

BEDTIME FOR SWEET CREATURES

Imitation and Symbolic Representation

Preschool

In this book, a child goes through the same emotions and actions as different animals as they get ready for bed. This story supports using imitation and role-taking during imaginary play.

CORE SKILL OBJECTIVES

INTENTIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES

THINK



Children will:

- ◆ Engage in pretend play
- ◆ Communicate creative ideas to peers and adults

Teachers will:

- ◆ Narrate imitation and representation
- ◆ Encourage children to try new roles

TEACHING TIP

Engaging in pretend play requires layers of understanding – of symbols, of processes, and of ideas. Imitation is a component of pretend play that helps children deepen their understanding of their own experiences, environment, and routines. By reading books that feature imaginative children, we can use stories to prompt and inspire children to use their imaginations more. Encourage and join in children’s imagination throughout all parts of the day, and let children guide the imitation and symbolic thought behind play scenarios.

1. INTRODUCE

- ◆ “What does a curled-up snake look like? What about a growling bear? Today we’re going to read *Bedtime for Sweet Creatures*, where we’ll see a child acting like all kinds of animals while they get ready for bed.”

2. READ THE BOOK

- ◆ Pause occasionally to narrate the imitation and representation shown by the child and adult.
- ◆ Encourage children to imitate animals throughout the story and communicate their ideas to the group.

Narrate Imitation and Representation

Read: “You coil beneath the quilt, silent as a snake.”

Narrate: “They’re all curled up in bed, just like a snake curls its long body up.”

Encourage: “We’ve seen a bear, snake, and owl so far, which one could you pretend to be? I noticed (*child*) is flapping their arms like wings, and (*child*) is curling their fingers like claws!”

Read: “...frozen like a fawn...”

Narrate: “A fawn is a baby deer, and the child is standing still as they look around, just like deer do.”

Encourage: “Can you show me what you would do to act like a deer?”

Read: “...and hop up once again”

Narrate: “The child is pretending to be this animal, called a gazelle, by stretching their legs and doing big hops.”

Encourage: “What kind of animal that hops could you pretend to be? Will you be a gazelle, or another animal?”

3. REVIEW

- ◆ “The child moved their body in different ways as they pretended to be different animals. There are lots of ways to show what you’re pretending to be, and I wonder what else you may pretend to be today.”

4. KEEP IT GOING

- ◆ Encourage children to extend their imaginary play. This can look like developing more complex scenarios, creating materials to use as props, or engaging in social relationships between roles. Pretend play can also be encouraged through the learning environment. Be sure to have both exact replicas of materials (e.g., brooms, aprons, cowboy boots) and open-ended materials (e.g., scarves, boxes) for children to incorporate into their pretend play.