fairy tales typically start with "Once upon a time...", and sure enough, that's how all our fairy tales began. Before we got our first fairy tale underway, we talked about several other elements that often make an appearance: magic and make-believe, castles and/or royalty, a villain (sometimes a very hungry one), talking animals, and a "happily ever after" ending for our protagonists. It was fun to think all week about which of the typical elements of fairy tales did and did not appear in the stories we read. Fairy tales make for very entertaining reads, and they spark some interesting conversations about what is real and what is make-believe - the question "Can a beanstalk really reach as high as a giant's castle in the sky?", for example, resulted in a lengthy and animated chat and some very strong opinions. Ask your children what they think, we imagine you'll love hearing their take on it all as much as we did.

Teeing off our fairy tale unit, we engaged in a variety of art and STEM activities this week. After reading one version of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, we did a What Do You See? project on **Monday** that channeled Jack's bean planting and was perfect for the much-anticipated arrival of spring. The children "planted" five beans (lima, kidney, pinto, black eyed pea, and lentil) in a Ziploc bag. They sprayed water on the paper towel that went in with the beans, we stapled along the middle of the bags so we could look for roots below and shoots above, and then we hung the bags in our windows so the beans could get plenty of sunlight. In the art room, the children decorated some cute "greenhouses" for our beans. We also planted the same five types of beans in five little plastic cups and all took turns giving them a good watering - we thought it would be interesting to see how the beans in our Ziploc bag greenhouses did compared to the ones we planted in soil. We have been inspecting our beans daily. There are already a few promising signs of growth, and we're excited to come back after a long weekend to check on them. And we got in some good numeracy practice, using a worksheet with "beanstalks" and dot stickers to work on number recognition and one-to-one correspondence to 8.

At our second circle on Monday, we read a very different version of *Jack and the Beanstalk* (the first retold and illustrated by Steven Kellogg, the second from The Book Studio). It was interesting to see how the stories were similar in fundamental respects and quite different in others. The text and illustrations of the first were more detailed and considerably more dark (in every sense) than those of the second, and on the whole the children seemed to prefer the creepy, slightly sinister version. We debated an important

question: Was Jack a villain in our story or not? While some of us decided that the gold wasn't his to abscond with, others thought Jack was smart to take the money and run. At lunch time, we pulled out felt characters for yet another retelling of the story - this time, everyone pitched in to help narrate and place the characters exactly where they belonged on our felt board.

On **Tuesday**, we couldn't miss the opportunity to wear our green proudly and celebrate St. Patrick's Day. After reading *How To Catch a Leprechaun* by Adam Wallace and *How To Trap a Leprechaun* by Sue Fliess, we went to the art room to create St. Patrick's Day easel paintings. Everyone chose to paint a rainbow and pot of gold, and we've got a few leprechauns as well. We also employed a different method to make some smaller rainbows - we used markers to color rainbows on coffee filters and then spritzed water on them and watched the colors blur and blend. All our rainbows are now hanging in our classroom. We love being able to see our rainbows even on completely cloudy days. We practiced tracing numbers 0-10 on shamrocks, read a silly poem about the perils of searching for leprechauns on a cold March day, and worked as a team to uncover 22 sneaky little leprechauns who'd crept into our classroom and hidden themselves while we were in Parish Hall. We also discovered that those rascally leprechauns had somehow managed to turn the water in our toilets green! And of course we couldn't resist indulging in some Lucky Charms at snack time. We discovered that those tasty marshmallows worked some strange alchemy in our mouths, turning our tongues the most brilliant shade of green. This was an exciting and hilarious discovery (it's the little things in life)!!

On **Wednesday**, we read a cute version of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* by Mara Alperin. We debated whether Goldilocks was the baddie in the story, or if she was just a curious girl who got in a little over her head. Great minds do not think alike, it turns out. The children then created puppets representing the four characters in our story. This involved coloring as neatly as possible (since we decided careful "in the lines" coloring looks a lot nicer and tells the story better than scribbling would), cutting around the outline of the figures, adding some yarn hair and googly eyes, and then affixing them on to craft sticks. We then had lots of fun using our puppets to retell the story. We also pulled out a kid-sized puppet theater and a bunch of new puppets, which the class loved. At our second circle, we cracked open an antique anthology of fairy tales and chose one most of the children didn't know: *The Princess and the Pea*. After some very (!!) animated chat about how two words can sound just alike and mean something totally different, we settled down to enjoy the story. We had fun thinking about whether a tiny pea would cause us to toss and turn at night - most of us agreed we weren't quite "princess-y" enough for that!

After a high-octane Spanish class first thing on **Thursday**, we turned our attention to letter **O**. We learned that O makes an appearance in lots of words and is pronounced in three very different ways. We made an interesting **o**bservation: when we make the double-O "oo" sound, the long O sound, and the short O sound, our mouths make small, medium, and large O shapes - **oh**, boy! We rounded out our usual Thursday letter activities with an **o**utstanding snack: some healthy **o**ranges, along with some less-than-

healthy but objectively delicious cupcakes that Oscar shared with us. (We could all recognize that “cupcake” doesn’t start with O. But to paraphrase the old adage, “when life gives you cupcakes, make letter O” - we noticed that the cupcakes, their wrappers, and even the wrapper decorations all formed the shape of an O!) We also read *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* and teamed up to do a fun hands-on STEM activity. The children worked together in small groups to see if they could build a sturdy Duplo bridge for the three billy goats to trip-trap over. We were very impressed with their engineering prowess - thanks to their good efforts, none of the Billy Goats Gruff met an untimely end.

We’ve got a couple more fairy tales and one accompanying art activity in store for next week. The children are very curious about what our art project will be, and we think they will enjoy having the answer revealed and finally putting those shoeboxes to good use. Thanks again to everyone who brought in shoeboxes!

Looking ahead to next week:

- Our Friday Show and Tell will feature the **letter P**.

Enjoy the long weekend. See you on Monday!
Pam and Carolyn







