

# May I Have a Word?

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## Long Lost or New Found Treasure? Using Storybooks for Speech-Language Intervention

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Some of the best intervention materials I own are ones that I can use with multiple populations of varying ages and at varying levels of functioning, and I believe storybooks fall under this category. A good age-appropriate storybook is one of the most versatile materials for speech-language intervention. Besides the obvious that books are rich in language, storybooks allow for addressing multiple goals concurrently or sequentially and are conducive to presenting multi-modality input that helps individuals learn and retain information more efficiently. Furthermore, books create a naturalistic and functional context for new learning, and as a bonus, they're fun and engaging!

When using storybooks with children for literature-based language intervention, the main goal is not to teach reading but to improve language and other related skills such as pragmatic awareness, narration, phonological awareness, and articulation – skills that will prepare children for and assist them in the academic setting.

So let's take one book example and see how this might work. I'll be analyzing the book entitled *Things All Around* (*Cosas por todas partes* – Spanish version) from the storybook series *GROW! Language Development with Engaging Children's Stories*. This storybook series is leveled, so in essence, one can read the story four different ways depending on the age and language level of the child.

At the highest level (Level 4), this particular book in the series has a repetitive pattern, where something is described (*The rainbow in the sky is colorful*), that description is tied to one of the five senses (*The girl can see it with her eyes*), then something similar is described (*The beach ball is also colorful*), and finally a contrast is made (*but the sand is dull*). The book follows this pattern so that all five senses with associated body parts are covered and the following is introduced: 50 nouns (e.g. *rainbow, sky, eyes, beach ball, sand*, etc.), 20 adjectives/descriptors (e.g. *colorful, dull, loud, quiet, sweet, sour*, etc.) and 10 pairs of opposites. Because of this patterning, prepositional phrases and location words are also covered (e.g. *with her eyes, with her nose, in the sky, on the road*, etc.), so as you can see, there are multiple vocabulary and language target possibilities.

There are many ways the story can be presented, utilizing graphic organizers as a pre-reading step, stressing content words through clarity and volume while reading, and doing quick checks for comprehension occasionally throughout the story reading.

There can also be post-reading steps where extension activities are chosen to highlight concepts or language targets introduced that are important for that child.

One post-reading extension activity could be doing a sequencing task where you cover the order in which the story character used her senses (seeing first, then smelling, then hearing and so on). A further extension of this would be to cut out magazine pictures or to take pictures of other things you can see, smell, hear, taste, and touch. This activity indirectly targets categorization skills and also describing skills since you would naturally talk about features of the items cut out or photographed in order to place them in the right categories (things you see, things you smell, and so on).

If zoning in on opposites, one extension activity I use is a song from *Listen, Sing, Speak! Children's Songs for Speech, Language & Hearing Goals*. It's a chant-like call-response style song that addresses opposites that goes right along with *Things All Around*. I also like working on opposites utilizing analogies.

If working on phonological awareness, I might pick several phrases or sentences in the book where one word can be substituted with a rhyming word. For example, "The *book* on the shelf is up high" can become "The *hook* on the shelf is up high." If generating a rhyming word is too difficult for the child, I might present two sentence options with a word that rhymes and with a word that doesn't, then the child merely has to identify which sentence contains the rhyming word that I generated.

Last but not least, for articulation, using highlighting tape, I have the child go through the pages of the book "highlighting" words with their target sound in a specific word position (initial, medial, or final position). A variation of this activity would be to use a magnifying glass to search for the words. This searching for target words addresses sound awareness, and the generated list of highlighted words can then be used for sound practice. After examining *Things All Around* for R, S/Z, and L words, it has approximately 44 R words (12 initial, 11 medial, 21 final), 68 S/Z words (19 initial, 17 medial, 32 final), and 40 L words (7 initial, 13 medial, 20 final).

So if you haven't picked up a storybook with one of your clients lately, give it a try and be amazed at how far you can get with it!