

The Early Years Count **Literacy** Connection



First Day Critter Jitters

Written by Jory John and
illustrated by Liz Climo

Preschool edition

Overview of Book

It's almost the first day of school and all the critters have their own worries and fears. So much could go wrong! How will it go? How will they make it? What will they do? What can help them? What will they learn on the first day?

Genre: Picture/fiction/social and emotional

Vocabulary

Books are a rich source of words new to children. Here are some words from *First Day Critter Jitters* to introduce in your classroom:

anxious	nervous
tense	skittish
unfurled	mnemonic

Each time you read the book, choose 2 or 3 words to highlight.

Use age-appropriate definitions and/or the illustrations to help children gain an understanding of each word's meaning.

Use these new words throughout the day, reminding the children, "That's a word from our story!"

Connecting with the HighScope Curriculum: COR Advantage 1.5

Approaches To Learning
Item A
(Initiative and planning)

Social And Emotional
Development
Item D (*Emotions*)
Item F (*Building relationships
with other children*)

Language, Literacy and
Communication
Item N
(Phonological awareness)

Social Studies
Item FF (*Knowledge of self
and others*)

Reading Tips

Ask the group, "What does it mean to 'have the jitters' about something?" After gathering ideas you might say, "This book is about having the jitters about starting school. After we read, we'll talk more about what that might mean." Use your voice to help reflect each character's emotion. Repeat the terms the characters use (nervous, anxious, skittish) and ask, "I wonder if that's another way to say jitters?" Notice with the group how the characters work together with their strengths to help everyone overcome their worries.

Three readings are recommended to familiarize children with the story. Each reading provides an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary words, pose open-ended questions, and engage children in activities that make the story "come alive."

Throughout the Routine

Refer to the book throughout the day and use new vocabulary words in meaningful ways. Active engagement with the story helps the content come alive.

Children can roll, hop or slither like the critters in the story for **Transitions**.

Play the mnemonic game that Chauncy the mouse tells about at **Greeting Time**. Have the children hear the sound of their initial letter/blend and think of something that sounds the same. For example, "My name is Drake and I like dragons!"

At **Small Group Time**, explore chalk on chalkboards like several critters in the story.

Around the Room

Highlight the book's content and build on the children's excitement in a variety of locations.

Add rolls of duct tape to the **Art Area**.

Make sure the **Writing Area** has sharp pencils, fresh chalk, erasers, and chalkboards.

Update the family photo area if need.

Add school busses to the vehicle bin in the **Block Area** and encourage children to make signs for streets and community buildings.

Display the book in the **Book Area**, along with other starting school books.

Open-ended Questions

Enhance active engagement and early critical thinking skills by asking open-ended questions. These questions encourage children to explain why or how things happen, make predictions, or brainstorm possibilities rather than give one "right" answer.

Here are some questions you might ask for *First Day Critter Jitters*:

Have you ever had the jitters about something?
Can you tell us about it?

What do you do to help friends at school when they are worried?

What was something about school that was a surprise to you?

For more information on how to use books and stories with children to enhance your curriculum, contact
The Family Connection:

website—
www.famconn.org

Facebook—
@famconnsjc

phone—
574-237-9740

@ Home

Since many of the children in our county will have this book at home, use it as a way to further the home-school connection. In your daily contact—in person or by text, email or other notes home—encourage families to share *First Day Critter Jitters* with their child. Here's a sample message you can send:

When you and your child are reading this together, ask questions like, "Have you felt this way? Can you tell me about that?" If you have one, share with your child a photo of yourself on your first day of preschool or Kindergarten. Share any fears or "jitters" you may have had. As you read each critter's worry and see the opposite page what they are afraid of (like the rabbit being given a time-out for having energy), share how each of the critters and their teacher need one another to be themselves and share their strengths for the classroom to be a great place for all. Ask, "What is your strength? What will you share to help everyone to succeed?"