

STORYTIME FUN WITH

HANDA'S SURPRISE

EILEEN BROWNE

For 25 years, Eileen Browne's award-winning storytime favourite *Handa's Surprise* has delighted the very youngest of readers. If you are a newcomer to the book, try telling the story with just actions first. If you are already familiar with the story, try adding some props. Above all, relax, take your time and have fun with it – your guests will have a wonderful time!



THE STORYTELLING SPACE

When planning the session make sure you are in a cosy, enclosed space where parents can sit with their children comfortably. This helps the children focus and makes them feel safe. Beware of distractions, such as toys or a chair to crawl under. If there is a window in the room, aim to have it behind the audience, not behind the storyteller!

You may like to set the scene with suitable music, colourful decorations or cushions which mirror the warmth and vibrancy of the illustrations.

BEFORE YOU START

It's nice to interact with the group before you start reading. Welcome people, seat them comfortably. You may find putting the book on a music stand is easier than holding it while doing the actions. Even better, an assistant can sit next to you, hold the book and show it around to the audience. This will leave your hands free for doing the actions and help you keep eye contact.

WARMING UP

Toddlers experience the world through their adult so the key is getting the adults to join in and interact with the children! Start off with a strong "hello" and encourage everyone to wave and say "hello" back. If you have a "hello" song, even better!

READING THE STORY ACTIONS

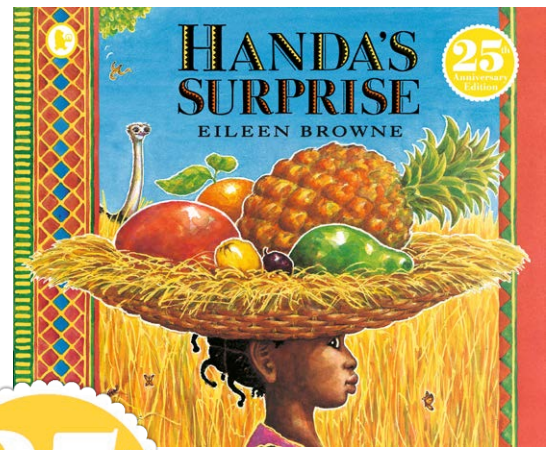
Animal actions and noises are simple to do. Pause the story at each new animal, show the picture and decide what kind of noise and action each animal will do. At this point little children will definitely need to be led by their adults, so don't be shy about getting the adults to join in. The more you, the storyteller, gets involved, the more everyone else will too, so don't be scared to be silly!

A monkey, elephant and parrot have fairly well known "noises" and actions. The others are a bit more challenging so here are some suggestions.

An ostrich goes "wuh-wuh-wooooooo!" (you could use your arm to represent the bird's long neck with your fingers making a beak.)

A zebra makes a "whinny" that sounds a lot like a horse. (You could stamp your feet like a galloping zebra.)

A giraffe is silent (mostly) but they chew leaves with a "nom nom nom!" (For the action you could invite everyone to stand on tiptoes and reach as high as they can for leaves.)



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An antelope makes a deep “moo”, a bit like a cow. (You could use your fingers to represent the antelope’s horns.)

A goat makes a “baaa” like a sheep. (You can use your fingers to make a goats beard.)

Another fun way to use actions is to learn the Makaton signs for each animal.

PROPS

If you are familiar with the story and are already using actions, consider adding props as well. They are brilliant fun and will engage even the most stubborn child.

FRUIT

The story features seven types of fruit and you might decide to include some real fruit in your session! This is often brilliant fun. However, please be aware that a small number of people have severe food allergies. There is also a danger from choking. Be sure to warn people before getting fruit out and certainly check with each child’s adult before handing anything out or letting anyone eat it.

Having said that, taste is one of the most often overlooked senses when it comes to storytelling so having small pieces of fruit to taste can be really engaging. You can show/pass around the whole fruits one at a time during the story. It’s probably best not to eat them at this point as it could get a bit messy! Instead, pass around bowls of cut up pieces at the end when you have some cleaning materials on hand. Alternatively you might want to finish the story by handing a tangerine to each family (having checked for allergies!).

There’s no need to ask a child to taste anything they don’t want to. Kids often LOVE to watch their parents trying things just as much as they enjoy eating things themselves.

ANIMALS

Handa’s Surprise really lends itself to animal puppets or cuddly toys. You can bring out the appropriate animal at each page and pass it around so each child has a chance to briefly interact with it. Keep the props in basket beside you. This increases the surprise value of each puppet and stops children trying to play with them out of turn! Take a pause, relax and allow time to explore each prop before putting it away. You might want to allow between three to five minutes of “play” before picking up the book for the next bit.

However if you DON’T have toy animals, don’t despair! It can be just as much fun choosing an action for each animal.

If you are already using real fruits, you might decide that using animal actions is a lot simpler and stress-free than trying to handle baskets of toys and fruits together!

If you find it difficult to hold the book as well as whinnying and stomping like a zebra or juggling fruits, you can ask another adult to hold the book for you and show the pictures while you read it out loud and do actions. This makes the session a lot simpler!

Above all, enjoy the warmth, the colour and the humour of this lovely book. If you as the storyteller are having a good time, everyone else will do too!

KIDS WHO DON’T LIKE IT

Of course, all the above is very good, but no matter how brilliant the book – or the storyteller – sometimes a child won’t respond. They might be over-tired, hungry or just plain grumpy! When this happens, it can be good to have an “out” for them. Is there a nearby room or hallway where a noisy child can be taken to calm down so they don’t disturb everyone else? Often they will quieten down in just a few minutes and they can come back in. Sometimes they don’t, but hey, that’s toddlers!

SAYING GOODBYE

Another joining-in song can be good to finish the storytime. If you have a “goodbye” song, that’s great. Otherwise a few choruses of “sleeping bunnies” is always popular!

